

Good Shabbos Everyone. Perhaps the greatest source of happiness in our lives is knowing that life has meaning. This week we are going to talk about how to make our lives more meaningful. When life has meaning, everyday is a happy day. The primary source of meaning in life is knowing that Hashem created us for a purpose and Hashem gave us a mission to carry out, which is detailed in the Torah.

This week is Parshas Bereishis, we read "In the beginning Hashem created the Heaven and the Earth." This is the first and the most famous line of the Torah, and it is perhaps the most important principle for us to recognize. Hashem created the earth and everything on it and Hashem created everything for a reason. According to Rashi, the Torah begins this way to establish Hashem's sovereignty over the universe. The first step to having meaning in life is believing in Hashem. The following story will inspire us to believe that there is a Ruler over the world.

Gershon Ber Jacobson was a well known journalist, according to some he was the journalist's journalist. He wrote for several major newspapers around the world, was fluent in many languages including French, English, Yiddish, Russian, Georgian and Hebrew, had a fluent, often stirring style, an eye for often uncomfortable detail and an unquenchable drive for often life-threatening scoops.

But in addition to all this, or perhaps we should say foremost, he was a totally observant Jew and a devoted Chassid (follower) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, perhaps the greatest, most erudite Jewish leader in history who teaches his followers to do everything possible to improve mankind. And it saved his life at least once.

The scene was immediately after the Six-Day war. Israel had decimated the combined armies of Egypt, Syria and the other Arab nations surrounding them and the idea popped into the mind of Gershon Ber, who at the time was the chief correspondent in New York for the Israeli newspaper 'Idiot Achronot' the biggest daily in Israel, to get a really hot story. He decided that the scoop of scoops would be to get into Egypt and get an interview with none other than the Prime Minister himself; Abdul Nasser!

He began to go about getting the necessary papers, when he got a phone call from another important personage from the 'other side' of the coin; 'Isar Harel' the head of the Israeli Secret Service the 'Mossad'. "Jacobson are you insane?" he screamed, "Listen, we have information that if you go through with this you'll never come back. Why, they'll arrest you as a spy and you'll never get out of jail! And we won't be in a position to help you! Do you understand? Don't go! And if you do we will take no responsibility!"

Jacobson thanked Harel, hung up the phone and called the headquarters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It wasn't long before he got a reply. The Rebbe said he definitely should go but he should do the following things 1) Take several pairs of new Tefillin 2) Take a new 'sh'chita' knife for slaughtering birds 3) check into the best room in the most expensive hotel 4) before leaving write short letters to all his friends and important acquaintances telling them he is in Egypt and mail them as soon as you arrive 5) as soon as he enters the hotel call all the foreign ambassadors living in Egypt and 5) at the first opportunity visit the Jewish community there.

Gershon Ber did exactly what the Rebbe told him and a week or two landed in Cairo. He told the driver to take him to the finest hotel and on the way he stopped at the post office and mailed the letters he had written. Then he checked in to his room and immediately set about calling all the foreign representatives in Egypt as the Rebbe said. And the response was fantastic!

In fact one of the ambassadors was so impressed (he claimed that in the fifteen years he was in Egypt no one had ever called him) he insisted on coming to see him and when he arrived insisted on being Jacobson's personal driver!

"Very well!" he answered. "Then let's go visit the Jewish community here." With the ambassador (I heard it was the representative from Canada) as his driver they pulled up at the home of the head of the Jewish community. Jacobson brought greetings from the Rebbe and began asking journalist questions; how was life in Egypt, Was there anti-Semitism, was anything affected by the Six Day War? etc. etc.

The community leader answered that although there was not overt anti-Semitism it was nevertheless very difficult for them to get around and impossible for them to contact the outside world. For instance what they really needed were a few pairs of tefillin (phylacteries) because several had become disqualified for use and a sh'chita knife for slaughtering chickens because the one they had somehow broke and was irreparable. But they couldn't get out of Egypt to get these things replaced.

You can imagine his joy and amazement when he produced exactly these items and told him how the Lubavitcher Rebbe somehow sensed their need. Jacobson got the interview with Nasser and when he arrived safely back in New York he got another call from Isar Harel. "Listen Jacobson. We know for SURE that they were planning to arrest you for spying. But when you got there and made such a storm with those letters and phone calls they didn't want to arouse adverse public opinion. Tell me, where did you get the idea to do those letters and phone calls?" **Good Shabbos Everyone.**