



There is a beautiful Midrash that tells us about the officers that the Egyptians set up to manage the Jewish people. I don't even know what to call them properly, but they were the intermediaries — the ones placed between the Egyptian taskmasters and the Jewish workers.

Among those officers were two people whose names we know very well: **Datan and Aviram**.

Datan and Aviram are troublemakers. Throughout the story of the Jewish people in the desert, they appear again and again as negative figures. And yet, Datan and Aviram also had something very beautiful about them.

They were placed in charge of the Jewish workers. And very often, there wasn't an opportunity for the Jews to get all the work done. There was a quota that was missed.

And when that quota was missed, someone had to give the beating. Someone had to administer the punishment.

Who was it?

These people.

Datan. Aviram. And the others like them.

They would come to their Egyptian leader and say, "Listen, it's not his fault. I got up late. I wasn't here on time." And they would take the blame. And they would take the beating.

Our chachamim tell us that this was incredibly precious in the eyes of Borei Olam.

And I thought to myself — Datan and Aviram are such negative people later on. How do you reconcile that with this?

It makes you understand something very important. Even Datan and Aviram understood that when you are placed in a position of power, in a position of responsibility, your job is to protect. Your job is to give cover. Your job is not to rat out the person beneath you.

That is a very powerful thing to understand.

In last week's parashah, Moshe Rabbeinu says something that is eye-opening.

Moshe, in his act of saving a Jew from an Egyptian, was seen. He was spotted. And the man says to him, "הַלְהִגְנֵן אַתָּה אָמַר?" Do you want to kill me the way you killed the other one?

And Moshe responds with the words, "אָכְן נָדַע הַדָּבָר."

On the surface, it sounds simple. It means: the thing is known. People know what I did. I'm in trouble. I have to run.

But Rashi explains it differently.

Moshe says, "Now I know."

Now I know why this difficulty is happening to the Jewish people. Now I know why this nation is so downtrodden, so beaten, so enslaved. How could it be? What did they do to deserve this?

Now I know.

Because **דאיכא דלטוריין** — because there are talebearers among them. Because there are Jews who inform on other Jews. Because there are Jews who speak lashon hara, who betray one another.

Now I understand the thing.

אכן נודע הדבר.

## When Speech Turns Into Exile

The Chafetz Chaim used to draw a frightening conclusion from this. He said: look at how powerful the sin of lashon hara is. Look at how powerful it is to be a talebearer, to go to the authorities, to inform on another Jew. And I need to be very clear about what we're talking about and what we're not talking about. We are not talking about a situation where someone needs to be stopped, where someone needs to be protected from causing harm, where there is danger and no alternative. We are talking about situations where something happened, where there are ways to deal with it, where it can be handled internally, where it can be resolved.

And instead, a person puts someone else on the wire. He hangs him out to dry. He tries to cut a deal for himself. He trips people up. He creates entrapment. Unfortunately, we have had stories like this in the community.

Moshe Rabbeinu looks at this and says something shocking. He says, now I understand why the Jewish people are going through all of this. Why? Because there are talebearers among them. Think about that. Look at the punishment of lashon hara. Because of this sin, an entire nation could suffer, and Moshe Rabbeinu says, now it makes sense. Now I understand.

## Redemption Looks Like the Opposite

My friends, when the story reaches its conclusion, when the Jewish people are finally ready to be redeemed, we see the exact opposite behavior. We see intermediaries. We see people stepping into the middle. We see people putting their lives on the line for others.

## A Friend From the Beginning

There was a fellow I was friendly with when we were just getting married. His name was Yitzy Berger. We were good friends. Yitzy had a grandfather who was one of the funniest people you could ever hope to meet. One of these people who is hilarious and has absolutely no idea that he's funny. You know those people? You just watch them and you're finished. You're dying from laughter. But he wasn't just funny. He was a big man. A big soul. A big heart. He was a Holocaust survivor. And not just a survivor — he was one of the people who survived in Auschwitz for an unusually long time. He came in strong. A strapping, powerful man. And in the camp, the inmates understood something. If one of them was due for a beating, if someone weaker was about to be punished, they could call him. The guards didn't know who was who. They didn't know names.

They didn't know stories. And he would take the beating instead.

## When a Name Reveals a Life

And I remember hearing this and thinking — that's unbelievable. And then I asked a question that changed everything for me. I said, what was his last name? I already knew his first name. But what was his last name? They told me. And I froze.

You know how our rabbis tell us that a person's name is not incidental? That a person's name contains their identity? That who they are meant to be in this world is wrapped up in their name? And not only their greatest strengths — but also their greatest challenges?

## What a Name Can Carry

Let me explain what I mean. My name is Shlomo. Shlomo comes from the root שָׁלֹם or שָׁלֹמָה. It means peace. It means completeness. It means someone who pursues peace, who avoids machloket, who strives for harmony. That's the positive side.

But there's a negative side too. Shalom yiyeh li. A person who says, everything is fine with me. I'm perfect. I don't need to change. I don't need anyone. A Shlomo can be a person who pursues peace — or a person who feels self-sufficient to the point of isolation. I don't need friends. I don't need people. I'll step on others and not worry about alienating them.

A person's greatest strengths are often their greatest challenges. We've spoken before about Yishmael. Yishmael means "God will hear." In the positive sense, he could teach the world tefillah. In the negative sense — like the Gemara says — he causes

so much pain to everyone around him that he causes everyone else to pray.

## Who Gets Into Gan Eden

You know that joke. A man comes up to heaven. There are two people in line. One guy goes in. Then it's his turn. They tell him, not now. You have to go somewhere else first. He says, are you serious? The guy you just let in is a taxi driver. I'm a rabbi. I teach Torah. I give shiurim. And you're not letting me in? They tell him, Rabbi, when you were speaking, everyone was sleeping. When this guy was driving, everyone was praying.

Some people fulfill their destiny in a positive way. Some people fulfill their destiny in a negative way. Either way — your destiny will be fulfilled. **נצח ה' הַיְאָתָקָם**. The question is whether you'll do it in a way that earns reward, or in a way that extracts a price.

## Life in the Middle

So I asked again. What was this man's last name? They told me: Mittelman. Chaim Mittelman. Chaim means life. Mittelman means middleman. His name was literally "life-middleman." And he took beatings for hundreds of people — beatings that would have killed them in their weakened state. Yishtabach Shemo.

## Not Only in Auschwitz

There are people like this. And it's not only beatings at the hands of Nazis. It's not only Germany. Sometimes it's a phone call. Someone calls you and says, listen, I need your involvement. I

know you know this guy. You don't know his full story.

There was a woman who needed a get. I won't embarrass her. No one could get it done. They called this fellow. He made some phone calls. He put himself into the situation. And because of him, she got her divorce. She had been waiting for who knows how long. An agunah. Chained.

## לא תעמוד על דם רעך

It's not comfortable to make that phone call. It's not comfortable to cash in your chips. It's not comfortable to owe someone a favor afterward. But being the middleman brings life. And the Torah places enormous value on feeling the tzaar of another person. Of a woman who is stuck. Getting older. Years passing. Wanting a family. Wanting children. And every year that goes by makes it harder.

My friends, the Torah says: **לא תעמוד על דם רעך**. You cannot stand by when your brother's blood is being spilled. You have to step into the middle. You have to bring life by being the middleman.

## The Bullet You're Saving

How many people are suffering, and all it would take is one phone call from you. And you're thinking to yourself, do I really want to use my bullet? Do I want to spend that favor? Do I want to cash that in? What do you have the bullet for? This is what it's for.

## What Hashem Gave You

Hashem blessed you with something. A relationship. A favor you once did. A loan you once gave. A donation you once made. He gave you a piece of leverage that can change somebody's life. And tzedakah is not only money.

## When Tzedakah Costs You

Sometimes tzedakah is letting your reputation take a hit. Sometimes it's letting someone think you're annoying. You don't want to bother the guy. You don't want to make the call. You don't want to be that person. But understand something. For you, it's discomfort. For the other person, it's his life. It's his child not having a place to go to school. It's someone clearing his name. It's someone standing up for him. It's someone saying, "This guy is a good guy."

## One Sentence

We don't realize how much one word can do. A guy called me the other day. He said, listen, I want to know about this person. Is he a good guy? I said, yes.

Now, I want to be very clear. I didn't tell him I did business with him. I didn't tell him things I didn't know. I said what I know. I see the guy every single day in shul. And by the way, coming to shul doesn't make you a good person. We all know that. There are people who pray and will rob you blind. Maybe they pray to Hashem that nobody should catch them being a ganav. I don't know.

But you see how a person treats people. You see how he speaks to someone who's raising money for tzedakah. You see if someone is adami. Legit. Honest. Kind. Sometimes all it takes is one

sentence. "Yes. From what I see, he's a good person." I don't know more than that. Do your own research.

That one sentence can save a person's life. You don't think that man has a wife at home? Children? A household to support? You don't think there's a holiday coming and they don't have enough money? This is what we're talking about.

## When a Livelihood Is on the Line

There are cases that break my heart. A guy is a broker. This is what he does. He puts two people together. That's his livelihood. And then someone says, "No, I knew the guy already." "No, you didn't introduce me." "No, I knew about the deal before." And they chop him out.

His cut is small. For you, it's nothing. For him, it's his parnassah. It's his ability to feed his family. And now you want people talking about you that you don't honor commitments? That you step on people when it's convenient?

## Stepping Into the Middle

Sometimes all it takes is one word. One sentence. To step into the middle and say, "Give the guy his aider." You're not a hundred percent sure? He's got mouths to feed. This is saving a life.

It's not comfortable to get involved. But sometimes, by doing so, you are literally bringing life.

## A Name for This Midah

The great tzaddikim carried this idea, and they gave it a name. In Hebrew it's called **הנושא בעול עם חברו**.

Say it with me: nosei be'ol chaveiro. It means to carry the burden of your friend.

## Moshe Under the Load

Moshe Rabbeinu lived this. The Midrash says that when Moshe saw his brothers and sisters carrying the heavy loads, he put his shoulder under the load. And he said, if only I could help you. If only I could die in your place. And by doing that, he made them feel a million times better.

## Not Being Alone

Do you know what it feels like to carry something alone? To be embarrassed to say it out loud. To not have a person you can speak to. It's crushing. And our chachamim praised this midah endlessly: **הנושא בעול עם חברו**.

## The Mitzvah Nobody Advertises

I always found it interesting how some mitzvot get all the press time. Everyone knows them. Everyone talks about them. They have dinners. They have campaigns. And then there are mitzvot sitting quietly in the corner, completely ignored. You almost want to hear them say, what about me? This mitzvah — carrying someone else's burden — nobody does me.

## Trying Is Already Carrying

You know what it really means? On one level, yes, it means helping financially. But on another level, it's not about fixing the problem. It's about carrying it together. So the person doesn't feel alone in their tzar.

And I want to tell you something very important. There are times when you can't solve the problem. You made the call. Nothing happened. You sent the message. No answer. But the fact that someone knows that you cared enough to try — you have no idea what that does. It's already half the problem.

And I want to share with you an unbelievable, beautiful example of this idea.

## A Sefer, a House, and a Thread That Runs Through Them

I want to share with you an unbelievable, beautiful example of this idea.

There was a certain rabbi whose sefer I loved. His name was **Rav Baruch Toomim**. There are two known works on Masechet Nedarim. One is called *Hafla'at Nedarim* and the other is called *Hafla'ot Nedarim*. I was learning Masechet Nedarim, and something very strange happened to me. Every question I had was in this sefer. Every answer I was thinking was already written there. Again and again, page after page. Somehow, I don't know how to explain it, my mind was on the same wavelength as this sefer. It was fascinating.

Years later, when we moved to London, we were looking for a place to live. Eventually we found a house, and we lived there the entire time we were in London. Only afterward did I find out that the house belonged to a great-grandson of Rav Baruch Toomim. I was literally living in the house of this man whose Torah I felt so connected to.

## A Wedding That Almost Didn't Happen

Rav Baruch Toomim's son was getting married. The family was a chashuv family. Good people. Serious people. The mechutanim came before the chuppah for Shabbat, as is customary, to spend time together.

They walked in and saw the rabbi, the father of the groom. They looked at his face and thought to themselves, something is wrong. They became nervous. They said to each other, maybe he's going to call off the shidduch. Maybe the wedding isn't happening.

They asked the family quietly, is everything okay? Is the wedding still on? They said yes, of course, the wedding is happening. So they asked, why does he look like that? Why does he look so upset?

They were told that the water carrier — a simple man in the village — was very ill. And the rabbi was praying and praying for him. It hurt him deeply that this simple Jew was suffering.

## “Only a Water Carrier”

The mother of the kallah came to Rav Baruch Toomim and said to him, Rabbi, you scared us. You look so nervous, so shaken. We thought you were going to call off the shidduch. Then we found out that it's because this water carrier isn't well. Why? Why are you so affected? He's only a water carrier.

Immediately, Rav Baruch Toomim stood up and said, we are calling off the shidduch.

He wasn't thinking about the wedding. He wasn't thinking about his son. He was thinking about something else entirely.

You think my child should marry into a family that doesn't understand why my face looks like this when a simple Jew is suffering? He's my brother. He's a fellow Jew. His pain matters.

It doesn't matter if he has a diploma on the wall. It doesn't matter if his title is not "rabbi." It doesn't matter if he's not related to me by blood. Aren't we all related?

## Carrying Someone Who Carries Water

The water carrier may carry water, but I carry him — in my heart, and in my tefillot.

This is what our chachamim meant when they spoke about a person being **נושא בעול עם חברו**. A person who carries the burden of another. This wasn't a nice idea. It wasn't a slogan. It was a non-negotiable standard for what it means to be a human being.

## Driving Slowly

I want to share another example of this, from the Chazon Ish.

One day, the Chazon Ish left shul and got into a car. As the driver began to pull away, the Chazon Ish said, slowly. Slowly. Don't drive fast.

The driver asked him why. Are you waiting for someone?

He said, no. Just don't drive fast.

They drove slowly for a bit. Then the Chazon Ish said, okay, now you can go.

The driver asked him, why was it important to drive slowly?

The Chazon Ish explained: every day, when I leave shul, there are people who are waiting to speak to me. One person is sick and wants a beracha. Another has a daughter who can't get married. Another doesn't have a job. Another doesn't have a place to live. They come to me and give me their pain.

How do you think they feel if they walk me to the car and see me speed away?

## What Makes a Gadol

The great ones were great because of how they related to people.

If you ever meet a rabbi, or a talmid chacham, and you see that he is callous to people's problems, that he doesn't care about their pain, understand that this is dangerous. When Torah does not refine a person's character, the Torah itself becomes poison.

**דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה**

If a person lacks derech eretz, what you are seeing is not Torah. It's something learned and misused — like the Gemara says — like an axe to chop down other people, to make them feel smaller, less worthy, less religious.

The number one prerequisite for a talmid chacham is that people can see that he cares.

## Letters That Could Not Be Thrown Away

When the Chazon Ish passed away, they found piles and piles of letters in his home. People asked one of his closest talmidim, what are all these letters?

He said, the Chazon Ish felt that if someone poured their heart into a letter, how could he throw their pain into the garbage?

No one would be upset if a rabbi threw out a letter after trying to help. But the Chazon Ish couldn't do it. He felt their pain was sacred.

That sensitivity — even when it seems excessive, even when it seems illogical — that is what made him the leader of a generation.

## Watching My Father

I'll tell you something personal.

My father — many of you know him — when a meshulach comes to him, or when someone from Israel comes to tell him about their struggles, he starts crying. Every time.

Someone says they can't pay groceries. Someone says they're overwhelmed. Someone says they don't know how they'll make it through the month.

My father cries.

When you hear it again and again, from eight or ten people in a row, it's very easy to become hard. To protect yourself by becoming numb.

But this is exactly what the Torah demands from us: **נושא בעול עם חברו**.

## Why Redemption Came When It Did

When the Torah tells us that the Jewish people were finally ready to be redeemed, it wasn't because they suddenly became more learned. It wasn't because they suddenly became more sophisticated. It was because something fundamental changed in how they related to one another.

When Moshe Rabbeinu said, **אכן נודע הדבר**, he was saying that as long as Jews could betray one another with speech, as long as they could stand aside while someone else was exposed, humiliated, or sacrificed, redemption could not happen.

And when redemption finally came, what did Hashem see?

He saw Jews stepping into the middle. He saw Jews taking the hit for one another. He saw Jews lifting one another's burdens. He saw people willing to carry pain that wasn't theirs.

That is what changed.

## Praying for Someone You Don't Know

There is a group that a number of women started. It's called *Pray for Another*. You sign up, and they give you a name. For forty days, you pray for that person.

There are two ways the group works. One way is that you know what you're praying for. You know the story. You know the pain. The other way is that you're only given a name. You don't know what the person is dealing with. You don't know why they need tefillah. Some people want privacy.

Someone once asked me, Rabbi, I feel like I would have much more kavanah if I knew what the person

was going through. It's easier for me to connect emotionally when I know the story.

And I understand that. I understand that it's harder to pray for a name on a page. It feels distant. It feels abstract.

But there's something else happening in Shamayim.

When it's easy for you to pray — because who wouldn't pray for a sick child — that tefillah is obvious. And because it's obvious, it loses a certain dimension.

When a person doesn't tell you their problem because they're embarrassed, or because they're afraid, and you pray anyway — even though it's hard to connect, even though it feels dry — that prayer is protecting their dignity.

And in Shamayim, that prayer is precious.

Hashem looks at that tefillah, the one that's harder, the one where you don't feel inspired, and He sees that you chose the other person's dignity over your own emotional comfort.

That is **נושא בעול עם חברו**.

## A Conversation in an Elevator

I need to add something else, because there are many ways to step into the middle of someone else's burden.

I was in an elevator this past week with a dear friend of mine. He said to me, weddings are getting out of control.

I asked him what he meant.

He told me about a friend of his who finally did something no one wants to do. He told his children, this is how many people you're inviting. This is how much money I'm spending on the wedding. And instead of spending more, I'm taking the rest of the money and putting it toward a down payment on your house.

Instead of another five hundred people at a wedding you don't even want, this money will help you build your life.

He said to me, doesn't that make more sense?

And on one level, it does. If you have the extra money, it's beautiful.

But I said to him, do you know how many people don't have that extra money? Do you know how many people are drowning in crushing debt because they feel they cannot be the family that invited only three hundred people?

They're too embarrassed. They feel trapped.

And then I found out about a very wealthy family. They could have made a wedding that would put anyone to shame. And they chose to make the simplest wedding possible.

Not because they couldn't afford it. Not because they needed to save. They could buy their children houses outright.

They did it to give permission.

To give permission to families who can't afford it to breathe. To allow people to make weddings without sitting at their own child's chuppah with a knot in

their stomach, wondering how they'll pay the mortgage next month.

## How It Used to Be

My father told me that in Halab, there was something called a *mlebbes* wedding.

You know what they served? Almonds covered with sugar.

That was it.

There were no carving stations. No endless salads. No pre-meal meal followed by another meal.

People got married.

My father told me that they even had weddings on Fridays. They invited people to the Friday night meal, which they were making anyway. They did the chuppah before Shabbat.

## When Help Exists but Shame Blocks It

In Lakewood today, there is something called a *takanah* wedding. You can make a complete wedding for around thirteen thousand dollars. Soup to nuts.

You can't choose the menu. You can't have any band you want. You can't invite unlimited guests. But it's a respectable, dignified, happy wedding.

So what's the problem?

The problem is that people feel they can't be the ones who need it.

But understand this: the leaders of the community know that the situation is dire. People you would

never believe are struggling with tuition, with weddings, with basic expenses, are struggling.

And this is where we need **Nachshons**.

Nachshon was the one who jumped into the water first. He didn't wait for comfort. He didn't wait for consensus. He felt the tzar of the people and stepped forward.

## Stepping First, So Others Can Breathe

Who will be the person who says that a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old doesn't need a hundred-thousand-dollar car? Who will be the person who normalizes restraint?

Thank Hashem that it became fashionable for kids to want Jeeps. Yishtabach Shemo. Someone very smart started that trend.

But this isn't just about cars.

It's about people willing to step into discomfort so others don't drown in shame.

It's about feeling the weight that others are carrying and deciding that you will carry some of it with them.

With one action. One decision. One uncomfortable choice.

You can bring life.

## Closing

We need people who step into the breach. People who feel the tzar of others and act on it. People who

understand that redemption does not come from standing on the sidelines.

It comes from standing in the middle.

## Takeaway from the Lecture

Redemption did not begin with miracles. It began when Jews stopped betraying one another and started carrying one another.

Moshe Rabbeinu understood that as long as there were *דלותרין*, as long as Jews could expose one another, speak lashon hara, or protect themselves at the expense of someone else, the suffering made sense. It was not random. It was not accidental. It was the natural result of a people that could not yet hold each other's pain.

And when redemption finally became possible, it was because Hashem saw the opposite. He saw people stepping into the middle. He saw Jews taking beatings for one another. He saw people using their strength, their position, their reputation, their leverage, and their comfort to protect someone weaker. He saw the *הנושא בעול עם חברו*.

This was true in Egypt. It was true in Auschwitz. It was true in quiet phone calls, in uncomfortable conversations, in lost favors, in damaged reputations, and in choices that gave dignity to others at personal cost.

Torah greatness is not measured by knowledge alone. It is measured by whether Torah has made a person more sensitive to the pain of others. If Torah does not lead a person to slow the car, keep the letter, cry with the needy, or feel the shame of

another as their own, then that Torah has not yet redeemed the person carrying it.

Redemption comes when Jews stop standing on the sidelines and choose to stand in the middle.

## Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. Moshe Rabbeinu linked the suffering in Egypt to the presence of *דלותרין*. In what ways do speech and silence today still determine whether a community becomes stronger or more fractured?
2. The lecture describes leadership as protection, not exposure. Where in our own lives do we hold power — social, financial, relational, or reputational — and how are we using it?
3. Many examples in the lecture involve discomfort: awkward phone calls, lost favors, social embarrassment. What prevents people from stepping into the middle, even when they know someone else is suffering?
4. The concept of *הנושא בעול עם חברו* emphasizes carrying pain even when it cannot be solved. How does this change the way we think about helping others?
5. Several stories highlight dignity — the water carrier, the agunah, anonymous prayer, families struggling with weddings. How can communities reduce shame while still maintaining standards and values?