

We experience miracles very frequently. The question and challenge we have is whether we are sufficiently alert and spiritually sensitive to notice them.

A most poignant example occurred this past August when a group of community rabbis teamed together to conduct our yearly walking inspection of the broader Teaneck-Bergenfield-New Milford eruv. This author, Rav Zvi Sobolofsky, Rav Michael Taubes and Rav Ezra Wiener (along with his son-in-law Rav Michael Goldman) joined our ace eruv administrator Rav Micha Shotkin in a thorough walking review of the entire route of the eruv.

We were very pleased to discover the fine job done by our weekly eruv inspector, Rav Raphi Steinhart: The entire eruv was discovered to be intact after our fine-tooth-comb inspection of every nook and cranny of the eruv. What a testament to Rav Steinhart and Rav Shotkin!

It is nevertheless essential for a community to have its eruv thoroughly inspected at least once a year. This year's inspection bears out this assertion. We found a few areas, while kosher, were heading toward disqualification. Better to identify a potential problem before it manifests as an actual issue.

We also identified vulnerable areas that might not withstand a strong storm and we made a plan to create a strong backup. In addition, as we do every year upon the advice of Rav Hershel Schachter, we raised the halachic standards. This year we nearly eliminated almost any change in direction in the eruv lines. This exceeds the standards of our poskim, Rav Schachter and Rav Mordechai Willig, who tolerate (based on Eruvin 11a) a slight change of direction in the eruv wires.

In addition, for the first time, we now satisfy the chumra (stringency) of the Tevu'ot Shor (cited by the Shaarei Teshuva to Orach Haim 363:26). Although the very first mishna in Masechet Eruvin permits a gap of 10 amot (15 to 18 feet) between mechitzot (halachic walls), the Tevu'ot Shor argues that this leniency does not apply to gaps between tzurot hapetach (halachic door frames, which form the core of almost all urban eruvs).

There has been a vigorous debate as to whether the halacha accepts the chumra of the Tevu'ot Shor. The Aruch Hashulchan dismisses it as tamu'ah (bewildering and not compelling), but the Mishna Berura believes that l'chatchilah we should satisfy this opinion. Rav Baruch Simon, in his masterful "Imrei Baruch" on Eruvin, does a yeoman's job of reviewing the rich Acharonic debate about this issue. Rav Schachter and Rav Willig do not

require adherence to this view, and in the past we relied on a compromise view: to rely on a 10-amah gap between a mechitzah and a tzurat hapetach but not between two tzurot hapetach. However, this year we eliminated the 10-amah gaps in regard to all tzurot hapetach to completely satisfy the Tevu'ot Shor.

The grueling but satisfying adventure took 11 hours but would have been even longer had it not been for a “chance” encounter on River Road in New Milford. Our eruv walk begins with the most challenging stretch of the day: the nearly 4-mile-long western border of the eruv from River Road and Fort Lee Road in Bogota to River Road and Graphic Boulevard in New Milford. This portion of the eruv requires intense scrutiny. However, past this point for a significant distance, the highest wire runs for a considerable length directly above the pole, creating a long series of proper tzurot hapetach. This may be viewed easily from a car, and we usually arrange for a friend to drive the rabbis during this portion of the eruv to make the inspection more efficient.

However, this summer had been exceedingly hectic, especially the week prior to the Teaneck eruv inspection. I had visited quite a few eruvim, ranging from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to a string of eruvim in western New England including West Hartford, Springfield and University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In the hurly burly of all the activity I had forgotten to arrange for a driver at Graphic Boulevard. As we approached the area I became concerned that my oversight would prevent us from completing our task.

However, all of a sudden, while passing near a small group of small stores in Northern New Milford we ran into none other than my TABC Talmid Zev Jarashow with his large van, which easily fit all of the rabbanim (and blessed with potent air conditioning to help us cool down)! Zev eagerly volunteered to help us and the day was saved!

While a skeptic would say this was mere coincidence, the trained Jewish eye and heart (see the first Rashi to Parshat Vayechi) knows how to identify the intervention of the Beloved. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 68:4) relates the story of the Roman noblewoman who approached Rabi Yosi Bar Chalafta and questioned him: From the seventh day of Creation until now, what does Hashem do? Rabi Yosi replied, “Hashem is busy making shidduchim.” This need not be understood as referring only to matching marriage partners, but to all connections.

What were the chances that Zev would be at the perfect time at the perfect place (which is not at all a popular location) with the perfect vehicle?! A

very reasonable explanation is the teaching of Chazal להבא לטהר מסייעין לו, one who comes to purify is assisted by Hashem in his task (Yoma 38b).

Rashi (to Kiddushin 33a d"h Harpatki) offers a stunning explanation for why we must stand for elderly people: how many miracles they must have witnessed during their lifetimes! One may wonder, does every single individual experience so many miracles? The answer is a resounding yes, according to Rashi! We need only be alert to notice them.

Every day in tefillah we refer to nisecha sheb'chol yom imanu, miracles that are with us every day. Ponder for a bit so many situations in life, and you will realize how mei'eit Hashem hayeta zot, it is all from Hashem!

By Rabbi Haim Jachter