

Reading the Book of Knowledge

by William Doss McDavid

The Introductory section of *The Secret Doctrine* contains a description of an “old book” in which the origin of the universe is recorded in the ancient language of Senzar. The Book of Dzyan (lit. The Book of Knowledge), which forms the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*, is said to have been derived from this “old book” as were also the accounts of creation contained in scriptures as diverse as the Sepher Yetzirah and the Puranas (1).

For 125 years, Theosophists and other students of Blavatsky’s writings have searched the world for any trace of the “old book” and the mysterious Stanzas of Dzyan that are said to have been compiled from it. They have consulted the libraries of the world and have interviewed lamas, pundits, kabalists, and sufi teachers---all to no avail. They have searched for the Mystery Language known as Senzar or Zend-zar, debating whether it is an actual written or spoken language or an elaborate hieroglyphic system of pictorial symbology. To date, we still have no documentary evidence for its existence and both the “old book” and the Stanzas of Dzyan remain as elusive as ever. Understandably, perhaps, serious scholars have more or less written it off and relegated H.P.B. to the ranks of visionaries and psychic “channelers”.

In an article published in the *Quest*, the magazine of the Theosophical Society in America, the present writer hypothesized that the “old book” may be a symbolical reference to a meditational process based on the numerical system called isopsephia and gematria by the Greeks and the Hebrews respectively (2). Since some ancient languages used the same characters to represent letters and numbers (See APPENDIX), words were treated as numbers and numbers as words. Words and phrases having the same numerical sum were believed to be related.

Based on several examples, the hypothesis set forth was the following:

WHAT IF:

1. Senzar is (at least in part) a numerical code.
2. Numerical “sentences” embodying the laws of cosmic and human origins are symbolically contained in a mystical “book” which may or may not have a counterpart in the material world.
3. This “book” is “read” by meditation on word-symbols and numerical patterns
4. This “book” forms the basis of the Book of Dzyan described in *The Secret Doctrine*.

In a subsequent presentation at the third “symposium” on the Secret Doctrine (Oklahoma City, 1998), I attempted to show that the number 2888, the sum of the letters in the Greek phrase Η ΒΙΒΛΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΓΝΩΣΕΩΣ (The Book of Knowledge), may be thought of as a symbolical “book”. As a total, it may be “expanded” or “unfolded” into sequences of Greek number/words which form complete sentences. Some of the “verses” created in this way are eerily reminiscent of those that make up the the published stanzas of Dzyan. These preliminary observations were

published in the periodical FOHAT published by the Edmonton Theosophical Society (3).

In the present article, several additional examples based on the ancient Greek language will be given to support this hypothesis as well as simple instructions that should enable interested readers to “read” the Book of Knowledge and take advantage of the information contained in this mysterious book for themselves.

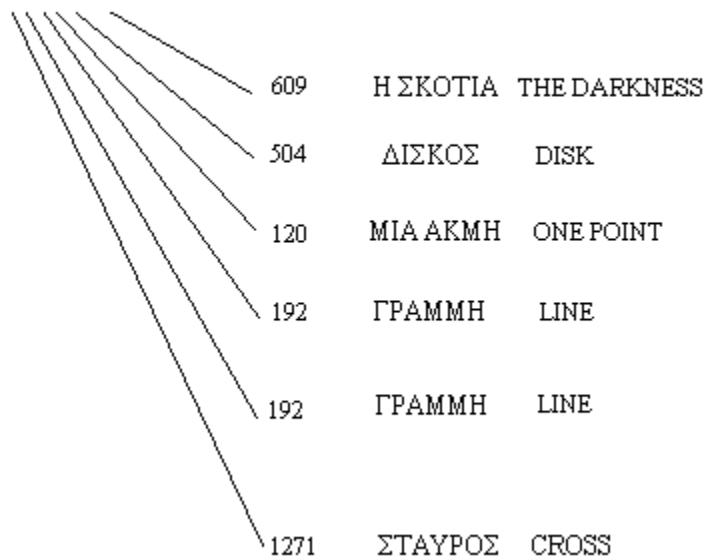
The first example we will examine is based on the geometric figures given in the Proem. H.P.B.’s description (4) will be familiar to most readers:

“On the first page is an immaculate white disk within a dull black ground...the face of the Disk being white and the ground all around black, shows clearly that its plane is the only knowledge, dim and hazy though it still is, that is attainable by man. It is on this plane that the Manvantaric manifestations begin; for it is in this SOUL that slumbers, during the Pralaya, the Divine Thought, wherein lies concealed the plan of every future Cosmogony and Theogony....The first illustration being a plain disc \bigcirc , the second one in the Archaic symbol shows \odot , a disc with a point in it — the first differentiation in the periodical manifestations of the ever-eternal nature ...In its third stage the point is transformed into a diameter, thus \ominus . It now symbolizes a divine immaculate Mother-Nature within the all-embracing absolute Infinitude . When the diameter line is crossed by a vertical one \oplus , it becomes the mundane cross... When the circumference disappears and leaves only the \dagger it is a sign that the fall of man into matter is accomplished.”

We may compare the preceding description to the following expansion from the number 2888:

THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

2888

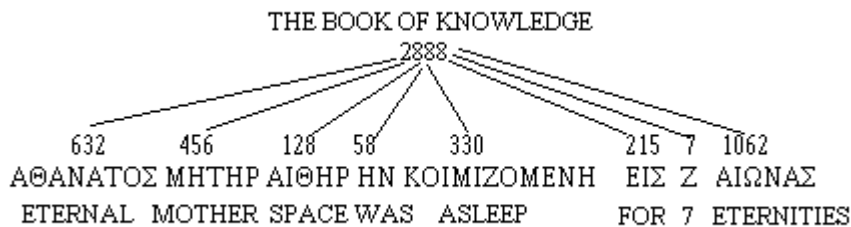


As the sequence emanates one by one from the total, the entire description given in the Proem appears before the reader's spiritual or mental eye.

Our second example is taken from the first verse of Stanza I of the Book of Dzyan. The published text (5) which appeared in 1888 says:

“The eternal parent (space), wrapped in her ever-invisible robes, had slumbered once again for seven eternities”

The earlier draft, known as the Wurzburg Manuscript (6), uses “eternal mother” instead of “eternal parent”. As it stands, there are too many ideas to condense into the sum of 2888. Instead, the sentence needs to be broken down into two separate sentences. The first expansion is given below, the derivation of the second being left as a challenge to the reader.



One of the most cryptic and mysterious verses of the published stanzas of Dzyan is the fifth verse of Stanza IV which reads (7) :

5. WHICH IS: —

“DARKNESS,” THE BOUNDLESS OR THE NO-NUMBER, ADI-NIDANA SVABHAVAT: THE ○ (for *x*, *unknown quantity*):

- I. THE ADI-SANAT, THE NUMBER, FOR HE IS ONE.
- II. THE VOICE OF THE WORD, SVABHAVAT, THE NUMBERS, FOR HE IS ONE AND NINE.
- III. THE “FORMLESS SQUARE.” (*Arupa*).

AND THESE THREE ENCLOSED WITHIN THE ○ (*boundless circle*), ARE THE SACRED FOUR, AND THE TEN ARE THE ARUPA (*subjective, formless*) UNIVERSE; THEN COME THE “SONS,” THE SEVEN FIGHTERS, THE ONE, THE EIGHTH LEFT OUT, AND HIS BREATH WHICH IS THE LIGHT-MAKER (*Bhaskara*).

Once again, there are too many ideas here to fit into 2888. However, we may focus on the central portion of the verse and attempt to translate it into Greek words, letters, and numbers. The results are shown below:

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2888	NUMBERS	GREEK	ENGLISH
	70	Ο	○
	1 70 430	A. Ο ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ	1. THE NUMBER
	2 1 31 9	B. Α ΚΑΙ Θ	2. ONE AND NINE
	3 592 1679	Γ. ΑΟΠΑΤΟΝ ΤΕΤΡΑΓΩΝΟΝ	3. FORMLESS SQUARE

This seems to embody quite nicely the major ideas in the stanza. In addition we may note that FORMLESS SQUARE (2271) = THE CROSS (Ο ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ = 1341) + EGG (ΩΙΟΝ = 930)---an identity that fits perfectly with H.P.B.'s commentary and her statement that the square or cross (the sacred four) within the circle is the most potent of all the magical figures (8).

Why the sum of terms should be exactly 2888 in example after example from *The Secret Doctrine* is difficult to explain unless the stanzas of Dzyan were originally constructed from these numbers. When I showed several of these examples to a friend several years ago, his comment was "Well, you just made it add up to 2888." My response at that time was "No, I am not that smart." The fact is that it is by no means a trivial task to make the numerical sums come out evenly and exactly to 2888. To carry out the process we must start with this sum and work backwards, finding the appropriate words, subtracting them one by one till we arrive at zero. If the numbers don't work out, no amount of forcing can "make it add up". Years ago, a colleague and I wrote a computer program to determine the chance of hitting 2888 with a series of random numbers generated to simulate the distribution of those encountered in Greek words. With relatively short sentences, the computer needed to make about 500 tries to produce one successful result.

The next portion of the verse goes on to describe the seven sons or planets and the "one left out"---the sun of our system. If we try to find the eight sons in the Book of Knowledge it is not too difficult. 2888 is equally divisible into eight parts and each part is equal to $2888/8 = 361$. 361 is equal to 70 (O, the masculine article) + 291 (ΠΑΙΣ or child, which is either a son or daughter depending on the associated article). So "the son" (Ο ΠΑΙΣ) fits eight times within 2888 making a total of eight sons. One of these is the sun and the other seven are the planets. 361 is also ΜΟΝΑΣ—a unit or monad. So the eight sons are also eight "ones" or chief monads in our solar system. The eighth "one" that is figuratively "left out" and sequestered in the center of the system is the sun.

OF THE WORLD”. We may interpret these verses in several different ways. If the “world” we are considering is a solar system, its heart is a star such as our sun. If the “world” refers to “man living in the personal nature”, as defined by HPB in the Bowen notes (10), then its heart is a symbolical state of mental darkness. If the “world” refers to a galaxy, we might say that the heart of each of these “island universes” is darkness---a black hole lying at the center of every galaxy according to modern astronomy. If the “world” is interpreted at the highest universal level, the darkness at the heart of kosmos represents the unknown One which, at the beginning of universal manifestation, “emits a bright ray from its darkness...the Logos (the first), or Vajradhara...As Lord of all Mysteries he cannot manifest, but sends into the world of manifestation his heart---‘the diamond heart’, Vajrasattva... This is the second logos of creation, from whom emanate the seven (in the exoteric blind the five) Dhyanis Buddhas.” (11). At this point we can note that, translated into Greek, “the diamond heart”(Η ΑΔΑΜΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΚΑΡΔΙΑ= 8+465+136) is also 609. We now have a third way of reading the verse from The Book of Knowledge: “THE DIAMOND HEART IS THE HEART OF THE WORLD”. The numerical identification of “the diamond heart” with the “star” at the heart of kosmos and the “darkness” from which they emerge, reminds us of a Commentary quoted by H.P.B. Describing the “World of Truth”, this Commentary describes it as “A bright star dropped from the heart of Eternity: the beacon of hope on whose Seven Rays hang the seven Worlds of Being” (12). This passage seems to bring all the ideas together. The symbolism is multivalent and multileveled. As a term, kosmos originally meant “order” or “arrangement”. At some point, it came to refer to the “world order” or to a “world” at whatever level we may be considering. In esoteric philosophy, it is traditional to speak of a macrocosm (great world) and a microcosm (small world) but the classification is relative. Compared to the solar system as macrocosm, man is a microcosm. Compared to the greater universe as macrocosm, the solar system is a microcosm. We should recall that HPB made a distinction between kosmos, by which she meant the entire manifested Universe, and the alternative spelling cosmos which she applied to a solar system. (13)

“Reading” the Book of Knowledge can be a profound spiritual adventure. Some of the correlations and revelations that emerge often seem to defy rational explanation. The impression of those who have worked with these systems of ancient numerology is that the numbers have a life and intelligence of their own. It is similar to an oracle. If undertaken seriously with a pure motive, it can almost be guaranteed that using this technique as a form of meditation will open inner doors and lead to major insights regarding spiritual laws and principles. Several suggestions, however, may be given:

1. Ancient Greek should be used rather than modern Greek.
2. To work properly, perfect Greek syntax needs to be employed. This means that adjectives and articles must match the nouns they accompany in case, gender, and number.
3. Get a good textbook of Ancient Greek and try to read it. This can be very painful but will prove worthwhile.
4. Invest in a Greek lexicon and an English-to-Ancient Greek dictionary. For the former I recommend either the long or short Liddell and Scott Lexicon (14) and for the latter, the dictionary by Woodhouse (15). All of these may be easily found online.
5. The correlations should be exact. Plus or minus one is not good enough.

A little experience may soon convince you that there is something very mysterious about these numbers. Whether we consider numerical resonances between individual words, eg. CREATION (ΚΤΙΣΙΣ) = 740 = CYCLE, CIRCLE (ΚΥΚΛΟΣ), isolated phrases, eg. LOGOS (ΛΟΓΟΣ) = 373 = ONE MIDDLE POINT (ΜΙΑ ΜΕΣΗ ΑΚΜΗ), or entire sentences such as those we have examined in this paper, isopsephia is a real and objective fact that anyone can verify for themselves. Scientists have shown that the constants of nature are uniquely suitable for the development of the universe as it presently exists and life as we know it on our planet. If they were to differ only slightly from their exact values, the entire cosmic system would never have come into existence. Similarly, the ancient names for things and the corresponding numerical values are fine-tuned to produce the mathematical correlations that have been shown in this paper and a great many more besides. The Book of Knowledge is unique. It is 2888 and not 2887 or 2889. Because of this, it contains exactly eight monads and the series of seven sevens (“epta kai epta kai epta kai epta kai epta kai epta kai epta”) as was demonstrated previously (3). The numerical correlations of isopsephia or gematria are concrete and objective facts that are difficult to explain away. If you are a diehard skeptic, nothing will convince you and you should probably focus your activities elsewhere. For those who see these correlations as strange and meaningful, they serve as powerful and convincing evidence that H.P.B. did not “invent” the Stanzas of Dzyan. Rather she (or rather Those who provided her with the information she was charged to deliver) was only faithfully transcribing the teachings of an ageless wisdom-tradition. The evidence remains circumstantial, but the probability that we may yet find written traces of these stanzas, aphorisms, and esoteric teachings is strengthened by the numerical evidence. In the meantime, the stanzas, as abstract mathematical relationships, remain as real as any ancient scrolls or palm-leaf manuscripts. They are certainly more durable, as they belong to the world of PURE THOUGHT.

We will close this article with a quotation from H.P.B. on the importance of speech (16). She begins by quoting Paul Christian (Christian Pitois) on the mystical power of words:

“... names (and words) are either BENEFICENT or MALEFICENT; they are, in a certain sense, either venomous or health-giving, according to the hidden influences attached by Supreme Wisdom to their elements, that is to say, to the LETTERS which compose them, and the NUMBERS correlative to these letters.”

The student may wish to underscore the last seven words. Following this quotation, H.P.B. goes on to state that “This is strictly true as an esoteric teaching accepted by all the Eastern Schools of Occultism.” If her statement is really true, it must be a teaching worthy of further attention.

APPENDIX:

To verify the correlations given in this paper, the following table of numerical equivalents of the Greek letters may be used:

A	1	I	10	P	100
B	2	K	20	Σ	200
Γ	3	Λ	30	T	300
Δ	4	M	40	Υ	400
E	5	N	50	Φ	500
F	6	Ξ	60	X	600
Z	7	O	70	Ψ	700
H	8	Π	80	Ω	800
Θ	9	Ϟ	90	ϗ	900

The symbols representing 6, 90, and 900 have not been part of the Greek alphabet for many centuries.

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