

RADIO PROGRAM - PEOPLE DON'T LISTEN  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Shalom. I am sure that you have often heard on the air and at home and in your church or synagogue the phrase that, "The problem with this world is that people don't listen." People don't listen, and, therefore, because people do not listen there is no communication, and because there is no communication there is only trouble between people, between generations, between parents, between workers and bosses, and between people generally. The problem with this world is listening. People just do not listen. This, of course, has a great deal of validity. But what do we mean by listening? How should a person listen? What should a person do in order to get along with somebody else? What do we really mean by listening?

I think there is an insight into what we mean by listening and how a person should listen to another in the story of Joseph. We all know the story of Joseph, the master of dreams, because Joseph was a big dreamer. Joseph, unfortunately, had a big problem. He could not listen. Of course, by listening we don't just mean by the ears alone or listening to the spoken words, but we also mean listening to the inflections of the word, of listening to a person's movements as well, so to speak. Joseph could not listen apparently, because he could not visualize why his brothers were mad when he came to his brothers and told them his dreams, why his brothers should be angry when he told them about the sun and moon and stars all bowing to him, when he told them about the sheaves all circling his sheave and bowing down to his sheave. He could not understand why his brothers did not like his dreams. Joseph was a very talented person. Joseph was a man who later was to be the Viceroy of Egypt, to save Egypt and the civilized world of that time from famine.

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What was the matter with Joseph, and why was it, though, that he had to go through so much trouble, to be sold by his brothers as a slave and to go into the house of Potifar and there again to be accused unjustly by the wife of Potifar of unlawful advances and then to be sent to prison? Why was it only after his prison experience that he was brought out and then made to be the Viceroy of Egypt?

You know, my friends, in our ear we have really two ears. We have an inner ear and an outer ear, and there are many different kinds of deafness, deafness of the inner ear and the outer ear. The outer ear cannot really receive the sound. Our bones do not vibrate and give sounds. Inner ear deafness is more a nerve deafness and sounds are not transmitted to our brain. There are two parts to the ear in every individual. I think this is true, too, of every individual in a spiritual sense, too. We have an inner ear and an outer ear. We have to listen with both ears. We have to listen to not only what people say but what they mean when they say it. That is the function of the outer ear, but we also have an inner ear as well, an ear which listens to our inner workings as well, to our own personality, to our own dreams, to our own desires, to our own integrity. Unfortunately, there are many people who suffer from diseases of hearing, some of the inner ear and some of the outer ear. There are some people who have no inner ear, no real sense of their own integrity, of their own dreams, their own aspirations. They only hear the outer ear. "What are the Jones saying about us? If they're doing it, we have to do it, too." They have no inner force, no inner ear. They do not listen to an inner force. They only have an outer ear.

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There are other people who only have an inner ear but not an outer ear. They listen only to their own dreams and desires, but they do not hear their neighbor at all. Their neighbor is far away. Their neighbor is not with them. They never hear their neighbor, or if they hear their neighbor at all it is only the applause the neighbor should give them because they are so brilliant, so good, so nice, so all-knowing.

This was the problem of Joseph. Joseph had a developed inner ear. He was a talented, wonderful individual, but he had no outer ear. He could not listen to the dreams of others. He could not understand or feel that other people had dreams, too. This is a common failing among brilliant people. They are so brilliant, these people, they just cannot understand how everybody else does not recognize their brilliance, too, and feel that just by their presence and talking they have given everybody else such pleasure that that should be enough for those other people. Why should they listen to other people's dreams? Their dreams are so superior, and they really are so talented. When they do something it is so much better. These people are suffering from a disease of the outer ear. Of course, there are people, on the other hand, who have no inner ear. They are nothing inside. They quiver at the least little criticism from somebody outside. They have no inner ear, no inner integrity. These people are suffering perhaps worse than those people with an outer ear disease.

What happened to Joseph? Joseph, because he could not listen to others, created only hatred, distrust, and was sold by his brothers into slavery. His brothers, who should have loved him, hated him because he could not listen to them. Then he was sent to Egypt where, again, he displayed his

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brilliance, but, again, he did not listen to others. He would fix himself up fancily and did not realize that even though unconsciously, he was, in a certain sense, misleading the wife of Potifar, although he did not do it on purpose. She concocted a story against him and he was sent to prison. When was Joseph called to greatness? Only after he was able to interpret the dreams of the butler and baker, who were sent to prison because they had sinned against the king. There he was able to listen to their dreams. Only after he was able to listen to their dreams was he called to greatness. Only when he cured his disease of the outer ear was he called to greatness. Then he was called to be the Viceroy of Egypt.

My friends, we must listen to others, to their dreams, their aspirations, and not to just their cries for help. Joseph was a generous person who was willing to give things to everybody to help everybody, but he did not have time to sit down and listen to their dreams, their aspirations, their thoughts. He thought they were not important. They were not going to do anything in the world. Only talented people will, and I am a talented person. That is wrong. We must listen, my friends, to both our inner ear and our outer ear. Woe to the person who has no inner ear, but double woe to the person who has an inner ear, who has talents, who can accomplish things, who has no outer ear because he is destroying his talent and only creating hatred. I hope that all of you are listening with both your inner ear and outer ear.