

Henry Ramek, z"l, Memorial Essay Contest 2019

6th Grade - First Place: Essay by Eli S.

Prompt: Explain spiritual resistance in your own words by examining Anne Frank's faith during her years in hiding. What specific words, excerpts, or lessons from her diary inspire you and how can it be applied when facing adversities in your world today?

Throughout human history, people have suffered in various ways, such as war, sickness, and death. However, the human spirit has a way of overcoming pain and remaining hopeful. During World War II, Nazis made it their mission to eradicate Jews and dehumanize those still living. Even in the worst possible human conditions, people still found hope, kept faith, and took advantage of life's opportunities. This type of spiritual resistance is apparent in *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

We learn about Anne's family's hiding place which they called "the annex." Anne could not go to school, go outside, or even cough aloud, but she still found a way to keep her spirit alive. Anne always saw the positive side of life. When she heard about the restricted rules of the annex and only after six could they play games and move around, she said, "One family. I love that!" (pg. 14). Anne never even considered how dire her situation was. She only saw her life full of hope.

Keeping her traditions alive was another way Anne was able to keep faith in life and living. Many people in this situation might convert to a different religion or resent their Judaism. However, Anne was proud to be Jewish. When Peter suggested that it would be a

whole lot easier if he were Christian, Anne said, "I'd never turn away from who I am. I couldn't. Don't you know you'll always be Jewish ... in your soul." (pg. 59) She celebrated Hanukkah and gave presents to everyone to keep their spirits high, even if they were recycled. "It's not new - it's yours - I rubbed it all out, but if you wait a while and forget, you can do it all over again." (pg. 34) This brought a huge smile to her sister Margot.

Anne showed hope for the future in many ways, never considering that she might die at the hands of the Nazis. She kept a diary of her daily life and spoke of her feelings, hopes, and dreams. She hoped one day she could publish a novel based on her diary: "Maybe one day I could even publish a novel. *The Secret Annex* - based on my diary!" (pg. 50) This is exactly the type of spiritual resistance needed to get through trying times in life.

I have felt this kind of despair when my brother was diagnosed with cancer, and I also found my own spiritual resistance through hope, faith, and living just like Anne did. I tried to live my life as best I could even when I knew how much he was suffering from pain, surgeries, fear, or even embarrassment of not having any hair. While he fought for his life every day, I still went to school, had playdates, basketball practices, and Hebrew school. We even celebrated Shabbat. This was my spiritual resistance, just like Anne's. Even in the worst possible human conditions, people still find hope, keep their faith, and take advantage of life's opportunities.