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 respond to the question:

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Some Gifts Don't Come In Boxes
Dr. Marge Goldin

It must be at least 12 years ago now that I attended a rudimentary discussion at Ellen Pensky's house about researching family history. We had all been asked to bring a fact or even bit of family lore to the meeting and we would be shown how to use that information as a starting point to learn more. I had come into the possession of some of my mother’s father's documents, originally looked at them, shrugged and stored them in the basement. But in preparation to go to Ellen's house that day I dug them out and began to look at them with different eyes. Much changed for me after that meeting. Once I saw how one fact lead to another, I was seriously hooked. All over the internet I began getting as much information as I could find, later requesting copies of original documents like social security applications and naturalization papers. My maternal great grandparents, Kate and Jacob Austrian, whom I believed lived and died in London, had in fact, come to NY with my grandfather and were buried here. After compiling a list of Jewish cemeteries in the NY metro area and spending months calling the offices asking for a "lookup" I located their graves at Mount Zion in Queens. It has been profound to see the linkages to so many other people and to put myself in context. It has been profound to locate long lost cousins and reconnect. It has been profound to "meet" other researchers online studying branches of my family longer than I and working together to find connections.

Kate Austrian died in 1932 of cancer when her oldest grandchild was 4 years old and unlikely to have any memories of her. During conversations with my
mother’s cousins I learned that before her death she feared she would be forgotten. She would be pleased to know that her grave has been found, that perpetual care has been paid for, that her name is now on the Wall of Honor at Ellis Island, that she has great great great grandchildren, and that her great grandchildren have electronically passed photos and information about her around the country. It is a gift to have gotten so much knowledge about my ancestors. It has enabled me to give Grandma Katie the gift of remembrance.

*Marge (the family historian) and Steve Goldin have been members of Temple Beth Torah for over 30 years. They have two sons, Russell (married to Angela) and Brian and two grandsons. They recently celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.*

Would you like to share your Elul Story? Answer the question: What is the best gift you have ever received? You can interpret the word gift very liberally- a moment, a thing, a find, advice, a surprise. Send it to me at: ravsusie@gmail.com. If you missed any of the previous Elul Stories you can go to www.tbty.org (media galleries/elul stories).