

# Messengers of the Most High: A 9/11 miracle

September 13, 2018 by [Rabbi Jill Zimmerman](#) 6 Comments

## What Happened First

It is bedtime on this second day of Rosh Hashanah – 9/11/2019, but I can't go to sleep before putting this story to paper. What happened today will forever be a reminder of grace, miracles and the unexplained mystery that weaves throughout our lives, that sometimes I'm lucky enough to catch a glimpse.



As one of the rabbis leading, I had been asked to say a prayer to commemorate 9/11. I was one of the clergy leaders with the Jewish Collaborative of Orange County, founded by Rabbi Marcia Tilchin.

I proceeded in my usual manner. Since I didn't have a prayer or reading in my own files, I reached out to the [T'ruah](#) clergy list for suggestions of prayers/poetry and to the "[Creative Gateways to Transcendence](#)" poetry group I started on Facebook five years ago.

What I ended up preparing was a combination. Rabbi colleagues told me about how Rabbi Irwin Kula had created a shofar service, with the blasts of the shofar interspersed with the actual voicemail messages from people who were in the flaming towers to their families – their final words. Even thinking about that made me sob.

My reading consisted of reading three of those voicemails, and the prayer for survivors & witnesses of 9/11 by the wonderful liturgist Alden Solovy.

The reading became part of the Mi Sheberach prayer for healing, placed in the Torah service, with the Torah open.

*I began by reading the three voicemails without introduction.* The energy in the room shifted. Everyone, EVERYONE knew what I was reading. The silence spoke volumes

as people listened and remembered where they were on 9/11, the images frozen into our consciousness.

## **Then This Happened**

When I was done and walked back into the congregation, a gentleman who I did not know, up to me with tears in his eyes, grasped me by both shoulders – and said:- Rabbi, a miracle has happened here & I just want to thank you.

He (I later learned his name was Larry) explained that one of the messages I had read was his brother's, who had called his wife from the towers. Larry's brother was with Cantor Fitzgerald, one of the 658 people from that company alone who died that day in the Twin Towers.

Larry had only moved to Orange County only six weeks ago from Long Island & this was the very first year he had not commemorated 9/11 and his brother's yahrzeit at Ground Zero, where he has gone for 17 years in a row.

In fact, Larry had helped raise his brother's kids (who were infants when his brother was killed) and now that as they were graduating high school, he felt it was ok to leave New York.

Larry's wife had found the [Jewish Collaborative of Orange County](#) online, and that is how he came to be sitting in our services, along with his kids.

On September 11, 2018, Larry awoke at five am in their home in Orange County, filled with deep grief, and thinking that he had made a huge mistake by not flying to New York for the ceremony at Ground Zero.

Larry told me that when I started reading his brother's last words from the bima, he knew that he had been brought to our services for a reason.

### ***He called it a miracle.***

At Kaddish, Rabbi Marcia Tilchin (who is such a sensitive and beautiful rabbi) invited Larry to come up and share something about his brother.

He told the congregation the story that I have written here.

After services, Larry and his children were surrounded by fellow worshippers who reached out to him for words, hugs and support. He had found his new community.

## **Even More**

That same morning, I had taught about God & the difficulty of God-language, as it is only a container, a pointer, to That Which is Beyond Us – The ALL.

I asked everyone to think about a moment that they felt totally connected, in-flow, where the boundaries dropped away, where they felt intimations of the holy and the sacred.

I asked people if they would say that that experience was an expression of The Divine/God/YHVH — and most people said yes.