The mission of **Torah Is Geshmack** is to bring out the richness and enjoyment of Torah for everyone, and in doing so bring them closer to Hashem.

תשפ״ו

Fire That Consumes or Fire That Shines

Dovid Kopel

In מנחות נג (*Menachos* 53), the גמרא discusses what matters more: whether a person is himself a תלמיד חכם (*Torah scholar*), or whether he comes from a distinguished family. In that context, the גמרא says:

> אי בר אוריין הוא – יאי; ואי לא – אישא תיכליה

If he is a person of בר אוריין (*Torah learning*), that is fitting; and if not, fire should consume him. It is a sharp line, but also a beautiful one. חז״ל seem to be speaking in the language of fire and light.

If a person is truly a תלמיד חכם, then he carries אור (*light*). Torah illuminates him. But if all he has is ייחוס (*lineage*) — if he comes from a משפחה חשובה (*distinguished family*) yet has not become a real בן תורה — then that same fire becomes something that consumes rather than something that shines.

Perhaps the point is not, חס ושלום (*God forbid*), simple punishment. The fire need not mean destruction. It may mean that the fire of his background, the greatness he comes from, should not let him remain as he is. If he has had a ירידה (*downfall*), that fire should overtake him, awaken him, and push him to become the תלמיד חכם he was meant to be.

That is part of the depth and beauty of the words of חז״ל: in just a few words, they give not only an argument, but an image — and the image says even more than the argument. May we all be awakened with the fire of Torah, become enlightened, use our potential, and become תלמידי חכמים!

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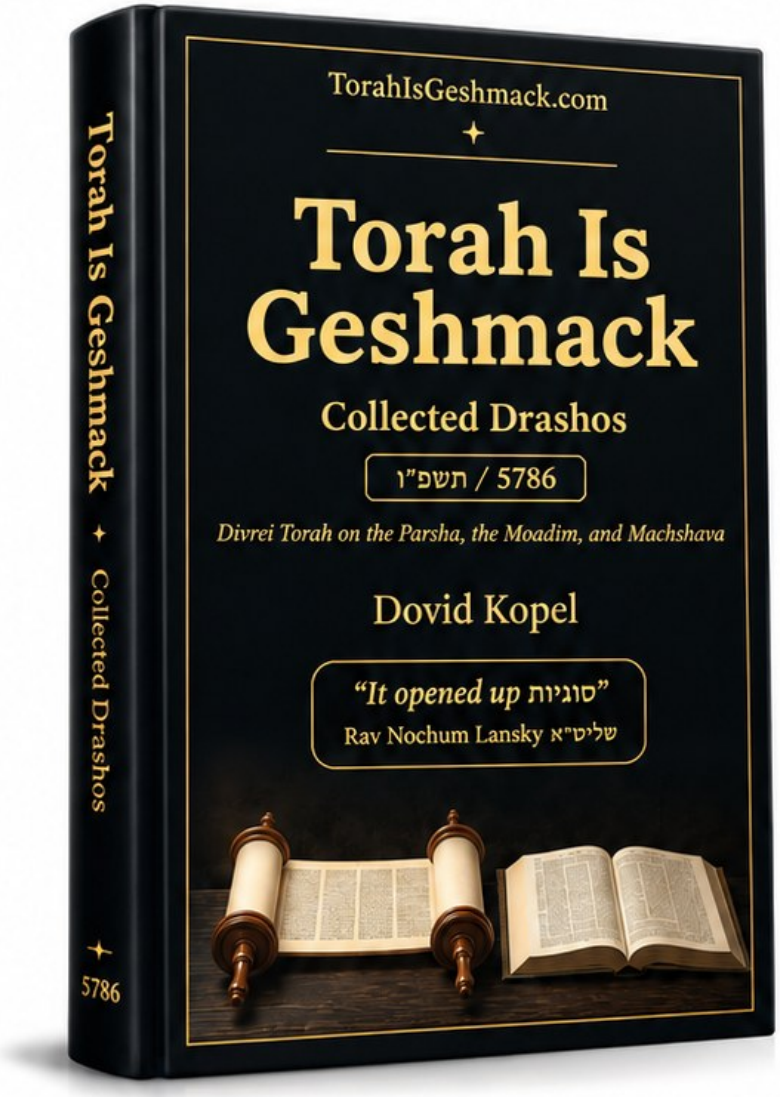
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