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.*

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**Help People, When They Need Help**  
Debbie Archer

When I was little, the High Holy Days meant skipping to shul with my family, often in a new dress and shoes, waiting impatiently to sneak down to the men’s section to find my Dad and get a Tallis hug. When I was a teenager, and studying the Holocaust, I indignantly rejected God entirely; what kind of God would allow that to happen? When I was a young mom, I embraced Judaism once again, seeking to create a Jewish home that would give my children comfort and stability— I guess the same comfort and stability I felt as a child. And now, here I am— entering yet another phase of my life; reflecting, struggling to find meaning. Rabbi Moskowitz’s sermon challenged me, and made me think; what is it that I want the people I love to remember, or even to know about me? What words do I want them to associate with my memory? Not an easy task, but here goes:

**Compassion, kindness and patience all go hand-in-hand.** The older person in line at the supermarket, carefully smoothing out her dollar bills? She’s living on a fixed income, and this is it for the week....The young child crying in the store, wailing as loud as he can? He’s not simply having a meltdown, he’s autistic and completely overwhelmed by the sights and sounds around him. The guy in the street, homeless, begging? He’s a veteran, he fought for your freedom, and he just needs some help...choose kindness, choose to realize that things are not always as they seem, and understand that everyone around you is dealing with issues you know nothing about.

**For my EMS colleagues,** that also means understanding that people call us at some of the worst times in their lives. They don’t feel well, or they’re hurt, and they have no-one to call except a stranger. They are afraid, and we must...
acknowledge their fear and treat it just as we treat their physical symptoms. Remember that the person you wait for with some impatience as they gather their things once waited patiently as their children did the same. Remember that the patient in the nursing home was once just like you—busy with their life, taking care of their kids, going to work and out to dinner with friends—and now, their kids are grown, their friends are gone, and everything they once loved has been reduced to a few mementos in their rooms. Look at them—see who they were and who they are, and treat them with dignity and respect. They are who you will become...

For my moms—and I am fortunate to have dozens of them—time is your best friend and your worst enemy. Your kids change every day, and you will never know when it will be the last time that they will hold your hand. Treasure the small moments, revel in them—Make memories, not memory cards, put down the Apple device and go apple-picking instead. I promise you, you will have no regrets. Hug your kids, read to them, talk to them—they will remember it all.

Last, but not least, love. Love fiercely; love your family and your friends more than your car or your house or your whatever—love unconditionally and that means that you will forgive quite often. Protect them, trust them, fight for them, fight with them—but always choose kindness and they will be with you forever.

So, thank you Rav Susie, for making me think, for making me reach for and find the meaning within these Ten Days...

All of this I bequeath to those I love. Compassion, kindness, patience...dignity and respect...and lots and lots of love.

B'Shalom, 
Debbie

Debbie Archer was a teacher in our Nursery School for 20 years. She recently retired and now has more time to devote to being an EMS worker in Melville. When "Miss" Debbie shows up to save you, you know you are in good hands. She bakes a killer Challah. We are glad she is still part of our TBT family.

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).