ELUL STORIES
Sharing our stories, sharing lives, creating community

Elul is the month leading up to Rosh HaShanah. Each day during the month, a different Temple Beth Torah congregant will share an Ethical Will or portion of one in order to help us prepare for this season of self reflection and personal growth.

What My Mother Left Me
Dana Dinowitz

There are so many things I could mention my mother left for me. Her sconces, her cherished holiday tablecloths that are stained with years of holidays past, her recipe for meat sauce. But the one I covet the most are three words: "forward without fear".

These words together have guided me throughout my adult life. I can't type them, let alone say them, without shedding a tear. I don't know why mom put them together but I can remember times she said them to me. It means to me, quite simply, do not let your fears get in the way of you experiencing life. She said them to me just before I left for college, before we bought our first house, before I went into the city by myself. She didn't want her daughters to let the fear of the unknown decide what we did or didn't do with our lives. Powerful.

This holiday season will be our tenth without her. The pain of her passing is as fresh now as it was back then. My children were so young that they barely have a memory of her but her legacy lives on with these words. I said it to my older daughter last year on the first day of high school. I will say it to my younger daughter this September on her first day of middle school. I will say it to them every opportunity I have until they can anticipate it so they can take it with them and pass it on to their families.

As the memory of her voice fades a little more each year, I have never forgotten how mom wanted us to lead fulfilling lives. I suppose she may have had some regrets, was fearful of taking risks. I remind myself of this and that each day is a blessing. "Forward without fear" can be left for the reader to
interpret. For me, it is a hug, a push, it is the very last thing I see before I turn to leave her grave since we put it on her headstone to show the world how much she and those words mean to us. That was her ethical will to me.

*Dana Dinowitz and her husband Mitchell have been members of Temple Beth Torah for 10 years. Their daughters, Diana and Shayna, are active in our Religious School. She dedicates this post to her mother, Mona Neelman.*

Would you like to share your Elul Story? Write an ethical will, in the form of a letter, a story or a collections of sayings. Include the "gifts" you would like to leave to your family focusing on the values and character traits which you feel are most important. Send it in its entirety or send a section of it to: *ravsusie@gmail.com.*

If you missed any of the previous Elul Stories you can go to [www.tbtny.org](http://www.tbtny.org) (media galleries/elul stories).