

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

EKEB

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 49:14-51:3

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DEDICATION: In Memory of Al Abraham Gindi A"H (Avraham Nissim Ben Esther A"H

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EDITORS NOTES

In memory of Al Gindi

Sometimes it helps to see the world through someone else's eyes. For a few moments on most days, I have the opportunity to speak with my mom. Her perspective on human nature and personal relationships is as good as it gets. Her insight into what makes a person tick, what brings a smile to them and what helps them whether its simply coping, growth or change.

This past weekend, my mom lost her cousin Al Gindi. Al was truly a giant of a man in our community and his contributions have impacted everyone. Thirteen years ago Al was hit with a terrible stroke. Inside he was all there, but because of the challenges in communication and movement, it must have been very difficult to say the least. On each Shabbat I was fortunate enough to be with my mom in Florida over those years I saw and often joined her as she sat with Al by the pool. They would sit for a few minutes each week and Adele Bibi became his little cousin Aduleh Gindi. She would convey him to the days of his youth and childhood's powerful memories and they would laugh together. Sometimes she drew me into the conversation reminding Al that I was David named for his uncle and her father, David Gindi and I was a rabbi following in the footsteps (I wish) of their mutual uncle Haham Moshe Gindi. There is incredible power in the brains ability to transport and see not what the mirror reflects, but what the mind knows to be true. For a few moments, one becomes part of that world; it becomes real again and reinvigorates a person. One could see the tremendous affect my mom's words, smile, hand holding and laughter had and I marveled at how simple it looked, but how miraculous it was and how it surely brought Al strength and joy when he needed it most. My mom made sure to attend the funeral on Sunday morning and I know the loss is felt.

I was surprised to learn that instead of Staten Island, Mr. Gindi was being buried in Eretz Yisrael. I learned of his tremendous love for the land. Thanks to the miracle of modern technology I was able to be in Israel with them and hear the words of Rabbi Sam Kassin, Rabbi Alouf, Rabbi Attieh, Rabbi Grossman and Rabbi Yaakov Hillel who dialed in. Their words echoed the words of Rabbi Mansour and Rabbi Harold Sutton spoken in New Jersey.

What is the purpose of a eulogy? Obviously we praise the one who has departed, perhaps providing some testimony for the heavenly court and certainly to bring some ease to the soul. We also try to bring comfort to the mourners. I believe though that the highest level of hesped (eulogizing) and the reason why the mourners and those around them continue to tell stories of the niftar for the week and the month is to use the life of the one who has left us to inspire us to make a change for the better. What can we learn from them that will allow us to look at our own lives differently and act in a different manner?

We are told that the first question one is asked in Heaven is if he was honest in business. It was heartwarming to hear of a man who refused to accept ill-gotten gains. Who returned millions of dollars paid to him in error after September 11th and its aftermath and was willing to forgo profit and even accept loss going beyond the letter of the law to bring peace. It's a challenge for some to return the extra ten dollar bill the cashier gave us in error, imagine returning a four million dollar check? And when we fight with someone over something whether trivial or significant, ego often prevents settling and peace goes up in flames. Imagine writing a check for \$700,000 to simply bring peace. Honesty in business is the first question we are asked because it is often the most difficult to attain. Our nature forces us to justify everything so even when we are wrong, we believe we are right. Al Gindi (and his partner Sonny Gindi, A'H) shows us that if we do right by man, Hashem will do right by us.

We read this week Vehaya Ekev Tishmeun, Moses promises, "If you will listen them you will be blessed". He uses a strange word Ekev. One thought on Ekev is reversing the letters to become Keva. We are told to that another of those heavenly questions is if one was koveya ittim – set aside time for Torah. It was

refreshing to hear from so many of the Rabbis about how AI attended their classes and not only listened. He would send back letters filled with questions, comments and suggestions. And if the letter was not answered quickly, he would follow with another asking of the first was received and bringing up more questions. He showed that being a successful businessman whose time is in demand from all aspects of so many cogs in his business life is not free from his obligation to learn, study and explore. The Torah is our life and gives us life and must be a part of our life. Perhaps Moses was telling us that if we will set aside time and learn in order to listen then we will be blessed. Without knowledge it is impossible to do. AI Gindi certainly showed that no matter how busy you are and how much you have on your plate and how many people you are responsible to and for, one must always set aside time to learn.

AI Gindi also showed that when one is blessed, then one must share. And he certainly shared building synagogues and schools and donating to every cause within and beyond the community. We see his behavior in his children who emulate him.

And finally I believe that there is a second explanation of Koveya itim of setting aside time and that is to set aside time to be with, to teach and to set an example for one's family. A/ and Shirley, may she be blessed, brought up amazing children who are incredibly special and I am proud to call them my cousins. May Terri, Isaac, Ronnie and Raymond be comforted from Shamayim for their loss and may they and their children make their father proud in even going beyond all that he did and doing more.

Tehi Nafsho Serurah BeSrur HaChayim

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

I wanted to point out a foundational pasook in parashat Ekev. Perek 8, Pasook 16 says "ha'maachilcha mahn bamidbar asher lo yedaoon abotecha le'maan anotecha oo'lemaan nasotecha le'hetibecha ba'acharitecha (I fed you mahn in the midbar to afflict you and to test you in order to do good for you in the end)". The Torah is telling us here why Benei Israel suffered in the midbar and in general why we face difficulty in our lives. The afflictions we experience are to test us in order that Hashem can give us good in the end. Hashem wants

to see how we react when things are not going smoothly. Hashem wants to reward us and thus he puts us in a position to earn greater reward. And so in this pasook Hashem is telling us how operates. And we should never forget this! Every challenge we face is uniquely designed by Hashem to give us an opportunity earn reward. It is the hesed of our loving creator. And we see it clearly here in our parasha.

Ekev - Moshe recounts the sin of the egel and tells Benei Israel if we follow the mitsvot we will have beracha in the land

1- Moshe reminds Benei Israel that if we keep our covenant with Hashem we will have beracha, destroy our enemies, and inherit a great land

2- Moshe warns Benei Israel that they will have success in Israel and forget Hashem and that if they forget Hashem and worship other Gods they will get destroyed.

3- Moshe goes on to rebuke Benei Israel because they angered Hashem many times including the sin of the egel

4- The events following the egel. Moshe goes up to ask for forgiveness and receive the new luchot.

5- Moshe again tells Benei Israel to make sure to fear Hashem, love him, and follow in his ways, particularly because they personally witnessed the miracles of Hashem.

6- The 2nd parasha of shema (we will only see beracha from the land if we listen to the mitsvot).

7- Moshe again says that if we follow the mitsvot Hashem will drive out the nations of Kenaan and make the nations of the world fear us.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"I grasped the two tablets and threw them from my two hands and I smashed them before your eyes." (Debarim 9:17) At the end of the Torah, Moshe Rabenu's accomplishments are listed. But what was the apex of Moshe Rabenu's career as a leader? Rashi explains that it was that Moshe's heart was uplifted to break the tablets before the eyes of the Jewish people.

This decision, which Moshe describes at length in our parashah, seems an unlikely choice for Moshe's utmost achievement. Wouldn't you guess that receiving the Torah was a greater accomplishment than breaking the luhot? Why is this seemingly destructive act considered Moshe's crowning glory? Rabbi Frand answers that Moshe Rabenu nearly gave his life for the luhot. He didn't eat or drink for forty days and forty nights while Hashem taught him the Torah. He also had to do battle with the angels in order to receive the Torah.

Human nature would dictate that after investing such superhuman effort into receiving the luhot, Moshe would not be so fast to destroy them. Would we have the strength to destroy something for which we had sacrificed so much? Moshe overcame the natural human tendency to want to protect his investment. That strength is indeed a crowning achievement. Parashat Ekeb is read each year when we approach the month of Elul to prepare for the High Holidays. In order to continue growing throughout our lives, we have to be willing to examine our lives and ask ourselves: Am I compromising on my values? Am I making good choices in my life or am I making excuses for wrong behavior?

Some questions can be extremely tough to ask yourself! "Is the way I act among secular colleagues acceptable for a religious person? Should I continue to work in a place in which my spirituality is being tested on a daily basis? Is running my business requiring access to forms of media that I shouldn't be viewing or reading?"

These are hard questions to ask, because it could mean walking away from something you've invested tremendous to achieve.

But as we prepare for Rosh Hashanah, we have to show Hashem that we have the strength that Moshe Rabenu displayed, so that we, too, can wear the crown of achievement even when there is destruction. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"You shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He who gave you strength to make wealth."

(Debarim 8:18) The Ben Ish Hai comments on this pasuk that we don't generally tell someone to remember something unless there is a reason that he is prone to forgetting it. We see this concept regarding Shabbat about which it says in the Ten Commandments, "Remember the day of Shabbat to keep it holy." Since we are involved in our daily activities six days a week, it is easy for a person to forget himself and do a forbidden activity on Shabbat. So the Torah commands us to remember the Shabbat day. Similarly, when we are busy making a living, and on the surface it looks like we are in control, we need a special reminder that all of our successes are through the hashgachah of Hashem. According to the natural course of events, it may sometimes look like we made a great business decision through which we made a lot of money, but this is not the whole story. We have to remember that it was Hashem who put the idea in our head in the first place. Since this concept is so easy to forget, the Torah went out of its way to tell us to remember that Hashem is running the show.

There are four categories of people who are required to recite Bircat Hagomel – one was very sick and was healed, one who crossed a sea, one who crossed a

desert and one who was released from prison. The reason for this, says the Ben Ish Hai, is because these people are inclined to think that their efforts led to their salvation, whether it was by seeking out the best doctors and medications, or by hiring an experienced person to take him across the sea or desert, or by having people intervene with the authorities to get him released from jail. For this reason, the Sages instituted that these people should recite Bircat Hagomel in order to recognize and declare that their salvation came from Hashem. In our daily lives, there are many things which could easily distract us and make us think that we are in charge. Let's try to stay focused and remember that, even though we are obligated to put in the time and effort, every success or failure is through the Hand of Hashem. We should then thank Him for our successes and even for when we don't succeed, because only He knows what is best for us. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

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Thirty-day risk-free trial period! No-fault insurance! A free society used to mean that the subjects under the rule of a particular government were free from oppression and discrimination. Today, a free society means the people are free from responsibility and no one is accountable. This is not what the founders intended when they created the land of the free, and it is not what Hashem intended when he freed us from Egyptian bondage.

The verse states: "They are my slaves that I freed from Egypt" (Vayikra 25:55). The Torah's attitude towards life is that all actions are subject to scrutiny and accountability. Also, people are expected to accept different degrees of responsibility based on their positions, intelligence, and ability. Life is certainly not a "free ride."

When you are about to say the magic words "it is not my fault," catch yourself before the words leave your lips. Consider that "it" just might be something that you are responsible for causing, and perhaps there is a price you should pay for the incident. It only takes a little maturity to shake off the "no strings attached" mentality and accept responsibility for your actions or lack of performance. It may hurt for a minute, but it will be beneficial for many years to come. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Traffic Lights of the Soul

"Communities have adopted red, yellow and green traffic signals to help insure the safety of people and their vehicles. We need to marvel at the many thousands of wonderfully complex devices that have developed to make people's lives better."

The Torah and its laws are traffic lights of the soul, which maintains our physical and spiritual health. (Norman D. Levy; Based on Rabbi Miller's, Duties of the Mind)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
The Little Things That Aren't So Little

The opening section of Parashat Ekeb describes the prosperity and good fortune that are promised to Beneh Yisrael if they obey Hashem's commands. However, the Sages inferred from the second word in this Parasha – the word for which it is named, "Ekeb" – that these blessings are earned by observing a particular kind of Misva. The phrase "Ekeb Tishme'un" literally means, "as a result of obeying." But the word "Ekeb" also means "heel," and as Rashi comments, it is used here to allude to those Misvot which people customarily "tread upon with their heel." In other words, we earn these blessings only if we ensure to observe the Misvot that are commonly ignored and overlooked. We are not necessarily deserving of these rewards for observing the "popular" Misvot, such as Shabbat and Kashrut, vitally important as these Misvot undoubtedly are. We earn these blessings only if we are careful to fulfill the "unpopular" Misvot that people tend to neglect.

To which Misvot does this refer? Which Misvot are the ones that people "trample" on?

I believe that the Sages refer here to our obligations and responsibilities to our fellowman, to the simple, basic acts of consideration and concern for the people around us. When we read Tehillim, or when we attend a Torah class, we feel "holy," we experience an uplifting feeling that gives us a deep sense of satisfaction, knowing that we did something important. Generally, however, this is not the case with simple acts of goodness. Extending a friendly greeting to a new face in the synagogue does not give us the same "high" as an impassioned prayer. Offering a neighbor a lift to the store does not get us excited. And therefore, too often, otherwise religiously observant people "trample" upon these Misvot. Since these and similar simple acts of courtesy do not give us a "holy" feeling, we easily forget how vitally important they are to Torah observance, and so we neglect them.

Of course, I am not saying that the prayers, study and ritualistic elements of Torah life are

less important. The Ten Commandments were written on two equal-sized tablets, one presenting our basic obligations to G-d, and the other our basic obligations to our fellowman. Both are equally important, and we must never prioritize one over the other. There is, however, a tendency among many observant Jews to neglect their basic duties to their fellowman, which is due to the tendency to associate "holiness" and "spirituality" specifically with our responsibilities to Hashem. In order to earn the beautiful blessings described here in Parashat Ekeb, we need to ensure not to neglect these "little things," which the Torah reminds us are not "little" at all.

Rav Eliyahu Lopian (1876-1970) told that he once received a generous donation for his yeshiva from a man who was not religiously observant, but exuded genuine love and affection for Hachamim. The Rabbi asked the man why he experienced such strong feelings for Rabbis, if he was not even observant. The man explained that when he was a young man, he had no interest whatsoever in studying Torah, but his father insisted that he travel to Radin and apply for admission to the yeshiva of the renowned Hafetz Haim. The boy, reluctantly, made the trip to Radin and was tested by the great Sage. Much to the youngster's delight, he failed his exam, and was denied admission into the yeshiva. Afterward, the boy told the Hafetz Haim that he had no train home until the following day, and thus he wanted to sleep over in the yeshiva that night. The Hafetz Haim replied that the yeshiva did not offer hospitality to those who were not students, but he graciously invited the boy to stay in his home. The boy felt very honored to receive such an invitation, and he spent the night at the Hafetz Haim's home.

Late that night, the Hafetz Haim walked into the boy's room, assuming he was asleep. The boy heard the great Sage whisper, "Oh my, it's way too cold in here." He promptly removed his overcoat and placed it on top of his guest to keep him warm during the cold night.

"Even now, 50 years later," the man said to Rav Lopian, "I can still feel the warmth of the Hafetz Haim's coat."

The Hafetz Haim did many very important things in his life, starting with the composition of seminal Torah works, such as the Mishna Berura and his work on the laws of Lashon Ha'ra. But what affected this young man was not the

Hafetz Haim's brilliant scholarship or inspirational prayer, but rather the simple act of giving him his coat so he could keep warm.

We should certainly aspire to greatness, but we must never forget about "goodness." The word "Ekeb" reminds us that often the most significant Misvot we do are the "little things," the simple everyday acts of courtesy and consideration to the people around us.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
HATRED**

The rabbis of the Talmud have taught us that there are two opposite emotions that distort our thinking and cause human beings – even otherwise capable and talented human beings – to behave in an irrational manner. These two emotions on the surface appear to be polar opposites. They are love and hate. But psychologists have long taught us that not only are these emotions not necessarily opposite or contradictory, one to another, but they are two different expressions of feeling and emotion that overwhelm our sense of rationality and propriety.

We are all witness to the fact that people who express love towards some in an expansive manner, at the very same time, express hatred towards others, often in a violent fashion. Since these character traits, love and hate, are constantly on display in our personal and national lives, we are so accustomed to their presence in our society that we take little notice of the true effects that they bring to our lives.

As Maimonides points out to us, no emotion or character trait, except for humility and the avoidance of anger, should be taken to an extreme. Hatred breeds zealotry and zealotry invites and justifies violence and discord. Unfortunately human beings are influenced and trained to hate and demonize others who are different than they are or who even have different views and opinions on matters both large and small. Many times, this hatred of others is really a manifestation of narcissism and love of one's self, which is not balanced and can lead to great emotional and practical difficulties.

We are witness to the effects of hatred in the political societies of many countries in the world, including our

own wonderful little country of Israel. Hatred of the others becomes the rallying point for justifying the policies and opinions of ideological and political parties, groups and opponents.

The completely irrational behavior of much of the American media regarding a duly elected president of the country borders on the pathologically insane. It is interesting in my opinion that no president since Abraham Lincoln has been so subjected to rejection and hatred, no matter whatever policies or appointments are created.

Though here in Israel things have not reached the same fever pitch as they have in the United States, the hatred and demonization shown towards certain groups and political leaders in our society is very troubling and is undoubtedly counterproductive towards the efforts to build a just and peaceful society. Why all of the expressions of hatred? Of what value are they and what positive end they achieve? These are hard questions that we should ask ourselves in an attempt to remove them from our book of tactics and behavior.

It was this lesson that our great rabbis of the Talmud attempted to teach us when they defined the cause of the distraction of the Second Temple as being baseless, unwarranted and corrosive hatred. This is a basic lesson of Judaism that unfortunately has not been learned and followed. Hatred still haunts many sections of our society and creates problems that easily could be avoided.

Children are born without any preconceived or inborn hatred of others. The nurseries in the hospitals of our country do not witness infants who hate others because of skin color, religious opinions and social beliefs. These types of hatred are taught to children and that is how they become part of the matrix of their personality and political and religious beliefs.

Those people who are responsible for teaching children – parents, educators, religious leaders and even social activists – bear an enormous responsibility and burden. They can easily make children haters, as was the case in Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union, and in other totalitarian regimes. It is easier to teach a child to hate than it is to teach a child to love and respect others who are different.

It should be the goal of every family and educational institution to grab hold of this emotion of hate and quench it to the best of their abilities. There are many matters in our society that we will disagree about and have different ideas, beliefs and policies that we wish

to implement. But hatred of others should not be the instrument by which we attempt to achieve our goals. The Talmud tells us of the great differences between the students of Hillel and Shamai. Yet it emphasizes the complete lack of hatred that characterized their discussions and disagreements. This is meant to be a moral landmark for later generations of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Listen, Really Listen

Some 20 or so years ago, with the help from the Ashdown Foundation, I initiated a conference at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on the future of Jewish peoplehood. I feared the deepening divisions between secular and ultra-orthodox in Israel, between the various denominations in the Diaspora, and between Israel and the Diaspora themselves.

It was a glittering array of Jewry's brightest minds: academics from 16 different countries representing all the shadings of Jewish identity. There were professors from Harvard, Yale and Princeton as well as most of Israel's universities. It was a scintillating success, and at the same time, a total failure.

Halfway through the second day, I turned to my wife Elaine and said, "The speaking is brilliant. The listening is non-existent." Eventually I could bear it no longer. "Let's leave," I said to her. I could not handle yet more skilled presentations from minds that were *parti pris*, lucid, coherent, but totally closed to ideas that lay outside the radius of their preconceptions. Far from being a set of solutions to the divisions within Jewry, the conference perfectly epitomised the problem.

We decided to travel south to Arad, to meet for the first time the great (and very secular) novelist Amos Oz. I mentioned this to a friend. He winced. "What," he asked, "do you hope to achieve? Do you really want to convert him?" "No," I replied, "I want to do something much more important. I want to listen to him."

And so it was. For two hours we sat in Amos's book-lined basement study at the edge of the desert, and listened. Out of that meeting came, I believe, a genuine friendship. He stayed secular. I stayed religious. But something magical, transformative, happened nonetheless. We listened to one another.

I cannot speak for Amos, but I can for myself. I felt the presence of a deep mind, a feeling intellect, a master of language – Amos is one of the few people I know incapable of uttering a boring sentence – and

one who has wrestled in his own way with what it means to be a Jew. Since then I have had a public dialogue with him, and another with his daughter Fania Oz-Salzberger. But it began with an act of sustained, focused listening.

Shema is one of the key words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times. It is, in fact, one of the key words of Judaism as a whole. It is central to the two passages that form the first two paragraphs of the prayer we call the Shema,[1] one in last week's parsha, the other in this week's.

What is more: it is untranslatable. It means many things: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise and to respond. It is the closest biblical Hebrew comes to a verb that means "to obey."

In general, when you encounter a word in any language that is untranslatable into your own, you are close to the beating pulse of that culture. To understand an untranslatable word, you have to be prepared to move out of your comfort zone and enter a mindset that is significantly different from yours.

At the most basic level, Shema represents that aspect of Judaism that was most radical in its day: that God cannot be seen. He can only be heard. Time and again Moses warns against making or worshipping any physical representation of the Divine. As he tells the people: It is a theme that runs through the Bible. Moses insistently reminds the people that at Mount Sinai: "The Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deut. 4:12). Even when Moses mentions seeing, he is really talking about listening. A classic example occurs in the opening verses of next week's parsha:

See [re'eh], I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you listen [tishme'u] to the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you do not listen [lo tishme'u] to the commands of the Lord your God. (Deut. 11:26-28)

This affects our most basic metaphors of knowing. To this day, in English, virtually all our words for understanding or intellect are governed by the metaphor of sight. We speak of insight, hindsight, foresight, vision and imagination. We speak of people being perceptive, of making an observation, of adopting a perspective. We say, "it appears that." When we understand something, we say, "I see." [2] This entire linguistic constellation is the legacy of the

philosophers of ancient Greece, the supreme example in all history of a visual culture.

Judaism, by contrast, is a culture of the ear more than the eye. As Rabbi David Cohen, the disciple of Rav Kook known as 'the Nazirite', pointed out in his book, *Kol ha-Nevuah*, the Babylonian Talmud consistently uses the metaphor of hearing. So when a proof is brought, it says *Ta shma*, 'Come and hear.' When it speaks of inference it says, *Shema mina*, 'Hear from this.' When someone disagrees with an argument, it says *Lo shemiyah leih*, 'he could not hear it.' When it draws a conclusion it says, *Mashma*, 'from this it can be heard.' Maimonides calls the oral tradition, *Mipi hashemua*, 'from the mouth of that which was heard.' In Western culture understanding is a form of seeing. In Judaism it is a form of listening.

What Moses is telling us throughout *Devarim* is that God does not seek blind obedience. The fact that there is no word for 'obedience' in biblical Hebrew, in a religion of 613 commands, is stunning in itself (modern Hebrew had to borrow a verb, *letzayet*, from Aramaic). He wants us to listen, not just with our ears but with the deepest resources of our minds. If God had simply sought obedience, he would have created robots, not human beings with a will of their own. Indeed if He had simply sought obedience, He would have been content with the company of angels, who constantly sing God's praises and always do His will.

God, in making human beings "in His image," was creating otherness. And the bridge between self and other is conversation: speaking and listening. When we speak, we tell others who and what we are. But when we listen, we allow others to tell us who they are. This is the supremely revelatory moment. And if we can't listen to other people, then we certainly can't listen to God, whose otherness is not relative but absolute.

Hence the urgency behind Moses' double emphasis in this week's parsha, the opening line of the second paragraph of the *Shema*: "If you indeed heed [shamo'a tishme'u] my commands with which I charge you today, to love the Lord your God and worship Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13). A more forceful translation might be: "If you listen – and I mean really listen."

One can almost imagine the Israelites saying to Moses, "OK. Enough already. We hear you," and Moses replying, "No you don't. You simply don't understand what is happening here. The Creator of the entire universe is taking a personal interest in your welfare and destiny: you, the smallest of all

nations and by no means the most righteous. Have you any idea of what that means?" Perhaps we still don't.

Listening to another human being, let alone God, is an act of opening ourselves up to a mind radically other than our own. This takes courage. To listen is to make myself vulnerable. My deepest certainties may be shaken by entering into the mind of one who thinks quite differently about the world. But it is essential to our humanity. It is the antidote to narcissism: the belief that we are the centre of the universe. It is also the antidote to the fundamentalist mindset characterised by the late Professor Bernard Lewis as, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell." [3]

Listening is a profoundly spiritual act. It can also be painful. It is comfortable not to have to listen, not to be challenged, not to be moved outside our comfort zone. Nowadays, courtesy of Google filters, Facebook friends, and the precise targeting of individuals made possible by the social media, it is easy to live in an echo-chamber in which we only get to hear the voices of those who share our views. But, as I said in a TED lecture last year, "It's the people not like us who make us grow."

Hence the life-changing idea: Listening is the greatest gift we can give to another human being. To be listened to, to be heard, is to know that someone else takes me seriously. That is a redemptive act.

Twenty years ago I sat in a lecture hall in a university in Jerusalem and listened to a series of great minds not listening to one another. I concluded that the divisions in the Jewish world were not about to heal, and would never heal until we understood the deep spiritual truth in Moses' challenge: "If you listen – and I mean, really listen."

[1] Technically, reciting the *Shema* is not an act of prayer at all. It is a fundamentally different type of action: it is an act of Talmud Torah, of learning Torah (see *Menahot* 99b). In prayer, we speak to God. In study we listen to God.

[2] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[3] Bernard Lewis, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell," *The Atlantic*, May 2003.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“And you shall remember the entire journey that Hashem your G-d led you these forty years in the wilderness.” (8:2)

When Rabbenu Yonah wished to point out the great importance of a Mitzvat Aseh (positive Commandment), he states that some of the most obligatory duties required by Hashem are expressed in the form of a Mitzvat Aseh. This verse is among the examples of such great duties and principles cited by Rabbenu Yonah (Shaare Teshuba 3:17): “The great virtues of remembering His kindnesses and of meditating upon them, as is said ‘And you shall remember the entire journey’ and it is said ‘They meditated in the kindnesses of Hashem’ (Tehillim 107:43).”

Thus we learn that this verse, “You shall remember”, refers not only to the nation in general and not only to the journeys in the Wilderness. But, it imposes the obligation upon every individual to look back upon his own journeys in life and to spend some time meditating upon them in order to appreciate more greatly how much he must be grateful to Hashem for His many kindnesses.

In one’s journey through life many perils and illnesses and misfortunes and evil influences hovered nearby, even though he was totally unaware of them. And Hashem continued to protect him as he journeyed from childhood to adolescence and on to adult maturity.

He must be grateful also for the continued well being of his wife and children. And, he must always be aware of the tragedies that others had suffered but from which he had been protected by Hashem. This is an example of the method of utilizing commandments to the nation in general as admonitions for each individual.

When R’ Miller was asked by a grandchild to reminisce upon his youth, the Rabbi responded. “Talking about the olden days is a waste of time. However, in the context of ‘you shall remember’ (see above), it is a Mitzvah.”

- When I was about 3-4 years old in Baltimore, I was walking & tripped on a wooden board which had a nail protruding from it. The nail struck me in the head above my brow (the Rav pointed to the spot). I was taken to the hospital for stiches. If the nail had struck a bit lower in my eye, maybe there wouldn’t have been a Rabbi Miller! But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- When I was in school it was a very cold day & there was a chubby fellow playing & sweating in the yard. When he returned to the school he drank cold water. He caught pneumonia & fell sick & did not return. But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- I knew a young man of 20 years old; he did not make it to 21.

But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- I was learning in Slobodka Yeshiva, 1932-1938. The Nazis Y”S killed all my chaverim (friends) (the Rav sobbed when he recalled this). But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

I was told that the Rav always reviewed the thousands of kindnesses that he kept recorded in his mind.

He wrote this Pasuk, ‘To remember all the journeys in your life’, in his instructions given to his family before he passed away. This is what he held as a Purpose of life. Hakarat Hatov!

I went to visit Rebbetzen Miller a”h in the Lakewood hospital. She had recently fallen into a coma. I asked her grandchildren if I could go in to see her & read this divre Torah. When I read this she opened her eyes and seemed to wake up. The grandchildren immediately called Rbtzn Brog. She asked me “what did you read to my mother”? I told her the Pasuk. She said “no wonder! This is what the Rav wrote to us in his last instructions”.

On one Erev Shabbat, the Rav told me 4 personal stories with the lessons of remembering the kindnesses done by Hashem.