

In memory of Molli Krausz
Dedication of the Sukkat Shalom Garden
Temple Aliyah
September 8, 2024
Rabbi Carl M. Perkins

I want to pay tribute to the late Molli Krausz, *aleha ha-shalom*, may she rest in peace, whose generosity helped create this wonderful garden.

Molli Krausz was born and raised in a Catholic family in New York. She graduated from a Catholic college, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, and Columbia University. And with whom did she fall in love? **Robert (Bob) Krausz, z”l**, a Holocaust survivor from Hungary. She and Bob married in 1970, moved to Newton, and were active at Temple Emanuel, where she studied Hebrew, Jewish history and Jewish practice, and where they headed up a project collecting household goods and old clothes for the homeless. In this and in other ways, it was a labor of love for them to try to help those who needed help. When they grew older, they moved to Fox Hill Village in Westwood, joined Temple Aliyah and became “regulars” on Shabbat mornings.

In shul, sometimes Molli would be asked to read the translation of a passage from the Humash or the Tanakh. Whenever she did this, it was such a pleasure: Her refined enunciation and the tone of her voice beautifully communicated the dignity and majesty of the text. And whenever she would participate in a Torah discussion it was always thoughtful and thought-provoking.

Molli developed a connection with Israel. One of my favorite photographs is of her and Bob, sitting on a stone wall overlooking what looks like the Judean hills. Bob had relatives in Israel, whom she continued to support throughout her life.

Molli was a gardener. On more than one of my visits to Fox Hill, we would walk through the property and come to the garden plot that she maintained to see what was blooming there at the time.

Molli loved to write poetry, and she often included descriptions of nature in her poetry.¹ Her poetry captures her sense of humor, her wit, and her charm. Here's a short poem, entitled, "River," which is best read slowly:

What does a river do?
Here are three things:
Drop into it a stone
And it makes rings.
It runs past rocks
And as it runs it sings.

Here's another, called "Calendar" that features her beloved black cat:

Such joy
When Cat leaps
Into the leaves
And later
Into the heaps of snow
And then again
Into the mass
Of new-mown grass—
Joy beyond reason!
And this is how
I recognize each season.

There's a beautiful verse in Psalm 92, the Psalm for Shabbat, that talks about aging. *"Tsadik ka-tamar yifrach; k'erez ba-lvanon yisgeh,"* – *"May the righteous person flourish like the date palm tree, and grow mighty like a cedar in Lebanon."*

The Talmud (BB 80b) asks: What's the point of comparing the righteous person to both the date palm tree and also the cedar? Wouldn't one comparison have sufficed?

Well, Rabbi Hiya bar Luliani says, If we only compared the righteous person to a cedar, that would be insufficient, because a cedar doesn't blossom and produce fruit, like a date palm tree does. And if we only compared the

¹ Molli is the author of two short books of poetry, *Light and Dark: Poems*, and *About Cat, Mostly*.

righteous person to a date palm tree, *that too* would be insufficient because if you cut down a palm tree, it stops growing, whereas, if you cut down a cedar, new shoots can come out of the stump: in other words, the tree can replenish itself.

By including both trees in the verse, we're saying that we wish for the righteous both that they blossom, and that they have the capacity to replenish themselves.

I think it's fair to say that Molli was blessed in both ways: she blossomed and she replenished herself. She continued to thrive at Fox Hill well into her 90s. She volunteered in the library there and wrote book reviews and cataloged books. And all the while, she continued to garden.

And she did more than that. She made generous contributions to Temple Aliyah. Why? Because she believed in the shul and its values. She didn't look at an opportunity to help from the perspective of how she might benefit from it. She didn't contribute because she wanted recognition. In fact, she recoiled from the idea. She was an exceedingly modest person who wanted only to help – not to be known for doing so.

And in that respect, she continues to teach us. Think about it: the contributions that she made during her lifetime – to Gan Aliyah, to Temple Aliyah — they are literally bearing fruit today. And they – together with the sweat equity put into this beautiful garden by so many who are here today and by many others who aren't – have allowed this piece of land, after many years of neglect, to replenish itself. Today, it is blooming and thriving.

May Molli's generosity and modesty inspire us to emulate those qualities, and may her memory long remain a blessing in our lives, and in the life of our congregation.

Amen.