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?

Ahavat Yisrael
Bert Rudofsky

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My greatest gift came from my Parents, the gift of Jewishness and a nurturing Jewish home. It has provided the core of my life through a connectedness with family, community, Judaism the Jewish People and Israel. My parents had simple ideas about Judaism easily passed on to their children: The Kosher home with Yiddish and Hebrew books, the celebration of Shabbas and all the Jewish Holidays with candle lighting and traditional foods and discussion of the holiday and its meaning and history, and in particular how the holidays were celebrated in the Pale. Our extended family often celebrated with us, we celebrated at their homes and remain close to this day. We only went to Orthodox services for the High Holidays.

Yiddish Culture. My parents read daily Yiddish Newspapers and secular authors i.e. Shalom Asch, Y.L. Peretz, I.J. an I.B. Singer. We attended the Yiddish Theater regularly and ate in lively iconic Kosher restaurants and cafes where writers and theatrical people hung out, mostly speaking Yiddish. Talk was mostly about the war in Europe, and the plight
of Jews in Eastern Europe. Mostly before we knew the extent of the holocaust.

Zionism was in our blood and at the center of our lives. The JNF blue box was in every home. We would go from apartment to apartment to distribute the boxes and collect the money. We would often attend rallies for Israel (Palestine then) to push for a Jewish State, especially as the news of the Holocaust became known.

My parents and their friends were active in the Labor Zionist Movement, and their children who remain my friends all were in the youth movement Habonim, and attended regular meetings and the summer camps. Many made aliyah and were Halutzim and fought in the war for independence and remain in Israel.

These memories hold a sweetness for me, and have left me with pride and love for our people and Israel.

Bert Rudofsky joined TBT 2 years ago. He has been active in the Jewish community his whole life. He is a regular attendee on Friday nights, Shabbat Morning and Tuesdays Jewish Tangents class where he shares his wealth of knowledge and experience.

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.tbtny.org (media galleries/elul stories).