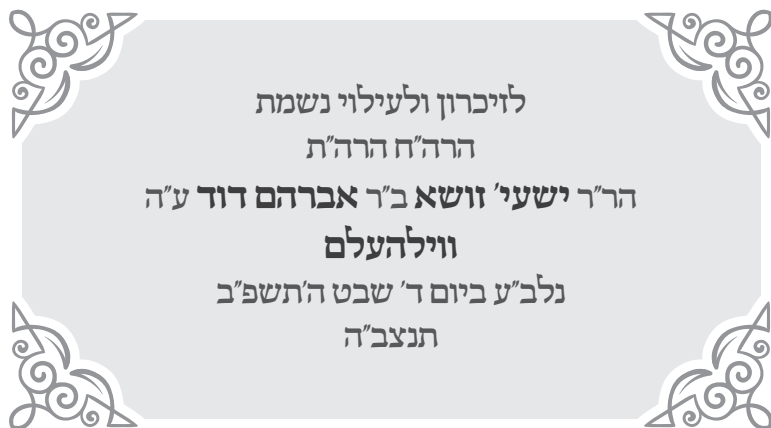


Shemos

THE WEISS EDITION

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FROM THE TEACHINGS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE  
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת  
הרה"ח הרה"ת  
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שמות

# Shemos

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1:22 | א:כב

כָּל הַבֶּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיְאֻרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל הַבַּת תַּחְיֶינָה

*You shall cast into the Nile every boy who is born, but every daughter you shall make live.*

## *Save Your Children from Pharaoh's Decree*

At first glance, it would seem that Pharaoh's decree targeted only the infant boys born to Bnei Yisrael, but not the baby girls. If so, why was it necessary for Pharaoh to add and emphasize, "but every daughter you shall keep alive"? This implies that keeping the daughters alive was an active and integral part of his evil plan.

Pharaoh's objective was to stop the growth and continuity of the Jewish people. As such, he decreed that half the children born to Bnei Yisrael be annihilated physically—and the others spiritually. Pharaoh did not tell the Egyptians to *allow* the Jewish baby girls to live; he told them, "Every daughter

[of Bnei Yisrael] *you shall make* live.” You—the very same Egyptians who are murdering the Jewish boys—should instill your Egyptian values and lifestyle into all the surviving children, thereby spiritually annihilating whatever remains of Bnei Yisrael.

Indeed, the first part of Pharaoh’s decree—to drown the baby boys in the Nile—conveys a similar message. Since it seldom rained in Egypt, the Egyptians relied on the waters of the Nile to irrigate their crops, and as they depended on it for their very sustenance, they considered the Nile a deity. Accordingly, drowning Jewish children in the Nile is a metaphor for immersing our children in the values, culture and lifestyle of our secular surroundings, thinking that this immersion will grant them a secure future.

It is crucial that we recognize that this approach stems from the likes of the evil Pharaoh—those who seek to destroy Jewish growth and continuity, if not physically then spiritually. In order to give our sons and daughters life, we must grant them an education that focuses on their true livelihood—the vitality that we Jews receive from “the Torah of Life.”

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 111-112*

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 ב:יג | 2:13
 

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וַיֵּצֵא בַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי וְהַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי אֲנָשִׁים עֹבְרִים  
 נֹצְיִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְרָשָׁע לָמָּה תִכֶּה רֵעֶךָ

*He went out on the second day, and behold, two Hebrew men were quarreling. He said to the wicked one, “Why will you strike your friend?”*

## Hands Down

The Torah describes Moshe’s encounter with two quarreling men. “He said to the wicked one, ‘Why will you strike your friend?’”

Notably, Moshe’s plea is in the future tense, indicating that the man he rebuked stood poised to hit his friend, but had not yet done so. Yet the Torah refers to him as “the wicked one,” notes the Talmud.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Rambam rules, “It is forbidden to raise one’s hand against a colleague. Whoever raises a hand against a colleague, even though he does not hit him, is considered a wicked person.”<sup>2</sup>

One understanding of the Rambam’s ruling is that raising your hand against a colleague is prohibited not only to prevent you from striking him, but because the negative character traits inherent in the act make it contemptible in and of itself.

Every aspect of human life exists in order to enable man to serve G-d, each limb in the human body contributing in its own unique way.<sup>3</sup> The hand, specifically, is synonymous with *giving*—benefiting others. Therefore, raising your hand

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1. Sanhedrin 58b.

2. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Chovel U’Mazik 5:2.

3. See Sefer Chareidim in detail.

in a manner associated with strife is forbidden and regarded as wicked, even if you do not actually hit anyone. For the very motion of raising your hand in strife defies the hand's G-dly ordained purpose: to perform acts of giving and lovingkindness.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 31, pp. 1-6*

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 ב:יד | 2:14
 

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וַיִּרָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵכֶן נֹדַע הַדָּבָר

*Moshe became frightened and said, "Indeed, the matter has become known!"*

## *The Scary Truth about Lashon Hara*

The redemption from Egypt marked the birth of the Jewish people—when Bnei Yisrael were chosen by G-d to be His nation.

This status was not earned through their virtues or merits. (In fact, due to the many years they spent in Egypt, many of Bnei Yisrael had fallen so low as to be drawn to idolatry.<sup>4</sup>) Rather, they attained their status as G-d's nation simply by His *choice*. In contrast with a *decision*, based on the qualities of the object or person selected, "pure choice" means to select between options that may be of equal merit; the selection of one over the other is unrelated to its qualities. That is why it was possible for Bnei Yisrael in Egypt to be chosen by G-d (and therefore redeemed) despite their lowly spiritual state at the time.

Yet, when Moshe discovered that there were talebearers among Bnei Yisrael, he became alarmed. "Since this is so," worried Moshe, "perhaps they do not deserve to be redeemed."<sup>5</sup> Why did Moshe fear that *lashon hara*, gossip, would render

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4. See Mishneh Torah, Hil. Avodah Zarah 1:3.

5. Rashi, Shemos 2:14.

Bnei Yisrael undeserving of being chosen and redeemed, more so than any other sin?

*Lashon hara* is unique among all other sins in its divisiveness. In addition to causing tension between people, gossiping about another person's deficiencies demonstrates that you lack empathy toward that person, even if you have no intention of causing that person actual harm, G-d forbid.

Accordingly, we can understand the cause for Moshe's concern upon discovering talebearers among Bnei Yisrael. Although G-d's selection of Bnei Yisrael as His nation was not contingent on their virtues, in order to be the Chosen Nation it was necessary for them to be a unit, and not a group of isolated individuals. Moshe therefore feared that the divisiveness of *lashon hara* could ruin their cohesiveness and their identity as a unit, thereby preventing them from becoming the Chosen *Nation*. Though they might not have required any other virtue or merit to qualify as G-d's choice, only through unity could Bnei Yisrael constitute a "nation" that G-d could choose as His own.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 31, pp. 8-12*



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 ב:יד-טו | 2:14-15
 

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וַיִּירָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבֵן נִוְדַע הַדָּבָר:  
 וַיִּשְׁמַע פַּרְעֹה אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לְהַרְגוֹ  
 אֶת מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבְרַח מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי פַרְעֹה

*Moshe became frightened and said, "Indeed, the matter has become known." Pharaoh heard of this incident, and he sought to slay Moshe; and Moshe fled from before Pharaoh.*

## The Power of Positive Thinking

When Moshe discovered that people knew he had killed an Egyptian taskmaster, he became fearful for his future. Indeed, Pharaoh learned of the episode shortly thereafter, and sought to have him killed.

With this episode, the Torah hints at the extraordinary power of *bitachon*—complete trust in G-d’s goodness and grace.

Having *bitachon* requires more than mere belief that since G-d orchestrates every detail of existence at every moment, whatever happens to you will certainly be for the very best. Rather, to have *bitachon* means to *be at ease* and trust that G-d will grant you goodness in the most obvious sense of the word.

How can you be confident that G-d will indeed bless you with revealed good? Does the Torah not promise that G-d will reward those who are worthy and punish those who are not?

Based on the verse “He who trusts in G-d, kindness will encompass him,”<sup>6</sup> the Sefer HaIkkarim explains: “Even if one

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6. Tehillim 32:10.

is not worthy on his own accord, *bitachon* draws down gratuitous kindness [from Above] upon he who trusts in G-d.<sup>7</sup> In other words, fervent *bitachon* alone makes a person worthy of G-d's blessings. Thus, if a person genuinely trusts that he is in G-d's good hands (and therefore not subject to any natural limitations), then he can be certain that G-d will guard him and provide for him in a revealed way—even if he is not necessarily worthy of this for any other reason. To paraphrase the Tzemach Tzedek's famous advice, "If you think positively, the future *will be* positive."

The Torah alludes to this principle of *bitachon* by telling us about Moshe's worries, which preceded the actual threat to his life. Considering the Torah's usual conciseness, the fact that it makes special note of Moshe's unease even before Pharaoh sought to execute him suggests that Moshe's fear actually contributed to the outcome. Had Moshe not been afraid, the threat to his life would never have materialized.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 36, pp. 1–6

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7. Sefer HaIkkarim 4:46.



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