In one of the videos displayed at the Holocaust Museum, there is a veteran member of a Jewish concentration camp who greets his new inmates by telling them about the atrocities that they are about to face in their new setting. He will always end by saying, “I have told you this story not to weaken you, but to strengthen you. Now it is up to you.” In that same spirit, the actions of Moishe the Beadle highlight that the worst part of the Jewish Holocaust is not the murder of six million people, but the indifference of the Jews to his warnings. More specifically, he exclaims to the Jewish community to “just listen… while there is still time” (Wiesel 7).

Moishe the Beadle is a character in Elie Wiesel’s nonfiction book Night. He is a poor yet spiritual man living in a little town of Transylvania called Sighet. The townspeople avoid him, and he stays out of their way. Moishe is socially impaired and is the master of rendering himself invisible. Unlike Elie, he is a foreigner. One day in 1942, all foreign Jews, like Moishe, are expelled from Sighet and loaded on cattle cars by the Hungarian police. Once in Polish territory, the deportees are taken over by the Gestapo and ordered onto waiting trucks headed toward the Galician forest. Once inside the forest, everybody is ordered out and forced to dig a huge trench. When the trench is dug, one by one the prisoners are forced to approach the trench where they are shot by the Gestapo. Awaiting his death, Moishe tries to get a glimpse of what is going on and sees his next door neighbors falling into the pit he had just helped dig. As he gets nearer to his death, the sounds of crying, screaming, praying, and wimping slowly disappears. When it is his turn, he sees a man yelling at him but no sound comes out. As he steps to the edge of the pit, he sees, smells, and feels death right under him.
At the sound of the bullet, Moishe the Beadle falls on top of the others. He is shot on the leg and left for dead with the other rotting corpses. Drenched in blood, Moishe crawls out of the grave so that he could return to Sighet in order to warn the others of what has taken place.

Day after day, night after night, he goes from one Jewish home to the next trying to tell his story to anyone who is willing to listen. “But people not only [refuses] to believe his tales, they [refuse] to listen” (Wiesel 7). People will say he is insane and is imagining things. That does not stop Moishe. In between dusk and evening prayer, he shouts in the synagogue asking for the Jews to listen. In the synagogue, he no longer mentions either God or Kabbalah. Instead, “He [weeps] and [pleads]: ‘Jews, listen to me! That’s all I ask of you. No money. No pity. Just listen to me!” (Wiesel 7). He believed that if he came back, than he could warn the others while there was still time. Only no one wants to listen to him. Everyone only feels pity, and that’s not what he wants.

Moishe was a prominent figure whose actions positively contributed during the Holocaust. Moishe, even through the ridicule and scorn of others, never gave up trying to tell the Jews his story. His actions are even influential to Holocaust survivors like Elie Wiesel after the Holocaust was over. If the Jews would have listened to him, some of them could have avoided the horrifying atrocities that take place during the Holocaust. It probably wasn’t easy for him to repeat the images of what had happened. In spite of that, he wanted to warn them. It was not his intention of weakening or bringing fear to the Jewish people with these terrible tales, but like the veteran member at the concentration camp, he wanted to warn them so that they may be strong and ready themselves for the events that were to follow. He was challenging them to stand up to fear and to listen for it will make them stronger.

The fact that he was able to stand up to these people that ridiculed him in order to save them was so heroic. This also challenged me to take action and stand up against bullying. When I was in 4th grade, I used to be bullied a lot by my classmates. I would always come
home crying after holding in the tears during the day. I dreaded coming to school every day and did everything I could to get myself sick. I hated myself and always wondered why I couldn’t be like them. One day, I was on the swings by myself while everyone else was playing kickball on the other side of the playground. That day was the first day I cried in school. With tears in my eyes, I looked up at the heavens and I asked God for a friend. Minutes later, a girl my age walked over and sat on the swings next to me. We sat in silence for a while until she asked me my name. Next thing I knew, we were challenging each other on who could swing the highest. November 8, 2006. That day was the best day of my life and the day I made a best friend. Everything was different from that day on. I didn’t care what other people thought, and that made me into a different person. People started to respect me more. I was no longer the girl who was always bullied.

On the first week of 5th grade, my teacher introduced us to a new kid named Julian. He was a very skinny kid and small for his age. Everyone made fun of him. Even I did. On picture day, people made fun of the way he dressed. He got angry and used a pen to dig into his skull until there was blood. That was the day I stopped teasing him, but I didn’t stop my friends. Every time I saw him, he was always by himself crying. Every time someone made fun of him, he would hit his head against something, whether it was a fence or his desk. I wanted to comfort him, but I was scared. I feared that if I went to help him, my friends would hate me. I was scared of being bullied again.

One day, during free time, the teachers blew their whistles and asked everyone to go indoors. When I went indoors, I looked outside and I saw a police car and an ambulance on our school parking lot. I soon found out that Julian tried to commit suicide by running out on the street. He refused to get out of the way of the cars that had stopped. He wanted them to run him over. That’s when I remembered how I used to hate myself so much that I too wanted to kill myself. I remembered how getting a friend prevented me from doing that. That’s when
I decided to stand up against bullying and try to be his friend.

A week later, I saw Julian again. This time, instead of avoiding him, I got the courage to walk up to him and say “Good morning!” He looked scared and very confused, but I didn’t care. Every morning I would walk up to him and say the same thing. I later asked him to sit with me at the lunch tables. Even though all my friends left except my best friend, I didn’t care. There were days when it was tough for me to keep being his friend, but in those tough times, I had him to lean on. Together, we were strong. No amount of bullying could stop us from being friends. I don’t regret going up to him. As a matter of fact, I would do it again. I would trade a thousand friends for one true friend like him.

Through the stories of Moishe the Beadle and mine, the human race needs to educate and learn from the horrors of the Holocaust and other genocidal atrocities. Everyone, like me, is capable of bringing someone down with the words we say and our actions. We need to listen to these individual stories as a warning of our ignorance and take the necessary steps to improve our current society. Unlike many, Moishe the Beadle wanted to tell the Jews of what was really going on no matter how much the Jews did not want to hear it. He even encourages survivors today like Elie Wiesel to remember their stories and tell others. Hence, the global society needs to acknowledge the important theme of silence. We, as a global society, must not be silent witnesses to the hate that revolves around us. It is our ignorance that encourages these tragic events to take place in our history. Silence is what made the Jews defenseless against the Nazi’s. The one promise we should be capable of keeping is that “Never Again” shall we ignore those who cry out for our aid.

Works-Cited