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.

Honor Thy Parents
Steve Kowarsky

Dear David,

When you were born, a certain light dawned for me. When I called my parents, it was not just to announce your safe arrival. I said to them, "Now I get it. I finally understand."

Perhaps one day you will experience something like that. But whether or not that happens, please know that you are a good son and a good person.

Perhaps the reason that "Honor thy parents" makes the big ten is that if a person can get that most complex, most challenging relationship right, they can get just about anything right. You've got it right. This probably says more about you than about me. I think that we both hold our connection to be sacred, and, come to think of it, that mutual feeling might be the key ingredient of every good relationship. Beyond your goodness as a son, I perceive that you are well equipped to live a good life and don't need much advice from me on that subject. That is a great gift to me.

I would just offer a couple of points:

The core Jewish metaphor works. Always remember that there IS a promised land, a land flowing sweet with milk and honey. You won't find it on google maps. But it's there. Cherish your hopes and aspirations to dwell in that place. At any given moment, we are always somewhere in the story - enslaved in Egypt, making the dramatic exodus, on the journey through a vast wilderness,
or enjoying the promised land.

Perhaps this is another way to say almost the same thing: don't underestimate the importance of being happy. Amidst the unending complexity of our thoughts and ideas, simple happiness here and now is really what it's all about. Chasing our dreams and concepts of what will make us happy is not the whole story. There is a happiness that wells up naturally from within us. That's the one you want.

To know that you are alive, to feel that you are alive, simply to be alive - that is the greatest thing.

With love,

Dad

Steve Kowarsky and his wife Jiya are regular attendees at Friday night and Saturday morning services. Steve is a student and a teacher to many of us.

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: raysusie@gmail.com

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