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.

סוכות תשפ״ז

What Is Truly Yours

קהלת, the סוכה, and the אדם We Bring Into Hashem's Embrace

Dovid Kopel

סוכות is זמן שמחתנו (*the time of our joy*). The תורה commands us to rejoice on it three times, one of them for the full seven days — more than it says of any other מועד. And on that מועד we read קהלת.

A person sits in his סוכה, surrounded by a harvest he has just finished gathering, and hears that everything is הבל.

It could be answered that the year contains dark readings, and this is one of them. But the others sit where they belong. איכה is read on תשעה באב, and its grief matches the day exactly. That is not a difficulty. It is a fit. The difficulty with קהלת is not that the ספר is dark; it is that the darkness has been set down on the day of joy.

And of the two, קהלת may be the more difficult. איכה mourns a catastrophe that has already happened. It weeps over what was lost, which means it still holds that the thing was worth having. קהלת does not weep. It looks at what a man has built while it is still standing, and asks what it was ever for.

So the question is not why the year makes room for a dark ספר. It is why זמן שמחתנו is the day we chose to ask it.

Two of the three ספרים (*books*) written by שלמה המלך are read on connected ימים טובים (*festivals*). שיר השירים belongs naturally to פסח. It is the ספר of youth, longing, and the first awakening of love. On פסח, the nation of כלל ישראל is itself young and budding. We leave מצרים and follow Hashem into a wilderness with the trust and excitement of a כלה (*bride*) following her חתן (*groom*). The romantic language of שיר השירים captures that beginning perfectly.

חז״ל offer more than one order for these ספרים. One view, that of רבי חייא רבה, places משלי before שיר השירים, while רבי יונתן places שיר השירים first and משלי second. Both agree that קהלת came last. רבי יונתן explains his order through the stages of a person's life: in youth he speaks in song, in maturity through משלים (*parables*), and in old age of הבל הבלים (*vanity of vanities*). The association of שיר השירים with youth and קהלת with age is therefore a teaching of חז״ל, although specifically רבי יונתן's understanding of the development of שלמה המלך's wisdom (שיר השירים רבה).

קהלת is read at the other end of the cycle. סוכות may arrive after ראש השנה, but agriculturally and emotionally, it is the end of the year. The produce has been harvested, the barns are full, and a season of effort stands behind us. Even our reading of the תורה is approaching its conclusion with the death of משה רבינו, after which we immediately begin again. קהלת is the ספר of that moment:

not the excitement of first love, but the wisdom produced by a life already lived. It looks back upon achievement, pleasure, acquisition, and regret, and asks what has actually remained.

משלי stands differently. It is the great guide for living, a microcosm of תורה and the collected instruction of שלמה's wisdom. Perhaps for that reason it is not confined to a single מועד (*a festival*), but accompanies the ordinary life lived between beginning and end. This leaves the ספר of old age standing alone on the festival of joy.

Three words seem to dominate the landscape of קהלת. The first is שמש (*sun*), the second is עמל (*labor*), and the third is הבל (*vanity*). Man lives beneath the שמש. Within that world he fills his days with עמל, yet when he looks back, so much of what appeared substantial dissolves into הבל. And yet קהלת does not deny that man works, builds, acquires, and accomplishes. It asks whether any of that labor can escape the closed cycle of the world beneath the sun.

The answer appears near the very end of the ספר, in the פסוק (*verse*) that we repeat after completing קהלת:

> סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים יְרָא וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמוֹר כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם. (קהלת יב:יג)

The conclusion of the matter, when everything has been heard: fear Hashem and observe His commandments, because this is the entirety of man.

The words כי זה כל האדם are normally understood to mean that this command applies to every person. But חז״ל already refuse to read the phrase as a simple statement about each individual:

> מאי כי זה כל האדם? אמר רבי אלעזר: אמר הקב״ה, כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא בשביל זה. (ברכות ו׳ ע״ב)

What is meant by 'this is the entirety of man'? Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One said, the entire world was created only for the sake of this.

If the whole world was created for the sake of this, then כל האדם can be read literally as well: this is the whole of man. This is the totality for which the אדם (*person*) was created. The possessions accumulated during his life will pass away. Much of his labor will be forgotten, and the body itself will return to the earth. What remains is the אדם formed through יראת שמים (*fear of Heaven*), תורה, and מצוות (*commandments*).

This is not an escape from עמל. In fact חז״ל distinguish between labor performed beneath the sun and the labor of תורה:

> בעמלו אינו מועיל, אבל בעמלה של תורה מועיל. (ויקרא רבה כח:א)

In his own labor it does not avail him, but in the labor of Torah it avails.

The problem is not that man labors. The problem is labor that remains trapped תחת השמש (*beneath the sun*). The question of סוכות is how the עמל of an entire year can be lifted beyond the שמש and used to construct the אדם who will endure.

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Beneath the Shade

The first answer is the סוכה. After gathering the produce of our fields, we leave the security of our homes and enter a temporary dwelling. We do not celebrate the harvest by enclosing ourselves

more securely within what we have built. We abandon those walls and sit beneath the protection of Hashem. What value is there in remembering that our ancestors dwelled in סוכות in the מדבר (*wilderness*)? Hashem provided for them then, and the מצווה asks us to discover that He provides for us now. We return to the desert and allow the ענני הכבוד (*the Clouds of Glory*) to guide us again.

The essence of the סוכה is its סכך (*roofing*). קהלת describes a world תחת השמש, while the סוכה is defined by shade. We have not left the physical world, but we have placed something between ourselves and the assumption that the שמש governs everything. We enter the צלא דמהימנותא (*shade of faith*) and learn that the visible order beneath the sun is not the totality of existence.

חז״ל derive the material of the סכך from the harvest itself, reading באספך מגרנך ומיקבך to mean that the roof is made of פסולת גורן ויקב (*the residue of the threshing floor and winepress*). The discarded remnants of the harvest become the roof beneath which we encounter the שכינה (*Divine Presence*). This may be one of the most beautiful reversals of קהלת. The crop that man proudly gathered may become הבל, while what he dismissed as פסולת (*waste*) can be elevated into the מקיף (*surrounding embrace*) that envelops him in קדושה (*holiness*). Value is not determined by what appears productive beneath the שמש, but by what can be brought into the service of Hashem (סוכה י״ב ע״א).

The סוכה resembles מצה in that both bring אמונה (*faith*) into physical life, but their עבודות (*spiritual tasks*) are different. מצה removes the swollen independence represented by חמץ (*leaven*). The סוכה is not primarily deprivation; we enter it with our food, furniture, and life. Leaving our ordinary protection does not leave us exposed, because we are dwelling in His house. Having emerged cleansed from יום הכיפורים, we begin a new life not with fasting or confession, but by sitting happily inside Hashem's embrace. The זוהר calls מצה מיכלא דמהימנותא (*the food of faith*) and gives the סוכה the name צלא דמהימנותא, the shade of faith.

This helps explain an unusual הלכה (*law*). A borrowed סוכה is valid. But that ruling is not obvious from the פסוקים, because the סוכה also carries a possessive of its own in the words חג הסוכות תעשה לך. What that word demands was itself disputed:

> תניא, רבי אליעזר אומר: כשם שאין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו ביום טוב הראשון של חג בלולבו של חבירו, דכתיב ולקחתם לכם – משלכם, כך אין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו בסוכתו של חבירו, דכתיב חג הסוכות תעשה לך שבעת ימים – משלך. וחכמים אומרים: אף על פי שאמרו אין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו ביום טוב הראשון בלולבו של חבירו, אבל יוצא ידי חובתו בסוכתו של חבירו, דכתיב כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות – מלמד שכל ישראל ראויים לישב בסוכה אחת. (סוכה כ״ז ע״ב)

It was taught: Rabbi Eliezer says, just as a person does not fulfill his obligation on the first day of the festival with another's palm branch, since the verse says 'you shall take for yourselves' — from your own, so too he does not fulfill his obligation in another's dwelling, since the verse says 'you shall make for yourself' — from your own. And the Sages say: although they said that a person does not fulfill his obligation on the first day with another's palm branch, he does fulfill his obligation in another's dwelling, since the verse says 'every citizen in Israel shall dwell in booths' — teaching that all of Israel are fit to sit in one סוכה.

For רבי אליעזר the two מצוות are identical: both carry a possessive, and both therefore demand that the object be mine. The חכמים read the two words differently. לך excludes only what was stolen, while כל האזרח opens the סוכה to everyone. The divergence between the two מצוות is therefore not written plainly in the תורה. It is produced by the way the חכמים read one possessive as a demand for acquisition and the other as a bare exclusion of theft.

Following the חכמים, one סוכה can belong to someone else and still envelop me. On the level of this דרשה (*interpretive reading*), one סוכה can hold all of כלל ישראל. It does not need to become mine because it represents what comes from above, the common מקיף within which every Yid can dwell.

But סוכות contains a second central מצווה, and its law is precisely the opposite.



What Must Be Yours

On the first day, the ארבעה מינים (*four species*) must be completely yours:

> וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ עָבֹת וְעַרְבֵי נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה׳ אֱלֹקֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים. (ויקרא כג:מ)

You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a beautiful tree, branches of date palms, a branch of a braided tree, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Hashem your God for seven days.

The opening words yield two laws:

> ולקחתם – שתהא לקיחה ביד כל אחד ואחד. לכם – משלכם, להוציא את השאול ואת הגזול. (סוכה מ״א ע״ב)

You shall take — each individual must perform his own act of taking. For yourselves — from your own property, excluding what is borrowed or stolen.

The species may grow in your own field, and they may also be received as a genuine gift. Payment is not essential. What the תורה requires is קנין (*legal ownership*). At the moment of the מצווה, they must actually belong to you.

The two מצוות are therefore inverted at every point. The סוכה must be made but need not be owned; the species must be owned but need not be made. תעשה ולא מן העשוי requires that the סוכה be constructed for shade, yet a borrowed one is valid. לכם requires that the species belong to me, yet they grow on their own and I make nothing.

Why does the תורה demand such complete ownership here? We perform many מצוות with objects that are borrowed or shared. Why must the ארבעה מינים become mine when the סוכה surrounding me need not?

חז״ל say in ויקרא רבה that the four species correspond to the essential organs of the אדם. The אתרוג (*citron*) resembles the heart, the לולב (*palm branch*) the spine, the הדסים (*myrtles*) the eyes, and the ערבות (*willows*) the lips. The entire person is gathered into the מצוה, fulfilling the words of דוד המלך:

> כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה ה׳ מִי כָמוֹךָ מַצִּיל עָנִי מֵחָזָק מִמֶּנּוּ וְעָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מִגֹּזְלוֹ. (תהלים לה:י)

All my limbs shall declare: Hashem, who is like You?

The species also correspond to different מידות (*character traits*) and to שבע הספירות התחתונות (*the seven lower dimensions*): three הדסים, two ערבות, one לולב, and one אתרוג in that order (שער הכוונות).

Perhaps that is why they must be ours. The סוכה is the שכינה that Hashem places around us, but the ארבעה מינים are the אדם we bring into that שכינה. My heart, eyes, mouth, spine, desires, and מידות must become my responsibility. I can receive תורה from my parents and my רבנים. I can be inspired by another Yid and inherit an entire דרך (*path*) in עבודת ה׳ (*service of Hashem*). But those things cannot remain borrowed. At some point, they must become לכם. No one else can refine my character for me. There is no such thing as borrowed inner growth.

This may also explain why לכם is concentrated on the first day. Before beginning the seven-day process, I must establish that this עבודה is mine. Each day will reveal another dimension, but the first act is personal acquisition.

The story of רבן גמליאל's לולב expresses this distinction perfectly. He purchased it for one thousand silver coins (אלף זוז), fulfilled the מצוה, and gave it to רבי יהושע. It then passed to רבי אלעזר בן עזריה, to רבי עקיבא, and finally back to רבן גמליאל. A genuine gift remained legally valid even though it was given on the condition that it be returned, while the enormous price demonstrated how beloved the מצוה was to them. (סוכה מ״א ע״ב)

The expense and the gift teach two different lessons. Purchasing the beautiful לולב was not what made it לכם; the genuine gift was sufficient. The price expressed חביבות המצוה (*love of the commandment*). Wealth that קהלת warns can become הבל was transformed into honor for a מצוה. Yet the לולב passed from one Yid to another. It was one object connecting the חכמים (*Sages*), but each had to acquire it completely before performing the מצוה and passing it onward.

That is also the nature of מסורה (*transmission*). תורה can be given to me, but it must become mine before I can give it to someone else. אחדות (*unity*) does not erase the individual portion; it gathers each acquired portion into one אגודה (*unified bundle*).

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The אגודה and the אדם

The four species contain several layers of unity. Under הלכה, they form one מצוה and are מעכבין (*indispensable to*) one another; if even one is absent, the מצוה is incomplete. Yet they never lose their identities. The לולב, the הדסים, and the ערבות are tied together, while the אתרוג remains in the other hand and is held beside them. Even the binding is a מצוה מן המובחר (*the ideal form*) rather than an absolute requirement. The unity is essential, but unity does not mean sameness (רמב״ם).

The same is true of the human body. The heart must not become the spine, and the eyes must not become the mouth. They become one אדם not by surrendering their functions, but because they are governed by one life and directed toward one purpose. The עבודה is likewise not to erase our different מידות but to bind them beneath one רצון (*will*). חסד (*kindness / expansive devotion*) remains חסד and גבורה (*strength / disciplined restraint*) remains גבורה, but neither is an independent power.

The אתרוג possesses both taste and fragrance, representing Yidden who have both תורה and מעשים טובים (*good deeds*). The לולב has taste but no fragrance; the הדס has fragrance but no taste; and the ערבה has neither. Hashem does not command that one category eliminate another:

> יוקשרו כולם אגודה אחת, והן מכפרין אלו על אלו. (ויקרא רבה ל:יב)

Let them all be bound into one unit, and they will atone for one another.

Each remains recognizable, but together they become a single מצוה.

The individual אדם and the group כלל ישראל are therefore not separate interpretations. The person must unite his differentiated parts, and כלל ישראל its differentiated people. A nation of people who have never acquired themselves cannot become an אגודה, but neither is לכם complete if it remains enclosed within the individual.

That movement is expressed through the נענועים (*wavings*). After insisting that the ארבעה מינים are mine, I move them outward in every direction:

> מוליך ומביא למי שארבע רוחות שלו, מעלה ומוריד למי שהשמים והארץ שלו. (סוכה ל״ז ע״ב)

We move them outward and inward for the One to Whom the four directions belong, and upward and downward for the One to Whom the heavens and earth belong.

I take what the תורה calls לכם and use it to proclaim that every direction belongs to Him.

There is no contradiction. ביטול (*self-nullification*) does not mean that I never possessed a self; I cannot surrender what I have never acquired. I first accept responsibility for my body, מידות, possessions, and עבודה, and then lift them toward their Source. Ownership creates the responsible אדם who can dedicate himself to Hashem.

Perhaps this entire movement is contained in the word לולב. The רמב״ם calls all four species together מצות לולב, and the ברכה (*blessing*) is recited על נטילת לולב. The whole מצוה is named for one of its members.

The גר״א writes in אדרת אליהו that the לולב contains all רמ״ח מצות עשה, and he divides the word itself into ל״ו and ל״ב. His division serves a different reckoning than the one drawn here, but the division is his.

Both numbers carry weight of their own. The גר״א calls the ל״ב the נתיבות, the thirty-two paths of חכמה, and ל״ו is the number of the hidden צדיקים through whom the world stands. A single word that holds the paths of חכמה together with the צדיקים who sustain the world deserves a drasha of its own. This is not it.

Read as לו לב, the word says that the heart is His. First the תורה says לכם: acquire the self until it is genuinely yours. Then the לולב reveals the purpose of that acquisition. Once the heart has become mine, I can make it His.

There is a duality in the heart here. Among the four, the אתרוג is the לב, and it is the one member the אגודה does not hold. It stays in the other hand and must be brought separately. Yet the word that names the entire מצוה is the word that carries the לב inside it. The heart is both the part that cannot be bound together with the others and the name of the whole bundle. That is what a heart is in a person. It is not one limb among the rest. It is what the whole structure is for.

The shaking takes place during הלל (*praise*). This is not silent introspection. The mouth represented by the ערבה, the eyes represented by the הדסים, the spine represented by the לולב, and the heart represented by the אתרוג are gathered into song. The entire אדם praises Hashem.

We do not merely think about the unity of our מידות. We hold them, bind them, move them, and sing with them.

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The Owned Self Inside the Shared סוכה

The two מצות form one complete structure. The סוכה draws the חסד as אור מקיף (*surrounding illumination*). The לולב and its נענועים draw that חסד inward through זעיר אנפין (*the six emotional dimensions of Divine expression*) toward רחל, the receiving aspect of מלכות (*kingship / receptive manifestation*). One מצוה provides the surrounding embrace; the other performs the internal work. It is therefore good, writes the אר״י in פרי עץ חיים, to take the לולב and recite the ברכה specifically within the סוכה.

The word אדם has the numerical value of מ״ה, and that is the name of תיקון: the הוי״ה שם spelled out in full with the letter א. The name of the vessels that broke is ב״ן, and בהמה has the numerical value of ב״ן. So when דוד המלך says אדם ובהמה תושיע ה׳, both names stand in the פסוק together — the level that repairs and the level that must be repaired. That is the תיקון of the נפש.

This is what the נענועים are doing. The חסד is drawn inward toward רחל, toward מלכות, which is ב״ן. The אדם of מ״ה gathers his organs and his מידות into one אגודה and moves them through the six directions, and the movement is the repair of what is received.

The synthesis is not stated in precisely these words. Yet once the סוכה is identified as אור מקיף and the לולב as the drawing of inward חסד, perhaps we may understand their conjunction as the climax of the עבודה. The person brings the organs, מידות, and directions represented by the four species into the Divine מקיף. Each מצוה stands independently, but when the לולב is shaken inside the סוכה, the inward עבודה is performed within the surrounding embrace. The אדם does not merely enter Hashem's embrace; he brings his own עבודה inside it.

This may be the deepest meaning of כלל ישראל. The לולב must be לכם, while the סוכה can be shared by everyone. Each Yid enters with the portion that only he can acquire, but all enter the same surrounding קדושה. The private לכם stands within the כלל ישראל of the סוכה. And כלל ישראל is formed when distinct individuals discover that they exist within one שכינה and serve one Source.

The נענועים become more powerful when performed there. We reach toward all six directions, but we never move outside the סוכה. The אדם moves through חסד and then גבורה, through תפארת (*beauty / harmony / integrated truth*), נצח (*endurance / victorious persistence*), and הוד (*splendor / yielded acknowledgment*), and finally יסוד (*foundation / channeling bond*), discovering that there is no direction beyond Hashem's embrace. We are no longer trapped תחת השמש. We stand beneath the shade of אמונה, and raise the entire world beneath the sun toward what lies above it.

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Seven Days and the Eighth

The עבודה cannot be completed in a single act. Each day of סוכות has its own קרבן (*offering*) and שירה (*song*); each brings another אושפיזא (*guest*) to the foreground and presents a distinct dimension of growth. One חסד enters each day until the process reaches completion on הושענא

רבה. The מצות repeat because every day repairs and fills another part of the אדם, one day at a time (שער הכוונות).

There is a resemblance to ספירת העומר (*counting the Omer*). During the עומר we count upward, refining each day as we move toward receiving the תורה. On סוכות we may understand the motion as descending, drawing the שפע (*Divine flow*) from above through the lower מידות until it reaches the recipient. That the days form a descending order is not only a kabbalistic reading. בית שמאי held that the lights of חנוכה decrease from eight, כנגד פרי החג, treating the diminishing offerings of סוכות as the model for how the days of a חג can be ordered. We follow בית הלל, so the descent does not determine the count of the lights; but the reasoning of בית שמאי assumes what we are describing, that the days of סוכות descend and that the descent means something. The first six days correspond to the six directions of expression. הושענא רבה gathers their completion into מלכות. We do not merely rise away from the physical world; we bring קדושה downward until it can live within us (שבת כ״א ע״ב).

This is also why we must be cautious about describing שמיני עצרת as simply an eighth מידה. The seven days complete the structure through which the חסד is drawn. סוכות is described through the embrace of וימינו תחבקני (*His right hand embraces me*), while שמיני עצרת is the intimate יחוד (*union*) that follows the embrace. It is not another direction added to the six, nor merely another day added to seven. It is a different stage in the relationship (שער הכוונות).

On שמיני עצרת, the תורה no longer commands us to use the סוכה or the ארבעה מינים. In חוץ לארץ (*the Diaspora*) we sit in the סוכה without a ברכה because of ספיקא דיומא (*uncertainty regarding the calendar day*), but the essential עבודה of the seven days has ended. The individual has lived within the מקיף, and its influence can now be carried inward. The relationship can be experienced without the forms that cultivated it (סוכה מ״ז ע״א).

We then complete the תורה with the death of משה רבינו and immediately begin בראשית. The end does not disappear, and the beginning does not deny everything that came before it. The completed תורה becomes the source of a new beginning. In the same way, קהלת does not leave us with death or הבל. It strips away what cannot endure so that the true אדם can begin again.

✦

כי זה כל האדם

We can now return to the three words that fill קהלת. The שמש describes the visible order that appears to govern everything. עמל describes the labor with which man tries to establish himself within that order. הבל describes what becomes of that labor when it never rises beyond itself.

סוכות does not tell man to stop working, harvesting, acquiring, or building. It teaches him what those things are for. The harvest produces the פסולת that becomes his סכך. His money expresses חביבות המצוה. His hands bind the ארבעה מינים, his body moves them through six directions, and his mouth sings הלל. Nothing physical has been discarded; everything has been gathered into עבודת ה׳.

The answer to הבל is not to possess nothing. The תורה deliberately demands לכם. A Yid must acquire his portion and build an אדם capable of standing before Hashem. But that ownership must

become the לולב of לו לב. He brings what is his into the shared סוכה, binds its parts into an אגודה, and waves it toward the One to Whom all directions belong.

That may be the meaning of כי זה כל האדם. This is not merely an instruction relevant to every person. This is the completed אדם: the individual of שם מ״ה, with every limb and מידה acquired and united, standing within the מקיף of the שכינה and singing to Hashem. Everything else may become הבל. The refinement of the אדם remains.

May we be זוכה (*merit*) to enter the סוכה with true שמחה (*joy*), to feel ourselves surrounded by Hashem's embrace, and to acquire the parts of ourselves that no one else can acquire for us. May we bind our hearts, our bodies, our מידות, and our possessions into one עבודה; join that עבודה to all of כלל ישראל; and lift everything we call "mine" toward our Father and King. First לכם, and then לו לב — until the whole אדם recognizes that everything is His.

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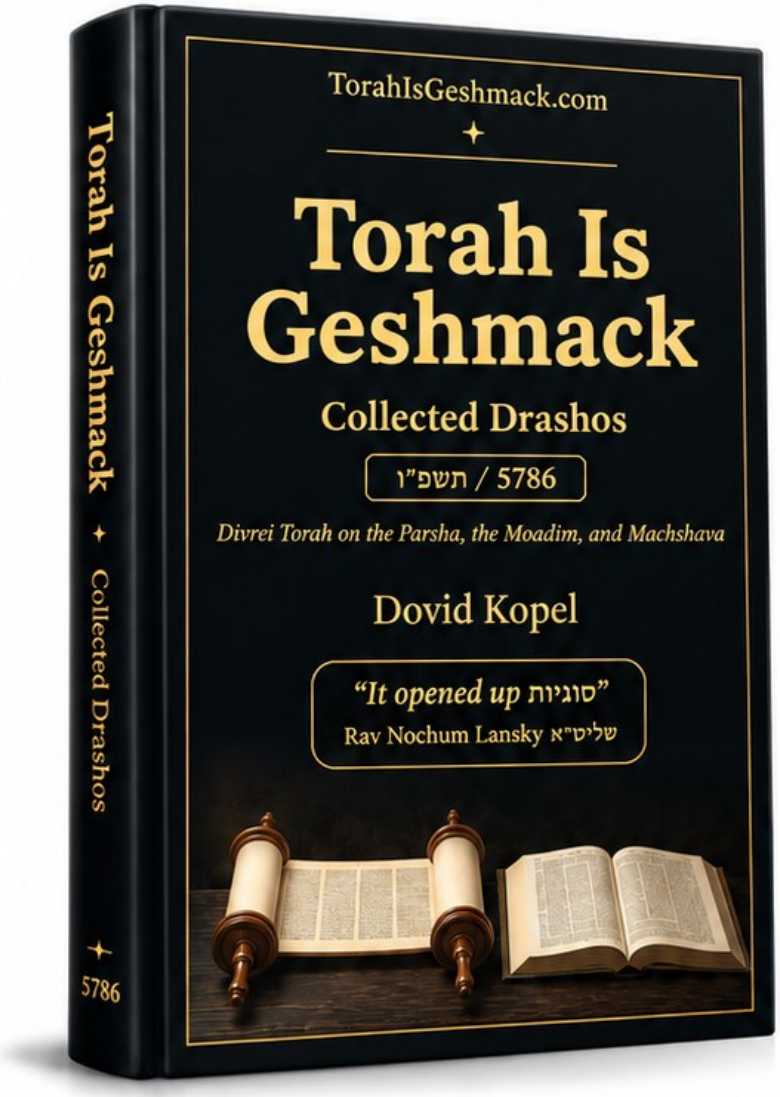
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