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Scriptural Allusions to Torah Umadda

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I have written elsewhere on the theme of Torah Umadda, especially in my volume by that name, at some length. The present article is in the nature of a footnote to that work, and consists of an interpretation of a verse in Psalms (36:10). It is not intended as a "proof" of the Torah Umadda thesis, and is by no means to be taken as "scientific" evidence of Torah Umadda in the Psalms. It is, rather, as the title of this short piece indicates, an allusion to Torah Umadda. And I believe it reflects the *peshat* of the verse and is more than homiletical.

^{על} The verse reads, *Ki Imcha Mekor Chaim B'orach*
Nir Ohr

The standard English translation is, "For with Thee is the fountain of life; Thy light do we see light." This is a fairly accurate translation, but it does not avoid a difficulty which arises in Hebrew as well. That is, how does one see light in the light of God? It is in the nature of light that a stronger light overpowers a weaker one. A small match struck in a totally dark room gives much wanted illumination, whereas the same amount of light in the outdoors on a sunny day is hardly noticeable, if at all. The Talmud (*Hullin* 60b) asks, rhetorically, what use is there of a lamp in the daytime?!

It would seem therefore, that the most powerful light imaginable, whether physically or metaphorically, is the light of the Divine, the *Ohr Hashem*. When a mere mortal has attained that spiritual or prophetic category of the divine light,

all other "lights" - again, whether physical or metaphoric - should effectively disappear. When exposed to the light of Godliness, all other lights shrink into insignificance. The conclusion, therefore, is that in immersing one's self in Torah, in attaining the spiritual illumination of divinity, all other sources of enlightenment fade away and are meaningless. Apparently, Mada has no standing in the face of Torah.

But that is not what the Psalmist says. When King David cries out, *B'oracha Nireh Ohr*, "in Thy light do we see light," he is declaring that the natural laws do not apply here. Quite to the contrary, the illumination provided by the divine Presence does not blot out all other light; instead, in the spiritual realm, the greater the divine illumination the more does a human being enjoy all other light, all other forms of enlightenment. In God's light, we see light. No matter how weak these other lights may be in the face of superior luminescence according to the laws of physics, they are strengthened by the presence of His light where spirit prevails.

The reason for this lies in the introductory clause: *ki imcha Mekor Chaim*, "for with Thee is the foundation of life." God is the source of all existence, and it is His decision that, contrary to ordinary physical law which prevails in the mundane sphere, in the spiritual-epistemological realm the divine light reinforces all other sources of illumination available to man.

Hence, when one grows in Torah-*Ki ner mitzvah v'ohr Torah*, Torah is identified with light (Prov. 6:23)-one is summoned to become especially sensitive to the illumination that comes from all aspects of the divine creation.

Our verse therefore implies the legitimacy of all forms of wisdom, for all true enlightenment ultimately issues from the Creator Himself. The divine light confirms and

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validates all other legitimate forms of illumination. In His light
do we see ever more clearly all other forms of light.