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# Listening To God: Inspirational Stories



## Synopsis

See the divine in every human encounter. Be receptive to God's voice. Act out of faith. These are just a few of the life lessons Rabbi Shlomo Riskin imparts in this collection of personal stories. Rabbi Riskin takes us from his grandmother's Brooklyn Shabbat table to the vibrant community of Efrat, Israel, with stops in Russian Jewish communities struggling to maintain their ethnic identities, New York synagogues tackling political controversies and much more. Through these poignant, entertaining, often humorous tales, Rabbi Riskin passes on wisdom for the next generation and, indeed for us all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The very popular and charismatic Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is a well-known speaker and raconteur. He has published highly respected books on the Bible and other subjects. In this volume, he offers one hundred chapters containing one hundred stories about his life. Some, he writes, are totally true. Others are true with some details changed. Others are fiction. But all are inspiring. They are stories the rabbi wants to tell his grandchildren about himself, stories that we will like as well. The rabbi takes an almost mystical approach to life, and this together with his love of Judaism, Jewish people, humanity generally, Torah, and especially God, permeates and spices his tales. His first story, for example, is entirely true. It is about his grandmother who influenced the course of his life. He tells how his grandmother would "gaze intently as she would bentsh licht, bless the candles [on Friday before the Sabbath], for twenty minutes. Her face framed by the flames, her eyes shut tight, I watched Grandma speaking to God, happily mentioning the successes and tearfully mentioning the

problems of each family member in turn." He tells how when his grandfather had a stroke and was in the hospital unconscious, his Grandma went to the store and bought a red dress. His mother was surprised. She told Grandma that she thought it was inappropriate. Grandma, who called Grandpa "Cham," replied: My Cham "always liked me in red. Maybe he'll see me in the dress and he'll wake up from the slumber he is in." Rabbi Riskin was influenced at Yeshiva University by both Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who taught him Talmud and philosophy and by Professor Louis Feldman from whom he learnt about Greco-Roman civilization and classical languages. He writes about both of them.

This book dedicated to his grandchildren is in effect the spiritual autobiography of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. In it he tells how he at an early age was drawn to Jewish Religious observance and inspired and helped in this by his beloved grandmother. Throughout the book he will tell of encounters with remarkable individuals who gave him much. And in effect throughout the book Rabbi Riskin exemplifies one of the first principles of Jewish ethics, 'hakarat Tov' gratitude for what one has been given. The book is pervaded by this positive principle and by the sense that throughout his life he has been communicated to, and helped by God. His preface and keyword is after all that famous teaching of the Kotzker that God is wherever we let him in. And all his life Rabbi Riskin has even while meeting countless difficult challenges been allowing what he calls 'emanations' from God in. These messages come too in the form of remarkable human beings. Rabbi Riskin pays tribute in this to the religious and non- religious alike and in one wonderful story he tells how his own non-religious mother says to him that perhaps the reason she was created was to teach him to love non-religious people also. And in fact another element in Rabbi Riskin's long rabbinical career has been his outreach to others, his warm relations with those who do not necessarily share his religious faith or communal or political loyalty. Rabbi Riskin has been a remarkable Jewish leader in a variety of settings, perhaps most notably in his creation of the Lincoln Center Synagogue and religious community on the West Side of New York in the sixties- and even more in his being the major spiritual figure in the building of the community of Efrat in Israel.

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