

ELUL 5 By Jill Oliver

I am part of a minority of women with no children or grandchildren. In addition, I am the last “Oliver”, with no relatives, except for one older cousin. My lack of relatives has to do with the loss of so many family members in Nazi concentration camps.

So, what do I have to offer in terms of a legacy for future generations? When I think about my life, I realize I have been living to answer this question throughout adulthood. Through personal loss and adversity, I reconnected with G*d, my spirituality, and Judaism. At first, these choices were made to save myself. However, I realized helping others has become an integral part of my journey to find purpose in life.



I’ve learned that giving to charity, doing volunteer work, helping feed first responders at “Ground Zero”, spending lunch time reading to underprivileged children, helping students with learning disabilities, helping friends and colleagues, is a way of giving back, and passing on good works. My belief is that when we give of ourselves, our actions may inspire others to pay it forward.

The actor, Jimmy Smits was recently interviewed for an article. He recalled thinking about his mom as a child, wondering why she saved money for the collection box at church when the family “struggled to have applesauce for dessert?” Today, he realizes “it was a way to give back, to look over your shoulder and think about the person that’s coming up, which stayed with him.”

Victor Frankl, in “Man’s Search for Meaning,” believed “life...is a quest for meaning. The greatest task for any person is to find meaning in his or her life.” As part of the human condition, we want to create a legacy for future generations, to leave this world a better place, to leave tangible evidence of positivity, good works, giving back, paying it forward. It’s the good we do in life that lives on in the memories of those whose lives we touched. In so doing, we not only find meaning and fulfillment in our lives. We find shalom (שלום).

Jill Oliver and husband Bill Milgrim have been TBT members for several years. Jill recently joined the TBT Board. Jill enjoyed two careers: an information security professional on Wall Street and a NYC Teaching Fellow/Middle School Special Education Teacher. Email: Jillo038@gmail.com