



# Bet Haraah

## בית הוראה

# Shaarei Ezra

## שערי עזרא

Parshat Shlach Lecha

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### NATION RISES LIKE A LION—WHO SHALL STAND BEFORE IT?

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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### הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא

Throughout history, the Jewish people have carried many titles—"a nation of priests," "a light unto the nations," and "a stiff-necked people." But among the most striking images is that of the lion. Fierce, noble, and unafraid, the lion represents more than strength—it embodies spiritual might, moral courage, and the ability to rise against all odds. From the blessings of Yaakov to the prophecies of Bilam, from ancient battlefields to modern-day wars, the lion has stood as a symbol of Jewish resilience and bravery.

This symbolism is not merely poetic. When Israel launched a powerful strike against Iran, the operation was named "**Nation Rises Like a Lion**"—a reference to Bilam's prophecy: "*Behold, a nation rises like a lioness, and like a lion it lifts itself up*" (Bamidbar 23:24). The choice of this name wasn't accidental; it reflected the same enduring spirit that has defined Jewish courage for millennia.

The Ramban (Bamidbar 8:18) writes: "*It is known that Israel are valiant and courageous in battle, for they are likened to lions and wolves that seize prey, and they conquered the kings of Canaan in battle.*" This statement reveals not only a historical truth about our victories but also a deeper identity trait embedded within the Jewish soul—courage and fearlessness in the face of conflict.

In the past, we wrote about the connection between our nation and the image of the lion. But today, with the historic attack on Iran, this comparison takes on new meaning—especially when viewed through the precise and prophetic insight of the Or HaChayim:

"Behold, it is a nation that arises like a lion etc."

"לביא" refers to a young lion rising for the first time.

Typically, inexperienced soldiers do not demonstrate great bravery in their initial battles. But not so with the lion—it displays courage from its very first con-

frontation. Bilam attributes this trait to the Jewish people: despite emerging from centuries of slavery, they showed remarkable valor, defeating mighty kings like Sichon and Og. Bilam continues, 'וכארי יתנשא'—and like a lion he shall lift himself—highlighting another contrast: while other nations grow weary and weakened from repeated wars, the Jewish people rise again and again with the strength of a mature lion, never showing signs of fatigue or decline."



The analogy of the Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh, who lived over 250 years ago, is both powerful and deeply relevant to our times. He compares

Am Yisrael to a young lion cub that rises to pounce even before it has fully matured. This vividly reflects the story of the Jewish nation, which rose from the ashes of the Holocaust to confront multiple powerful Arab armies surrounding it. Like the lion cub, Israel rose to the challenge despite being outnumbered and seemingly weaker—armed with extraordinary courage and deep trust in Hashem. And just like the lion, repeated wars did not weaken or exhaust this small nation, but only sharpened its strength and resolve to persevere and triumph in every battle for survival.

Here's a more concise and engaging version with mid-rashic tone and sharp insights:

One of the earliest and most powerful comparisons between the Jewish people and a lion appears in Yaakov's blessing to Yehudah (Bereishit 49:9): **גור אֲרִיָּה יְהוּדָה... כָּרַע רֶבֶץ בְּאֲרִיָּה וְכָלְבִּיא מִי יְקִימוּהוּ.** "A lion cub is Yehudah... He crouches and lies like a lion—who shall rouse him?"

Yehudah is not merely fierce—he is royal. Like a lion, he doesn't chase glory; he rests with confidence, and when he rises, the world trembles. The Midrash teaches that this lion-like strength was passed on

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to his descendants. That's why we are called **Yehudim**—not just by lineage, but by nature.

This isn't about brute force. "From the prey, my son, you rose"—Yehudah had the courage to admit failure (with Tamar) and still lead. That's Jewish strength: rising not by stepping on others, but by standing up with truth.

The *Shulchan Aruch*, the foundational guide to a Jew's daily conduct, opens with the instruction to "wake up like a lion," symbolizing both inner strength and spiritual courage from the very first moment of the day.

But here's why this message is so critical: if a lion forgets he's a lion and begins to see himself as a rabbit, others will treat him like one. He'll be harassed, hunted, and mocked—because he forfeited his own majesty.

This isn't just a metaphor. It's a pattern in Jewish history. When we lose touch with our identity—with the strength, dignity, and spiritual grandeur embedded in our soul—others sense the void and step in to define us instead. When the Jewish people stop seeing themselves as Hashem's nation, charged with a unique mission and backbone of courage, the world stops seeing it too. We blend in, shrink back, and are no longer feared or respected.

But a lion who remembers who he is doesn't need to roar all the time. His very presence commands awe. When we carry ourselves

with inner clarity, rooted in Torah and emunah, the world reacts differently. Respect returns. Fear returns. Order returns.

This is why remembering our true nature is not just inspiration—it's protection. Our survival has always depended not only on Hashem's miracles but also on our refusal to forget who we are.

But the more important point is this: we, as a nation, represent Hashem in this world. We are His ambassadors among the nations, His reflection on earth. And Hashem expects us to carry ourselves as royalty—not with arrogance, but with dignity, purpose, and moral strength.

A king's honor is measured by the stature of his emissaries. If we walk hunched, uncertain, or afraid—how does that reflect on the King we serve? But when we rise with confidence, act with integrity, and live with courage and clarity, we bring glory to His Name.

This is why we cannot afford to live small. We must rise to the task—not just for ourselves, but because Hashem's kavod depends on it. When the Jewish people walk like lions, the world remembers the majesty of the Creator they serve. And when we forget, the world forgets too.

Our strength, our nobility, our very presence must remind the world that Hashem's people are still here—and that His Name lives through us.

## TEHRAN TREMBLES, JERUSALEM RISES: YONATAN BEN UZIEL'S VISION COMES ALIVE

In *Brit Bein HaBetarim* (Bereishit 15:7–21) Hashem reveals to Avraham Avinu a prophetic vision outlining the future of the Jewish people. This foundational moment sets the stage for Jewish destiny, including both exile and redemption.

Within this covenant, Hashem makes a dramatic appearance—"a smoking furnace and a flaming torch that passed between the pieces." This symbolizes a binding agreement and Divine presence accompanying Avraham's descendants throughout the ages. Upon witnessing current world events—especially the war with Iran—it's astonishing to realize how all of this was already outlined in the Torah, as explained by Yonatan ben Uziel.

Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, the earliest and most expansive Aramaic commentary on the Torah, brings a profound interpretation to this passage. He views the vision as not just referring to the Egyptian exile but as an allusion to the **four exiles**—each represented by a different kingdom that would dominate Israel in the future. This mirrors the interpretation later expanded in Sefer Daniel.

The pasuk states: "*As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Avraham, and behold—a dread, great darkness fell upon him*" (Bereishit 15:12). Chazal note that four distinct expressions are used in this

pasuk: **deep sleep** (תרדמה), **dread** (אימה), **great darkness** (חשכה גדולה), and **falling** (נופלת). What do these four elements hint to?

Targum Yonatan connects the four empires to the pieces of the covenant to show that Jewish suffering is never random, but part of the Divine plan—foretold from the very beginning of our national destiny.

**Deep sleep** (תרדמה)—symbolizes the Babylonian exile, when the people were spiritually asleep and disconnected after the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash.

**Dread** (אימה)—represents the Persian-Mede Empire, in which the Jews faced existential fear, as in the story of Haman and the threat of national annihilation.

**Great darkness** (חשכה גדולה)—refers to the Greek exile, which brought a darkness of the soul—spiritual war against Torah, mitzvot, and Jewish identity.

**Falling** (נופלת)—points to the Persian (Iran) exile, marked by destruction, dispersion, and the ongoing challenges of galut.

Here, the Targum offers a profound insight: he explains that in the end of days, this empire will fall and will never rise again—and from its downfall, Israel will rise, and Mashiach will come. Throughout history, this seemed impossible to anticipate. But what we've witnessed



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over the past week is a precise unfolding of this prophecy: Persia—modern-day Iran—is collapsing, while Israel is rising in the most miraculous ways. (Note that in some versions, the Targum reads *Edom* instead of *Persia*.)

In the prophecy of Daniel, Yishmael does not appear as the fourth exile; instead, it is Edom. This stands in clear contrast to what is presented here.

Yishmael is notably absent from the list of the four empires described in Daniel's prophecy. The Maharal explains this omission: unlike the others, Yishmael never had to conquer an existing empire. As a descendant of Avraham Avinu, Yishmael carried an innate sense of royalty and nationhood, which set him apart from the imperial powers that rose through domination.

Nevertheless, Daniel's vision subtly includes Yishmael. In the statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar, the feet were composed of both iron and clay—iron representing Edom (Rome/Christianity), and clay symbolizing Yishmael (Islam). This mixture implies that in the final chapter of world history, these two powers—Edom and

Yishmael—will stand together as the last great forces before the ultimate redemption.

The Gemara in Yoma (10a) records a debate as to which of the two—Edom or Yishmael (often referred to there as Persia, understood by many to mean modern-day Iran)—will dominate at the very end. This uncertainty is reflected in the unstable composition of the statue's feet: two conflicting elements that cannot truly merge.

But the prophecy doesn't end with them. A stone—unshaped by human hands—strikes the statue and shatters it. This stone represents the eternal kingdom of Hashem, led by an "ancient of days" who reigns forever. It is a vision of Mashiach and the ultimate redemption, when all false powers collapse and Divine truth fills the world.

We are standing at the threshold of that moment. Based on the words of Chazal and the unfolding of world events, it seems that the final stage of history is already in motion. The end of exile is near—and with it, the dawn of eternal clarity.

**"ONE WHO BELIEVES DOES NOT FEAR!"**

**Question:**

When rockets head toward Israel, the clear protocol is to take cover in a secure shelter. Those who remain outside place their lives at risk. But if a person has true faith, must he enter a protected area? After all, no one can be harmed unless it has been decreed from Heaven—and if it has been decreed, then no power in the world can prevent it.

**Answer:**

At first glance, from several places in Chazal, it seems clear that everything is in the hands of Heaven, and one who places his trust in Hashem should not be afraid of harm. After all, there is no death without sin (Shabbat 55b), and all is in the hands of Heaven (Ketubot 30a).

Also the gmara (Rosh Hashanah 16b) states:

*"Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah—one for the wicked, one for the righteous, and one for the average. The righteous are inscribed and sealed immediately for life; the wicked are inscribed and sealed immediately for death; and the average are suspended from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit, they are inscribed for life; if not, they are inscribed for death."* So it seems that a person's fate is sealed at the start of the year. Why, then, should one be cautious about something that has already been decreed?

However, this raises a difficulty: the Talmud in several places instructs a person to take precautions to protect himself. For example, the Sages were exceptionally careful to avoid contact with individuals suffering from contagious illnesses.

In Bereishit Rabbah (16:3), it says that Rabbi Yochanan forbade walking within four cubits of a leper, and Reish Lakish went further, saying even 100 cubits should be kept.

Similarly, in the case of those with the severe and contagious illness called "ra'atan" (likely a form of epilepsy or another neurological condition), it is written in Ketubot (77b) that Rabbi Yochanan warned people to avoid even the flies from those afflicted. Rabbi Zeira would avoid standing in their wind, and Rabbi Elazar would not enter the same tent.

Tosafot (Ketubot 30a) already addressed a similar contradiction—on the one hand, "everything is in the hands of Heaven" and yet (Shabbat 32a) one should never place himself in danger or pass under a leaning wall. This shows that a person is required to protect himself from harm. Tosafot resolves this by explaining that a person is obligated

to protect himself from known dangers—such as deliberately entering a hazardous situation—while harm that is decreed from Heaven will occur regardless of one's precautions. For instance, if it's cold outside, one should dress warmly to avoid illness; if it's hot, he should stay cool and hydrated. However, when it comes to unforeseen or unknown threats, there is no obligation to take extra precautions, as such events are governed by Divine decree and fall under the realm of faith.

**The Mesillat Yesharim (Chapter 9)** expounds this: "You may ask: haven't our sages required that a person protect himself well in every circumstance and not expose him-





## "ONE WHO BELIEVES DOES NOT FEAR!"

self to danger—even a righteous and pious person? Indeed, they said (Ketubot 30a): 'Everything is in the hands of Heaven except cold and heat.' And the pasuk says (Devarim 4:15), 'Take very great care of your lives.' So this seems to contradict the idea of full trust in Hashem.

Answer: there is proper fear and foolish fear, trust and recklessness. Hashem gave humans intelligence and wisdom to act wisely and protect themselves from harm. One who refuses to act with reason and exposes himself to danger is not expressing trust—but foolishness. This is against the will of the Creator, who desires that man guard himself.

So not only is such a person exposed to real danger, he also sins by doing so—bringing punishment upon himself. The correct form of caution is based on reason and wisdom, as in the pasuk (Mishlei 22:3), 'The prudent man sees harm and hides; the fools pass on and are punished.'

Foolish fear, on the other hand, is excessive caution that interferes with Torah and service of Hashem. The general rule, as Chazal said (Pesachim 8b): 'Where damage is commonly found, be cautious.' But where danger is not known, one should not fear it."

**Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 546)** explains why Hashem does not protect someone who enters danger, even if that person is innocent:

"Even though Hashem supervises all people and nothing happens unless He decrees it, man must still guard himself from natural dangers. Hashem created a world based on the rules of nature—fire burns, falling stones crush, and gravity pulls.

He gave us wisdom and the ability to protect ourselves.

Even though He is capable of miracles, He does not override nature for most people, even righteous ones. His will is for the world to operate in an orderly way. So if a person walks into danger, he is essentially harming himself."

**Chazon Ish** (Emunah U'Bitachon, ch. 2) writes: "A longstanding mistake has taken root in many hearts regarding bitachon. They believe that bitachon means trusting that everything will always go the way we want. That if someone fears something bad might happen, he lacks bitachon.

But this is not true. Unless the future has been revealed through prophecy, no one can know what will happen. True bitachon means believing that nothing happens by chance, and that everything that happens is directed by Hashem."

**Pele Yoetz** (entry "Havtachah") writes the same: "*Bitachon is a blessed trait that brings peace to the soul. But it does not mean believing that nothing bad will happen. Many righteous people have suffered greatly. The true meaning of bitachon is believing that everything Hashem does is for the best—even pain and hardship. Hashem knows what is truly good for our spiritual growth. Therefore, we should accept all that comes with joy and trust.*"

### Conclusion:

When there is a real threat of missiles such as when the government instructs to go to a protected shelter, anyone who does not go is endangering their life and removing Hashem's protection. Real faith and bitachon include using the wisdom Hashem gave us to act wisely and protect our lives.

## העובר את הגבול למדינה אחרת ויש עמו אוכל רשאי לזורקם ואין בזה משום בל תשחית.

בלא תשחית. ויוצא לדעת הרמב"ם שהאיסור דאורייתא הוא רק בהשחתת אילנות ולא בשאר דברים, ויש סוברים שגם שאר דברים אסורים מדאורייתא, כן הוכיח הרש"ש (בבא מציעא לב, ב) מדברי התוספות (ד"ה מדברי).

אמנם במקום שהתועלת גדולה מההיזק מצאנו בהרבה מקומות שאין בו איסור בל תשחית, וכן משמע מהתוספות הנ"ל שכבוד מלך ונשיא עדיף ודוחה את בל תשחית.

וכן מובא בגמרא (שבת קמ, א) שעדיף לעבור על איסור בל תשחית על מנת לשמור על בריאות הגוף.  
וכן ביאר הרא"ש (בבא קמא צב, א) שמותר לקצוץ אילן אם היה צריך למקומו, וכן הביא הט"ז (יו"ד סימן קטז סק"ו).

ידוע שברוב המדינות ישנם מגבלות חמורות על הכנסת מאכלים, ובעיקר פירות וירקות שלעיתים נושאים מחלות חקלאיות שונות. וכמו כן אסור להכניס בשרים ועופות ודגים. ומה יעשה מי שעומד לעבור את הגבול או שנחת במדינה אחרת ויש עמו אוכל?

מכיון שיש בהכנסת מאכלים סיכון מסוים לקנסות ויתכן שאף לחמור מזה, רשאי להשליכם ואין בזה איסור בל תשחית.

הנה בעיקר סוגיית בל תשחית אסרה התורה השחתת עצי פרי, שנאמר (דברים כ, יט): "לא תשחית את עצה לנדח עליו גרזן, כי ממנו תאכל ואותו לא תכרת", אלא שהוסיף הרמב"ם (פ"ו מהלכות מלכים ה"י) שלא האילנות בלבד נאסרו אלא שחז"ל אסרו כל השחתה וכגון המשבר כלים וקורע בגדים והורס בנין וסותם מעין ומאבד מאכלות דרך השחתה עובר

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