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.

חנוכה תשפ״ז

Working for the Light

The Olive, the House, and the Torah We Acquire

Dovid Kopel

A small group of כהנים stood against the גבורה of יון, reclaimed the בית המקדש, and restored its עבודה. The victory was astonishing, and we do not ignore it. In על הנסים we describe it at length: the many delivered into the hands of the few, the mighty into the hands of the weak. Yet when the גמרא asks מאי חנוכה (*What is Chanukah?*), it answers with a small פך שמן, sufficient for one day and burning for eight.[1]

The victory made the return to the מקדש possible. Why should the oil, rather than the battle, explain what had been restored? The physical נס of the שמן lasted eight days; the נר established by חז״ל lasts through the generations. What is it about שמן that makes it fit to carry the essence of חנוכה?

The mitzvah itself raises further difficulties. We kindle a נר whose ordinary illumination we may not use, and we place it at the doorway, where others can see it, even though a lamp is ordinarily valuable because it helps the person sitting beside it. The מנורה of the מקדש was constructed according to a prescribed צורה, yet the נרות of חנוכה require no particular color, no particular vessel, and no common frame joining the flames. Their number, their distinction from one another, and their location are governed by הלכה, but the physical חנוכיה has no prescribed design. Why should a commemoration of the most precisely constructed כלי in the מקדש leave its own most visible object so open? Yes, we are forbidden from producing a replica, but why should it be performed like this?

The contrast goes further. The מנורה of the מקדש had seven fixed נרות. Its number did not change from night to night, and its צורה and עבודה were not left to the imagination of the כהנים. By contrast, חנוכה is distinguished by change itself. The lights follow the days, and in one form of הידור they follow the number of people in the house as well. If the task were to reproduce the original מנורה, why should the changing number become an expression of beauty in the mitzvah?[2]

Then comes the מחלוקת. According to בית הלל, the count begins with one and proceeds to eight; according to בית שמאי, it begins with eight and proceeds to one. The same eight nights, the same נס, and opposite directions. Why should either count be the most complete expression of the mitzvah? And why should the members of a בית become part of the count at all? More flames do not make the original נס greater. What is growing, or diminishing, when these lights are kindled? How does the change in נרות affect the פרסומי ניסא?

These questions are not independent of one another. The location of the נר, the prohibition against using its light, the open form, the changing number, and the decision of חז״ל to make a פך שמן the defining image of חנוכה all point in one direction. If the point were simply to remember that Hashem performed a miracle, many symbols could have carried that memory. חז״ל chose a light deliberately deprived of its ordinary function. We are asked to look at it, but not to use it. We say it ourselves each night after kindling: ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם בלבד (*we have no permission to use them, only to look at them*).[3] That itself demands explanation.

✦

Come And See

One פסוק in משלי seems to stand behind the whole mitzvah. But it is worth reading to its end, rather than stopping where we usually stop.

> כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכְחוֹת מוּסָר (משלי ו:כג)

For a mitzvah is a lamp, Torah is light, and תוכחות מוסר *(rebukes of discipline) are the* דרך חיים *(path of life).*

The פסוק does not end with the beauty of אור. It insists upon the difficulty of a דרך, and it places the rebukes of discipline inside the path of life rather than beside it. What does the hard work of מוסר have to do with the light of Torah? And why should that relationship become visible specifically through a candle?

Even the enemy is difficult to define. יון valued beauty, philosophy, and חכמה. The struggle with יון was not a struggle between wisdom and foolishness. Indeed, חז״ל allow the beauty of יפת into the tents of שם, speaking specifically of the Greek language.[4] If beauty and intelligence can serve Torah, how did such a civilization become associated by חז״ל with חושך?

The words of על הנסים identify the attack precisely: להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך (*to make them forget Your Torah and turn them from the statutes of Your will*). The threat of יון was not merely to affect our perception of information. It sought to remove Torah as תורתך, an אמת defined by רצון השם. There is a kind of חכמה that wishes to decide by its own standards which truths deserve acceptance. **Today, we are plagued with a novel notion of everyone having their "own truth".** Torah asks something different. It asks the intelligence of man to become the servant of an אמת he did not invent.[5]

I heard a distinction between תא חזי, come and see, and תא שמע, come and hear. Sight encounters what appears before the eye; hearing can receive a truth that does not originate with the observer. Sight has its own greatness, and it is not inferior in itself. But the eye cannot establish on its own authority what ought to be done. This takes us back to the beginning of human failure. חוה saw that the עץ הדעת was good for food, desirable to the eyes, and נחמד להשכיל (*desirable for gaining wisdom*). She had received the ציווי through אדם, yet the promise of what she could see prevailed over what had been heard. The Torah does not describe something obviously ugly seducing her. It describes something compelling to the eye and attractive to the mind. If falsehood always appeared ugly, obedience would ask very little of us. The test begins when what is beautiful to the eye and persuasive to the mind seems to compete with a command received from Hashem.[6]

In יון, that temptation was elevated into a civilization. Its חכמה was real, but it sought wisdom without submission to רצון השם. The חשמונאים restored not the existence of light but its meaning. That is why a mitzvah whose light may not be used is such a compelling mechanism. We are not invited to make the room more convenient with light. We are asked to recognize an אמת that utility cannot establish.

✦

The Fruit That Must Be Worked

In פרשת נח, before the leaf, there is a כף (*sole*). The first time the יונה is sent out, it finds no מנוח (*rest*) for the כף of its foot; only when it is sent again does it return with an עלה זית (*olive leaf*). I heard that within that leaf already lies the possibility of oil, and eventually of a חנוכה flame. Yet the next planting described by the Torah is not an olive tree. It is the כרם of נח, and ויחל is understood as עשה עצמו חולין (*he made himself mundane*). The world has been returned to man, and he must decide what it is for. Wine is not the problem; wine is raised to קדושה in קידוש on שבת and יום טובים and on the מזבח. The question is what place the produce of the world will occupy in the life of the one who receives it. It will either become a כלי for קדושה or draw him into itself. And נח stands at the head of the nations who will inherit that question.[7]

Even the letters of יונה contain יון together with the letter ה. The beauty that יון would later make into a civilization appears here joined to the Name. The same beauty can remain enclosed in itself or become bound to רצון השם. That is the question of חנוכה, posed before we have even reached the oil. The leaf is only a beginning, and its eventual light is not automatic. A world restored after the מבול and a מקדש restored after the war both leave man standing before what has been returned to him.

The זית itself teaches a strange lesson. A grape or a fig announces its sweetness at once. A raw olive is bitter. To be eaten at all it must be prepared, and to yield its שמן it must be pressed. The very fruit from which light will emerge resists the person who expects its value to be available at first sight. Its worth cannot be measured by the first encounter with the senses. The fruit of the עץ הדעת announced its apparent allure immediately; the זית demands עבודה before its inner possibility becomes accessible.

As חז״ל say in דברים רבה, comparing that movement to עמל התורה:

> מַה הַשֶּׁמֶן הַזֶּה תְּחִלָּתוֹ מַר וְסוֹפוֹ מָתוֹק, כָּךְ הֵן דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה, אָדָם מִצְטַעֵר בָּהֶן בַּתְּחִלָּה וְעוֹשֶׂה בָּהֶן אַחֲרִית טוֹבָה (דברים רבה ז:ג)

Just as oil is bitter at its beginning and sweet at its end, so are words of Torah: a person struggles with them at the beginning and if he perseveres he will taste the sweetness.

The bitterness and the sweetness describe the experience of יגיעה, a מתיקות that could not have been appreciated at the start. What is within the olive must be brought forth, not merely admired.[8] Elsewhere חז״ל say that the olive gives its oil only through כתיתה (*crushing*), and apply that image to the way יסורין bring a person back to the good.[9]

The comparison reaches both forms of Torah. The received Torah is not something a person admires from afar. תורה שבכתב provides what Hashem has given, complete and binding. תורה שבעל פה does not replace it with something more appealing; it labors to disclose the meaning and delve into the deeper depths of what is truly there waiting to be uncovered. The hidden richness of a

דבר תורה may be there from the beginning while still demanding years of יגיעה from the one who would understand it.

Anyone who has worked through a difficult סוגיא knows this. At the beginning the גמרא resists. A question will not go away, and every answer creates another difficulty. There are moments when a person wonders whether he understands anything at all. Then, after honest יגיעה, a distinction becomes clear, the pieces fall into place, and what was bitter becomes a source of real שמחה. This is what חז״ל call יגעתי ומצאתי (*I labored and found*).[10] It is not the immediate satisfaction of taking what looked appealing. The work prepares the person to find what he could not previously see.

At the beginning of מתן תורה comes the promise יערב לכם מכאן ואילך (*it will be pleasant for you from here on*), because שכל התחלות קשות (*for all beginnings are difficult*). I heard that כל התחלות קשות is a דין. The difficulty has to happen. Its length depends on how long the transition is. Without it, where is the work?[11]

The יסוד lies in the purpose of creation. Hashem created the world להיטיב מטובו לזולתו (*to bestow of His goodness upon another*), yet complete goodness requires that the recipient become בעל הטוב (*owner of the good*), possessing the good rather than merely receiving it. A goodness received only as an undeserved gift remains incomplete because of נהמא דכיסופא (*bread of shame*). The שורש is חסד. The דין of עבודה does not compete with that חסד; it is precisely what makes the חסד attainable as something truly ours.[12]

Now we can read מוסר ודרך חיים תוכחות without dividing it into opposing purposes. The תוכחות מוסר are the דרך חיים. There is one ultimate הטבה, and the דין is the means by which we become capable of receiving it. Through עמלות בתורה the difficulty of the סוגיא becomes understanding. What began as a gift from שמים becomes an achievement in which a person has genuinely participated. The process does not make Torah a human invention. It makes it possible for a human being to possess a received אמת.

The contrast with the עץ הדעת is exact. חוה saw a goodness apparently available at once. The זית requires us to submit to a process before tasting what lies within. And here we must be precise: יון also possessed intellectual discipline, and its philosophers worked hard. Effort is not the distinction. The distinction is the direction of the effort and the authority before which it stands. עמלות התורה begins when intelligence places itself beneath Torah and keeps working even when its first, attractive explanation must be surrendered. A beautiful argument that cannot stand within Torah is not saved by its beauty.

And yet this same fruit, whose שמן expresses acquired light, is associated by חז״ל with forgetting what was already acquired.

✦

What Does It Mean to Return Something Forgotten?

Before we reach that גמרא, we must feel the difficulty it enters. Why should שכחה play any role in the symbol of חנוכה? If Torah is the source of life, why does its acquisition involve the repeated experience of losing what we once held? The question becomes greater when we recall where חז״ל locate the beginning of that condition. As חז״ל say in עירובין:

> אִלְמָלֵי לֹא נִשְׁתַּבְּרוּ לוּחוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת לֹא נִשְׁתַּכְּחָה תּוֹרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל (עירובין נד ע״א)

Had the first לוחות *not been broken, Torah would not have been forgotten from* ישראל[13].

The breaking of the לוחות followed the חטא העגל. Gold, which could have been directed to the service of Hashem and later would be, became the material of a betrayal. Once again, as with the כרם of נח, the question was never whether the substance was corrupt. It was what man would do with the precious thing placed in his hands. And the consequence entered our relationship with Torah itself: what is acquired can now be lost (or more correctly, misplaced). We must not glorify that loss. שכחה is not an ideal; it is the diminishing of something that ought to have remained present. But it is the condition in which we now learn. A בן תורה can spend years establishing a סוגיא and later discover how little of it he can reproduce. He may return after many years and find depths that escaped him the first time. In our world, Torah is acquired, slips beyond reach, and must be recovered through חזרה and renewed עמלות. If that is our condition, what is the status of what has slipped away? If the Torah once became part of a person, what has actually disappeared?

Now we can hear the גמרא. As חז״ל say in הוריות, some things cause a person to forget Torah and others restore learning. Among the latter is שמן זית:

> כְּשֵׁם שֶׁהַזַּיִת מְשַׁכֵּחַ תַּלְמוּד שֶׁל שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, כָּךְ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת מֵשִׁיב תַּלְמוּד שֶׁל שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה (הוריות יג ע״ב)

The זית *causes the forgetting of seventy years of learning; its* שמן *is* משיב *(restores) the very same measure.*

The word deserves our attention. חז״ל did not say that the שמן sharpens the mind or strengthens the memory. They said משיב. The word is not merely זוכר; rather, משיב means to bring back. As רש״י explains it, מחזיר את הלמוד שנשתכח הימנו כבר ע׳ שנה (*it returns learning already forgotten for seventy years*). Something once present has gone missing, and something returns.[14]

The difficulty sharpens from both directions. Why should the fruit associated with forgetting contain the very substance associated with השבה (*return*)? And what does it mean to return Torah at all? Is a forgotten סוגיא simply gone, as if it had never belonged to the person? If so, there is nothing to return; there is only something new to acquire. The word משיב insists otherwise. The very possibility that the same learning can be restored tells us that forgetting and never having acquired are not the same condition.

A second גמרא supplies the other half. The פסוק begins חפצו בתורת ה׳ (*his desire is in the Torah of Hashem*) and ends ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה (*and in his Torah he meditates day and night*). At first the Torah is called by the name of הקדוש ברוך הוא; afterward it is called by the name of the one who toiled in it. The Torah is always Hashem's. Through יגיעה it also becomes תורתו. This is כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם (*for I have given you a good teaching*): a gift from שמים which the person must work to acquire. Its divine authority never changes. Its relationship to the one who acquired it does.[15]

Here the language of השבת אבדה (*returning a lost object*) becomes illuminating. An אבדה remains associated with its בעלים even when separated from him. The mitzvah is to restore what was lost. When a בן תורה forgets a סוגיא he acquired through years of עמלות, he can no longer reach it as he once did. But his past יגיעה has not become meaningless. What is missing is present access to something that had become תורתו. And שמן זית is משיב.

The analogy sharpens when we distinguish ownership from immediate possession. An object can lie in the street while the בעלים are somewhere else. That it is not presently in his hand is precisely why השבה is meaningful; one does not return a thing to a stranger. The person who learned the סוגיא may no longer have every שקלא וטריא (*give-and-take of the argument*) ready on his tongue, but his earlier struggle established a relationship which a stranger who never entered the סוגיא does not possess. The Torah was never his in the sense of freedom to alter it. It was his because of the work by which he acquired it. Returning to it is not the beginning of an unrelated acquisition. It is השבה.

Perhaps we can say: אין יאוש בתורה (*there is no despair in Torah*).

Forgetting may conceal learning, but it need not end the קנין forged through עמלות. A person does not give up on what is his merely because it is not in his hand. A בן תורה returns to the דף, struggles again over the distinctions, and finds what he thought had disappeared. חזרה is not the replacement of lost information. It is the reclaiming of a relationship with Torah that was already his and may become present again.

Now the choice of oil is no incidental symbol of victory. The Greeks sought להשכיחם תורתך. I heard that the darkness with which יון is identified is itself forgetting, for the letters of חשך are the letters of שכח[16]. The very שמן produced from the fruit of שכחה is described by חז״ל as משיב את התלמוד[17]. The olive must be worked to yield its oil; Torah must be worked to become תורתו; what has been forgotten must be worked for again. The פך interprets the war. It reveals what יון tried to take and what the חשמונאים preserved. And the opening question receives its answer. The war restored the possibility of עבודה in the מקדש. But a people may regain its building and still lose the Torah for which that building exists. The שמן stands for the inner struggle: against שכחה, against the preference for beauty without command, and for the renewed עמל by which Torah becomes real in a human life.

The leaf carried by the יונה of נח held the possibility of שמן. The שמן could become a flame. Between the two stands עבודה.

✦

A Light That Must Reveal

Yet if שמן represents restoration, why must it burn? Why is the mitzvah a נר and not the oil itself? We search for חמץ with a small lamp rather than a great אבוקה (*torch*), because the greater blaze cannot enter the חורים וסדקים (*holes and crevices*) where something may be hidden.[18] The torch illuminates more. The small נר reveals more. Brightness is not the same thing as גילוי (*revelation*). The measure of a light is not its intensity, but whether it illuminates what must be found.

That gives us a vocabulary for חנוכה. Greek light could be brilliant. Human חכמה can flood enormous areas of knowledge, and beauty can make the world appear ordered and magnificent. None of that guarantees that the light reaches the place where the decisive אמת is hidden. The נר of Torah is smaller in physical scale, but it is directed. It searches. It reveals.

The מנורה of the מקדש likewise served as עדות that the שכינה rests among ישראל; Hashem does not need illumination. If we imagine the מנורה as supplying something to Him, we have reversed the relationship. The light announces a reality. The חנוכה flame may not be used because it is meant

to be recognized as testimony. In that recognition there is already the first movement of הודאה: the אור does not draw attention to itself, but acknowledges its source.[19] The words we say after kindling make the purpose explicit: we may only look at them, כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול (*in order to thank and praise Your great Name*).[20] The light is withheld from use so that it can serve הוד (*splendor*).

The נרות of שבת give useful light within the בית for the sake of שלום בית. That light participates in the life of the home, raised into the dignity of שבת. It is חנוכה that directs the flame toward פרסומי ניסא. In one case we use the light to live in the home; in the other, the light declares what that home serves. The greatness of the נר is not its brightness but the אמת it reveals.

Return to the opening words of משלי, which read כי נר מצוה ותורה אור. The פסוק does not identify the mitzvah with the אור. It identifies it with the נר. A נר has a כלי which contains, שמן which sustains, a פתילה (*wick*) which draws the שמן toward the fire, and the אור which becomes visible beyond the vessel. The flame needs an אחיזה (*hold*), a point of attachment from which it can draw; without it, it cannot endure. Once it has that אחיזה, its light extends beyond the dimensions of the כלי. The מעשה מצוה is our אחיזה in this world. It exists within גבול, with a particular זמן and a particular manner. Torah is אור, and its אמת cannot be exhausted by the vessel that reveals it.

Another פסוק speaks of נר ה׳ נשמת אדם (*the soul of man is the lamp of Hashem*). The inward נשמה is manifested through a light that requires lower components to support it.[21] The parts of the נר correspond to the person: the כלי is the גוף, the פתילה is the נפש (*life-force*), the oil is the רוח (*spirit*), and the flame is the נשמה itself.[22] The lower components do not compete with the light. The inward light does not abolish the need for a physical vessel; it depends on the vessel fulfilling its role. Their proper חיבור allows the אור to be revealed.

The words פתילה and תפילה share their letters, and both are forms of חיבור. The פתילה draws the שמן to the place of burning, so that oil becomes an actual flame. תפילה draws the inner world of man into דיבור. In one, the physical medium burns; in the other, breath becomes words addressed to Hashem. In both, what lies within must find a real means of connection and expression.

The mitzvah of תפילין adds a חיבור accomplished not through words alone but through קשירה. The פרשיות enter physical בתים (*housings*) and are bound upon the arm and the head. The Torah does not only instruct us to know those words or to speak them. It commands וקשרתם לאות על ידך (*bind them as a sign upon your arm*), and the קשר itself is a הלכה למשה מסיני. The connection must become a מעשה[23]. In all three, the פתילה, the תפילה, and the תפילין, connection is revealed through a medium: oil drawn toward the flame, a voice directed upward, words of Torah bound upon the גוף. In none of them is an idea of connection sufficient without the act that brings it into the world.

The same structure governs תורה שבעל פה. Its power to derive depends on אחיזה. A genuine חידוש emerges from the words, the principles, the מסורה, and the methods of Torah. The more profound the חידוש, the more important it is that its flame can be traced back to its שמן and its פתילה. Anyone who learns seriously knows the pleasure of a beautiful מהלך, one that fits so elegantly that we want it to be true. But beauty is not the final בירור. I heard in the name of the ראש הישיבה that "יופי איז רחוק מן האמת", or a pretty thing is not necessarily אמת; this is related to the תפילה of אמת ויציב after קריאת שמע in שחרית[24]. If the מהלך has no honest אחיזה in the סוגיא, we have recreated the problem of יון inside the בית מדרש: admiring the form while detaching it from the authority that

gives it אמת. When the אחיזה is real, the opposite happens. The beauty is no longer an enemy. It becomes the beauty of יפת dwelling in the tents of שם.

Even here an anomaly remains. How can we say אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו (*Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us*) over a mitzvah established by חז״ל? The command להדליק נר של חנוכה is written nowhere in the חומש. Where did Hashem command us? The גמרא asks:

> וְהֵיכָן צִוָּנוּ (שבת כג ע״א)

And where did He command us?

The answers are לא תסור (*do not depart from what they instruct you*) and שאל אביך ויגדך (*ask your father and he will tell you*). The authority of תורה שבעל פה is itself given within תורה שבכתב. The miracle was historical; the אור which continues לדורות rests on the כח of חז״ל. And notice what has happened. The mitzvah is expressed through something we see, but the authority to perform it rests on our willingness to hear. We first hear a command, and only then kindle a נר which others can see. The failure of the עץ הדעת, where ראיה overcame what had been heard, is reversed.[25]

There is still one component missing. Even when the כלי, the שמן, the פתילה, and the אור are all present, חנוכה has not yet achieved פרסומי ניסא. The finished נר needs a מקום in which its meaning will be seen. And it is precisely here that the structure of חנוכה becomes unlike the מנורה of the בית המקדש.

✦

One Light in Countless Homes

The בית המקדש is one בית with a prescribed structure, and its מנורה has a prescribed form in astonishing detail. By contrast, no single holder or design is required for the נרות of חנוכה. There is also a boundary in הלכה here: one may not make a private מנורה in the seven-branched תבנית (*pattern*) of the מקדש מנורה[26]. The form of the one בית cannot simply be copied into a private home. Its עדות must instead be established in a new מקום. That sharpens the question rather than answering it. חנוכה has real measurements and arrangements in הלכה: the lights must be distinct, recognizable, and properly placed. What is absent is any requirement that the physical holder have one fixed צורה. That omission is remarkable because the מקדש was not a place of free design. Its very קדושה was expressed by the exactness of the received command.

The answer begins with the language of the mitzvah: נר איש וביתו (*a light for each man and his household*). It does not begin as נר בית המקדש. It begins with a person and his בית. Every בית receives the same Torah, but no two households share one architecture or one arrangement of people. One house is large and another modest; one family has many members and another few. Their forms differ. The אור they are charged with revealing does not.

This is the relationship of כלל (*the whole*) and פרט (*the particular*). The מקדש is the single national בית toward which all of ישראל turns, and its ordered צורה belongs to כלל ישראל. Its light declares an אמת common to every Yid. But the mitzvah of חנוכה does not gather everyone into that one building. It carries the testimony of the one בית into every particular בית without reproducing the original מנורה. The כלל is not weakened by becoming many particulars. Its universality is revealed by its ability to enter each of them without becoming a different Torah in each place. The מנורה of

the מקדש teaches the fixed אמת of the light; the נר of חנוכה teaches that the אמת must acquire a מקום within the distinct life of every בית.

That is why מקום matters so much. Someone who holds a lit נר חנוכה in his hand has not fulfilled the mitzvah, since הרואה אומר לצורכו הוא דנקיט לה (*the onlooker says he holds it for his own use*). The observer may think it serves private use. Its שמן and its פתילה are unchanged, and the אור is real, but its meaning has not become recognizable. The מעשה מצוה is הדלקה, yet the flame must stand in its proper setting. The light has not changed; what it says has. מקום is what allows an existing אור to become an עדות[27].

Now the first הידור becomes intelligible: והמהדרין נר לכל אחד ואחד (*and those who beautify the mitzvah, a light for each person*). The light can communicate not only the miracle but the people to whom it belongs. The רמב״ם combines the count of household members with the count of nights, so that a house of ten kindles ten lights on the first night and eighty on the last. תוספות holds that the highest הידור uses one set counting the days, so that its number remains recognizable. The רמ״א allows the members to kindle separately but requires each person's lights to stand in a distinct מקום, so that the count remains recognizable. People, days, and מקום are not decoration. They are the very things the נר makes visible. Without היכר (*recognizability*), more flames can communicate less; a person who cannot distinguish nights from household members cannot read the count. The various opinions make the form of recognition part of the הידור itself, each according to its understanding of what must be seen. The same principle that governs the placement of one flame governs the arrangement of many.[28]

A second פסוק in משלי now returns us to the first:

> חֲנֹךְ לַנַּעַר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, גַּם כִּי יַזְקִין לֹא יָסוּר מִמֶּנָּה (משלי כב:ו)

"*Educate the child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not depart from it.*"

We have been speaking of דרך חיים. Here the same word appears again. The destination of חינוך is the one דרך חיים of Torah, and it is not invented anew for every child. Yet the דרך by which a child enters it must be על פי דרכו. One child, one person, one בית is not interchangeable with another. The same אמת must find a path into each distinct life.

This is the deeper relationship between חינוך and חנוכה, beyond the shared letters. The discipline of עמלות בתורה is not a uniform burden placed identically on every person. It must become a דרך fitted to this child, this person, this בית. Just as one חנוכיה need not look like its neighbor's while the mitzvah remains the same, the lives of the בתים may differ while the אור remains one. The בית is not a stand on which the חנוכיה happens to rest. It is the מקום where Torah becomes part of a particular family's life.

And that אור is directed beyond the בית. The נר stands at the doorway, a place that is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside. It is the point of transition, where the life of the household meets the street. The מזוזה stands on the right and the נר חנוכה on the left, and a Yid passes between them. The מזוזה declares the enduring authority of תורה שבכתב and the יחוד השם of the בית; the נר reveals a mitzvah established through the כח of תורה שבעל פה. The two are not competing sources of קדושה. Together they define the entrance to a Jewish home. The right side of a doorway is itself determined by the direction of entry, and the same threshold is an entrance

or an exit depending on which way one faces, much as the same eight days can be counted as ימים הנכנסין (*days still to come*) or ימים היוצאין (*days that have passed*).[29]

The doorway also tests whether what was heard has become life. The עבד עברי has his ear pierced at the door, because that ear heard at סיני that כלל ישראל are servants of Hashem, and he chose another master. The ear heard the אמת, but the person did not live accordingly, and the threshold is where that failure is exposed. חנוכה offers its positive counterpart. The place where שמיעה failed to govern life becomes the place where a נר testifies that the Torah heard has taken form in a בית[30].

✦

Eight Days, Two Directions

One anomaly remains. Before assigning the two counts to any deeper structure, we should appreciate how strange the מחלוקת is. Both בית שמאי and בית הלל agree that the ideal form of this mitzvah changes every night. The object is not simply to light a correct number of lamps; the change itself is the הידור. It is חנוכה that asks us to make the passage of the miracle visible. The גמרא gives two explanations of their dispute. One says that בית שמאי counts ימים הנכנסין and בית הלל counts ימים היוצאין; the other, that one follows the פרי החג (*bulls of the festival*) and the other the rule of מעלין בקדש (*we ascend in holiness*).[31]

The first explanation is the key. The days entering and the days departing are not two different sets of days. They are the same eight days seen from opposite directions. The full eight exists in כח from the first night. בית שמאי counts what remains of that potential, eight down to one; בית הלל counts what has already entered reality, one up to eight. Neither has changed the miracle or the calendar. They reveal two aspects of a single movement: what stands in כח and what has entered פועל (*actuality*).

The second explanation shows the same two directions. The פרי החג diminish across סוכות from thirteen to seven, seventy in all, corresponding to the שבעים אומות. Then שמיני עצרת stands apart with a single פר, for the closeness of כלל ישראל to Hashem, in the language of קשה עלי פרידתכם (*your parting is difficult for Me*). That one is not the next step in the descending count; it is a different kind of culmination. The movement of בית שמאי is therefore not loss but gathering: from the full multiplicity toward the one point to which it was always directed. The rule of מעלין בקדש runs the other way, from that point outward into increasing גילוי. One count returns the many to their root; the other carries the root out into the many. On the eighth night, the two stand at opposite numerical ends, and both have completed the same festival.[32]

The same two movements can be named in the language of חסד and דין. The שורש is חסד; the דין of עבודה is what allows that goodness to be acquired. בית שמאי, the house of גבורה, expresses גבורה שבהוד (*strength within splendor*): the discipline that defines, limits, and brings the full כח toward its essential point, a count that is פוחת והולך (*progressively decreasing*). And בית הלל, the house of חסד, expresses חסד שבהוד (*kindness within splendor*): the giving that extends what has been acquired into ever-wider גילוי, a count that is מוסיף והולך (*progressively increasing*). These are not competing ultimate ends. They are the two halves of מוסר תוכחות ודרך חיים, the discipline and the life, both describing how one light becomes known through time.

This also answers a danger that our whole מהלך has raised. If Torah becomes תורתו only through each person's עמל, and every בן תורה develops his own distinctions and חידושים, how does it remain one Torah? Do the many פנים (*facets*) not risk replacing the unity of revelation with competing opinions? There are שבעים פנים לתורה (*seventy facets to Torah*), but not seventy unrelated Torahs. The greatness of עמל is not that it produces an opinion belonging only to oneself, but that it reveals a dimension of a Torah which precedes the person, binds him, and will remain after him. בית שמאי and בית הלל model exactly this. Of them it was said אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים (*these and those are the words of the living God*), and the הלכה follows בית הלל, who studied the words of בית שמאי and set them before their own. Legitimate multiplicity does not abolish הכרעה; it requires כבוד. When that כבוד was lacking among the תלמידי רבי עקיבא, what ought to have deepened אחדות became פירוד. The beauty of one's own מהלך must never take the place of אמת.[33]

✦

The Small פך and the Wound of יעקב

We began by asking why the oil, rather than the battle, carries the meaning of the victory. The answer we have given runs through the בית מדרש: the שמן is משיב, and Torah reclaimed through עמל becomes תורתו. There is a second line to the same answer, and it runs through the struggle of יעקב.

Long before the חשמונאים, another small vessel stood at the center of a struggle. Before his encounter with the שר (*angelic prince*) of עשו, our father יעקב returned across the river alone for פכים קטנים (*small vessels*). Why should the man who carried the future of כלל ישראל expose himself to danger for a few small containers? חז״ל explain that the possessions of צדיקים are dear to them because they are acquired without a trace of גזל. But there is a further dimension. יעקב is the איש תם יושב אהלים (*a wholehearted man dwelling in tents*), the אב of Torah and אמת. The worth of a כלי is not measured by its size or its market value. Even the smallest thing can become an אחיזה for an enduring קדושה, and the man of Torah refuses to abandon it. I heard that those פכים קטנים are a רמז to the single פך שמן found by the חשמונאים.[34]

There, alone, the שר of עשו wrestled with him until dawn and struck him in the כף הירך (*hip socket*). The struggle reaches the supports of Torah, the סמכין דאורייתא (*supports of the Torah*); when they are weakened, the קול of יעקב is endangered in the world. The question of that night was not whose material force was greater, but whether יעקב could endure until the dawn.[35] The echo in חנוכה is not genealogical. יון descends from יפת, not from עשו. It lies in the task of guarding the small כלי in which קדושה may endure against a power that sees the world differently.

The location of the struggle adds a further precision. The Torah identifies the crossing by the name מעבר יב״ק. The numerical value of that name is 112. It is also the sum of two divine Names: הוי״ה has the value 26, while אלקים has the value 86. Remarkably, this very ייחוד appears among the three unions that constitute the spiritual structure of the Chanukah lamp. The three ייחודים are the joining of הוי״ה with אהי״ה (47), corresponding to אימא; הוי״ה with אלהי״ם (112), יב״ק, corresponding to לאה; and הוי״ה with אדנ״י (91), corresponding to רחל. Together they total 250, the גימטריא of נ״ר, representing the complete ייחוד. The connection therefore reaches beyond the

small vessels carried by יעקב and the small oil flask found by the חשמונאים. The crossing before the struggle and the light kindled generations later share an inner structure.[36]

The word כף has appeared before, by the יונה. Why did the יונה return empty the first time? On the level of פשט, the waters still covered the earth. But the Torah's word is כף. I heard in the name of the גר״א that the מבול is the בחינה of טוב מאד: a goodness too great for any כלי to receive, which therefore breaks what it fills.[37] A כף is made to close around something and hold on, as a bird's foot closes around a branch. While the excess remained, there was nothing for the כף to take hold of. It had to subside before there could be a מקום for תפיסה. The תיבה could shield from without, but it gave the כף nothing to hold. The פך is the opposite: a כלי that holds קדושה intact. The second time, the יונה returned with a leaf plucked from a tree.

The same word now returns in the struggle of יעקב. The יונה could find no place for its כף to rest; יעקב was struck in the כף הירך, where the body depends upon its support. Both passages direct our attention to אחיזה: in one, the absence of a place to rest; in the other, an injury to the place of support. This brings us from the כף to the פך, and from guarding קדושה to repairing what was damaged.

The כף is bound to the גיד הנשה (*sciatic sinew*), and the letters of כף are the letters of פך, in reverse.

Here the distinction between guarding and repairing matters. Eating the גיד would strengthen the קלקול of the פגם in הוד. The איסור protects against deepening that פגם, but a לא תעשה (*negative commandment*) does not repair. The positive תיקון is חנוכה: the פך, guarded from destruction, becomes an actual אור. The struggle of יעקב left a wound that the Torah fences off; the חשמונאים, finding one small פך, turned what had been guarded into light.

In the familiar order of the רועים (*shepherds*), it is משה who corresponds to נצח and אהרן who corresponds to הוד. The חשמונאים were כהנים, descendants of אהרן, and the מנורה belonged to their ancestral עבודה. Yet before they could restore that עבודה, they had to go to war. The מלחמה of נצח removed the obstruction; the light revealed whose victory it was. The conquest alone could not perform the עבודה of the אור.

That distinction also illuminates the ancestry of the חשמונאים. The תקיפות of לוי was never meant to become an end in itself. The events at שכם raised a difficult question about the rightful use of strength. In its proper תיקון, that strength serves holiness and peace. The חשמונאים fought with the strength of לוי so that כלל ישראל could illuminate with the אור of אהרן. Their מלחמה opened the way, but the renewed מנורה disclosed the purpose of the struggle.[38]

On ordinary days, the light of הוד reaches מלכות (*kingship*) only by way of נצח, because הוד remained unrepaired, as in והודי נהפך עלי למשחית (*my splendor was turned upon me into ruin*). During these eight days alone, מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול repaired the הוד, and the light of הוד itself is received directly. That is why על הנסים is said in מודים. The same passage records the view of the חברים (*the companions of the Arizal*) that חנוכה belongs to נצח as a branch of חכמה, the סוד of שמן משחת קודש (*holy anointing oil*), which is why the miracle came through oil and through a כהן. Either way, what these days reveal is recognition: הודאה.[39]

Thus the days were established בהלל והודאה (*with praise and thanksgiving*). The flame is הודעה (*making known*), a נס made known. Recognition becomes הודאה, and הודאה opens into הלל. A victory is an event; the נר reveals whose victory it was. It is fitting that the רמב״ם sets out the

general laws of הלל within the laws of חנוכה, and that בית אהרן is called upon in הלל: the descendants of אהרן restored the עבודה, and now the אור calls forth דיבור in every generation.[40]

✦

The Work of These Nights

The work of these nights begins where the year has grown dark. The intensity of תשרי has passed. The ימים נוראים, the סוכה, and שמחת תורה cannot carry a person through a whole winter simply by remaining a pleasant memory. The days are short and the outward קדושה of the season is less visible. A בן תורה may find that a סוגיא he once knew has become obscure, that a קביעות has weakened, or that the מתיקות which once accompanied his learning has grown distant. But concealment is not absence. The darkness does not decide whether the Torah remains his.

The Greeks sought להשכיחם תורתך, and שמן זית is משיב את התלמוד. Return to the דף. Return to the קושיא that never yielded. Make חזרה, however much it feels as though everything must be learned anew. The Torah which once became תורתו through יגיעה has not ceased to be his, and it has not ceased to be worth reclaiming. There is no יאוש in Torah. The work that first acquired it becomes the work of השבה. There is no shortcut around that work; the same Torah which required עמל the first time may require it again. But the difficulty does not cancel the שמחה of what is restored. The bitterness of the beginning is the way to its sweetness.

And that עבודה has a מקום. The individual בית is not a stand for an attractive חנוכיה. It is where Torah passes from parents to children, from רב to תלמיד, and from one generation to the next. Each child needs חינוך על פי דרכו, and each בן תורה needs his own honest עמלות. The Torah remains one, while every person enters its דרך חיים by his own דרך. What burns at the doorway must testify to a living עבודה within.

This is how the תיקון of הוד finds its practical expression. The אור must be received, acquired, acknowledged, and handed forward. A בית whose members return to a difficult סוגיא, who refuse a beautiful shortcut when it contradicts the אמת of Torah, and who bring their children into that עבודה according to their own דרכים, is not merely displaying the victory over יון. It is living the purpose for which the victory was won. The חשמונאים restored the עבודה in the מקדש. Then חז״ל established נר איש וביתו, and the עדות of the one בית came to stand at the doorway of countless בתים. The truth given from above becomes acquired through עמל, revealed through a נר, and established in a מקום.

The חשמונאים did more than win a war. The פך interpreted the victory. And חז״ל gave that interpretation a נר that could continue to grow, from one night to the next and from one בית to another.

May we be זוכה to fill the long nights of חנוכה with עמלות בתורה, to return with שמחה to what we have learned and to what we thought we had lost, and to make every בית a מקום for the אור of Torah, each according to its own דרך within the one דרך חיים. May that עבודה bring increasing גילוי of כבוד השם throughout כלל ישראל במהרה בימינו, and let us say אמן.

✦

Notes: מראי מקומות

1. The question מאי חנוכה and the פך שמן — שבת כא ע״ב

2. The seven-branched מנורה of the מקדש — שמות כה:לא-מ

3. The words of הנרות הללו — נוסח הנרות הללו; מסכת סופרים כ:ו

4. The beauty of יפת in the tents of שם — מגילה ט ע״ב

5. The decrees of יון and the language of darkness — נוסח על הנסים; בראשית רבה ב:ד

6. The distinction of תא חזי and תא שמע, taught by HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א; and on חוה and the עץ הדעת — בראשית ג:ו

7. The olive leaf and its future oil, taught by HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א; the כרם and ויחל — בראשית ח:יא; בראשית ט:כ ורש״י שם

8. The oil that is bitter at first and sweet at the end — דברים רבה ז:ג

9. The olive gives its oil only through כתיתה — מנחות נג ע״ב

10. The expression יגעתי ומצאתי — מגילה ו ע״ב

11. The promise of יערב לכם; the דין of the difficult beginning was heard from HaRav Shraga Neuberger שליט״א in the name of the חתם סופר — רש״י שמות יט:ה

12. Becoming בעל הטוב — דרך ה׳ חלק א פרק ב, רמח״ל

13. The breaking of the first לוחות and שכחה — עירובין נד ע״א

14. The olive and the oil; the meaning of משיב — הוריות יג ע״ב; רש״י שם ד״ה משיב

15. The Torah that becomes תורתו; the לקח טוב — עבודה זרה יט ע״א; משלי ד:ב

16. The letters of חשך and שכח, taught by HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א — שיעור חנוכה תשמ״ז

17. The זית and שכחה, the oil and זכירה, and the decree of להשכיחם תורתך — מאמרי, בני יששכר אות טו, מאמר ד, כסלו-טבת

18. The נר and the אבוקה in בדיקת חמץ — פסחים ח ע״א

19. The מנורה as עדות; the prohibition of ordinary use — שבת כב ע״ב; שבת כא ע״ב

20. The purpose of the lights in הנרות הללו — נוסח הנרות הללו

21. The נשמה as a נר — משלי כ:כז

22. The correspondence also appears in תיקוני הזוהר, which reads the פתילה as the נפש, the oil as the רוח, and the flame as the נשמה — תיקוני הזוהר, תיקון כא, מט ע״ב

23. The binding of תפילין — דברים ו:ח; מנחות לה ע״ב

24. Heard in the name of the ראש הישיבה, HaRav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman זצ״ל, the author of עבודת לוי

25. The authority of a mitzvah established by חז״ל — שבת כג ע״א

26. The prohibition against reproducing the מנורה of the מקדש — ראש השנה כד ע״א-ע״ב

27. Holding a lit נר חנוכה — שבת כב ע״ב

28. The positions of the רמב״ם, of תוספות, and of the רמ״א — שבת כא ע״ב; רמב״ם הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ד:א-ב; תוספות שבת כא ע״ב ד״ה והמהדרין מן המהדרין; רמ״א אורח חיים תרע״א:ב

29. The מזוזה on the right and the נר on the left; the right side determined by the direction of entry; the מזוזה as תורה שבכתב and the נר as תורה שבעל פה — שבת כב ע״א; שולחן ערוך יורה דעה רפט:ב; חנוכה תרס״א, שפת אמת

30. The ear of the עבד עברי at the door; the doorway, the מזוזה, the נר חנוכה, and שמיעה — קידושין כב ע״ב; חנוכה תרמ״ח, שפת אמת

31. The two explanations for בית שמאי and בית הלל — שבת כא ע״ב

32. The seventy פרים, the one פר, and the words קשה עלי פרידתכם — סוכה נה ע״ב; רש״י במדבר כט:לו

33. The principle of אלו ואלו; the humility of בית הלל; the תלמידי רבי עקיבא — עירובין יג ע״ב; יבמות סב ע״ב

34. The פכים קטנים as a רמז to the פך שמן of חנוכה, taught by HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א; the return for the פכים קטנים — שיעורי חנוכה תשמ״ז ותשפ״ד; חולין צא ע״א

35. The blow to the כף הירך and the סמכין דאורייתא — זוהר וישלח, ח״א קעא ע״א

36. The ייחוד of יב״ק at the crossing, and its place within the three ייחודים of נר — שער הפסוקים, דרוש א׳, שער הכוונות, דרושי חנוכה; על ויעבר את מעבר יב״ק, פרשת וישלח

37. The מבול as the בחינה of טוב מאד, heard from HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א in the name of the גר״א

38. The תקיפות of שמעון ולוי, its criticism, and the covenant of שלום through פינחס — בראשית במדבר כה:יא-יג; בראשית מט:ה-ז; לד:כה-לא; נוסח על הנסים

39. The light of הוד on חנוכה, the תיקון of מתתיהו, and the view of the חברים — פרי עץ חיים, שער ר״ח פרק ד, חנוכה ופורים

40. The days of הלל והודאה; the purpose of the lights; the laws of הלל — שבת כא ע״ב; רמב״ם הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ד:יב; רמב״ם הלכות מגילה וחנוכה פרק ג

Dovid Kopel · TorahIsGeshmack.com

Visit the site

Join our WhatsApp



For contact inquiries or if you wish to sponsor an issue, please email **dovid@torahisgeshmack.com**

Dedicated anonymously

לז"נ דוד יוסף בן שלום ונחה דבורה בת אסתר ואשר לעמל חיים בן דוד יוסף

TorahIsGeshmack.com

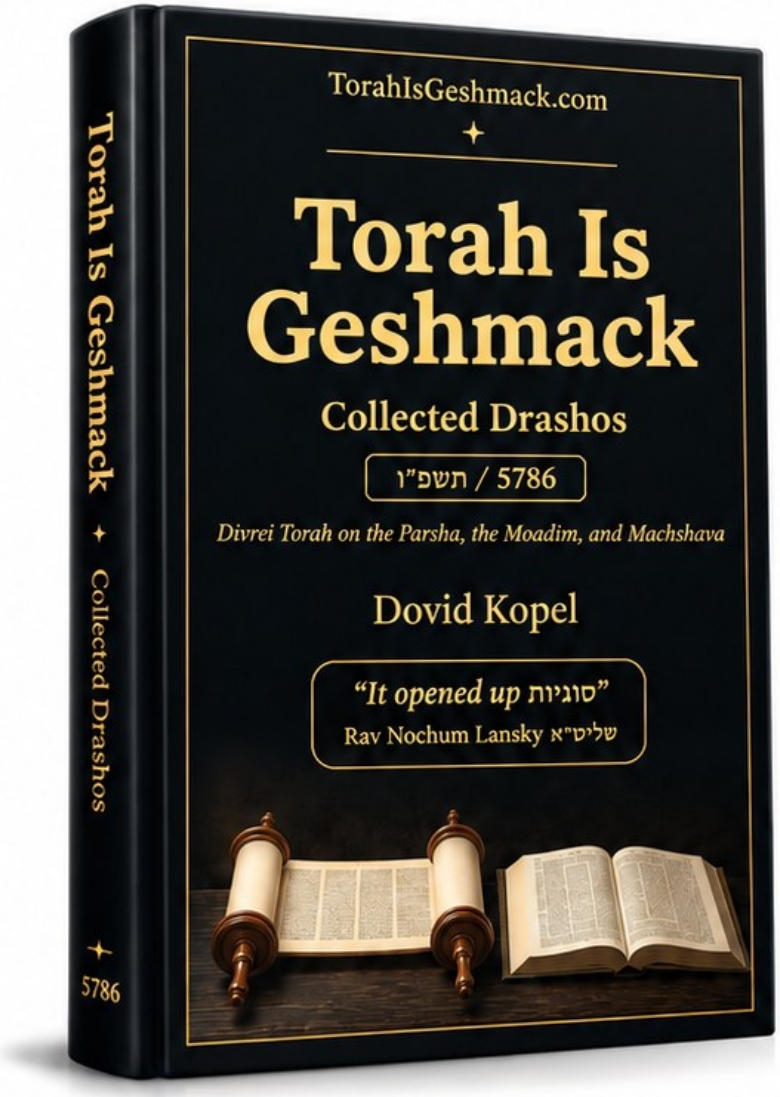
Torah Is Geshmack

Close To Torah

Collected Drashos

תשפ"ו / 5786

Divrei Torah on the Parsha, the Moadim, and Machshava



"It opened up סוגיות"

Rav Nochum Lansky שליט"א

PRE-ORDER: $25

Free U.S. shipping | Baltimore drop-off

SCAN TO PRE-ORDER

form.jotform.com/262865600851056

Divrei Torah on the Parsha

Inspiring Drashos on the Moadim

Thoughtful Machshava

Hope to be available by חנוכה

I learn Torah, and it's geshmack.