

The quest to find meaning

Viktor Frankl posited that a sense of purpose in one's life is essential not only for happiness, but even psychological survival. That may sound like typical New Age pabulum, but given his experiences in the concentration camps of World War II, his "Man's Search for Meaning" cannot be so easily dismissed.

The hard part of the issue, though, is how to understand just what to seek. After all, the term "meaning" has all sorts of, well, "meanings." Speaking broadly, many people understand it in terms of personal success. Olympic athletes, for example, are not alone when they say their life's "meaning" is to win a gold medal in their field. Every profession has its equivalent "gold medal." Then there are those who define "meaning" in terms of "helping others." Teachers and doctors are typical in this category, but even the most cynical have to concede that there are all kinds of entrepreneurs and inventors who came up with their innovations sincerely to help others and not only to make



Arthur Yavelberg

Arthur Yavelberg's 40-year career as an educator includes head of school at The Tucson Hebrew Academy, and dean of students at Sir Manasseh Meyer International School Singapore. He holds an M.A./B.A. Philosophies of Judaism (Jewish Theological Seminary of America). A Tucson resident, Yavelberg is the author of "A Theology for the Rest of Us" (MSI Press) available online at Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

a profit. Today's ubiquitous internet was freely made public by Sir Tim Berners-Lee who felt that such a commodity should be accessible by all and he could not, in good conscience, take out a patent on it.

However, the ironic curse for either of these groups can be success. Once having won the gold medal or found the previously elusive cure, the inevitable question arises: "Now what?" Duane Thomas was a rather enigmatic star running back for the Dallas Cowboys who was about to play in Super Bowl VI. When asked how he felt about playing in the "ultimate" game of all time, he became characteristically quite pensive and

answered with a question of his own: "If it's such a big game, why are they playing it again next year?"

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is totally random but the only acceptable approaches are those we like. And then there are those who try to suppress the need for meaning altogether through alcoholism, work, sex and any number of other mind numbing behaviors.

But if one looks out at the universe and sees more than ample evidence of intelligence, then the question becomes all the more baffling. Furthermore, if there is such an intelligence, there seems to be something of a tease in the ability to even ask the question. In Hinduism, the answer is: "That which you are seeking is

causing you to seek." In other words, the Infinite is pushing us to find the divine connection in which meaning can be found. Similarly, when God addresses the Biblical Job "out of the whirlwind?" Job's questions as to the cause of his immense suffering are unanswered. Nevertheless, Job is comforted by the sheer knowledge that there are answers, if unknown at this time. So what do we do in the meantime? We do whatever gives us a sense of meaning in the here and now, with the implicit understanding that there will be another game next year.

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