

## How a “Wizard of Oz” Replay Changed My Life Forever

How a gale force wind lifted me from the sidewalk and sent me flying 15 feet into oncoming traffic...

BY AMY NEUSTEIN, PH.D. ● COMMENTARY, HER-STORY ● APRIL 9, 2026



Just like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz who is violently ripped from her sheltered but humdrum world by a cyclonic force, I was hurled by a gale before Passover, thrown sideways 15 feet, landing in the street in the path of oncoming traffic. Rush hour had just begun in Fort Lee, New Jersey where I lived and things looked ominous. Like Dorothy, I was stewing about the past. It was shortly before Pesach and I was recounting how this Passover marked the 40 year anniversary since my daughter was whisked away by family court at the age of six because I tried to protect her from sexual abuse. And later when I sought emergency medical care for my daughter, who was diagnosed with life-threatening anorexia nervosa and suicidal depression while in the custody of her father, my visits were permanently suspended because I was not allowed to seek medical attention for my daughter as the noncustodial parent. Even more, when my visits were suspended I was not allowed any telephone contact either.

Lost in the cobwebs of life were all the empty Passover holidays over the past 40 years where my daughter's seat at the Seder stood empty. I recalled the warmth we once shared and how she pleaded to come back to me. No one listened. She stopped pleading. And when my visits were permanently suspended with my daughter, her estrangement and feelings of abandonment intensified, growing exponentially greater. At the end was a carapace so thick it seemed impenetrable. I had held out hope of her having children so that she'd relax and enjoy the beauty of life. That didn't happen.

As I was lying in the street with moving traffic I suddenly had an epiphany. I couldn't move as the impact of the fall had snapped the head of my femur bone leaving it disconnected from the hip socket. I rolled over to my left side, the non injured side, to find relief from the excruciating pain of a fractured hip. But when I tried to raise my right arm to alert motorists that I was in their way, the arm didn't extend as I had fractured it too. It was at that moment I called out to God. Immediately, I heard a man's voice behind me asking if he could help me get up. I explained to him I couldn't move my leg and asked him to call 911. He obliged. And he did more. He stood with me and a crowd formed. And the cars were no longer a threat to my safety. I was safely transported to the Englewood Hospital emergency room and scheduled for a hip replacement.

The epiphany was that if Divine intervention could save a life, bringing the right people to the right place to do the right thing, then it could certainly bring my daughter back into my arms. But I must not sit back passively. I need to take the initiative of trying once again to speak to my daughter whose voice I haven't heard for decades, whose hand I haven't held since I took her to the hospital in 1989 to save her life. Over the years I made entreaties to her husband's family, to rabbis, to powerful members of the Orthodox community, to my estranged sister and her husband who are very close with my daughter, and to my daughter herself. Stone silence was the common refrain. However, just as I rose from the gutter after the cyclone hit now I must rise from the gutter and show my daughter and all the reinforcers who have kept her away from me that I am fortified by the Godly force that saved my life. If my life was worth saving, it is so that my daughter will have the love of a mother once again. And all the name calling and disparagement of me by those so close to my daughter will evanesce like morning dew after the first strong ray of sunshine.

*About the Author: Amy Neustein, Ph.D., is author/editor of 16 academic books. Her most recent book is "From Madness to Mutiny, 2nd edition" (Oxford University Press, 2026).*

### Author

---



AMY NEUSTEIN,  
PH.D.