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

L'Shma: When the Audience Disappears

Dovid Kopel

One of the great tests in עבודת ה׳ (*service of Hashem*) is not only whether we do the right thing, but why we do it. A person can learn, give צדקה (*charity*), take on a חומרא (*stringency*), or share a beautiful חידוש (*novel insight*) — and all of it may be objectively good. But the hidden question remains: if no one knew I did this, would I still want to do it?

That is often the litmus test of לשמה (*for its own sacred sake*). When the audience disappears, the soul and the ego no longer want the same things.

I once knew a Yid in yeshiva who would hide the ספר he was taking. He was a tremendous תלמיד חכם, but he had no need for anyone to know what he was learning. There was something so pure in that. He wanted the Torah itself, not the image of being the kind of person who learns it. He is now a Rav of a קהילה (*community*). I am not surprised. People eventually notice those who are truly לשמה. They are quiet; they try to hide from plain sight.

Maybe that is part of the meaning of doing mitzvos with צניעות (*modesty and inner dignity*): not only to do what is right, but to do it in a way that starves כבוד (*honor*) and feeds אמת (*truth*). Because the challenge of לשמה is not just doing mitzvos — it is making sure the self does not quietly stand in the center of them.

May we all be זוכה to do our Avodas Hashem, and to try to do it with צניעות. Don't let it stop you if recognition helps you now. As we know, מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה — from performing a mitzvah not for its own sake, one comes to perform it for its own sake. Keep going, keep doing, keep growing!

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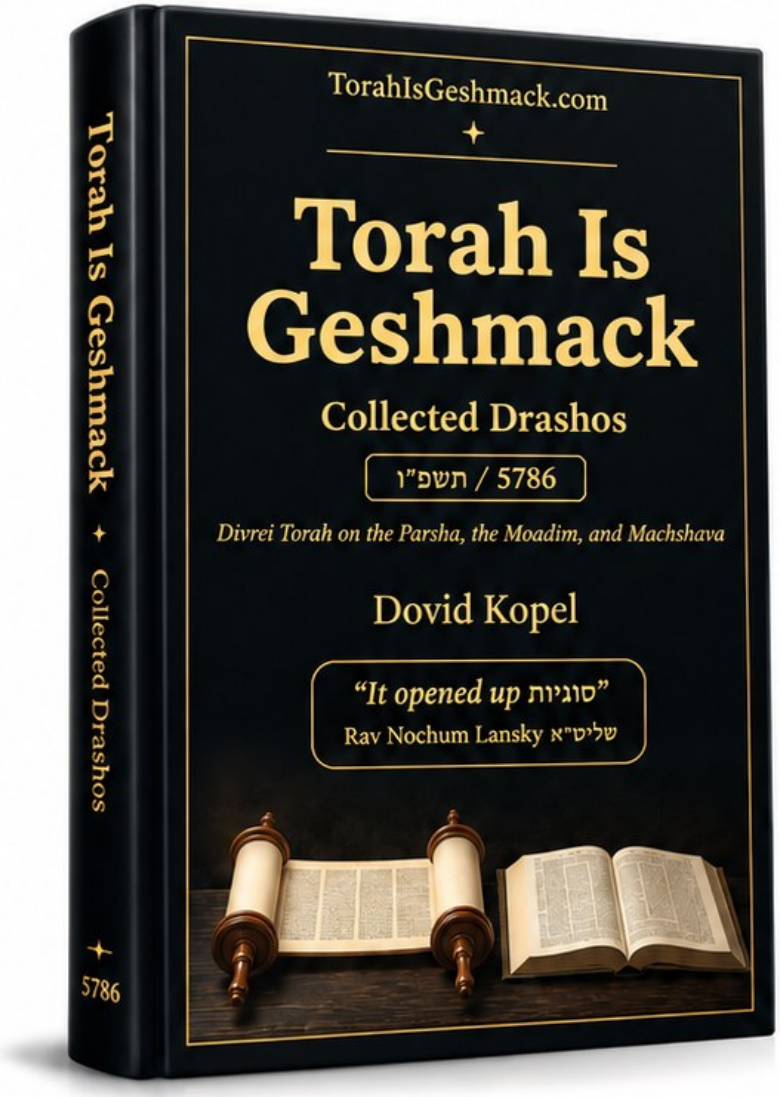
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