Elul is the month leading up to Rosh HaShanah. Each day during the month, a different Temple Beth Torah congregant will share a High Holiday reflection to help us prepare for this season of prayer, repentance and tzedakah.

Yom Kippur in Israel
Limor Tintweiss

It is Yom Kippur in Israel. I am 10 years old and I am so excited! This is my favorite day of the year! I can't wait to go bike riding with all of my friends. Bike riding? Yes.... all of the roads are going to be empty today because nobody drives on Yom Kippur, which leaves one thing for the kids to do - go bike riding in the streets!

Fast forward a few years, and I am 21 years old in New York. It is Yom Kippur and I am getting ready to go to temple while thinking how I wish I was going bike riding. I confess to my then boyfriend, Michael, that I have never gone to temple on Yom Kippur. Needless to say, he was shocked and could not believe that his Israeli girlfriend has never been to temple on Yom Kippur. I walked away thinking .... how many times do I have to explain that in Israel, as a non-religious Israeli, people do not go to temple, but simply celebrate the holidays and their traditions at home. Why doesn't he understand that I never had to think about being Jewish because everyone is Israel was Jewish when I lived there?

This began my new tradition of attending temple for holidays and some shabbat services. For years, I still did not feel comfortable going to temple and it felt like it was something I was doing for Michael, not for me. While I am a very spiritual person, temple was never equated with spirituality for me, but more with religion, and since I don't consider myself religious, it did not feel natural for me to attend temple.
As we got married and had our three beautiful children, Michael and I continued to struggle to find a middle ground where we can both feel comfortable. After all, him growing up conservative, and me growing up Israeli was very different. We began our search for a temple that would feel just right for both of us. After joining three temples and still not finding that special place for us, we joined Temple Beth Torah and it quickly began to feel like home for everyone in our family!

I feel that I have come a long way in this journey; I now attend services and even enjoy them, I look forward to temple events, and get a lot out of my membership in this incredible community. Rabbi Susie has certainly demystified my vision of what a rabbi is like (i.e. old bearded man who preaches and brain washes you about the bible and its stories). Thank goodness for Rabbi Susie's gentle, down to earth way, creativity, and wisdom, that I can truly say that I feel a very different connection to Judaism than the one I grew up with.

Limor and her husband Michael have three children, David, Jessica and Maya. She is a school psychologist and enjoys tennis and yoga in her free time.

Would you like to share your story? It can be a High Holiday memory, a first experience or a ritual that is special to you at this time of year. Send your stories to ravsusie@gmail.com. If you missed any of the previous Elul Stories you can go to www.tbtny.org (media galleries/elul stories).