

Maharal Torah Paths

The Wisdom of the Nations (4)

Netiv HaTorah 14:565 - Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi asked how do we know that orbits and planetary calculations are mitzvot? It is said, "For it is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of all the nations" [D'varim 4:6]. What wisdom is this? Orbits and planetary calculations, through which man can recognize the magnitude of Hashem's works. This is why man is obligated to perform them if he can, in order to know and recognize his Creator.

From this we learn that however we can learn of the order of Hashem's creation, we must learn it. But we must take care not to learn from an unfit teacher. Rabbi Meir who learned from Acher was an exception because of his closeness and connection with his teacher [Chagiga 15b]. Watch out for words opposing the Torah of Moshe, our teacher, and outside "knowledge" of Hashem, and the World to come, and the origin of the world, for "The lips of a forbidden woman [heresy according to Rashi] drip honey" [Mishlei 5:3], for they speak from their logic, and not from Hashem's received wisdom.

However, if his motivation is to know how to answer a heretic [Avot 2:14], he must know what they say. This is certainly permissible, and there is no concern that the Torah scholar will be influenced by their words if his initial intent is to contradict their words that oppose Torah and the sages.

Column preped by Dr. Moshe Kuhr