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

Yiddishkeit Is Preparation: Entering the Summer

Dovid Kopel

I tell my children often that אידישקייט is about preparation. The idea of קדושה (*holiness*) means taking something and making it set apart. Sometimes something begins that way, and sometimes it becomes that way because we elevate it. A person takes an animal and designates it as a קרבן (*offering*), and suddenly it is קדוש (*holy*). It is no longer just an animal. It has a new identity, a new purpose, a new reality.

As Yidden, we are rooted in קדושה. Our נשמות (*souls*) are pure. But we live in a physical world, surrounded by physical needs, distractions, pressures, and temptations. So our job is preparation. We prepare ourselves in order to elevate ourselves. That is really the pattern of life. Every stage is preparing us for the next stage. Every day is preparing us for the next day. A Yid does not have to live by impulse. We can live with thought, with care, with calculation, with precision.

Greatness does not happen by accident. A גדול does not wake up one morning as a גדול. He works at it. He builds himself, step by step. The path to greatness is not sudden inspiration. It is preparation. We just finished the weeks of preparation and transformation that led us to קבלת התורה (*receiving the Torah*). We counted day after day. We worked on ourselves. We tried to become ready. And now, right after that, we enter the summer months.

The summer is its own עבודה (*service*). It is a time of change, a time of relaxed schedules, a time when the normal structure is not always there. And with that comes challenge. There are so many ways the יצר הרע can distract us during these months. The days are longer. The routines are looser. People travel. People go away. The normal framework that keeps us steady can feel less firm.

I am reminded of one of my first summers in Yeshiva. I was not planning on going anywhere for the summer. Really, I did not have anywhere to go. The Mashgiach could not hear of it. I told him, “Where should I go? Home? There is no בית מדרש there.” The Mashgiach looked at me and said, “You cannot be here all summer. It is not good for you.” So he sent me to Ohr Shraga. He told me where to go, when to go, and that was it. No questions asked. He did not ask me for a dollar. He just told me to go and shteig. He told me that a change of מקום (*place*) would be good for me. He was right.

That summer, I learned more than I expected. The change of scenery inspired me. It gave me new energy, and in some way, it opened something up inside me. I do not mention that because the amount matters. I mention it because, looking back, I realized the Mashgiach understood something I did not. Leaving the familiar בית מדרש did not mean leaving growth. Sometimes the

right change of מקום gives a person exactly the new kochos he needs to keep growing. That stayed with me.

The idea of בין הזמנים (*the break*) is important — not only for a בחור in Yeshiva, but for all of us. A person needs a change sometimes. A person needs to breathe. A person can put on a baseball cap and go on a trip. A family can go away. Children can have a break. Life does not have to look exactly the same every week of the year. But that does not mean we sacrifice our davening. It does not mean we sacrifice our learning. It does not mean growth stops.

In many ways, בין הזמנים shows us where we really stand. How do we act when the structure is not holding us? How do we daven when no one is watching? How do we learn when there is no regular seder? How do we keep our speech, our priorities, our homes, and yes, even our eyes, where they need to be? The Mashgiach taught me that we cannot always live inside the בית מדרש. But our heart can. And our learning does not have to stop when we are not there.

I have heard so many people say, "I wish I could learn the way I learned when I was in Yeshiva." Of course, life changes. When a person is married, raising children, working, and carrying responsibilities, there is much more on his shoulders. It is not the same schedule, and it is not supposed to be. But it cannot stop us. The form changes. The responsibility grows. The challenges become different. But the mission remains. A Yid always has to prepare for the next step. A Yid always has to ask: What does my next stage require from me? What does my next preparation look like? How do I stay connected? How do I stay קדוש?

That is the question as we enter the summer. Not whether summer should feel different — it should. Not whether a person needs a change of pace — he does. The question is whether we enter it awake, or whether we let ourselves drift. How do we enjoy the time away without losing ourselves? How do we give our families a healthy break without giving up what matters most? How do we teach our children that אידישקייט is not only for the structured parts of the year, not only for the בית מדרש, not only for when everything is easy and familiar? We prepare. We make a plan for davening. We make a plan for learning. We make a plan for what our homes should look like, what our trips should look like, what our standards should look like. Not because we are rigid, but because we understand that קדושה needs preparation. And when a person prepares, the summer itself can become elevated.

The baseball cap, the trip, the change of scenery, the time with family — all of it can become part of עבודת השם (*service of Hashem*), if we enter it with thought. That is what I learned that summer, and it is something I am still trying to teach myself and my children. We should all be זוכה to rise to the occasion — to enjoy the time away, to gain from it, to refresh ourselves from it, but never to lose sight of who we are. Because wherever a Yid goes, his heart can still be in the בית מדרש.

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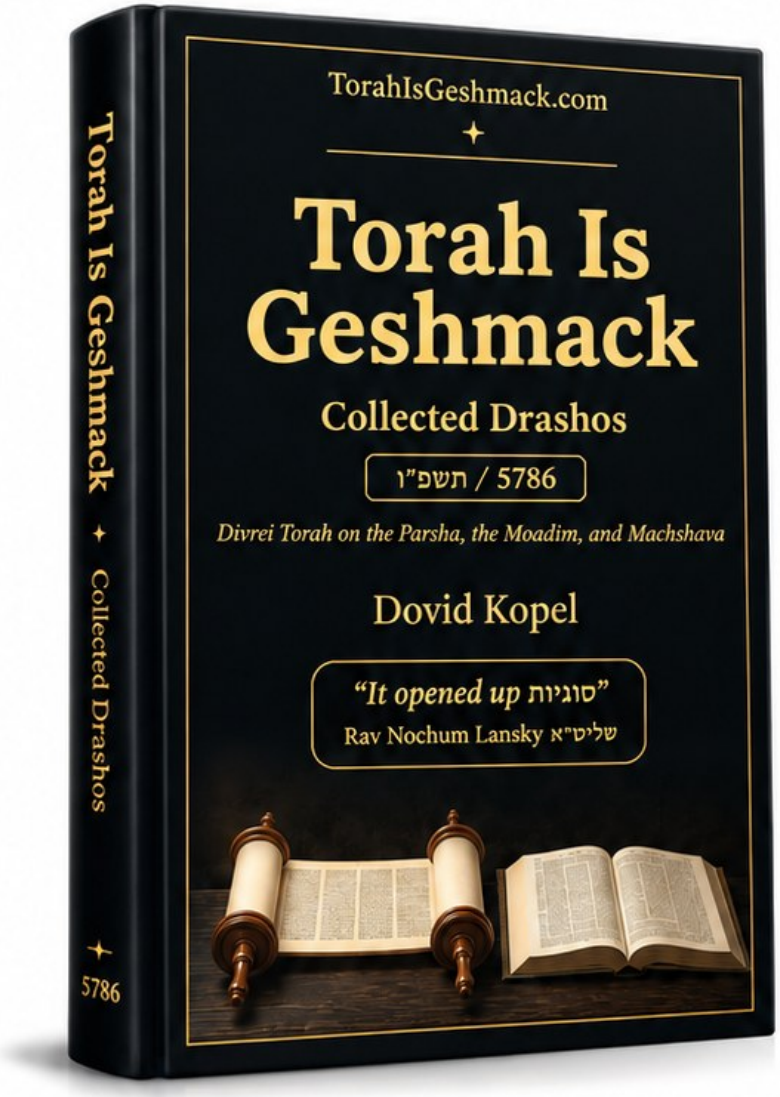
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