

# Saved by Tefillah B'Tzibbur

A sudden gust of wind—a stone's throw from Young Israel of Fort Lee—snatched me from the sidewalk and hurled me into the gutter during rush-hour traffic.



By Amy Neustein

Miracles are those split-second inflection points in our lives that we often do not see or comprehend until the moment has already passed. Even more, while a miracle unfolds in a second, the making of a miracle takes decades, and most likely centuries or millennia. Miracles flow from Tefillah b'Tzibbur, which is so powerful that it resonates for generations. In Exodus (20:6) we are taught that the prayers of our ancestors creates a lasting merit (*zechut avot*) that brings divine favor upon their de-

scendants for thousands of generations. And in the Talmud (Shabbat 151b), we learn that the innocence of children will serve as guarantors that Hashem will judge us favorably in the present moment, for the prayers of our descendants will inure to our benefit now.

Having been picked up by a savage wind on Parker Avenue in Fort Lee and tossed into the gutter 15 feet from where I stood, at the onset of rush hour, landing in the path of oncoming traffic, I needed nothing short of a miracle to save me from an unspeakable fate. I tried to raise myself from the ground but my right leg felt like an empty airbag, completely hollow and with no support. I later learned that the



traumatic impact of the fall caused the neck of the femur bone, the longest bone in the body, to snap off and leave the femur bone disconnected from the acetabulum (hip socket). I literally had no leg to stand on. I rolled over to my left side to reduce some of the pain, but when I tried to wave my right hand so that the motorists would see me, I found my hand so badly sprained and black and blue that it didn't extend too far.

At that moment, I realized how close I was to the Young Israel of Fort Lee. I recalled how many, many times I saw my neighbors at The Colony and at The Century next door make a mad dash to the shul just to make sure there would be a

minyan—never passing off the obligation onto the next one but rising to the occasion to make sure that they'd be counted in the minyan themselves. In the Talmud (Berakhot 6a) it states that whenever 10 men pray together the Schechina is with them. And I thought to myself that if prayer can reverse a Gezeira, an evil decree, it can certainly reverse my hapless fate that would await if the cars were not to see me. I thought of Marty Epstein, the former president of YIFL, and how many times he walked to shul with terrible back pain just to make sure there was a minyan so that one could sanctify God's name. Realizing the stellar efforts of Rabbi Shmuel (Sammy) Bergman to hold daily minyanim and to have weekly Parsha Explorations on Zoom, I was certain of Hashem's presence at the shul.

Suddenly, I heard a voice of a man I didn't know: "Can I help you stand up, ma'am?" I explained I couldn't stand because I had probably broken my hip. But I asked him to please call 911. He obliged. A moment later, a female motorist stopped and got out of her car. She offered to place her car sideways to block traffic on Parker Avenue so that no one would run me over. The Fort Lee Police arrived a few minutes later and I couldn't ask for a more caring and compassionate female police officer who took off her own garment to keep me warm while we awaited an ambulance. The EMTs arrived shortly thereafter, and with much agony I was lifted from the gutter and placed in an ambulance. I was taken to the Englewood Hospital emergency room where they x-rayed my hip and identified the fractured femur bone requiring a hemiarthroplasty (partial hip replacement).

The whole scenario felt surreal. I was terribly shaken, and I soon spiked a fever from the trauma and the resulting inflammation.

It was explained to me that being thrown 15 feet by the wind gust was equivalent to falling from a second or third story building or, in earlier times, being thrown from a galloping horse. But the miracles didn't end there. I was slow to begin recovery from the hip surgery because of the extraordinary trauma associated with the fall. I prayed to Hashem for an answer. Suddenly, I received an email from my cousin, Dr. Mark Young, a preeminent rehab doctor whose work has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the Annals of Internal Medicine and other prestigious outlets. His first words were, "I have worked closely with the chief medical officer at Kessler who is a friend and colleague of mine for many years." Though on his way to present a talk at a medical conference in Europe, my dear cousin Mark took the time to take a medical history from me at the Munich airport where

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# SCN ‘Spring Threat Briefing’ Shares Broad View of Security Concerns

By Harry Glazer

Most days, I think of myself as the person who usually doesn't get alarmed when others do. Yet in watching the Secure Community Network's "Spring Threat Briefing" webinar on March 24, I found myself quite concerned.

When Ken Corey, the former chief of department of the NYPD, stated that the current situation is "the highest threat environment I've seen in my career," and it echoed assessments made by a few other security experts in the webinar, I found that a sobering statement.

But what really got me to sit up and take notice was when Kerry Sleeper, the SCN's chief of threat management and information sharing, and a former assistant director of the FBI, rattled off this list of extremist attacks within the last month alone:

- Shooting at a bar in Austin, Texas
- Explosive devices used at NYC protest
- Explosive devices used in Oslo unrest
- Explosive devices used at U.S. Embassy in Toronto
- Explosive devices used in protest in Amsterdam
- Shootings targeting three shuls in Toronto

- Attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan
- Explosive devices used in attack on shul in Rotterdam
- Disruptions at events in France
- Surveillance of community institutions in London



SCN National Director and CEO Michael Masters speaks in the webinar.



United States Department of Homeland Security Under Secretary Matthew Kozma speaks in the webinar.



Ken Corey, the former chief of department of the NYPD, speaks in the webinar.

- Attack on Chabad institutions in the Netherlands
- Firebombing of four Hatzolah vehicles in London

He added that SCN has also detected and deterred 25 or more phishing attempts targeting Jewish institutions, in which the cyberattackers sought membership directories.

Sheriff Michael Bouchard of Oakland County, Michigan, who was part of the law enforcement team that responded to the attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield on March 12, shared that he has received

"hundreds" of threatening messages after speaking out publicly in support of the Jewish community, on the day of the attack.

Despite all these disturbing developments, the SCN webinar offered both reassuring perspectives and practical advice on how Jewish community institutions can

Gary Torgow, the chair of the Jewish Federations of North America, encouraged viewers to urge their local elected officials to speak out forcefully if any antisemitic acts occur in their areas, as these public comments by local leaders help push back against the normalization of hatred.

Sleeper encouraged viewers to keep attending their synagogues and schools, and not to let fear dictate their behavior, as this pushes back against intimidation efforts.

Corey suggested that leaders of community institutions ask their local police departments to be explicit when they say they will increase their monitoring of the institutions,

protect themselves in this environment.

Michael Masters, national director of SCN, advised that "there are no known threats to specific Jewish institutions at this time" and praised the "greatest mobilization of security institutions outside Israel." He advised Jewish institutions to:

- Connect with local law enforcement,
- Designate a point person to oversee the institutions security efforts,
- Request local law enforcement to give heightened attention to the institution,
- Ensure that lock down procedures are in place, and
- Implement outside facing security measures to deter threats.

United States Department of Homeland Security Under Secretary Matthew Kozma reminded viewers that the federal government continues to advise community members to follow the "See Something, Say Something" approach, as community institution members are the best judges of what is unusual in their environment. He urged people to call 911 if they see anything out of the ordinary that may indicate a possible danger.

so the leaders know what support to expect. He also encouraged synagogues and schools to advise the local police department about their security protocols and personnel, so the police are aware of each institution's approach.

Bouchard suggested that a leader of each community institution make a point of holding a meeting with their local police chief and build a relationship with him or her, as this is the foundation of better communications.

In closing the webinar, Jewish Federations of North America President and CEO Eric Fingerhut announced that the Jewish Federations will be organizing an Advocacy Fly-In to Washington, DC May 18-19. They will seek to arrange meetings with all members of Congress and with leaders in the White House, to push

for greater attention to Jewish community security concerns.



Gary Torgow, chair of the Jewish Federations of North America, speaks in the webinar.



Kerry Sleeper, the SCN's chief of threat management and information sharing, speaks in the webinar.

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he was catching a plane to Krakow to give his talk. He reached out to his colleague though it was on a Sunday. I knew Hashem was watching over me.

All the efforts to make Tefillah b'Tzibbur possible, through the commitment of Rabbi Shmuel Bergman and the

shul president Herb Speiser, have added to the sanctification of the Young Israel of Fort Lee, which saved my life the day a ferocious gale tried to end my existence.

Amy Neustein, PhD, is author/editor of 16 academic books. Her most recent book is "From Madness to Mutiny, 2nd edition" (Oxford University Press, 2026).