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# High Holy Days CRC Member Teachings 5774

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## EREV ROSH HASHANAH

### *Though Broken Inside, I am Grateful*

by Michael Getty

page 23 / Machzor

A few years ago, I started corresponding with a man named Maurice Adkins, who for several years has been incarcerated at various federal facilities for offenses I've never been totally clear about. Through synchronicities that should come as no surprise to members of the CRC community, he stumbled upon some of Rabbi Susan's teachings and reached out. Maurice is in his early fifties, grew up in a Jewish family, knew he was gay at an early age, and assumed as many did in his generation -- and still do -- that the Jewish world had no place for him. So he left, drifted, and eventually got into trouble. He served time in Florida, was released, re-offended, and finally ended up at a facility in Massachusetts.

It wasn't until after his incarceration that Maurice began reconnecting to Judaism -- at least to the extent he can, given that in most facilities, Orthodox prison outreach is the only game in town. As a minimum-security inmate, he has privileges that others don't, including opportunities for community service.

And so it was that on April 15th of this year, Maurice found himself wearing orange prison garb, handing out bottles of water to runners completing the Boston Marathon. Maurice was close to the first explosion but was uninjured, likewise for the second explosion. He made sure the people immediately around him were okay and together they ran, not knowing if they were running away from danger or towards new danger. They just ran.

In his letter, Maurice reflected on the experience in ways that are challenging to me in a number of respects, but so powerful and compelling that I knew I had to bring them here.

He writes:

"Though broken inside, I am grateful. I have no frame of reference in which to place such evil. The only way I can deal with the emotions is acceptance. In the face of inexplicable acts, we are confronted with the possibility that rhyme and reason may not be on G-d's agenda, yet there is peace in the words of Job which remind us how little reason avails us when we try to understand the unexplainable. Job answered his wife, "Shall we receive good at the hands of G-d and not receive the bad?" Surrender moves us towards a wholeness and connectedness in which all things, good and evil, are divine, all part of the sacred gifts of life from our loving Creator."

"I weep, I pray, I gasp for breath at times. Yet I know that all suffering belongs to some higher dispensation of mercy and justice and that G-d, the power that creates and sustains all things, including our very lives, doesn't owe us reasons. It is the very dwelling in the wilderness of mystery that, moved

by love and faith, we venture all to enter the sacred, to cross the threshold of the invisible and draw closer to G-d."

"We do not have a say in all that befalls us, but we do have a say in our response. I do not know what my response should be. I am broken and sad, yet very grateful. My heart aches for those who died, those who grieve for them, for those injured and for all who are crying along with me. There is a connectivity in sorrow, and to open our hearts and our arms to those in pain enlarges not only the moment but it enlarges us, to the extent we are not dwelling just in the moment but within the whole of life."

"In closing, I want you to know I love you; you matter to me. I am grateful for you. I urge you to take a minute today to give someone a hug, a kind word, a loving affirmation. May we all transform our world with love."

## ROSH HASHANAH

### *A Prayer*

by Bobby Frauenglas  
page 31 / Machzor

*A Prayer* - by Miriam (Mickey) Frauenglas, z"l

Help me, oh Lord, help me become wise  
not remain foolish  
Teach me, oh Lord, teach me to have strength  
not stay weak  
Show me, oh Lord, show me how to acquire  
understanding and compassion  
not feel bitterness nor self-pity  
Guide me, oh Lord, guide me towards attaining courage  
not to have fear  
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me to love and hope  
not to feel despair nor unhappy."  
-the end-

My Mom wrote this just a bit over two years after my Dad & her husband had died of a sudden massive heart attack, and she became a young widow of just 51. My Dad's name was Seymour, but most everyone called him Sonny; which truly suited him; since at 55, he was youthful in both appearance and attitude. My Mom had been with my Dad since she was just 16 & they been married for over 31 years.

Outwardly, everyone thought my Mom was wise & never foolish; strong & never weak; filled with understanding & compassion & never exhibited bitterness nor self-pity; was courageous & not fearful; was filled with love & hope and not despair nor unhappiness. I guess, judging by her prayer, my Mom doubted herself in a way that nobody else did.

My Mom always spoke to G-d, but never considered herself religious in any traditional way. She never did quite grasp the concept of kosher, figuring that as long as the chopped meat was from the glatt

kosher butcher shop, what could be wrong with serving her son a cheeseburger & a glass of milk for lunch? I think G-d loved my Mom very much & her poem reminds me that the feeling was mutual. Apparently, she received more strength from her relationship with G-d than even I knew about. Her memory is a blessing. -by © Bobby & Mickey Frauenglas, 1978, 2013

## *Sea of Love*

by Miriam Raskin  
page 47 / Machzor

I was a clingy child by her account.  
I followed close behind her steps.  
You are such a needy little thing,  
she'd say, as if wanting more love  
was a really ugly form of greed.  
I took what I could get and thought  
that's all there is for me,  
and settled for long years into  
the cocoon of my own misery,  
which kept me safe – and sorry.  
Sad and sorry is what I was  
until the shell that held me  
broke and dropped me into  
a deep and dark blue sea of love,  
where there's enough – and more –

for me and all who chance to enter  
to take their fill of love – enough  
to overcome each soul's  
own deep dark neediness.  
I linger in this sea of love and never  
get too much. We -- all of us --  
we take and give and give and take,  
and always there is more for us to have,  
as if there is no end, no end to it at all.  
And if the day should come  
that I take too much and drown  
in that good sea, well, then,  
I'll drown, in love and peace  
and happiness – with no regrets  
whatever, ever, ever more.

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*miriam raskin 3/14/12*

## *Moses*

by Niki Nymark  
page 61 / Machzor

Who is this angry man  
God chose to lead His Jews?  
One slow of speech  
who takes forever  
to learn from his mistakes.  
  
A curious babe,  
he tastes a fiery coal,  
that burns his tongue.  
  
A rash boy, he strikes down an overseer,  
flees to the wilderness,  
encounters a burning bush,  
but heedlessly argues with God,  
won't concede til he's eighty.

God opens the sea for him,  
sends manna for the people,  
but Moses strikes a rock  
for water instead of calling softly.

Ablaze with anger,  
he breaks the tablets  
he climbed a mountain  
to bring from God  
to his ragged people.

Could God have been mistaken,  
choosing such a furious man?  
Or perhaps  
It takes a burning man,  
to set a whole people  
on fire.

## YOM KIPPUR

### *Masada (the Mountain)*

by Rick Isserman

page 51 / Machzor

Last summer, I was fortunate enough to go on the trip of a lifetime to Israel with my wife, Rabbi Randy and a group of CRC members. I am 59 years old, out of shape and think in my mind I am either 40 or 69, depending on when you ask. Part of the "Israel experience" is climbing the mountain fortress known as Masada. My dad did it when he was in Israel in 1948, age 20. My daughter, son and wife did it when they were in their 20s as well. The day before the mountain experience, Randy came to me and my wife, the oldest group members, and asked if we were up for the climb and I said yes, without thinking. I once climbed the Lincoln Memorial; it can't be too much harder. The next morning came early at 3am. You see they wanted to get to the top in time to witness the sunrise. My body woke up and says whoa; Coffee!!! At Masada, it was still dark and Randy points to steps that go way up the mountain. **A big Mountain.** He said to me, do you still want to climb? . **Sure, I said.** I got to the first step and looked up, it was a long way. My wife was standing next to me, and the group was quickly far ahead of us. Randy said, take your time and went ahead himself. I said to my feet, you can do this. I put the foot on next step. My wife said are you ok, I said yes; see my foot is on the step. Then it started one foot placed on each step, it did not look so hard, one step at a time, one step. **Just one step.** I got halfway up and Randy came down to help. Are you OK? He asked. Yes I can make it. I said, to myself, one step, and Randy is here. Finally, I actually got to the top! All around me was God's wondrous beauty-the rising sun in front of me the moon still at my back. The two eyes of God were looking at me on this mountain where one of the great dramas of my people had occurred. One step at a time and I got to have this awesome experience.

Once back in St. Louis I joined a weekly Quran study group with Dr. Rana. The Mountain presented itself again to me. How can I communicate or be at ease with Islamic scholars? **A big Mountain.**

One time a learned Doctor in the group stated the Jewish god was a tribal god as opposed to the great Muslim god. However, I was joined by the other Muslims in refuting this—there is one God for us all. **Just One Step.** That doctor and I have since become friends; we are both 'Trekies.'

I asked Randy, can you join me in a quest for more understanding with Muslims. He said yes.; **A big Mountain.**

This past May, a CRC contingent met with members of Imam Dr. Rana's Islamic study group and we set up an ongoing dialogue where we all agreed to learn more about each other. **Just One More Step.**

For it is written, Isaiah 40: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is God from of old, Creator of the earth from end to end, He never grows faint or weary, and His wisdom cannot be fathomed. He gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent. Youth may grow faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but they who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength."

Despite our many challenges, all it takes is just one more step to climb the mountain, the journey of lifetime.

# *I Can't Fix Everything*

by Karen Kalish

page 159 / Machzor

Those of you who know me know that I am a do-gooder, an activist, a “fixer”. But I’ve learned this year that I can’t fix everything, or everyone I try to fix.

Let me explain.

In 1971 I married a man with a child, who was six. I became Mom – and am still Mom – in a way.

He was a cute, sweet little boy, and we were close. He had an awful life before I knew him. He grew up, finished high school, bummed around, got married in his mid 20s, had a child a few months later - and I was still Mom and went to the wedding and was grandmother to the child.

And then he disappeared – for 22 years. No contact. I had two private detectives look for him through the years to no avail. Not knowing where and how he was was like a hole in my heart. What happened to my kid?

And then - 22 months ago I found him - on Facebook. He was in Seattle and, with his permission, I went to see him. I found a 48-year-old man totally down and out, and alcoholic. Through a series of events, he came here to St. Louis and I was Mom again. He agreed to go to Harris House, a fabulous place for people with addictions, right here in St. Louis. Having my son back seemed like an incredible gift, especially at this time of my life.

He worked and stayed sober for 16 months. During those 16 months I did for him, and gave, and did for him and gave, and kept giving and doing. In hindsight, I was trying to fix him, give him another chance. I was doing what moms do. And then he relapsed. And we’re not in touch - again.

I gave a lot – many would say way too much. I gave time and money – and love - and I didn’t get very much back, or what I thought I would. But what I did get were some life lessons.

1. You can’t fill up the empty years of a person’s life. They are over and done. No amount of giving and doing makes up for those difficult years. Those who know the whole story say I should have stopped long before I did. It wasn’t good for him, and it wasn’t good for me.
2. I also learned that I can’t want more for a person than he wants for himself. Well, I can want it, but I can’t make it happen. I can want him to be sober, and work, and save a little money, and have friends - but if **he** doesn’t want those things, they are not going to happen. No amount of wanting will make a particle of difference.
3. The third lesson has to do with dealing with reality, and not what I wish. Many of us without children wonder who will take care of us in our old age, or if we get sick. Most of us have fabulous friends and it would be handled, but that thought nags us in the back of the head. A few months after I found him, I found myself thinking about a different future, one with a “son” in it, who might take care of me, who would now be a family for me. The reality is that he never looked for me in the 22 years and has never taken care of anyone, including himself. Once I separated fact from fiction, I was over that. But it was a good reminder to stay in reality.

There’s a verse in the Talmud that says: “...whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he – or in my case, she - saved an entire world.” I tried to save a life, but if that life doesn’t want to be saved, there’s nothing that can be done.

I’m glad I found him and I’m okay with not being in touch again. I always wanted to know where and how he was – and I now know that, and wish him the best.

Isn’t it wonderful that at age 68, I can still learn new lessons in life, and can go into this next year a little wiser?

## NILA/YISKOR

### *A Night of Keeping Watch (from Exodus 12:42)*

by Marilyn Probe, z"l  
before the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

Tis a night of keeping watch for YHWH,  
to come out of Egypt...  
a keeping-watch of all the Children of Israel,  
throughout their generations.

On the eve of my leave  
I paused.  
What would I say to my co-workers  
about my participation  
in their future?

How to plan for when I would not be there?  
"I was to start on a journey"  
I said, "I did not know when I would return."

I gave so many clues,  
but no one knew.  
Some did not believe  
that I would cross to the other side  
and leave the sea  
safely behind.

Liberated, I begin  
a new chapter.  
Stories sung among thorns  
firmly shorn-  
to wander  
in a desert of possibilities.

## ON-LINE SELECTIONS

### *Unstuck Always, Sometimes Fine and Dandy*

by Rabbi James Stone Goodman

In the teaching brought down by Rabbi Rivkin, may he rest in peace, a teaching he derived from the Baal Shem Tov the founder of Chassidus, an oral teaching (I have never seen it written) and it may be that one of the Rav's ancestors was present when it was first given over 250 plus years ago, a teaching that unlocked for me the culmination of the arc of these days of awe; it opened up onto a concept that was entirely inward and not nearly as lofty as fine and dandy better described as Unstuck. I thought I was reaching for fine and dandy – how are you? I'm fine and dandy but it was closer than that. This is what I

have been searching for in my inwardliness through these days of awe, nothing that lofty or formulaic, it was simply unstuck.

I am unstuck. In the old shuls of my childhood we threw ourselves flat out on the ground and said I surrender my separation and from flat out on the ground I feel the earth moving as I feel my soul moving unstuck and sometimes it is as difficult to sense as the turning of the globe. But you can, you can sense it. But you have to go deep. You have to be willing to go to any lengths. You may have to lay down on the earth now and again. How are you earth? Not quite fine and dandy are you, but unstuck? Unstuck.

Are you willing to go to any lengths to be unstuck? Trying, I'm trying to be fine and dandy one day but for now I am satisfied with unstuck. On my way to my legacy as a human being, fine and dandy, I am willing to be unstuck. That's manageable, unstuck. I learned this on September 7, 1993. I was sitting half asleep at the Rabbinical Association meeting in one of the synagogues of our town. The room was underground, though the walls were white, it was dark within. Rabbi Rivkin came in, gave us a short teaching that he brought down from the Baal Shem Tov, on unstuck, what we call teshuvah.

That day I learned two central realities: submission (sometimes surrender) and to aspire to be unstuck.

Soon I will be fine and dandy. I believe that with great belief, it is my natural optimism an inheritance I received from my people, we are the most optimistic people in the world. We have looked into the basements of hell and came up rolling our sleeves and going to work. We believe in the future. We believe that some day, it's going to be fine and dandy. Right now we are unstuck, we're moving, we are in motion.

How are you? Unstuck? That's good. Almost fine and dandy.

### *Tale of the Rebbe, the Ordinary Fly, and the Ordinary I*

by Michelle Long

It's Shabbat once more; a time for study.

The Rebbe receives his students warmly,

Gifting them with a fresh brewed exotic tea of an unusually fine character,

As well as some choice fruits and nuts for sustenance.

While the Rebbe strums his loyal acoustic guitar, the assembly transitions into meditation.

The only sounds are the strumming, the Rebbe singing a niggun,

and the faint noise of an ordinary fly chiming in off key.

The entire class sits, eyes closed, transfixed.

Distracted by that ordinary fly, I open my eyes to observe what he is doing.

In a split second, I am allowed to witness an unforgettable vision; a dream, an illusion!

The Rebbe, with eyes closed, captures that ordinary fly by one wing,

Then escorts him to a place of honor beside the Rebbe.

That ordinary fly, unhappy with the spot the Rebbe has assigned him;

or possibly just out of stubbornness that someone many times his measure is attempting to restrain him,

shifts his location to come to balance on the Rabbi's Tanakh.

What happens next, you couldn't believe.

That ordinary fly, lending an ear to the Rebbe,

commences to acquire a glow, an aura, as if he is becoming enlightened just from osmosis while poised on the Tanakh.

I am privy to witnessing the transformation of an ordinary fly to that of a holy, ordinary fly.

And, akin to that holy ordinary fly, for just one moment on one holy Shabbat, I encounter myself enlightened as well.