

Introduction: Making it Real



Making truth real to us. That is our challenge, knowing how to bridge the gap between the mind and the heart. But why has Hashem set up the world this way? Why is it a constant struggle to internalize what we know to be right? Join Rabbi Shafier as he embarks upon the *Mesillas Yescharim* and learn how The Ramchal guides us to discovering who we truly are.

INTRODUCTION

Summer's evening and you're walking by the beach, it's quiet, it's still. You look out, far, far into the horizon and slowly, you notice something, there's a light and the light starts to grow and it gets larger and it gets larger. And before you know it, it looks like almost the image of a man.

And it's huge wearing white robes and this image comes closer and closer and you say oh my goodness, it's a *malach*, a *malach*, you hear a loud booming voice, Moishy I was sent by Hashem, what? What? I was sent to tell you the secret to creation. The reason why Hashem made everything including you.

Yes, yes, what is it? What is the reason? Hashem made you Moishy so that you should make money. Money, money? Yes make money but not just a little bit of money, make a lot of money.

Make as much money as you can, make more money than you can ever spend in your lifetime, your children's lifetime, your children after that and the *malach* leaves.

Now if this were to happen, if you were to experience that, I would imagine that conversation would impact your life greatly, impact every decision that you make, impact what you decided to do with your time, who you would be involved with, in what ways, because if in fact that were the message, it would greatly impact every decision you made in your life.

Now to be honest with you, I doubt a *malach* is going to come and visit you and I surely doubt that if he did, that would be the message but you see here's the point, this question why did Hashem create us, what's life about, what am I doing here? Is the most basic question, it will impact every decision that you will make for the rest of your life.

And the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains to us that this question is the *yesod*, the *shoresh*, the source, the underpinning, the foundation of our entire religion. Asking this question and answering it. Why did Hashem create me? What's life about? What am I doing here? What does Hashem want from me?

And asking that question and getting the answer clearly in front of me, is in fact the single greatest force in our entire *avodas Hashem* and again as the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains to us, it's the foundation.

But it's very interesting because when he opens up the *Mesilas Yesharim*, he says the words "*sheyisbarer vuyisames*" it should become clear and truthful to a person, why he was created, what he's doing here.

He didn't just say you should think about it, he didn't say you should listen to the answer, he said it should become clear and truthful and one of the questions I think a person should ask themselves is I don't understand, let's assume for a minute that we're going to have a very clear direction. Imagine for a minute the *malach* were to tell me exactly why Hashem made me, and again unlikely to make a lot of money, but that's exactly what this book is now going to do.

I have *emunas chachomim*, I fully accept the fact that Hashem sent His messengers, His *shlichim*, I fully accept the words of the *Torah* as true, and therefore I accept the words that the *Mesilas Yesharim*'s saying here as a very basic underpinning of my life, the reason why Hashem created me and he's going to explain to us.

The reason is because Hashem's the *metiv*, Hashem's the giver, Hashem wants to share His good with mankind, and therefore Hashem created the world. This world is the place where we grow, we accomplish, we earn our *schar*, the world to come is the reason for it all. But that concept once I get it, should be in my mind. Once I understand that, I should get it, it should change my life radically and completely and yet that's not what the *Mesilas Yesharim* says.

He says the real *avodah*, the real work is for it to become clear and truthful, not just to read it, not just hear it, but to actually get it, to fundamentally understand it and to grasp it, for it to be part of the essence of me.

And in lieu of an introduction, I'd like to really spend this session as dealing with this very question, why is it that certain concepts require so much work, for instance if I were to ask you in what year was the revolutionary war fought? I assume you'd tell me 1776. And if you didn't know the answer off the top of the head, we'll you'd look it up and you'd know the answer.

If I were to ask you what's the first law of thermodynamics, either you would answer me, if you didn't know it immediately, again you would read a little bit and you would get it, you would understand it.

So clearly we're intelligent people, we can take abstract thoughts, abstract ideas and get it in front of us and understand it. Why then is it that the entire *avodah* so much of the work is *sheyisborer vuyisames* that it should become clear and truthful why is it that I have to spend so much time, energy and effort on really understanding this, really getting it, making it clear, you read it, you understand it, we're done.

And if you don't quite hear this question, let me make it a little bit more clear.

Question: Here's a question, have you ever sinned? A candid question, in your lifetime, have you ever sinned? Now that's a reasonable question but here's the observation. If I am a *mamin*, if I have *emunah*, then I know that Hashem is present right here. If Hashem is present right here, the king of kings, creator of the heavens and the earth is right here, how is it possible that I ever in my life sinned? I'm not a *kofer*, I don't deny Hashem's existence, I don't say Hashem isn't here, so how's it possible that I ever sinned?

And by the way, the *Sefer Hachinuch* says, why is it that part of the *avodah* on *Yom Kippur* is *viduy*, to speak out? He explains because all year round when we're doing what we're doing, we're denying Hashem's presence.

If I've ever sinned during the course of the year, by the way I spoke *lashan hara*, or whatever he might have done, that action is denying Hashem's presence. He explains, on *Yom Kippur* the process of *tshuvah* involves *viduy*, speaking it out so that I should really retrain myself because

all year round I was training myself in the fact that Hashem isn't here, because if Hashem was here I sure wouldn't have done it.

Now on *Yom Kippur* I have to undo that training and recognize no in fact Hashem was there, Hashem was listening, Hashem was right there, but here's the point. If I am a *mamin*, if I know that Hashem created the world, runs the world, and is present right here, how's it possible to sin?

Here's another little question to expand this a little bit. When was the last time that you passed out during *davening*? When was the last time you were so overcome with emotion, with the awe, trepidation that you literally fainted?

Well the odds are good that if you're like you and me and pretty much everyone else we know, it wasn't that often that that experience occurred to you. But here's a problem, I'm speaking to the creator of the heavens and the earth, right here. The *Mesilas Yesharim* explains that *davening* is not speaking Hashem can You hear me, way up there in the heavens, uh uh, speaking to Hashem right here. And he says literally as I'm speaking to my friend, therefore my friend is right here, I'm conversing, my friend may respond, he may not respond. Says the *Mesilas Yesharim*, *zu hi tefilah*, that's *davening*.

So here's the question: I'm a *mamin*, I know that Hashem is here and I understand that *davening* is speaking to Hashem, how's it possible that I space out? How's it possible that I'm not trembling?

First of all, Hashem is more powerful than any human being I could imagine or envision.

Hashem has lots of money, Hashem has diamonds in South Africa, Hashem has oil in Saudi Arabia, Hashem has real estate, Hashem's got everything I need, how's it possible that I'm not trembling in awe and trepidation if I accept the fact that Hashem is here?

Now we use certain words, getting it, hearing it, feeling it and knowing it. As if there's some sort of divide that you can know things, but not feel it. But here's the question, why is that? History is not illusive, gravity is a reality. I recognize it, I fully get it. I don't have to work on it. Let me *daher* gravity, let me, oh my goodness, heavy objects, really do fall. I experience it, I know it, it's real even though gravity is a mighty abstract concept, yet I know it, in the core of my essence.

Why then is it that these concepts what am I doing here, Hashem's presence, why is it that these concepts require so much work, why are they so difficult to grasp, why are they so far removed and again, why does the *Mesilas Yesharim* say the real foundation, the real work is *sheyisborer vuyisames* to get it clear, we should just study it, read it and we're done?

And the reason why I would like to deal with this issue is because this issue I believe is probably the core, main focus of all *mussar*. And probably the biggest purpose of *mussar*. And to begin answering this question, let me first deepen it one more step.

There's a *Gemara* that I quoted in *shmuz* number twenty, *davening* make it real and I believe that *Gemara* is very, very eye opening because we'll soon see that it's not just us, maybe you say it's me, during *davening* I space out, one minute I'm speaking to Hashem, the next minute I'm gone. But that's coz I'm living in a fast paced generation, I'm distracted etc. I'd like to share with you, that phenomena is endemic, basic to the human.

The *Gemara* tells that Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai was the leader of the *Klal Yisrael* and at a hundred and twenty years of age, he took ill. Now at that time, every person knew that Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai, the great *tzaddik* was the leader of the generation and the word quickly

spread that the great leader is ill, *nichnesu talmidav huvakrav*, his *talmidim*, his students came to visit him.

And you have to appreciate, his students were people of tremendous stature. They were *tanoim*, they were people of unimaginable greatness, and as soon as they walked into the room, he understood that they were coming to bid farewell, *miyad hischil livkos* he begins crying.

And they said to him, *rebbe mipnei mah atoh bocheh*. Why are you crying? Normally before a person prepares to leave this earth, there's a lot he has to think about, many things he did that he shouldn't have done, many things he should have done that he didn't, but you're the great Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai, the pure *tzaddik*, you spent your entire life, serving your creator, serving your people, why are you crying?

And Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai said, there's a *derech* in front of me, I'm heading on a path but I don't know where it leads to, but I do know that they're going to judge me. If I were being taken in front of a *melech bassar vadam*, a mortal flesh and blood king, who's today here and tomorrow gone, if this flesh and blood king would have judged me and would get angry with me, that anger wouldn't last forever, if he would lock me up, it wouldn't be forever. And if that mortal flesh and blood king would have killed me, it also wouldn't be forever, but that's not where they're taking me. They're taking me in front of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, the creator of the heavens and the earth, and if Hashem's angry with me, that is forever. If Hashem locks me up, meaning to say the Maharshah explains, puts me in *gehinnom*, potentially that could be forever, *vu'im himisani*, if Hashem snuffs me out, the worst punishment is the destruction of the *neshamah*, that's forever, shouldn't I cry?

And what Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai was saying was, understanding that I'm going to be judged, my entire life is going to be reviewed, measured, counted, weighed is a very, very frightening concept. If a peer would have measure it, if a peer were to be my judge, but that's not where I'm going.

Explains Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai I'm standing in front of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* who weighs and measures every single act of my life, every single thought, every single engagement that I ever had and Hashem measures to the depth, to the depth, to the depth, not just the action, but my intention, where I was coming from, shouldn't I cry?

At which that point the *talmidim* realized there was not much time left so they said the words *rebbei barcheinu*, give us a *brachah*. And Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai said, my *brachah* is *shetehei morah shomayim alechem kumorah basar vedam*, you should fear Hashem as you do man.

The *talmidim* said, *kulah hi vesu lo*, you just told us how much more we should fear Hashem than we do man, your *brachah*, your final *brachah* is that we should fear Hashem as we do man?

Says Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai *halevi, halevi* you should fear Hashem as you do man, before a man commits a sin, he looks left, he looks right, *shelo yirani adam* let no man see me. *Halevi* you should fear Hashem as you do man and with those words, the *Gemara* closes.

Now here's the observation. These students of Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai were people of unimaginable greatness. If we spent our lifetime trying to even envision what they were, I doubt we would imagine it. This is the time right at the *churban bayis*, we're dealing with people whose entire lives were serving Hashem, we're dealing with people who got it, totally completely, most of them if not the majority, were in the *Beis Hamikdash* during the *avodah* and they got to experience Hashem's presence, so why is his final *brachah*, you should fear Hashem

as you do man and they said that's nothing to which he said *halevi, halevi* you should fear Hashem as you do man because my goodness, before you sin, if a human being would catch you you'd be mortified, you look left, right, make sure no one sees you, how come you don't realize that Hashem sees you?

But here's the problem this *Gemara* was not you and I, this was Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai speaking to his closest *talmidim*, on his deathbed, saying words that should be rather obvious, and yet it was a core eye opening experience for his *talmidim* and it was a *brachah*.

And again, the question is why for us is it so difficult to get certain concepts and especially for people of that stature, why didn't they just know it, why didn't they just change their life, why didn't they just be great *tzaddikim* from that moment on?

At to begin answering this question, let's begin with one observation. The *Derech Hashem* which is another *sefer* that the Ramchal wrote, before *Mesilas Yescharim*, explains that there are four stages of my life.

The first stage is before I was in this body, Hashem created me, I the *neshamah*, the one inside, and I was under the throne of glory without a body, fully alert. Fully conscious, fully aware an intellectual being, close to Hashem, that is the first stage of our life.

Then Hashem puts us into this life. Chooses a particular family, particular generation, puts me into a body, with a certain temperament, certain level of intelligence and says go out there, forge those dreams, climb those mountains, become the great human being you can become.

When I'm done my job here, the body's put in the ground, I separate, I go to the *olam haneshamos*, so we could call it maybe a holding pen where I, separate from my body, spend a

certain amount of time and then eventually it's *tchiyas hamessim*, when I'm put back into a body, a body much more similar to Adam *Harishon's* body, a body in which I can quickly perfect my *neshamah*, I can quickly perfect the body and I in that new form, live on forever.

Four stages. The first stage is before I was in the body, second stage, in the body, out of the body then back in.

But you see, here's the point. Before I was in this body, I understood things with absolute clarity. I got it. I got it so clearly and I understood it so clearly that I was torn. I was torn whether to come into this world or not come into the world.

The *Beis Yosef* in his *sefer Magid Mesharim* explains that the *neshamos* sit there and certain *neshamos* go into this world and come back. And when they come back, they come back powerful, stellar giants, they see *neshamos* that started like they, and they come back literally like the sun in midday, brilliant, gigantic, and every *neshamah* when seeing that says I too want to come into this world, let me have a chance. Hashem please let me enter the world.

However, not every *neshamah* that enters this world comes back greatly improved, some come back damaged, some come back malformed, some come back crippled and the *neshamos*, as in you and I, watch as many, many *neshamos* come into this world, great, pure and come back to that world very, very damaged, very impure and all the *neshamos* see this and they say it's too dangerous, it's not worth it.

The danger is so powerful, the destruction for eternity is so pervasive it's not worth it and none of the *neshamos* want to come into this world. Hashem in His infinite wisdom understands that for those who reach the heights it's worth it, and against their will, Hashem puts the *neshamah* into a body.

But you see, at that moment, when I'm there, under the *kisei hakavod*, I get it with absolute clarity and absolute understanding. I see the consequences of my actions, I understand that every *mitzvah* that Hashem gave me, or will give me, is for my benefit and the benefit of the world at large. I understand that anything Hashem warns me not to do, is destructive to me and to the world in which I live. And in that state, I am pure. And in that state I'm much like a *malach*.

But in that state I can never become what I could be. And explains the *Derech Hashem*, the reason that Hashem created the entire world, was to allow the human being to be close to Hashem, to allow the human being to make himself into Hashem as much as human being can and by doing that to enjoy the ultimate reward, to be close to Hashem, to be *dovek*, to enjoy the proximity, the greatest pleasure that can be envisioned or imagined.

But that has to be earned. And the way it's earned, is not by being a *malach*. You see one of the mistakes that we make, is we say ah if only I could get it so clearly, if only I could be like a *malach*, I could serve Hashem and it would be wonderful. And on one level it would be, but if I and a *malach* were the same, there'd effectively be no purpose in creation.

And to illustrate this let me focus on a very interesting point that's mention a number of times, in a number of *shmuzen*, but it bears repeating. One of the mistakes that we make is, we assume that a *malach* doesn't have freewill. Ask a kid in school, fourth grade, fifth grade, does have an angel have, absolutely not, *malachim* don't have freewill, don't have *bechirah*, angels, a human being, man has freewill, a *malach* doesn't have *bechirah*.

The only problem is that that's not correct. There are numerous examples in *Chazal* where *malachim* made mistakes, *malach* is a *das nifrad*, a separate intellect, it has freewill as you and I

have freewill and the difference between a man and a *malach* is not freewill, the difference between a man and a *malach* is the clarity with which a *malach* gets things.

You see a *malach* understands exactly as I did before I was in this body, exactly the goodness of Hashem, the purpose of creation and a *malach* realizes the consequences with absolute, total understanding. If you'd like to know the freewill of a *malach*, it's a very simple thing.

Imagine I were to say to you the following: I would give you a one hundred dollar bill if you'll put your hand in this fire for a minute. Let's say I pull out a crisp one hundred dollar bill and said, I'll give you this hundred dollar bill if you put your hand in the fire for one minute. Would you put your hand in the fire?

Now the answer is you wouldn't. Not for a hundred dollars, not for a thousand dollars because it's self-inflicted damage and you would never do it.

But here's the question do you have freewill to do it? Of course you have freewill, you could do it, in theory you could do it but you never would because it's foolish, that's the type of freewill that a *malach* has. You see a *malach* sees every action and its consequences, but it sees it and it gets it, and the kind of freewill that a *malach* has, is similar to my freewill to put my hand in a fire.

If you would offer me a thousand dollars to drink a cup of bleach, I wouldn't take you up on the offer, why because I understand that it's destructive and I won't do it. And a *malach* understands with absolute clarity the results of its actions and the consequences and therefore a *malach* is static, it can never grow and as great as a *malach* is, that's where it's pegged and that's where it remains for eternity.

But Hashem created the human being potentially to be way, way greater than *malachim*. Hashem created human being and put him in a situation where he would have free reign, freewill and if he chooses correctly and if he puts his life on track, he grows and he accomplishes and he makes himself, not being formed into something, but chooses to be like Hashem with his strength of will and creates himself into something and thereby becomes greater than any *malach* in creation.

But to allow for that, it has to be an even contest. You see freewill to put my hand in a fire, is theoretically freewill but it's not practical. To allow man to choose, and for that choice to be rewarded because it was really his choice, it can't be clear because if I saw the consequences, obviously I wouldn't do it.

And to allow the human being to have actual freewill, not theoretical freewill like putting my hand in the fire, but to have real freewill where I can easily go this way and just as easily go that way, where I literally have to choose and I could literally spend my life frittering away and just destroying my existence, or the opposite, I could choose to grow and choose to accomplish, both choices being viable. Both choices being equally there to do that, Hashem had to do something that's very, very difficult for us human beings to relate to.

And to do that Hashem put I into a body but this body isn't just a body, kind of like a robot that I occupy and now I tell it what to do, the body has its own will, has its own thoughts, its own *das*, it has a *nefesh*, it has a full, vibrant life part with desires and needs and hungers and appetites and when I, the brilliant *neshamah* was put into this body, suddenly I got mixed into all these desires and needs and all of a sudden I'm in this constant state of flux, constant state of change, but one thing for sure, I never get it clear.

I never really see the consequences. I never really understand the gravity of certain actions because if I did, there wouldn't be freewill. And if you'd like to fundamentally understand our state, I have a *mashal* that I think well defines it.

You've ever seen a *Yeshivah bachur*, let's say a first year *Beis Medrash* guy and this *Purim* he decides, you know what? I'm getting drunk, I'm doing the *mitzvah* the right way, if you think so, and I'm going to get drunk. And he does, he does just that, he gets himself drunk and you see him in the street. And you see him and you say Moishy what are you doing, I'm playing at traffic, Moishy you're playing with the cars, you know you're going to get hit by a car. I know, hah smack, crack, break my back, haha. Moishy you know you're going to get hit by a car and they're going to send you to the hospital, you know.

I know, crack my back, they'll put pins in my back, and I'm going to go through the metal detector, ding ding ding. Hahahaha.

Now let's stop. You're having a conversation with this fellow and he's responding and he's clearly alert and clearly aware, he knows that he could get hit. He even knows that if he'll get hit he'll go to the hospital, they'll put pins in etc. so how is he in traffic, risking his life? And the answer is he's drunk.

Meaning he's having a conversation, he seems to get it, but the consequences don't really hit him, he doesn't really feel it. He's in a drunken state. And in a drunken state you get it, you don't get it, you understand, you don't understand.

That is us. As long as I'm in this body, I'm drunk. I'm drunk in the sense that I'm mixed in with different desires and needs and appetites and all kinds of things mixed in so that I never really get it.

And I could say the words *gehinnom* is waiting for me hahahaha, I wonder how hot it's going to be, hahahaha.

And as I say the words, it doesn't even penetrate. My entire future, who I am for eternity, one word of learning, is more valuable, more precious than any diamonds and jewels. And as I say the words, just doesn't penetrate, just doesn't enter my heart. And I could stand in front of the creator of the heavens and the earth and know that I'm here, recognize that I'm speaking to Hashem right here and getting a little hungry, hope I.

What is going on? What's going on is that is the secret to freewill. When Hashem created the human, Hashem put us in a situation where we literally can choose left or right, be great or whatever, but both choices are viable, both choices are there.

But to do that, we have to be sort of drugged up, sort of drunk, put into this body where I never really feel things. And it's not just you and me. The students of Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai as great as they were, as holy as they were, needed Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai to say to them, you're speaking to Hashem. If you realize that Hashem was here, if you thought about Hashem as you do a human being, you would fear Hashem much more, you'd be a much greater person because as great as they were and as much as they got it, they too were humans.

And this reality is the point. The reason why we're here is to grow, to accomplish. The reason why it's so difficult to grow and accomplish is because we're put into this body, desires, needs and this heavy cloak of physicality and we just don't feel it.

If you'd ask me what is the goal of *mussar*, probably the biggest accomplishment is exactly that, to feel things, to come to understand things and recognize them as real.

Reb Yisrael Salanter in his *igeres*, in his letter he writes *luharchiv es hadavar*, to make it wider and clearer, till you feel it, till it's palpable. You see when *Mesilas Yesharim* says *sheyisborer vuyisames*, it should become clear and truthful, I have to really get it. I have to understand it's really, really going to be me in the world to come. It's really going to happen and it'll be exactly what I shape myself into. But not some splintered down version of me, not my *neshamah*, my distant cousin, like I'll be dead, me, I with my thoughts, all of my desires, everything, me, the same me who's talking to you right now, I will be there and forever I'll be what I shape myself into.

But getting that, understanding, feeling it, is a tremendous, tremendous *avodah*. Obviously if I ever really got it fifty percent, forget it. My life would be so much more focused, so much more driven. If I ever realized Hashem is right here, believe me my life would be a very, very different existence.

We get twenty percent, twenty two percent, we work a little more, twenty five percent and sometimes it goes up, sometimes goes down, but we never really have it clear because we can't. As long as we're in this body, as long as we're in this existence called life, we never get fully clear.

The *avodah*, the real work is to think, to dwell, to use exercises, whether it be *meshalim*, or physical exercises, all the various things that the *mussar sefarim* explain to us, to really feel it, to make it clear so that I really, really feel it as much as I can, will it ever be totally clear? No. It's not supposed to. But understanding that is the work of *mussar*. Trying to get it.

You see *davening* is a very, very spiritual activity. When I *daven* I'm transcending physicality, I'm speaking to Hashem but all of my senses deny Hashem's presence. I don't see Hashem, I

don't hear Hashem, I don't feel Hashem, and everything in my existence, I only relate to through my frame of reference, through my five senses.

And everything in my existence denies Hashem's presence. And when I do that process of actually speaking to Hashem, right there, cut through the layers and layers of physicality, cut through that darkness and actually connect to my creator, it's a transcending experience. I'm really getting it, I'm feeling it.

Of course I come back and it doesn't last that long but you grow a little bit, you grow a bit, the job is to get it, the job is to think about it, the job is to dwell. The single question that a person must ask himself more than anything else is what am I here for? What's my purpose in existence? Why did Hashem put me here?

And the reason why that question has to be asked and asked again and again and again is because you get a little bit more clearly, a little bit more clearly and the more you feel it, the more you understand it, the more you realize how life is a golden opportunity. The more I realize I'm here for a few short years to grow and accomplish, the more everything becomes focused, everything takes on a whole different light and I become a driven human being, driven to accomplish, driven to serve my creator, but I have to ever focus on it, ever think about it, *sheyisborer vuyisames*, it should be clear and truthful and many times you'll be tempted to say well I know these concepts already.

Mesilas Yesharim in his introduction says, what you're going to read in this book probably won't be very *chiddushdik* at all, you may find very few novel concepts. But they're concepts that we forget about, that we don't feel, that we don't deal with, we don't spend time on.

My Rebbi, the *Rosh Yeshivah zatzal* explained that those words were written with tremendous humility because every page, every paragraph of *Mesilas Yesharim* has tremendous novel points, tremendous new ideas but nevertheless, the main focus and the main accomplishment of the book is not the new ideas, but for me to feel it, for me to sense it, for me to become a different person and that's by going over it, by thinking about it, by dwelling on it.

The purpose of all *mussar* really is to get it, to feel it, so many of the *shmuzim* deal with it for that reason, this series will be dedicated to those ideas, to getting concepts. I hope that you're more than familiar, I hope that you listened to many, many *shmuzim*, I hope that you listen to life one on one which is the first time I went through *Mesilas Yesharim*, it's only the first *perek* and hopefully you'll listen to other parts, dealing with other parts of *Mesilas Yesharim*, but in this series, what I'm trying to do is bring it more to the fore so I could feel it, I could sense it, I could really be *marginish* it.

And I want to close with one last observation. This *shmuz* of Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai I happen to have said recently. I was asked to speak on Friday night, *shiur*, in Monsey in a *shul* and I walked in and as I'm going there to speak, my wife said to me you know so and so, they're making a *shalom zachor*, a friend of hers, her daughter had a baby and they're making a *shalom zachor* at the Zeidy, at the parents' house and my wife is friendly with the grandmother, asked that I go and stop in.

Happened to be the *shul* was about a half hour from my house but it was right near to these people's house so after saying this *shmuz*, after Reb Yochanan Ben Zakai *shmuz*, I stopped at the *shalom zachor* and everyone was very, very happy I was there, the grandfather, the father but I realized that they might have thought that I walked in a half hour for them and even though

they're good friends of my wife, etc. I really didn't, I didn't want there to be any misunderstandings so I explained, you know just happened to have been speaking in a *shul* nearby and I wanted to stop by to wish *mazel tov*.

The grandfather who is about my age said to me, he said oh, tell me what did you say, but tell me in two sentences. And I told him, what did I say? I'll tell you what I said, when I'm *davening* I'm speaking to Hashem right here, not up there, right here. And then he said to me the words, so what took you forty five minutes to say that?

And I said to him, for me to say it would only take two minutes, for me to say it in the way that they're going to feel it takes forty hours of preparation, and one hour of saying it over because feeling it is not just a concept, feelings it is when it's real, when it's palpable when you really sense it, to say it, doesn't take long, to feel it is the *avodah*, and ultimately that's the work of *mussar*, ultimately that's the work of this series.