

Fort Lee Woman Blown Into Traffic by Tornado-Like Wind: Survival Story and Legal Battle Over Lost Daughter

A wind lifted me and hurled me into the road – and then...

A ferocious wind lifted me from the sidewalk and hurled me into the gutter at the onset of rush-hour traffic. I survived and it changed my life.

Dr. Amy Neustein

• 2 minutes

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Shortly before Pesach as I was walking back to my co-op in Fort Lee after completing some essential errands, a sudden, unexpected tornado-like wind hoisted me up from the sidewalk where I stood and threw me 15 feet into the road, right into the path of oncoming traffic. The force of the fall snapped the head of my femur bone, severing its connection to my hip socket. I would later learn that the radial head of my forearm had fractured too.

It was close to 5pm and the cars were starting to stream down Parker Avenue where I lay unable to move. I tried to raise my arms to alert motorists that I was in their way. but my right arm couldn't extend far enough because of the fracture resulting from the fall.

At that moment I knew that either I'd be mowed down by the traffic or miraculously saved. Surprisingly, my thoughts were not all that linear, nor black and white. I confess that despite my firebrand spirit and reputation of indefatigable activism, a small part of me felt relieved at the thought of returning to Hashem. Moments before the accident I had been preoccupied with the bittersweet thought of celebrating Passover, though still suffering from the long-lasting grief of having lost my only child in 1986 who was six years old at the time. I want to clarify that my child didn't die, chas v'shalom, but was violently snatched from me, almost like a gale force wind, after my mother, A"H, walked into the room at our summer cottage in Ellenville, New York and witnessed my daughter being sexually violated by my now ex husband.

Despite eye witness testimony and corroboration by New York's leading authority on sexual abuse, my daughter was whisked off to a foster home at the Ohel Children's Home and Family Services while I was prosecuted by Ohel's attorney for allegedly making a "false" report of abuse. While in foster care, my daughter, who slept over at her father's home for Shabbat, came back terribly traumatized. She had horrific nightmares and told her foster mother that her father had molested her again while she was at his home for Shabbat. In the meantime, I was given very severe visitation restrictions. Under suspicion of having "influenced" my daughter to believe she was sexually abused, I was never allowed to be with my daughter without a supervisor present to monitor my conversations with her. - [jsfeedadsget](#)

Ultimately, I lost all visitation contact with my daughter, and was never able to hear her voice or see her face again. The force of the law came down hard on me when on a visit with my daughter I rushed her to the Kings County emergency room where they diagnosed her with life-threatening anorexia nervosa, dehydration, anemia, electrolyte imbalance, and suicidal depression while in the custody of her father. In the hospital my daughter threatened to expose having been induced to lose weight for modeling.

The pediatric resident would later testify before a New York State legislative panel looking into the cover up of sexual abuse in my daughter's case, that my then eight-year-old daughter evinced "bizarre sexualized behavior," certainly shocking for an observant young girl. But having taken my daughter to the hospital where she was diagnosed with "failure to thrive" and considered to be in imminent danger was in violation of the family court order which did not permit a non custodial parent to seek medical care, even in an emergency.

Having lost all contact with my daughter, and, eventually, hope that the family she eventually married into would help me reconcile with her, I devoted my life to helping countless other mothers who had similarly lost their children after they tried in vain to protect them from sexual abuse. I broadened my interests to include all victims of sexual abuse, boys and girls alike, who were abused in the yeshivot, in camp, in foster care, and at home.

As I lay on the ground awaiting help, I suddenly felt the burden I'd been carrying for 40 years lifted from my shoulders. I never felt as close to the Schechinah than at that moment when I was suddenly at the crossroads of this and the next world, Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa. I knew my burden was lifted because God HaBa now taken hold of my right hand to strengthen, guide, and protect me.

I recalled how Jewish Voice and Opinion founder and editor-in-chief Susie Rosenbluth encouraged me to keep speaking openly about the sinister institutional cover up of sexual abuse in the observant community, and how extensively she wrote about my story, often staying up all night to meet her publication deadlines. I recalled how my Fort Lee neighbor and a former president of Young Israel of Fort Lee passed on to me the spiritual guidance of a preeminent Yerushalayimi Mekubal who understood my mission, *tafkid*, to expose a scandal that ran "very, very deep" in the frum community, for only then would its children be safe from predatory harm.

Certainly, Divine Providence, Hashgacha Pratit, saved my life. At that moment when Divine Providence was deciding my fate, suddenly a man came along and asked me if I needed help getting up. I explained I couldn't move and needed him to call 911. My dear friend and neighbor Sally Share met me at the Englewood Hospital emergency room where the ambulance had taken me. She observed that I was remarkably calm and confident notwithstanding the serious trauma I had just endured. I understood my composure stemmed from a much larger picture. Feeling Hashem take my right hand I knew for certain that my 40-year quest would finally free the children wrenched from their mothers who tried to protect them from sexual abuse.

All in all, Hashem's omniscience came through to me that day. My life was changed forever. I will hold my daughter, Sherry, who was turned brutally against me once again in my arms, and all the obstacles that have been placed in front of me will be removed. My daughter's spouse's family will finally embrace me, and the rabbis will join hands with me, as I have been fortified by Yad Hashem, in exposing what the Yerushalayimi Mekubal saw with such clarity. B'ezrat Hashem the floodgates will open and all the sexually abused children forcibly taken from their mothers will be returned and be back in their mothers' loving arms.

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)