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״ז

What Is Your Greatest Asset?

Dovid Kopel

What is your greatest asset?

You cannot buy it. You cannot sell it. You cannot transfer it to someone else. You can use it, and you can waste it. And once it is gone, you can never get it back.

It is your time.

The first letters of the ששה סדרי משנה (*six orders of the Mishnah*) form the familiar רמז (*hint*) זמ״ן נק״ט.

And what is the very first word of the very first מסכת (*tractate*) in ש״ס (*the Talmud*)?

מאימתי.

From when?

The entire תורה שבעל פה (*the Oral Torah*) begins with a question about time.

The משנה in אבות ב:ד teaches us:

> אל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה, שמא לא תפנה (אבות ב:ד)

Do not say, "When I have time, I will learn," because perhaps that time will never come.

When will you have time? When things settle down? When work becomes less demanding? When the children get older? When life becomes a little easier?

There will always be something demanding your attention.

But there is a danger in thinking about time this way. A person can become overwhelmed with דאגה (*worry*), consumed by the hours he has wasted and the opportunities he has missed.

That is not the goal.

Our relationship with תורה should be driven by אהבה (*love*), not דאגה.

The פסוק (*verse*) in שיר השירים ב:ה says:

> סַמְּכוּנִי בָּאֲשִׁישׁוֹת רַפְּדוּנִי בַּתַּפּוּחִים כִּי חוֹלַת אַהֲבָה אָנִי (שיר השירים ב:ה)

For I am sick with love.

חולת אהבת תורה אני.

When you love something, you want to spend time with it. You look for opportunities. You make room for it in your life. Not because you are afraid of what will happen if you don't, but because you cannot imagine anything more precious.

You don't count the hours out of fear that they are slipping away. You treasure them because of what you can do with them.

Not anxiety over everything we haven't learned, but excitement over how much more there is to learn.

I think about this sometimes.

I don't want my מצבה (*gravestone*) to say that I was great with computers.

There is nothing wrong with being good at what you do. We have responsibilities. We need to make a פרנסה (*livelihood*), support our families, and fulfill our obligations. But is that what I want to define my life?

What do I want my children to remember?

I want them to remember Tatty sitting with a sefer, falling asleep over it because he didn't want to stop learning.

Tatty running to catch a מנין (*prayer quorum*). Working through a difficult פשט (*simple meaning*), refusing to settle for a מהלך (*line of thought*) that didn't really answer the question. The excitement when something finally made sense, and the determination to keep looking when it didn't.

But I also want them to remember Tatty sitting with them when they were sad. Listening to what was bothering them. Helping them with their homework.

I want them to remember the Shabbos טיש (*the Shabbos table*), singing זמירות (*Shabbos songs*) together. Playing games, laughing, going on trips, and simply enjoying being together.

I don't want my children to remember a father who was always too busy doing important things to spend time with them.

I want them to remember a father who loved תורה, who loved הקב״ה, and who loved his children.

And I want them to understand that these were not competing loves.

They were all part of the same חיים (*life*).

You see, until you see it, until you live it, these things are just stories in an Artscroll biography.

We read about great people and their מסירות נפש (*self-sacrifice*) for תורה. We admire them. We are inspired by them. But their lives can seem so far removed from our own.

Yet when a child can say, "My Tatty did that. My Tatty sacrificed for תורה," it becomes real.

He saw it with his own eyes. He grew up with it. It wasn't a story about somebody else's father.

It was his own home.

And perhaps, as he grows older, he comes to understand something even greater.

For Tatty, it wasn't sacrifice. It was חיים.

He wasn't giving up his life for תורה.

תורה was his life.

He wasn't forcing himself to sit with a sefer when he was exhausted. He wanted another few minutes. Another line. Another פשט. What looked like sacrifice from the outside was, for him, the greatest pleasure.

And that is what I want my children to inherit.

Not merely the knowledge that תורה is important. Not simply the understanding that learning is an obligation.

I want them to love it.

Whether they are sitting in כולל (*a kollel for married men*) in a little apartment or living in a beautiful house with a successful career, תורה should remain the center of their lives.

Their circumstances may change. Their responsibilities may grow. The hours available for learning may be different at every stage of life.

But what they love need not change.

It sounds beautiful. But living that way is not so simple.

Another half hour. Where does it belong?

That could be another דף (*folio*) of גמרא learned. Another half hour of work, earning a little more money to support my family. A walk with a child. A conversation with my wife.

All of them are valuable. All of them matter.

So how do you make that חשבון (*accounting*)? How do you know where that half hour belongs?

And perhaps even more difficult, how do you know what each person needs from you at that particular moment?

One child needs you to listen. Another needs help with homework. Your spouse needs your attention. There are responsibilities at work, a סוגיא (*topic*) waiting to be understood, and a hundred other things demanding your time.

You cannot do everything at once. Sometimes choosing one good thing means putting aside another.

What a חכמה (*wisdom*) it is to know how to give everyone what they need, in the right measure, at the right time.

It takes a lifetime to master.

And I wish I knew the perfect balance.

I don't.

When I was in ישיבה, life was relatively simple.

You had your סדרים (*study sessions*). You had your חברותות (*study partners*). You knew when you were supposed to learn and what you were supposed to be doing.

Of course, learning was hard. Understanding a difficult סוגיא was hard. But the structure of your day was built around תורה. The question of where your time belonged was largely answered for you.

Real life is much harder.

We don't live in the מדבר (*wilderness*), with מן (*the manna*) falling from שמים (*Heaven*) each morning.

We have to earn a פרנסה. We have spouses and children who need us. Bills to pay. Responsibilities that cannot simply be put aside because we want to learn another דף.

And none of these responsibilities are distractions from life. They are life.

Sometimes the greatest challenge is not finding the strength to open a sefer. It is finding the חכמה to know when to close it.

And sometimes the challenge is exactly the opposite. To recognize that the work can wait, that there will always be another email, another problem to solve, another dollar to earn, and that now is the time to open the sefer.

How do you know?

I wish I had a perfect answer.

But perhaps that is part of the עבודה (*service*) of life. To build a home, provide for a family, be present for those who depend on us, and through it all, never lose that אהבה for תורה.

Not to live in the מדבר, but to bring the תורה of the מדבר into the life we actually live.

תורה is not merely what we do during סדר (*study session*). It is what teaches us how to live when סדר is over.

And perhaps that is why אהבת התורה is so important.

Because when תורה is something you love, it remains at the center of your life even when you cannot spend every moment learning.

You still look forward to opening a sefer. You still get excited by a difficult קושיא (*difficult question*). You still cannot settle for a מהלך that doesn't make sense. And when you finally understand something, there is a שמחה (*joy*) that is difficult to describe to someone who has never experienced it.

חולת אהבת תורה אני.

I am sick with my love for תורה.

Not a sickness of דאגה. Not a fear of falling behind or an anxiety over everything I have failed to accomplish.

But a longing for more.

Another שעה (*hour*). Another סוגיא. Another opportunity to understand something I didn't understand yesterday.

And there is no greater sickness.

We will all have regrets. Nobody uses every moment perfectly, and nobody accomplishes everything he hopes to accomplish.

But the answer to wasted time is not to spend the time we have left worrying about what we have lost.

It is to fall in love with what we can do with the time we have been given.

And perhaps we can return to where we began.

מאימתי.

When?

When should I learn? When should I work? When should I close the sefer and listen to my child? When does my spouse need my attention more than anything else I could be doing?

I wish I always knew the answer.

But perhaps the greatest חכמה is never to stop asking the question.

What does הקב״ה want from me at this moment?

We may spend our entire lives trying to get that חשבון right. We will make mistakes. We may never find the perfect balance.

But we can keep trying, not out of דאגה, but out of אהבה for everything and everyone הקב״ה has placed in our lives.

We will all have regrets. Don't let wasted time be one of them.

And when our children look back, may they remember not only that we made time for תורה, but that we loved תורה. Not only that we provided for them, but that we were there for them.

May they inherit an אהבה so deep that wherever life takes them, תורה remains at the center.

חולת אהבת תורה אני.

There is no greater sickness.

May we be זוכה (*merit*) to live with genuine אהבת התורה, to find our greatest שמחה in learning and growing, and to have the חכמה to give our families the love, attention, and time they need. May our children see in us not merely people who sacrificed for תורה, but people for whom תורה was חיים.

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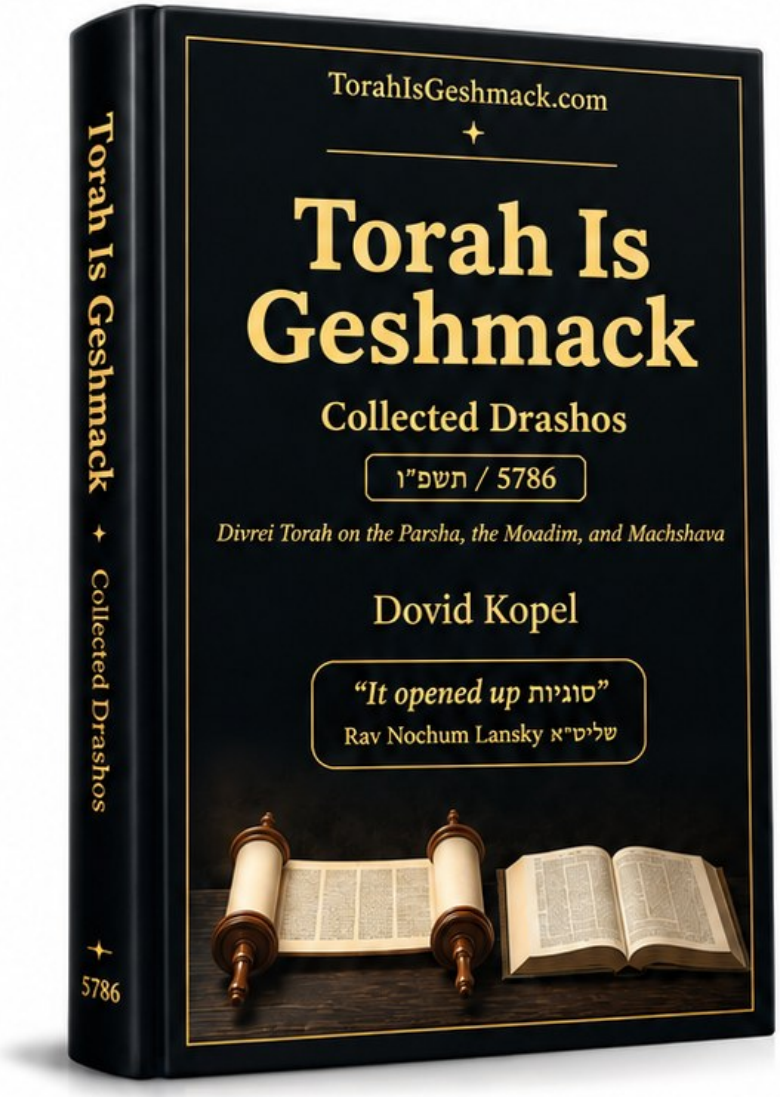
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