



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

Understanding the Meron Tragedy: An In-Depth Class with R' Aryeh Nivin

23rd Iyar 5781 / May 4th 2021

Hi everybody. Welcome to our special webinar teleconference. We'll be going on a journey together to help us understand the deeper realities to the Meron tragedy. I'll be giving some caveats along the way.

I'm sure 99% of you know me. For anyone new on the call, my name is Aryeh Nivin. I am speaking from the Machon HaAdam HaShalem, *the Institute for the Perfection of Man* in Ashdod. A subdivision of that is Rav Aryeh Nivin's Chaburas.

If you want to hear more information about our chaburas, please contact us at chaburapa@gmail.com.

Overview

Tonight, we are here to gain a deeper perspective of how to handle tragedies and move forward in a Jewish way. I am here to offer you a map, G-d willing with the help of the One Above.

This mini chabura presentation is for people who don't know what to do with their emotions, and for people who want to make a positive change in wake of this tragedy, who don't want to move on as if nothing happened.

There is a concept, particularly related to when it rains on the first night of Succos, a concept called "*I poured a glass of wine for my master and he flung it in my face.*" Here we are, Klal Yisroel is in the middle of celebrating one of the biggest communal events of the year, and the next thing you know, the whole thing turns out to be a disaster.

We had a doubly painful event. Not only the event is painful, but the context is painful. For me it was triply painful, and I'll allude to soon. I had two sons involved in the event. One son was in the sea of bodies and unfortunately had very bad things happen to him. B"H he is okay and just got out of the hospital. He was trampled under a sea of bodies. I had another son who was right there and saw the whole thing.

Everyone probably knows someone who knows someone who had a big loss. We are in the aftermath. Our emotions are going crazy.



R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

What is the Jewish response to this? To the pain, the agony? How do we move forward and respond on a physical level, a material level? The point of this presentation is to answer these questions and come up with a human response, a healthy Jewish response.

PSA

This class is an advanced class. The topics will require further learning afterwards.

After this class, if people are interested in going deeper into the topics we discuss, please contact us at chaburapa@gmail.com.

Story of My Son

To bring you to my life situation, I want to make people aware of what this means for me and for people who had children there. My son was in the first two or three rows of people walking down that plank, the stairway or passageway there. The first group of people fell in front of him and he fell in there. Many layers of people fell on top of him. He was buried alive in bodies.

B"H he managed to get an air passageway out, don't ask me how. That's what saved him. He was covered like that for 10 or 15 minutes. He was then immediately taken to the hospital and only got out a day ago.

He is physically healthy with emotional side effects, and his emotional journey is about to begin. It will hopefully soon go fast and be over. But unfortunately, there were people all around him who didn't make it and he witnessed it and experienced it. That's part one of my story.

I also had a 15-year-old who wasn't there in the bodies and saw the whole thing. I'm sharing this with you because this presentation I'm sharing with you tonight is a real one, not an academic or theoretical thing. I am in the pain of this and it is real for me. It's so painful. When your own child is in it and experienced it, it hurts. This is the context of where some of the things I'm sharing with you are coming from.

May Klal Yisroel have a refuah shleima. May we learn all the right things to come out of this long journey ahead of us okay.



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

How to Deal with Tragedy: Introduction

How do we deal with tragedy in a place where our emotions have gone wild?

Judaism gives an answer, it comes from the laws of mourning. The Jewish response is to be respectful of the emotions; to feel them and to honor the human experience. For seven of our relatives, the response to a loss or tragedy is to sit shiva. Shiva isn't a cognitive experience necessarily.

Our emotions might be contrary to our intellect. We might want to believe or feel certain things, but certain times, our emotions are not always on board with what we want. The Jewish response to a tragedy like this is strangely respectful to the human experience.

When someone sits shiva and feels strong negative emotions, it's obvious that you don't tell them "have emunah" or "everything G-d does, He does for the good." We don't do that.

First Step in Processing

If your emotions are wounded and you're thinking things you don't want to think, don't beat yourself over the head and say "everything G-d does, He does for the good." Don't say "you should be having more emunah," or that it's a mitzvah to be *b'simcha*.

G-d created us with emotions. They sometimes get out of control. To violate yourself with logic when it's not appropriate, that's a violation of self-expression.

We do gently point ourselves in the right direction. But if your emotions are raw and penetrating, respect them as part of the human experience.

We have a whole module on the concept of mourning in our chabura system, and having strong emotions like denial, shock, depression, anger. These are part of the human experience before we leave the world of mourning and come to acceptance.

Respect the human experience and understand where it's coming from. Be compassionate of the wilder and more difficult emotions you might have.



R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

Chochma Elyona

I'll share with you some Torah on transcendence. When you're ready, you can point yourself in that direction. We might be feeling raw emotions and might not now be ready to process all the content I'll be presenting. Just listen to these concepts for when you are ready.

Fasten your seatbelts. We're launching into outer space. We'll get into the deeper roots of tragedy. We'll cover a lot of topics. We have a course on transcendence with five levels of transcendence in tragedy and adversity.

These are different from the levels that we conquer in our daily lives. The first four levels take 16 hours to teach. Level 5, the concept of tragedies, that we are dealing with now, that takes another 16 hours.

Right now, we are doing a basic and superficial overview of some of the deepest concepts in the whole Torah! You might need to do further learning and exploration after hearing this class.

There are different kabbalistic worlds. Every world is higher than the other. Our world we live in is the *Olam Haasiya*, the world of doing. As we go higher in the kabbalistic worlds, we so to speak go up more into the world of Hashem.

In Jewish mysticism, there is a world three levels up called the world of *Chochma*. These are esoteric concepts. This is one of the higher worlds that's almost closest to Hashem. In this world, there is an upper part of this world. It corresponds to the top of Hashem's mind, so to speak.

In this world of *Chochma Elyona*, upper wisdom, is hidden all of the secrets of *middas hadin* in the world. In this world are the answers as to why all the bad things happen in this world – the hidden perspective behind tragedies, suffering, challenges. It's hidden and locked up in this world.

This world is so high and esoteric, that we cannot break into this world in our lifetime. It's locked up and the key is thrown away. For all the reasons brought down in Jewish hashkafa regarding free will, why G-d had to create a world of adversity and challenge, why we must be independent, these things require deep learning to understand them.

Why did G-d create a world where the reason for *middas hadin* is locked up and we cannot fathom it in our lifetime?



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

Caveat: Just because you think you got it doesn't mean you necessarily got it.

Summary: We have this world called *Chochma Elyona* of upper wisdom. This hidden world is locked and the key is thrown away. The Rabbis say the world of *Chochma Elyona* is unreachable and unknowable. So the starting point in a Jew in this world is that there are many things in this world that are unknowable.

So when we relate to tragedy, it's understandable that people can never know the true answer for G-d's attribute of justice, His *middas hadin*. The reason is not reachable now, but one day we will know.

It says, *az yimoleh sechok pinu*, "then our hearts will be full of gladness." The word 'Az' means in the World to Come. This refers to the Messianic age. We will then be able to look back and see how all of our suffering was an illusion, so much so that we will burst out in laughter.

Az, then, we will understand and will even laugh. It's hard to fathom.

When it comes to tragedy, a Jew bows his head, remains silent and humble. He knows that there are things beyond his human comprehension. But hope is not lost. Maybe there is a way to somehow break into the world of *Chochma Elyona*. To glimpse into it partially.

Glimpsing into Chochma Elyona

Most of the material I am giving is based on the works of Rabbi Dessler. There is a verse in Iyov that says, *chochma m'ayin tematze*h - "Wisdom will be found from *ayin*."

Chochma Elyona, this upper world, will be found in nothingness. What does that mean? Hidden in the mystery of *Chochma Elyona* is a profound principle. **To the extent that someone is immersed in this world and owned by it, he cannot get to the world of *Chochma Elyona*.**

There is a hint in the verse that tells us something. "To the extent that one transcends the world and its physicality, proportional to one's comprehension, one has the ability to gain a glimpse into the upper world of G-d's profound consciousness."

Let me explain. It says from nothingness will it be found. If we're in the world of *yesh*, of "there is," we will not break into the world of *Chochma Elyona*.



R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

Our world has a physical cover around it. It's made of "natural" principles. The word *olam* is from 'heelam,' meaning hidden. When I see this world and the natural laws of nature, so long as I believe in the natural laws of this world, I am in the world of "yesh."

Somehow, and I will explain this practically, if I nullify the world that is and go into the world of *ayin*, the world of transcendence, then I can break into the world of *Chochma Elyona*. Then I can begin to answer why tragedies happen, but only according to my level of doing this *avodah*.

Someone might say "tragedies happen because they didn't plan enough safety measures" or "the government was disorganized." These are very true reasons. But those are the technical answers. It's true, but what is the deeper answer, the spiritual message that G-d is trying to communicate to us?

The world is encased in natural law and consequence. Behind it is a law, a set of spiritual principles. If we can see beyond the layers of the physical world and break through to the world of nothingness, of spiritual reality, we break out of this world and slowly, gently, incrementally move into the world that is beyond this world.

We cannot break into the world of *Chochma Elyona* in this world. To the extent that we transcend this world, we break from the confines of this world and can slowly begin the journey to understand the deeper realities of life and suffering tragedies.

Three Main Principles

There are three principles a person must understand to do this, to break into the world of *Chochma Elyona*.

1. Everything that happens in the world is *hashgacha pratis*, Divine Providence, down to the finest detail.
 - a. The Gemara in Chulin says, Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa says, "a person does not stub his toe down here on Earth unless it was decreed upon him from Above."
2. Everything that G-d does is just, down to the finest detail.
3. Everything that G-d does is for the good.



R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

These principles cannot be fully understood in this world. Chazal acknowledged that. But the extent we learn deeply what these principles are all about, and we integrate them into our life in a deeper way, to that extent we can break out of the world of *yesh* and into the world of *ayin*.

To the extent that a person begins this journey, dedicating themselves to these principles, to that extent they will get deeper insights into the nature of the world.

It says about the great tzaddikim, many of them have achieved other worldly consciousness in this world, in this lifetime.

Our dedication to these ideas must be learned and understood in depth and with context.

We can begin to dig our way out of the confusion we are in and get a foothold into handling tragedies.

Story of Rebbe Akiva

I'll show how these principles are illustrated in the Gemara in Brachos (61B) about the story of the end of Rebbe Akiva's life. They are achievable even for simple people like you and me.

I'll paraphrase the end of the Gemara in Brachos. He was taken for execution, it's the time of the saying of the Shema. They are combing his flesh with iron combs and he was accepting upon himself the kingdom of Heaven, saying Shema.

We will see that the Gemara I read won't make sense until we lay these principles out.

He is there and his students ask him, as he is being flayed alive, *ad kan*, until this point? He answers but doesn't answer their question. He replies, "all the days of my life I've been troubled by this verse that says you must love G-d even if they take your soul. I interpret this to mean that even if He takes your soul, I should love G-d. I said, when shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling this? Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfill it?"

He prolonged the word *echad* until he expired while saying it. A *bas kol* went forth from Heaven and proclaimed, "happy are you Akiva, that your soul has departed with the word *echad*."

He was flayed alive, said the shema, had this interchange with his students. The angels above cannot believe what's going on. They complained before G-d, "such is Torah and such is the



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

reward? He should've been from them that died by your hand, oh Lord." G-d replied "their portion is in life."

A *bas kol* went forth from Heaven and proclaimed, "happy are you Akiva, that you are destined for life in the World to Come."

This is the Gemara. Many of us are familiar with it. There are many things here that don't make sense.

Going Deeper

Rebbe Akiva is taken to being killed and it's time for the shema. The Yerushalmi says that when he was being killed by the Romans for the decree of teaching Torah in public, Rebbe Akiva was in ecstasy. The Arizal says that Rebbe Akiva didn't feel a thing.

The students were looking at their Rebbe and not understanding. They asked *ad kan*, until here? What does that mean? They were asking, "does the obligation of Judaism extend even to a situation like this? We don't understand what we are seeing! What's going on?!"

Rebbe Akiva answered, "all the days of my life I've been troubled by this verse that says you must love G-d with all your soul. Even if they kill you, you must love G-d." I've been troubled by this verse and to know how you love G-d even in the most tragic circumstances.

"All the days of my life" meant when he was starting to get strong in his Judaism at 40, until this moment at 120. For 80 years, every day, Rebbe Akiva was working on how to understand how to love G-d no matter what. He says shema and dies at "shema" and a voice comes from Heaven.

He says I've been thinking about this for 80 years and you're looking at me like I just thought of it. 80 years I've been trying to understand how to love G-d when you're being killed. 80 years and I got it today. Of course the Torah extends to here. I've been working consistently and persistently and I've struggled to understand this. This has allowed me to break into the world of *Chochma Elyona*.

This is the meaning of the *bas kol*. The voice means that Rebbe Akiva was one with G-d. He had achieved unity with G-d. He was already in the world to come in this year, he had broken through to *Chochma Elyona*.



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

This is not all or nothing. Every minor effort you do breaks you into this world more and more.

Summary

We have Rebbe Akiva, an ignorant Torah shepherd, trying to learn and understand the deeper mysteries of life, of loving G-d no matter what. He works on it every day until one day he gets to a point where he achieves total oneness.

This might seem totally out there for us. Don't compare me to Rebbe Akiva, I'm not like him. But that's not true! I can share many stories of why Rebbe Akiva started out the way he did. He slowly started learning and working. Little by little, that allowed him to rise above the world and break into *Chochma Elyona*.

We can achieve *olam haba* consciousness in this world. In proportion to our efforts in this area, our transcendence and our work on the three principles named above, we can slowly begin our journey to transcendence.

Meron Tragedy

How does this relate to Meron?

It is incomprehensible to understand the tragic death of 45 people. That's part of being in this physical world. But we can still peel away the material, the physical. We can dedicate to spiritual laws in microscopic ways. Eventually, we will leave the confines of this world in this world and gain a glimpse into the meaning of suffering and tragedies and challenges.

Chochma Elyona Tool

This tool is enormously helpful. You cannot violate your emotions with logic. But we don't want to get stuck in some of our negative types of thinking. How do we deal with the human experience?

The tool (this is advanced stuff): You talk to G-d from both sides of the spectrum.

Say, "G-d, I'm horrified, I'm in agonizing pain about what is before my eyes. I'm experiencing troubling feelings and thoughts. I won't suppress them or violate their emotions with logic. Even though my feelings are screaming out, I know the three important principles."



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

I am writing here the three cardinal principles of how to break into the world of chochma elyona. You can use any principle that is appropriate for you.

1. Everything is hashgacha pratis, down to the finest details.
2. Everything G-d does is just.
3. Everything G-d does is for the good.

You talk to G-d and express your feelings. But you say, “even though I’m going through this, in my logic system and my foundations, I know these principles.” You talk to G-d from both sides.

When I acknowledge the rawness of my emotions and the parameters of the physical world I am born into, but even so I hold onto my principles, I nullify a small amount of the world and I break into the *Chochma Elyona* in a nanometer.

We too can break through like Rebbe Akiva did.

The tool is, you don’t break up your emotions. You acknowledge your devastated feelings. You say, “even from that place, I know the following principles” and when you do this, you’re accomplishing phenomenal tools in this world and the heavens.

This tool is tried and tested.

We have spoken how to gain understanding and perspective.

How to Do Healthy Teshuvah

Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh Lazeh. All the Jewish people are responsible for one another.

Tragedies speak to us all. The question we are all asking is, “how do I figure out what lessons I must learn from this event?”

When you don’t know what teshuvah to do, it can disempower you. *How do I know what to do, how to walk away from this event, to move on in life?*

The answer is brought down by a chassidic great, the Shomer Emunim. “When you don’t know what to do teshuvah on, you think about it. What’s the best answer you can come up with, based on your understanding of the world?”



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

You choose the best thing that might be appropriate to you. You tell Hashem you are not a *navi*, a prophet. You introspect and say, “the best thing I can come up with for what I did wrong, what I must learn is this ___ and I commit to it, or a plan to move in that direction, because it’s the best thing I can do.”

You introspect and think of the best answer you can come up with, and you acknowledge your humble state and your boundaries to Hashem. You talk to Hashem and say, “this is what I think the message of the Meron tragedy is to me.”

Says the Shomer Emunim, this *vidui* is better than 150 fasts!

You don’t have to be a prophet and know the answer for how to do teshuvah. Do *hisbonenus* and see the areas you are lax in and have to correct. Gently, lovingly, incrementally, commit to working on it. This is greater than 150 fasts.

A broader perspective on teshuvah according to Judaism. is that it isn’t that G-d hates me. G-d is giving me a correction that is necessary for me to fulfill my life’s purpose.

You do not have to take something on every time there is a tragedy, as that can become a heavy burden. Teshuvah doesn’t mean you’re taking upon yourself actions, rather you’re taking upon yourself perspectives, your next step in avodas Hashem.

Practical Teshuvah

People ask, “what about the technical aspects? We are supposed to act with wisdom. These aspects are not the main message but they cannot be ignored. The safety aspects that we are all responsible in Klal Yisroel and cannot be ignored. We have our work to do on a national level.

It is obvious that there are many technical things we must do teshuvah on. Regarding safety, how many people we allow in public areas, organization, guards, etc. We must look around in our lives to see where we have failed to consider safety and practical concerns.

Where have we gotten too otherworldly and G-d wants us to remember we live in a physical world with physical concerns that must be taken care of? There is a lot we must do teshuvah on, on a technical level.



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

But we must also grow on a deeper level. On a national and communal level, on a religious level, there is another answer, a deeper message we must be looking for.

Summary

How do we live in a world of tragedies? How can we understand and grow in our relationship to them?

We cannot understand tragedies within the parameters of this world. The extent that we begin rising above the natural world, through understanding and spiritual practices, slowly, gently, incrementally, to that extent, our perceptions will become more other worldly and we will get a small glimpse into the nature of tragedy and suffering in the world.

If we continue to work on this, there are people who will rise to the level of great tzaddikim, who will break through to another reality in this world just as Rebbe Akiva did.

Many of us can relate to aspects of this. To the extent that we keep plugging away, we can break out of the constraints of our physicality. We can begin to love G-d no matter what happens to us, even if we are killed.

Next practical takeaway: How do we deal with our ballistic and suffering emotions? Bitterness, anger at G-d, things that are technically inappropriate on a hashkafic level. The answer is to respect the human condition. Do not violate yourself with logic.

It's precisely our constraints that are our greatest ability to break through. Turn to Hashem with the *Chochma Elyona* tool. Tell it like it is.

Hashem, I am lost and in agony and bitterness. I am crying and angry at you. Depressed, in despair. That is where I am holding emotionally.

Then you do the reversal.

Nevertheless, Hashem, I know that it's all hashgacha pratis, all 100% just and for the good. I don't know how but I know it is.



R' ARYEH NIVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

At that moment, you just gained entranceway to the world of *Chochma Elyona*. Keep at it and you'll gain more profound insights.

G-d knows how we are feeling, He made us this way.

When you rededicate to these three principles, you should continue to learn them and not just say them. That's also part of the avodah.

It's ok to scream in pain and also know and love G-d. That is where many people are at right now.

Loving G-d no matter what is the goal of every Jew. Each of us must find the path to Chochma Elyona. Cry out to G-d and proclaim your dedication to the three principles. Do teshuvah. Take upon yourself your best response. Tell G-d you don't know the best answer but this is your best response, and that is better than 150 fasts, says the Shomer Emunim.

Thank you for coming.



R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS

For more information on other webinars:

Please contact: chaburapa@gmail.com or
Mrs. Robin Meyerson at (602) 469-1606

Join us now for our
new marriage chabura:

The Connected Marriage ^{2.0}

R'Nivvin's
4-Step
Paradiesing
Marriage
Method

Learn to help yourself and others experience a deep emotional intimacy. No matter how long you've been married.

- Replace resentment and blame with *closeness and acceptance*
- Build *trust and understanding* even if there are conflicts
- Create *oneness and unity* despite your differences

Start Date:
Wednesday,
April 28th

Women's program
Wednesday's 12 PM ET / 7 PM IT

Men's program
Pre-recorded Classes, with Live Q&A Sessions

16 weekly live teleconferences	Recordings available	Practical guided exercises	Personal program liaison	Coaching certification option

SIGN UP NewChabura@gmail.com
602-469-1606* (US)

*Phone/Text or WhatsApp to Mrs. Robin Meyerson

R' ARYEH NIVVIN'S
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHABURAS