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.

פרשת ואתחנן תשפ״ו

The נא Moshe Did Not Say

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Parshas ואתחנן opens with one of the most painful moments in the life of משה רבינו. משה pleads to enter ארץ ישראל (*the Land of Israel*). He does not come with a claim. He does not present his זכויות (*merits*) and insist that Hashem owes him. רש״י explains that ואתחנן is the language of מתנת חנם (*a free gift*).

משה comes before Hashem as an עני (*poor person*). He does not merely speak humbly, while privately believing that his lifetime of service entitles him to an answer. He recognizes that he truly has no claim.

Hashem is מקומו של עולם (*the One in whom the world exists*). He is the source of everything we possess, including our abilities, our זכויות, and even the כח (*power*) to serve Him. Whatever good we have done was itself made possible by the life, opportunity, understanding, and strength that He first gave us. We cannot take Hashem's gifts and turn them into leverage against Him.

Hashem is the מטיב (*One who bestows good*). He gives because He is good, not because we have placed Him under an obligation. The true בעל תפילה (*one who stands in prayer*) therefore comes openhanded. He asks as one who is genuinely poor before the source of all existence.

The בית אלקים explains that תפילה (*prayer*) is entirely for us. Hashem is perfect and lacks nothing. He does not need our words, our praise, or our requests. We are the ones who need everything from Him.

That is the deepest meaning of מתנת חנם. We come before Hashem not only with empty hands, but with the recognition that all need is on our side and none on His. Hashem needs nothing from us, yet in His goodness He allows us to stand before Him, ask, and form a relationship through that asking.

That itself is the recognition expressed later in the פרשה:

> אַתָּה הָרְאֵתָ לָדַעַת כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (דברים ד:לה)

There is no independent source of life, כח, זכות (*merit*), הצלחה (*success*), or ישועה (*salvation*) outside Hashem. We bring nothing that He needs because everything we possess already comes from Him. All lack is ours. All giving is His.

The ultimate תפילה is therefore the meeting of absolute need with absolute generosity. We come as an עני who owns nothing, deserves nothing, and requires everything.

And yet משה pleads.

Acceptance does not mean passivity. Recognizing that Hashem owes us nothing does not mean suppressing our desires or refusing to ask that the decree be changed. משה knows that nothing is beyond Hashem. He knows that תפילה has כח, and therefore he asks with everything he has.

Then Hashem says:

> וַיִּתְעַבֵּר ה׳ בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלָי וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֵלַי **רַב** לָךְ **אַל** תּוֹסֶף דַּבֵּר **אֵלַי עוֹד בַּדָּבָר** הַזֶּה (דברים ג:כו)

Hashem tells משה to stop.

The author of בונה ירושלים records that he heard from the גר״א that when משה prayed for מרים, he said:

> וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה׳ לֵאמֹר **אֵל נָא רְפָא נָא** לָהּ (במדבר יב:יג)

The word נא appears twice. Here, however, משה says:

> אֶעְבְּרָה **נָּא** וְאֶרְאֶה **אֶת** הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן הָהָר הַטּוֹב הַזֶּה וְהַלְּבָנוֹן (דברים ג:כה)

משה says נא only once. The גר״א explained that had משה said נא a second time, Hashem would have accepted his תפילה. Hashem therefore told him:

> וַיִּתְעַבֵּר ה׳ בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלָי וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֵלַי רַב לָךְ **אַל** תּוֹסֶף דַּבֵּר **אֵלַי עוֹד** בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה (דברים ג:כו)

Do not continue. Do not add another plea. Do not say the second נא.

The command to stop does not reveal the weakness of משה's תפילה. It reveals its overwhelming power. Hashem had to command him to stop because the תפילה could still overturn the decree.

But perhaps there is an even deeper רמז (*hint*) hidden within the נא that משה was forbidden to repeat.

חז״ל teach that fifty gates of בינה (*understanding*) were created and that משה entered all but one during his lifetime. In פרשת וזאת הברכה on שער הפסוקים, the אריז״ל explains that on the day of משה's passing, שער הנון (*the gate of the fiftieth*) was finally opened to him. This is the meaning of נ׳—הר נבו בו. The נ׳ was now within him.

Perhaps these teachings meet.

משה wishes to say another נא. He wishes to continue pleading, overturn the decree, and remain alive. Hashem tells him to stop. Yet through that very stopping, משה ultimately becomes שייך (*connected and belonging*) to שער הנון.

The connection between the withheld נא and שער הנון is a possible רמז. The original teaching is that the second נא would have changed the outcome. The חידוש (*novel insight*) is that by withholding it, משה may have become connected to the נ׳ that he could reach only through accepting his death.

He does not reach the final gate by forcing open Hashem's decree. He reaches it by accepting Hashem's will.

Perhaps the deepest בינה is not always receiving the explanation we seek. Sometimes it is recognizing where human understanding ends and קבלת מלכות שמים (*acceptance of Hashem's kingship*) begins. The final gate was not opened through gaining control over the answer. It was opened through accepting the answer Hashem gave.

משה seeks another נא. Hashem tells him to stop. Through the נא he does not say, he becomes connected to נ׳. The גימטריה of these two are off by one, which I was attempting to connect as they are very close in value, but didn't see a clear explanation. I think the יסוד is self-evident without the numerical connection.

That may be the key to the entire פרשה.

The word שמע does not always mean merely to hear sound. It often means to accept, obey, and allow what one hears to govern one's life.

משה pleads fully, and then he accepts fully. He does not begin with resignation. He asks as long as he is permitted to ask. But once Hashem says רב לך, continuing would no longer be תפילה. It would become a refusal to hear.

משה stops. That stopping is not defeat. It is שמע.

True תפילה holds two realities at once. Before Hashem's answer is final, we ask with all our strength. Once He reveals His will, we accept that His wisdom reaches beyond our own.

Hashem listening does not always mean Hashem saying yes. משה's תפילה is not ignored. Hashem answers him directly, shows him the Land, and entrusts him with the final mission of strengthening יהושע. The request to enter is denied, but the relationship remains.

Not receiving what we ask for is not the same as not being heard.

But what makes such acceptance possible?

Earlier in the פרשה, משה tells כלל ישראל (*the Jewish people*):

> אַתָּה הָרְאֵתָ לָדַעַת כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (דברים ד:לה)

The name ה׳ expresses רחמים (*mercy*), while אלקים expresses דין (*judgment*). Yet the תורה declares:

> כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקים (דברים ד:לה)

The God of compassion and the God of judgment are One.

There are not two forces governing our lives—one responsible for kindness and another responsible for pain. There is no rival power standing behind the decree. The One who says yes is the same One who sometimes says no.

And He is always the מטיב.

We see only one fragment of reality. We see the moment of loss, the unanswered request, the closed door, and the future we wanted but were denied. Hashem sees the totality. He sees what came before, what will follow, what each נשמה (*soul*) requires, and how every event belongs within the ultimate טוב (*good*).

That does not mean pain feels good. It does not mean we pretend to understand what remains beyond us. It means that even when we cannot see the טוב, we know its source.

> אַתָּה הָרְאֵתָ לָדַעַת כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (דברים ד:לה)

The One from whom every gift comes is also the One who sometimes withholds. The refusal does not come from a second force. It comes from the same מטיב who sees the whole.

That truth is later crystallized in קריאת שמע (the recitation of שמע):

> שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקינוּ ה׳ אֶחָד (דברים ו:ד)

The same ה׳ of רחמים is אלקינו even when He appears through דין. And it is ה׳ אחד. There is one Author behind the revealed kindness and the concealed kindness; the answer we understand and the decree we cannot.

משה is therefore the greatest teacher of שמע because he is forced to live its deepest truth. He knows Hashem is the מטיב. He asks that the decree be changed because nothing is impossible and תפילה truly matters. But when Hashem says no, משה accepts that this answer also comes from the One who is entirely good.

That is not merely submission to power. It is trust in goodness.

Perhaps this is why something as central as שמע ישראל appears only now. Surely כלל ישראל already knew that Hashem is One. They had stood at Sinai and accepted the תורה. Why does the defining declaration of קבלת עול מלכות שמים appear here, at the end of משה's life?

Because now they must learn what שמע truly means.

At Sinai, they stood within open revelation. In the מדבר (*wilderness*), משה was physically present. The מן (*the manna*) fell and the ענני הכבוד (*the Clouds of Glory*) surrounded them. Hashem's presence was visible.

Now they are preparing to enter ארץ ישראל without משה. They will enter a world of war, agriculture, wealth, family, responsibility, and concealment of Hashem's presence. They must no longer depend upon משה standing before them. They must carry Hashem's voice within themselves.

משה is the one who teaches them because he has just lived it. He has heard the answer he did not want and accepted the decree he could not fully understand. Then he tells them:

> שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקינוּ ה׳ אֶחָד (דברים ו:ד)

משה is not teaching an abstract theological proposition. He is teaching the posture of his own life.

To say שמע is to accept that Hashem is One even when His answer is painful. It is to recognize that one רצון (*will*) governs the world even when our own will must yield before it.

Then comes:

> וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ (דברים ו:ה)

משה's love does not depend upon receiving the outcome he desired. He begs to enter ארץ ישראל, but when the answer is no, he does not withdraw his love. He does not allow disappointment to become distance.

He continues to love, teach, and serve.

Our love for Hashem cannot depend upon whether He gives us what we requested. If it does, then we do not love Hashem unconditionally. We must love the outcomes He provides.

משה demonstrates something deeper. He asks fully, accepts fully, and continues loving fully.

But the love in the פרשה is reciprocal. משה embodies our side of the relationship: We continue loving Hashem even when His answer hurts. תשובה (*repentance*) reveals Hashem's side. Even when we fail Him, His love does not disappear.

That is why so much of ואתחנן is devoted to עבודה זרה (*idol worship*).

After disappointment and destruction, the temptation is to turn elsewhere. When Hashem's presence becomes hidden or His answer is painful, a person may seek another power, another source of security, or another object of trust.

Hashem therefore repeatedly warns כלל ישראל not to replace Him.

The severity of the warning is itself an expression of love. קנאה (*jealousy / envy*) and exclusivity exist only where a relationship still matters. Hashem does not say: You failed, so you are free to go elsewhere. He says: You still belong to Me.

Do not mistake My anger for the end of My love. Do not mistake concealment for abandonment. Do not replace Me because I did not give you the answer you wanted.

That is also why, after תשעה באב, Hashem gives us the עשרת הדברות (*Ten Commandments*) again. The second reading of the דברות appears in ואתחנן before the Torah later recounts the creation of the physical לוחות שניות (*the second tablets*) in עקב.

The words return before the stone.

After fracture and destruction, Hashem first speaks to us again. He commands us again. He entrusts us with מצוות (*commandments*) again.

That ציווי (*command*) is itself an expression of love. Hashem still commands us because He still wants us. He still believes that we can listen, serve, rebuild, and carry His ברית (*covenant*) forward.

Destruction did not end the relationship. The first לוחות were broken, but the דברות are heard again.

Then comes:

> וְהָיוּ֙ הַדְּבָרִ֣ים הָאֵ֔לֶּה אֲשֶׁ֥ר אָנֹכִ֖י מְצַוְּךָ֣ הַיּ֑וֹם עַ֖ל לְבָבֶֽךָ׃ (דברים ו:ו)

The תורה cannot remain external. It cannot merely be carried, displayed, or inherited. It must move from משה's mouth into the heart of כלל ישראל.

Then:

> וְשִׁנַּנְתָּ֣ם לְבָנֶ֔יךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ֥ בָּ֖ם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ בְּבֵיתֶ֑ךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ֤ בַדֶּ֙רֶךְ֙ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ֣ וּבְקוּמֶֽךָ׃ (דברים ו:ז)

ושננתם is the language of sharpening. We do not merely drill information into our children or force them to memorize words they have never made their own. We sharpen them through questions, distinctions, inquiry, and clarity.

We teach them how to struggle with a פסוק (*verse*), how to enter a סוגיא (*topic*), how to test an assumption, and how to submit their minds to אמת (*truth*). We are not merely filling children with facts. We are molding them into בני תורה (*people rooted in Torah*) and עבדי ה׳ (*servants of Hashem*).

Then:

> וְשִׁנַּנְתָּ֣ם לְבָנֶ֔יךָ **וְדִבַּרְתָּ֥ בָּ֖ם** בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ בְּבֵיתֶ֑ךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ֤ בַדֶּ֙רֶךְ֙ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ֣ וּבְקוּמֶֽךָ׃ (דברים ו:ז)

The תורה must become the language of life:

> בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ בְּבֵיתֶ֑ךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ֤ בַדֶּ֙רֶךְ֙ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ֣ וּבְקוּמֶֽךָ׃ (דברים ו:ז)

It must be in the heart and in the mouth. It must fill the home, shape the day, and remain constant within the ordinary rhythms of life.

That is true שמירה (*protection*).

A תורה carried externally may remain physically present while disappearing from a person's inner world. A תורה placed upon the heart, sharpened for one's children, and spoken constantly becomes part of the person himself.

This is also why בל תוסיף ובל תגרע (*the prohibition against adding to or subtracting from the Torah*) is taught now:

> לֹא תֹסִפוּ עַל הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ לִשְׁמֹר אֶת מִצְוֹת ה׳ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם
> (דברים ד:ב)

משה is leaving. New leaders will arise, new circumstances will emerge, and new questions will be asked. The תורה must enter history, but it may not be rewritten.

It cannot be added to and it cannot be diminished. And yet it can never cease being learned.

That is the balance between לא תספו ולא תגרעו and וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם The תורה is unchanging, but our engagement with it never stops. Every generation learns, asks, argues, clarifies, applies, and transmits.

That is not changing the תורה. That is allowing the תורה to change us.

A dead object is preserved by leaving it untouched. A living תורה is preserved through constant learning. That is what makes it a תורת חיים (*living Torah*), and that is the בחינה (*aspect*) of תורת משה (*the Torah of Moshe*).

משה cannot remain physically present forever. No leader, רבי, or parent can. Human life is mortal.

The greatest gift a person can give is therefore not merely his presence. It is to distill his תורה, love, service, and way of seeing into those who continue after him. As I've said in the past, that is also the notion of calling the עדות the לוחות and how ultimately it is כלל ישראל who embody this עדות into their essence.

Perhaps this is why the תורה is called תורת משה. משה did not author the תורה, but he received it, transmitted it, taught it, and placed it within כלל ישראל. Whenever a Yid learns תורה, he is learning the תורה that came through משה's mouth and was entrusted to his people.

משה's body does not enter ארץ ישראל, but תורת משה does. Every בית מדרש (*study hall*), every parent teaching a child, and every תלמיד (*student*) struggling with a סוגיא becomes another place where משה's voice continues to speak.

משה cannot enter ארץ ישראל through his own feet, but he enters through the people he has formed. He places himself within their hearts, homes, and children.

חז״ל teach that when words of תורה are repeated in the name of a תלמיד חכם (*Torah scholar*), his lips move in the grave—שפתותיו דובבות בקבר. The teacher continues to speak through those who learn his תורה.

Every time a Yid learns תורת משה, משה's lips move again. Every time a parent teaches a child, משה enters the home. Every time a רבי sharpens a תלמיד, משה's voice continues. Every time תורה is spoken in ארץ ישראל, משה crosses the ירדן (*Jordan River*).

This may deepen the repeated language of שמירה in the פרשה. A person must protect the body because it is the כלי (*vessel*) through which he serves Hashem. But no body can be preserved forever.

The deepest שמירה of the body is to use it for תורה so completely. Even after it can no longer speak, its lips continue moving through the תורה it left behind.

The ultimate שמירה of משה is תורת משה. His body remains outside the land. His תורה enters and never leaves.

Perhaps this also gives deeper meaning to:

> וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבֵקִים בַּה׳ אֱלֹקֵיכֶם חַיִּים כֻּלְּכֶם הַיּוֹם (דברים ד:ד)

משה is preparing to die, yet he teaches כלל ישראל that true חיים (*life*) comes through דבקות (*cleaving to Hashem*). His physical life will end, but through reaching שער הנון and placing תורת משה within his people, his life continues.

True חיים is not exhausted by the body. משה remains alive through דבקות, through תורה, and through the nation that continues to speak his words.

Then comes תשובה:

> וְשַׁבְתָּ עַד ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְקֹלוֹ (דברים ד:ל)

תשובה is the restoration of שמע. A person sins when he ceases to accept Hashem's voice as authoritative. He returns when he once again hears and accepts that voice.

But תשובה is not merely an emergency mechanism created after human failure. חז״ל teach that תשובה preceded the world.

It is a foundation of the human experience itself. Hashem did not create a world that depends upon human beings never failing. He created a world in which responsibility is real, failure is real, and return is built into existence from the beginning.

Hashem's love does not begin again after sin. The possibility of תשובה exists because His bond with us precedes our failure.

Our love survives His "no." His love precedes our sin.

That is the reciprocal נחמה (*consolation*) of the פרשה.

תשובה is מלכות (*kingship*), and it is שבת. שבת is the moment when a person stops asserting ownership and control. We cease creating, mastering, and claiming the world as our own. We recognize that Hashem is מלך (*King*), that He is מקומו של עולם, and that all existence rests within Him.

As my רבי says, the ultimate point of the עשרת ימי תשובה (*Ten Days of Repentance*) is שבת. On שבת we do not fast and do not say סליחות (*penitential prayers*). The goal of תשובה is not to remain forever broken.

It is:

> מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת טוֹב לְהֹדוֹת לַה׳ (תהלים צב:א-ב)

The ultimate return is gratitude, trust, and resting within Hashem's מלכות.

משה's stopping is itself a kind of שבת. He has acted, pleaded, and poured out his deepest desire. Then Hashem says, רב לך, and משה stops.

That stopping is not despair or denial of his longing. It is קבלת מלכות שמים. It is שמע. It is the moment in which he becomes connected to the נ׳ that could not be reached through continued asking.

The final gate does not open because משה gains control over his future. It opens when he returns his future to Hashem.

And that is why ואתחנן is the foundation of שבת נחמו (*the Shabbos of Consolation*).

נחמה does not always mean that the decree has already been reversed. משה still does not enter the land. The חורבן (*destruction*) has happened. The pain remains real.

But Hashem still speaks.

He gives us the עשרת הדברות again. He commands us again. He says שמע. He says ואהבת. He gives us תלמוד תורה (*Torah study*). He warns us not to replace Him. He gives us תשובה. He commands us not to change His תורה, yet never to stop learning it.

The comfort is not merely that the answer changes. The comfort is that the relationship survives the answer.

But there is an even deeper comfort. The One who says no is the same One who loves us. The One who appears through דין is the same One who is רחמים. The One who destroys is the One who promises return. The One who hides is the One who never leaves.

The פרשה returns repeatedly to one unified truth:

> אַתָּה הָרְאֵתָ לָדַעַת כִּי ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבַדּוֹ (דברים ד:לה)

And later:

> ה׳ אֶחָד (דברים ו:ד)

Everything comes from One source, and that source is the מטיב.

This is the ancient question of צדיק ורע לו.

קהלת declares:

> אֶת הַכֹּל רָאִיתִי בִּימֵי הֶבְלִי יֵשׁ צַדִּיק אֹבֵד בְּצִדְקוֹ וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁע מַאֲרִיךְ בְּרָעָתוֹ (קהלת ז:טו)

The visible outcome does not always reveal the spiritual truth. A צדיק may suffer precisely while remaining righteous, while a רשע may appear to flourish despite his wickedness.

חז״ל teach that משה himself asked Hashem:

> וְעַתָּה אִם נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדִעֵנִי נָא אֶת דְּרָכֶךָ וְאֵדָעֲךָ לְמַעַן אֶמְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה כִּי עַמְּךָ הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה (שמות לג:יג)

משה was asking why there is צדיק ורע לו, צדיק וטוב לו, רשע וטוב לו, and רשע ורע לו. How can a world governed entirely by the מטיב sometimes appear to contradict His goodness?

That question was not abstract for משה. He had given his entire life to כלל ישראל, yet he would die outside the land toward which he had led them. By every calculation visible to human eyes, משה was the צדיק for whom the answer should have been yes.

Yet the greatest צדיק may still experience רע לו. Not because Hashem has ceased to be good, but because human beings see only the immediate outcome and not the totality within which that outcome belongs.

We may not understand how every decree is good. משה himself does not receive the explanation he seeks. But he reaches a deeper recognition: the limits of his understanding do not limit Hashem's goodness.

That is the true נחמה after תשעה באב. We do not deny the חורבן. We do not pretend that pain is painless. We do not claim to understand the totality of Hashem's ways.

We declare that there is only One.

The same Hashem who loved us before the destruction loves us within it and after it. The same Hashem who hears our תפילות may sometimes answer no, but even that answer comes from the One who sees what we cannot and who is always the מטיב.

Hashem hears us even when He says no. We hear Him even when His answer hurts. We continue to love Him. He continues to call us back because His love preceded our failure.

משה cannot enter the land physically, but his תורה enters through כלל ישראל. His lips continue moving. His voice continues speaking. His life continues within those he taught.

משה seeks another נא. Hashem tells him to stop. Through the נא he does not say, he becomes connected to נ׳.

The body is mortal.

תורת משה is not.

May we learn to plead without entitlement, to accept without becoming distant, and to trust that the One who governs through both רחמים and דין is always One and always good. May we recognize the good even when it is not evident to us. If it could be better, it would be.

May we place His תורה so deeply upon our hearts and within our mouths that the voices of our רבנים continue speaking through us. May we hear within שבת נחמו that even after destruction, Hashem has never stopped speaking to His people. May that love bring משיח צדקינו and the ultimate נחמה and ישועה.

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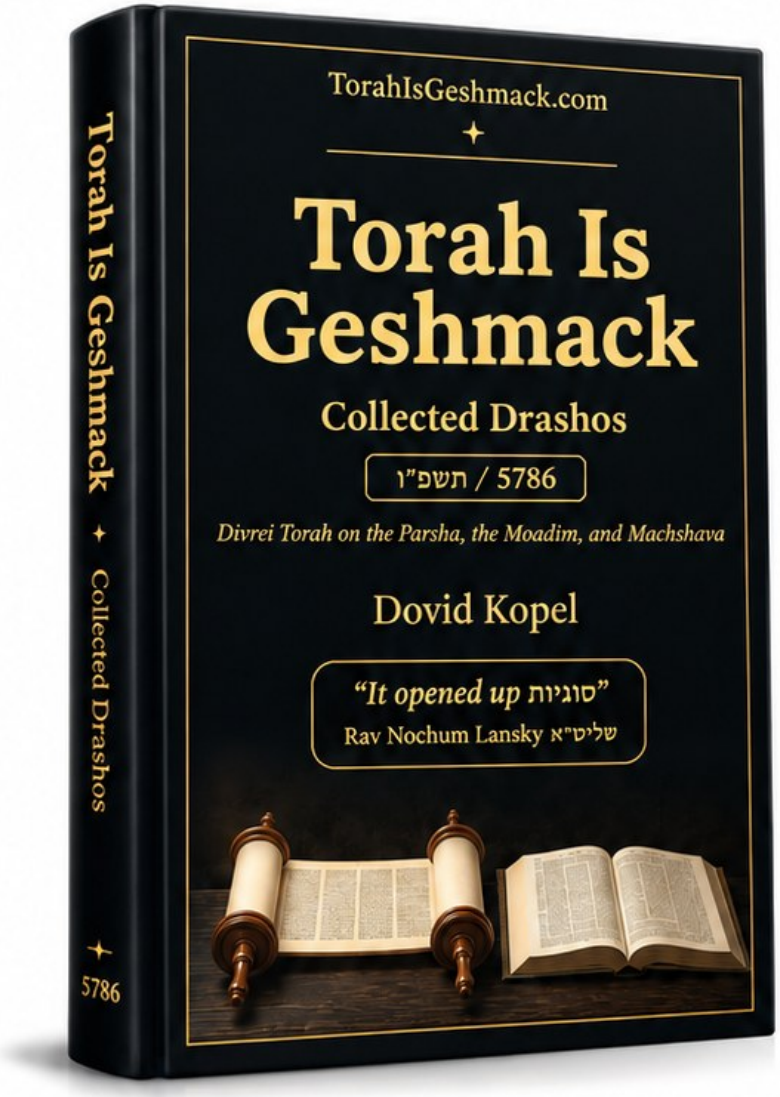
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