

# A Life-Changing Call

When you want to give something power, you plug it into a power source, such as a battery. If you want to seriously increase the power, you have to find a massive battery suitable for your purposes. Or, you can create a battery bank, in which a group of small batteries are joined together for the same effect. A well-constructed battery bank is more convenient to use and store and much easier to acquire and access when needed.

When a person wants to grow, he needs energy. Instead of going it alone, he can plug into a unified group of people who *all* want to grow, increasing his power exponentially. The Rambam says that when 10 people get together to do *teshuvah*, they can bring down the energy of Yom Kippur, all year round. When it comes to

Jewish *neshamos*, one plus one doesn't equal two, it equals three. And one plus one plus one doesn't equal three, it works out to six, seven, or maybe even eight. The more *neshamos* that join together to grow, the greater the power in the community.

That is the power of a *chabura* — a group of people who get together to achieve a spiritual goal.

By associating with others who share a growth-oriented mentality, you benefit by their intelligence, varied life experience, knowledge, and spiritual forces. When you want to put plans into action, the group helps you convert ideas into a practical plan for success.

## One of a Kind

Thanks to modern technology, women now have the option of joining a *chabura* via teleconference. Rabbi Aryeh Nivin's Personal Development Chabura, which has been going strong for six years, brings women together from all over the globe, learning, sharing, and growing, as individuals and as a group. No need to arrange babysitters or rides to and from classes, no need to brave inclement weather; all you need is a telephone and the desire to grow.

Once a week, women call in to the Chabura to be a part of a life-changing program. Based on classic Torah works, the call begins with a short discussion related to the time of year. Participants then engage in discussion about the week's topic, which is part of a larger module lasting two to four weeks. The calls are recorded, so if you aren't available for the live class you can listen to it at your convenience. The classes are archived, and if a module particularly gives you *chizuk* or direction, you can review it as needed.

The Chabura is the only virtual frum community of its kind in the world, an ongoing growth-oriented community. Participants make a comprehensive overview and life plan. You spend a month figuring out who you are, and what your issues are, from a multilevel perspective. This is condensed into a single sheet of paper that forms your plan. As you go through the modules together, you keep referring to this paper; you are not just learning theory, you are applying what you learn to your life, keeping you focused and motivated, week after week.

The program is so powerful that after the three-month Chabura is finished, most women choose to continue the

program. One Chabura ran for over six years! The women, most of whom had never met face to face, grew closer than sisters. Those who did meet in person after meeting through the Chabura often found that they were instantly able to relate to one another. Not only did they share a desire to grow, they were literally on the same page, using the same tools to face different struggles.

Interestingly, there are decided advantages to meeting by phone instead of in person. The externals, your appearance — how you dress, don't sidetrack anyone, and preconceived prejudices don't sabotage the relationship or ability to learn from each other. You can connect with women in any community, anywhere around the world. Furthermore, you can retain your anonymity; some people choose not to use their real names, which affords them the opportunity to be completely open and honest about their issues without fear of social reprisals.

Chabura members share in each other's joys and sorrows. When one Chabura member finished a book she'd been working on for 20 years (its completion spurred on by her Chabura), the whole Chabura shared deeply in her joy. Recently, when the missiles were falling in Ashdod, Chabura members could hear the sirens wail as Rabbi Nivin accompanied his children into the bomb shelter and continued giving his *shiur*. Being a part of the Chabura is watching — and experiencing — true unity.

In addition to the Chabura, most people choose to have a *chavrusa* (study partner). Through a specialized procedure, you are paired up with a person whose goals and time constraints are similar to yours (alternatively, you can sign up with a friend and request to become *chavrusos*). *Chavrusos* meet for 15 minutes five days a week, and together they further redefine their goals and how, practically speaking, to achieve them. Many *chavrusos* stay together for many years, learning and growing together.

## Geared for the Times

Shaped by the participants and geared to their specific needs, the Chabura is designed to address the challenges unique to today — rapidly changing social mores, the onslaught of technology, troubled youth, etc.

Because the Chabura revolves around the cycle of the Jewish year, participants are truly prepared for the Yamim Tovim, which are a catalyst for growth. Insights about the holidays are plugged into each person's life plan. Besides the weekly Chaburas, which have anywhere from 40 to 100 people, all the Chaburas join together for a quarterly *drashah*.

There are also events focusing on a single topic; the next event is on verbal introspection — how to do *hisbonenus*, according to the Ramchal, which involves asking yourself a series of basic questions that give you consciousness about the major issues in your life, as well as how to keep the most important things in the forefront of your mind.

During these events, newcomers have the opportunity to hear from the veterans about how to implement these insights

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into one's life. Additionally, there are Chabura coaches, in which senior students coach the newer ones.

The Chaburas grow mostly by word of mouth. Participants gain so much from the program that they feel they *must* share it with others. Dina said, "I have seen the gradual transformation in myself, and so has my husband... [because of the] tremendous influence the material has had on my life and those around me. My entire outlook has shifted. I am able to see myself beyond my limitations and I'm a much more positive and upbeat person."

Ilana wrote, "Your *shiur* blew me away. It was the first *shiur*, where you literally asked each of my questions [that I'd been asking for years], and answered them one by one. It made sense. I couldn't believe it. I've been putting this puzzle together for so many years, and now suddenly those last few missing pieces snapped into place."

Linda emailed the office, "I signed up for the free trial, and after completing my first course with Rabbi Nivin, I'm officially hooked!"

If you're looking for a simple way to be fulfilled and connect to vitality, this course is for you.

To inquire about joining the Three-Class Trial of the Women's Chaburas starting in January, go to [www.threeclasstrial.com](http://www.threeclasstrial.com), call (646) 863-4123 in the U.S., or (02) 580-6406 in Israel, or email [NewChabura@gmail.com](mailto:NewChabura@gmail.com)

*\*names changed to protect privacy*

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