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9/21

Being only fifteen, I have had some trouble in answering the question, "What gives meaning to your life?" This is because I've never really thought about this question before. However, I believe that in order to fully answer this question, one must first answer the question *mi anochi?* Ultimately, to find what gives your life meaning, you must first discover what defines you as a person. And to do that, you must explore the different levels of Jewish thinking.

On the outside, the first level, P'shat, I can be defined by my love of skiing and the outdoors. My love of mountain biking and just being in the Colorado wilderness. I can be defined by enthusiasm towards debate and my classes. And I can be defined by my my friends, and the people I hang out with. But once you delve into what defines you on the first level, you realize that those things are just barely scratching the surface, and that they don't actually give much meaning to your life. One must then go on to the second level, Remez.

Defining one's self is more difficult on the second level because you have to find the symbolic characteristics in your life. I have decided that defining your life on the second level requires an evaluation of your thoughts and feelings. I am an analytical thinker, I like to take situations in a text and break them apart using logic and reasoning. I am also a philosophical thinker, I enjoy pondering what is common knowledge, and striving to find alternative meanings in situations. Much of the basis of my thinking comes from Plato's cave allegory which I came upon when doing research for my d'var Torah. I define myself on the second level with the cave allegory, my thoughts are the prisoner who escaped the cave. But even this is not enough to identify what gives meaning to my life. So I go further to the third level, D'rash.

Looking at this level has been the hardest part of the analyzation for me. I had trouble deciding

what this level actually meant, but I finally decided that it had to do with your personal relationship to the Jewish world. I have wrestled with the idea of the existence of G-d for many years, and at this point I don't believe in G-d. But I do believe in many Jewish ideals such as tzedakah. I believe in the ideals behind b'tzelem elohim. I believe in tikkun olam, I believe that we have the ability to change the world. And most of all I believe in me. This point brings me to the fourth level in which I discover what really gives meaning to my own life.

Sod, the fourth level of secret meaning. I realized, when I got this level, that to fully define yourself, to find meaning in your life, you must imagine being stripped of all things that have defined you on the other levels, being stripped of your entire identity. You must imagine what, and who that person would be. I thought about this for a long time before coming to the conclusion that it's not what's left that defines you, it's the fact that you know that there is left after being stripped of everything. This, is faith.

So through this process I have found that my faith in myself, not my physical, mental, or other self, is what defines me. My faith that there is something at my core that makes me, me. This is what fully defines me; and this is what gives meaning to my life.