



# Bet Horaah

בית הוראה

# Shaarei Ezra

שערי עזרא

**Parshat Vayeshev**  
**Zmanim for New York:**  
**Candle Lighting: 4:13pm**  
**Shabbat ends: 5:18pm**  
**R"T 5:45pm**

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**HASHEM ALWAYS LOVES ME: ONLY GOOD, MORE GOOD; A CLOSER LOOK AT THE LYRICS**  
 WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**  
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## HALACHA QUESTION?

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The new song that has taken the Jewish world by storm raises serious questions in *emunah* and adds to a growing list of hits in recent years that portray Jewish beliefs inaccurately. Specifically, this song conveys the message that Hashem always loves me and that I will endure nothing but good—followed by even more good and more good.

Before examining whether this song aligns with Torah perspectives, let us consider other songs that have also become iconic in the Jewish world but portray false ideas. For example, the song that says, "Whoever believes doesn't fear to lose his belief," implies that if one has belief in Hashem, there



is no need to worry about losing that belief. This song has been sung by people for many years, shaping their mindset around this idea.

The truth is that the Mishnah in *Avot* (2:4) teaches the opposite, that one should not trust in oneself until the day of death. The Bartenura explains that this refers to not trusting oneself to maintain faith. As the Gemara in *Berachot* (29a) states, even Yochanan Kohen Gadol, who served as High Priest for 80 years, ultimately became a Sadducee (*Tzeduki*).

There are a few more examples from songs, but let us focus on this very new song and analyze it. Normally, we wouldn't pay much attention to songs, as many of them are not written by rabbis—let alone by religious individuals. However, this particular song has permeated every Jewish home, school, wedding, and bar mitzvah, making it impossible to ignore. Moreover, the lyrics are said to have been written by the renowned Breslev rabbi, Rabbi Shalom Arush, who is well-known for bringing many people closer to Hashem.

Additionally, we are not the first to analyze this song, as it has already sparked a significant debate over its lyrics, which, as we will see, are problematic at best

Regarding the lyrics of the song stating, "Hashem always loves me," which imply that one's actions do not affect this love, we can reference the words of the Rambam (Teshuva 7,6), who conveys the opposite sentiment. He writes: "Teshuvah brings near those who were far removed. Previously, this person was hated by Hashem, disgusting, far removed, and abominable. Now, he is beloved and desirable, close, and dear."

The words of the Rambam clearly indicate that one is not always loved by Hashem, as this depends on their actions.

To reconcile these ideas, one could argue that some interpret the Rambam as referring specifically to extremely wicked individuals, not merely someone who has sinned (*Divrei Yirmiyahu*).

Now let us get to the core of the controversy. The lyrics stating, "I will always endure only good," seem inconsistent with reality and with our *mesorah*.

With reality, if we were to experience only good, how could bad things ever happen? The song suggests that one will receive better and better because Hashem loves them. Yet, we know of the age-old question asked by Moshe Rabbeinu, the prophet Yirmiyahu, and discussed in the *Gemara (Brachot 7a)*: how is it that bad things happen to righteous people?

We firmly believe that Hashem loves the righteous, so according to the song's premise, why don't they experience only good?

Regarding the lyrics of the song suggesting that "things will only get better," we can bring a teaching (as quoted by prominent rabbis in Israel) from the holy Chafetz Chaim: "It is forbidden for a person to say that things could be better. One may only say that the current situation is bitter, but it cannot be better, because whatever Hashem does is the very best for a person."

Likewise, there is a story of someone who once

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told the Chafetz Chaim that if he had a few more dollars, his situation would improve. The Chafetz Chaim corrected him, explaining that Hashem always provides a person with exactly what they need in the best possible way. If having a few more dollars were truly better for him, Hashem would have already given it to him.

Regarding the lyrics suggesting that one will only have good, we can reference the well-known words of the Chazon Ish on *emunah* and *bitachon* (trust in Hashem):

"An old misconception has taken root in the hearts of many regarding the concept of *bitachon*. The term *bitachon*, which is praised as a primary virtue by the pious, has come to mean [falsely] an obligation to believe—in any situation where a person faces an uncertain future with two possible outcomes, one good and the other not—that the good will certainly occur. If one doubts or fears the opposite of good, they are deemed to lack *bitachon*. However, this interpretation of *bitachon* is incorrect. Unless the future has been clarified through prophecy, the outcome is not determined, for who knows the judgments of Hashem and His boundaries?! Rather, the essence of *bitachon* is the trust that there is no randomness in the world, and everything that occurs under the sun is decreed by Him." The words of the Chazon Ish clearly demonstrate that we cannot know if things will be good. *Bitachon* teaches that everything that happens, whether perceived as good or bad, is directed by Hashem and serves a purpose.

To justify the words of the song, which were written by Rabbi Arush

as mentioned earlier, we can interpret them as referring to what is good in Hashem's eyes, rather than what we perceive with our limited understanding. This means that while we may see something as bad—just as Moshe Rabbeinu questioned why the righteous suffer—in Hashem's view, everything is reflected in its true essence as the ultimate good for that person.

The *Chovot HaLevavot* teaches that since Hashem loves us, He always does what is best for us. However, "best" does not mean having a good time as we perceive it, but rather the ultimate good in its true and deeper context, as only Hashem understands.

This can be compared to a child who wants candy for breakfast, believing it to be the best thing for him. However, his parents, out of love and care, do not allow it and instead give him a nutritious breakfast, which is the true good for him, even if the child doesn't recognize it at the moment.

We can also add that the words might reflect an element of wishful thinking, as seen in the well-known saying of the Tzemach Tzedek: "*If you think good, things will be good.*" This motto is embraced by some Jewish communities, even though it is not a statement sourced in *Chazal* or the *Rishonim*, who appear to hold the opposite view, that our mindset does not determine our future, but rather our actions—whether we are good or bad. Still, there is also the concept of *bitachon*, where a person who places their trust and belief in Hashem is rewarded positively with good.

**FROM FLAX TO SPARK: HOW ISRAEL'S STRENGTH BURNS BRIGHT**

In the end of last week's parasha, the Torah lists the descendants of Esav, with the list continuing extensively. One who reads it is left wondering how Am Yisrael could ever manage if all these masses were to turn against them, as they have done repeatedly throughout history. Similarly, Hashem tells Avraham Avinu that Yishmael's descendants will multiply and fill the entire world, a prospect that also seems daunting.

Rashi, at the beginning of this week Parasha (Vayishlach 32:8), explains that this was precisely how Yaakov Avinu felt when he learned of Esav's vast population. However, Hashem reassured him, saying that Yosef, Yaakov's son, would overcome them.

Rashi brings a parable to explain Hashem's reassurance to Yaakov Avinu. He describes a man carrying large loads of flax to a blacksmith's store. Seeing the sheer volume, the blacksmith wondered, "*Where will all this flax fit?*" A wise man responded, "*One spark from your furnace can burn it all.*"

The parable illustrates that while Esav's descendants seemed numerous and intimidating, Yosef, symbolized by the spark, had the power to overcome and nullify their strength. For generations, Jews read these comforting words and believed in them wholeheartedly, even when they seemed out of touch with the harsh realities of relentless persecution and suffering, often without a glimpse of light.

In recent years, this message feels even more alarming, as the enemies of Israel amass enormous arsenals of deadly rockets and dig extensive tunnel networks, encircling the small country



from all sides. The situation appears almost impossible to defend, leaving many wondering how the Jewish people can endure and protect themselves in the face of such overwhelming threats. Yet, the parable continues to remind us of Hashem's promise and the hidden strength embedded within.

No one imagined that within a few short weeks, the entire chokehold on the small country would collapse. It all began with a spark from the blacksmith's workshop—behind the Mossad computer offices—where the press of a button ignited thousands of beepers in Lebanon, leading to the collapse of Hezbollah's mighty army. This was followed by a domino effect: Syria was significantly diminished, and Iran's influence weakened, leaving the entire world in shock at how swiftly the tide had turned.

The tunnel infrastructure in Gaza and Lebanon was dismantled, leaving them exposed to devastation.

This is a true unfolding of the prophecy in Rashi, something no one could have predicted. However, it requires a closer look and deeper understanding, as Chazal's parables are profound and carry inner meanings.

First, let's analyze the man carrying the flax who enters the blacksmith's shop in an intrusive manner, bringing his heavy load without the blacksmith's consent. Since the man with the flax represents the hostile nations and the blacksmith symbolizes Israel, this clearly conveys that the nations will attempt to conquer the Jewish nation by overwhelming it with vast armies and weapons, despite the Jewish nation posing no threat to them.

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We also need to understand why Chazal chose the example of the flax versus the blacksmith and the spark for their parable? The answer lies in the symbolism: the flax represents earthly, material possessions, while the spark is spiritual—it is not made of anything tangible. This teaches us that Israel's power to defeat its enemies lies in Torah learning and spirituality, not in building a strong army

or amassing weapons.

This message especially resonates this month, the month we celebrate the victory of Chanukah, where the few and weak triumphed over the many and strong. This is the Jewish legacy—the legacy of spirituality and purity prevailing against evil and overwhelming odds.

**IS SYRIA PART OF ISRAEL'S PROMISED TERRITORY?**

A couple of months ago, when the conflict between Israel and Lebanon erupted, we published an article titled 'Is Lebanon Part of Israel's Promised Territory?'

We discuss how Hashem promised Avraham Avinu the Land of Israel, extending from the River of Egypt (which includes Gaza in the south) to the Euphrates River near Turkey in the north. The Torah delineates Lebanon as part of Israel's borders.

This article was posted on a popular news website and within days went viral throughout the Arab media. It was shared extensively, sparking an outcry of anger over the claim that Jews were purportedly seeking to occupy Lebanon as well. Although the website quickly removed the article, it was already too late—the article had been reposted in its entirety across the internet.

Adding to the controversy, this publication followed a previous article posted more than a year ago, titled 'Is Gaza a Jewish Land?' That earlier article also generated debate and backlash.

In light of these discussions and the recent events in Syria, today we wish to explore another related question: What is the status of the land of Syria? According to the Torah, is Syria considered Jewish land?

The question of whether Syria is part of biblical Israel's territory is a complex one, rooted in the Torah and historical accounts of the ancient Land of Israel. Various descriptions of Israel's borders in the Torah and Tanakh suggest that portions of what is now modern-day Syria overlap with the territories described as part of biblical Israel.

**Torah Boundaries**

Syria, unlike Gaza and Lebanon, although part of the Promised Land granted to Avraham Avinu and defined within the borders of the Torah, was to be conquered only after the entire of the Land of Israel was secured. In contrast, the entire Land of Israel, including Gaza, was conquered by Yehoshua and immediately divided among the tribes to grant it the full status of the Land of Israel. Consequently, Gaza and Lebanon were subject to the full laws of the Land of Israel, including the obligation to separate portions of agricultural produce for the Kohanim and Leviim.

The Torah outlines the boundaries of the Promised Land in multiple places, such as Bamidbar (34) and Devarim (11:24). While the core of Eretz Yisrael is centered around modern-day Israel, these descriptions often extend to broader regions. For instance, the border sometimes includes the area up to the Euphrates River, a significant geographical feature that flows through modern Syria. This suggests that parts of Syria were within the envisioned borders of biblical Israel.

The land of Syria was conquered by King David, but this conquest was not carried out in full accordance with the proper order. As

explained above, he was supposed to conquer the entire Land of Israel first before acquiring new territory which he didn't. Additionally, Syria was conquered not by the entire nation but by King David's private army. Our sages referred to this as a 'single conquest.' As a result, Syria holds a status that is not entirely equivalent to the Land of Israel.



**The Rambam on the land of Syria**

The Rambam (Beginning of Halachot of Trumot) writes in regards to the laws of separating Trumah: Whenever *Eretz Yisrael* is mentioned, the intent is the lands conquered by the King of Israel or a prophet with the consent of the entire Jewish people. This is called "a conquest of the community." If, however, an individual Jew, a family, or a tribe go and conquer a place for themselves - even in the land given to Abraham - it is not considered as *Eretz Yisrael* in the sense that one is obligated to observe all the mitzvot there. The

lands which King David conquered outside of the Land of Canaan, e.g., Aram Naharaim, Aram Tzovah, Achlab, and the like, even though he was a King of Israel and he was acting with the consent of the High Court, is not considered as the Land of Israel with regard to all matters, nor is it like the Diaspora, i.e., Babylonia and Egypt with regard to all matters. Instead, it was removed from the category of the Diaspora, but did not enter the category of *Eretz Yisrael*.

Why its level was considered lower than that of *Eretz Yisrael*? Because David conquered them before he conquered all of *Eretz Yisrael*. Instead, there were still members of the seven nations there. If, however, he had conquered *Eretz Yisrael* entirely, in all of its boundaries, and afterwards conquered other lands, his entire conquest would have been equivalent to *Eretz Yisrael* with regard to all matters. The lands which King David conquered are called Syria.

**Historical Context**

The Jewish people have a long history in Syria, starting from the patriarchs and continuing through to the recent esteemed and glorified communities who lived there for many generations, which were known for their deep learning and Torah scholarship.

The Torah describes the Avot (Patriarchs) and Imahot (Matriarchs) events in areas that are part of modern-day Syria or its surrounding regions:

**Avraham Avinu**

Avraham Avinu was in Syria during parts of his life. The Torah mentions that he traveled extensively throughout the region. For example:

**Charan:** Avraham lived in Charan

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(modern-day southern Turkey or northern Syria) before being commanded by Hashem to go to the Land of Canaan (Bereishit 12:1-5).

**Damascus:** In Bereishit 14:15, Avraham pursued the kings who had captured Lot "until Chovah, which is to the north of Damascus," indicating his presence near or within the Syrian region.

**Eliezer of Damascus:** Avraham's servant Eliezer is described as being from Damascus (Bereishit 15:2), suggesting that Avraham had connections or interactions in that area.

**Yitzchak**

**Rivkah's Origins:** Rivkah, Yitzchak's wife, came from Padan Aram (Bereishit 25:20), a region identified with Aram Naharaim, near Charan in modern-day northern Syria or southern Turkey.

**Yaakov**

**Journey to Charan:** Yaakov fled to Charan (also part of Aram, in the region of Syria) to escape Esav's anger and to find a wife (Bereishit 28:10). He lived there for 20 years, working for Lavan and marrying Leah and Rachel.

**Leah and Rachel**

Both Leah and Rachel, daughters of Lavan, were born and raised in the region of Padan Aram (Bereishit 29). Lavan, their father is explicitly described as an Aramean (Devarim 26:5).

**Bilhah and Zilpah**

Bilhah and Zilpah, the handmaids who became mothers of several of Yaakov's children, were also from Lavan's household, thus tied to Syria.

**King David**

As explained, during the height of the United Monarchy under King

David and King Solomon, the kingdom expanded to include territories beyond the immediate borders of Israel. For example:

- **Aram:** Northern regions such as Aram-Damascus (modern-day southern Syria) were mentioned in the context of interactions, alliances, and conflicts with Israel. Damascus, a prominent city in Syria, played a significant role in biblical history.

- **Hamath:** This ancient city, now part of central Syria, is referenced as a northern boundary of Israel's sphere of influence during Solomon's reign (Melachim 1. 8:65).

- **The Euphrates River (Nehar Perat):** In some texts, the Land of Israel's borders are described as stretching "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Bereshit 15:18). This expansive definition includes parts of Syria, particularly its southern and central regions.

In summary, while not all the Avot and Imahot lived in Syria for extended periods, many significant events and connections in their lives involved regions of modern-day Syria, especially through their familial ties and journeys.

Let us conclude with the encouraging words of Chazal regarding the end of times before the arrival of Mashiach:

The Sifrei states: "In the future, Jerusalem will expand in all directions, and the gates of Jerusalem will extend as far as Damascus" (Sifrei Devarim, 1).

May these unfolding events mark the beginning of the fulfillment of those prophecies.

**אסור לחלוטין להשתמש בכיריים אינדוקציה בשבת**

עליהם סיר או מחבט ואז סלילי המגנט המונחים מתחת לזכוכית הקראמית סוגרות מעגל חשמלי הגורם לחימום מהירות של הסיר המונח מעליו. וברגע שמסירים את הסיר מעל הכיריים, נפסק מיד תהליך החימום והכיריים מתחילות להתקרר.

מכיון שכיריים אינדוקציה הינם דבר חדש ולא כולם יודעים את תכונתה, לכן לפני שמתארח בשבת במקום שיש בו כיריים יבדוק אם הם אינדוקציה, וזאת כי הם נראים דומים לכיריים קרמיות. צורת הבדיקה היא פשוטה שיבדוק אם הם מתחממות אחר שנותן עליהם סיר, וכשמסיר מעליהן את הסיר הם מתקררות.



**אסור לחלוטין להשתמש בכיריים אינדוקציה בשבת. ואם רצונו להשתמש בכיריים בשבת יבדוק לפני השבת שהם אינם אינדוקציה.**

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Moshe Ben Tune**

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