

## TORAH THOUGHTS – AVOID, DENY, DEFEND

On Tuesday, I joined about thirty staff and lay leaders of MJC at a training called C.R.A.S.E., which stands for “Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events.” We were instructed by two officers of the Marlboro Police Department, Sergeant Symanski and Captain Reck. Their Power Point included current statistics, practical advice, and helpful videos.

ADD – Avoid, Deny, Defend - was emphasized throughout the evening as the most effective way to respond in these types of situations. ‘Avoid’ means to get away from the shooter as quickly as possible. We learned to be aware of our surroundings, including all possible exits. ‘Deny’ means to prevent a shooter from entering your location. This means locking or barricading a door, turning off lights, silencing phones, and standing against the same wall as the door so the perpetrator cannot see you or others inside a room. Finally, as a last resort, you may need to ‘defend’ yourself by attacking and disarming a gunman.

We also learned about human behavior, including how we react to stress and the psychology of groups. It was a terrific ninety-minute session! I thank Officers Symanski and Reck for their presentation, and Executive Director Dara Winston, President Len Whitman, and Executive VP Steve Solomon for arranging the training and for their dedication to our safety.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. ‘Avoid’ is not only helpful in a live shooter scenario. Being aware of your surroundings is critical in any life-threatening situation, such as a fire at home or in a public setting. Consider that on airplanes and in movie theatres, all exits are pointed out. If you are in a lecture hall, a school, a stadium, a meeting hall or at some other venue, learn where the exits are in advance.
2. As for ‘Defend’, the Torah does justify self-defense. See Exodus 22:1-2, about what is permissible if a thief breaks into your home. The Rabbis of the Talmud, based on this law, decreed that if you believe that the intruder’s intent is to murder you, you may kill him first. However, life is precious, and this should only be done if your life is at stake.
3. The Torah also teaches, “Take utmost care and watch your selves scrupulously ...” (Deuteronomy 4:9). This can be interpreted that we are commanded to guard our lives. In the current environment, which practices do you think best ensure our safety?
4. Dara will schedule another C.R.A.S.E. training – watch for more information.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Pont