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.

The Little Things
Cantor Sarene Appelbaum

During Elul, we have been blessed to have some insight into the ethics and values our fellow congregants and friends would like to share with their children and with us. We leave our imprint on the world, not only by passing our values and beliefs to our children, but also by influencing everyone we come in contact with by how we conduct ourselves. We are all role-models for humanity, creating our legacies daily, because everyday, the way we treat other people has an effect not only on their experience, but also on the people they come in contact with after being touched by us. Everything is connected, and a kindness that we extend, it could be as simple as a smile, may potentially result in Gemilut Chasadim....acts of loving kindness that extend far beyond the scope of our awareness.

Alternately if we are harboring or spreading negativity or bitterness, by acting on our Yetzer hara our evil or negative inclinations, that as well can go home with, to work with, to school with others and impact people we do not and never will know. It could be as simple as someone going home to a spouse or children in a bad mood, to a teacher that inadvertently shares projected aggravation with a roomful of students, to a leader with much more power that governs many, acting on misdirected anger.

We often have difficulty envisioning the scope of our power to make change in the world, but we have a responsibility to be more aware of the umbrella of our influence. Not having purposefully caused another person pain, not being aware that you played a part in another’s sadness or fear, no matter how small, does not excuse you from being at least partially responsible for it. One dirty look from your car, or in the aisle of the supermarket can reverberate far beyond its intended target. It all boils down to awareness, and being able to
transcend our own experience to understand the profoundly intricate nature of how human beings interact with each other. Next time you are sitting in a room of strangers, imagine what you could do to effect positive change in one of their lives. Share a smile, help with a door, just look at someone and think a kind thought about them.
During this season as we extend our apologies to those we know that we have wronged, send out a prayer, for those you will never know about. An apology and promise that you will never again underestimate the span of your legacy. L’shana Tova.

Sarene Appelbaum is entering her 5th year as our Cantor at Temple Beth Torah. She has blessed us with her voice and her warmth. May she find strength on this High Holidays from the little acts of kindness she experiences every day.

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 (media galleries/elul stories).