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What are you afraid of?, 1940.

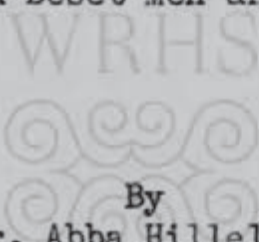
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WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
Some Fears Which Beset Men and How to Overcome Them.

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday Morning, January 21, 1940



My dear Friends:

I will not discuss with you this morning pathological fears or neurotic fears. That is a subject for the psychologist, and psycho-analyst. That is a subject for clinical diagnosis and therapeutics. That is a form of disease, as are all nervous derangements and while Religion has from time to time been remarkably helpful in this field, the field belongs principally to the physician and not to the minister.

There are men and women who are the victims of all kinds of fobias, people who are, so to speak, psychically allergic to certain things, certain objects. Some have a fobia for open spaces. Some have a fobia for closed spaces. Some are afraid. Some are afraid of crowds. Some are afraid of being alone, solitude. Some are afraid of high altitudes. Some are afraid of walking across the street. Some are afraid of spiders, caterpillars, cats, snakes or a little mouse. Some of these fears are not very serious. There are other men and women who are the victims of a continuous condition of mental strain and anxiety, of unreasoning and unaccountable fear bordering on hysteria. But that requires the attention of a physician. The tangled secret inner life and experiences of such people need some skilful probing and rectification, if possible.

That kind of fear I do not wish to discuss because I am not able to discuss it with authority. Nor do I wish to discuss real fear, real fear which is man's normal reaction to danger. I do not wish to discuss it because there is nothing to discuss. There is nothing wrong with this kind of fear. And every normal human being experiences it one time or another. This fear is nature's danger signal. It is nature's warning to an individual to take steps either to flee, to run away from the danger or to take steps to defend himself from that danger. This fear is a sort of advanced notice

to us to make quick and necessary preparations as a part of the strategy of self-preservation. And such fear when it is not extreme is often the mother of wise caution on the part of a human being for caution, safety and foresight.

A good scare is worth more to a man than good advice. There is nothing wrong about that. The human race has inherited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of certain things - loud noises, for example, falling. Some even say of strange people, of darkness. But these fears date back to the ancestral life of the race. They date back even to the infra-human experiences of what we believe to be the human race, the experience of man in those long eons in the jungle, the experiences of man during his cannibal period, during his savage period, when he was hunted by men and by beasts. These fears date back to the story of man's bitter struggle for survival, through myriads of years. And they have left - these experiences have left in the sub-conscious life of the individual a dark deposit of what you might call instinctive reactions to certain stimuli, the fateful meaning of certain sounds, movements and appearances and of how man must be prepared to meet them. It has been demonstrated that fear causes certain definite physical and chemical changes in the organism, changes which are necessary in order to equip man to defend himself against sudden assaults of danger. Fear, for example, causes an excessive discharge of adrenalin from the glands which stimulate the nervous system and more sugar is poured into the blood, creating additional energy. The blood is drained from skin and digestive organs and is channelled into the brain and muscles where it is needed for defense. In other words, this kind of fear is normal fear. It prepares a man for necessary flight from danger or for necessary combat.

This fear is not cause of worry. It disappears with the danger which stimulates it and it is commensurate with the danger.

But at times there is an excessive fear, out of all proportion to the danger which threatens men. At times that fear completely overwhelms man, and instead of equipping him for action, it paralyzes him. His defenses collapse. He is completely demoralized. His will is prostrate. All reason vanishes. He is a bundle of chaotic reflexes, a licked and shattered man blind manic and funk.

A human being caught up in such a panicky fear is frequently called harsh names, cowards. The fault is not always that of the man himself. It is not always the fault of character. Heredity and environment and training and example and the thyroid glands and diet may have much to do with it.

And much can be done to keep this fear within reasonable bounds, these besetting fears of man. Much can be done to keep the phenomenon of fear from becoming extreme, destructive.

Courage is a habit which can be developed to a large extent like cleanliness. It is not true that courage is always inherited. Courage can be developed like so many other qualities such as truthfulness and cleanliness. A person can be trained to have courage. Every soldier, for example, is afraid. Every human being who finds himself at the Front line trenches, in the firing line, danger lurking all around, in front of him, ahead of him and beneath him and over him is afraid. But the discipline of training to face danger fearlessly, helps a soldier over his attacks of fear. And at first it is very hard - this panicky, driving, demoralizing fear, but it becomes easier as he time and again succeeds through much effort and the exercise of will to master it. It becomes increasingly easier to master fear. And so, a seasoned soldier, while he is not unafraid, is fearless, and is able to meet danger and curb the demoralizing affect which fear might have upon him.

And, therefore, from childhood on, men should be trained to face the things and the situations which frighten them, and to surmount them until

the mastery of all fears become a matter of course. The trick is not to run away from fright-producing situations, but to confront them. They are terrifyingly difficult at times but they become increasingly less difficult as you face these dangers which have a tendency to shatter us and demoralize us. It must be done, this training in courage, because unquenchable fear, persistent, all-pervading fear is an ugly thing. Even when it does not betray itself in action, it is still an ugly and dangerous thing, because it under-mines character.

Fear makes us cruel in all human situations, for fear makes man desperate, and desperate people feel fear. When you see a man who is cruel, you can write it down that that man is not strong - that that man is weak, afraid of things sometimes unknown to himself. He might be physically powerful, but somewhere inside of himself he has a gnawing, cankerous fear which is undermining his spiritual strength, and that weakness is manifesting itself in desperation.

A really strong man is never cruel. Fear makes us hate, for we hate the people we fear. When you find an individual who hates other individuals, or who hates groups of individuals, or who hates mankind, you can write it down that that man is afraid of that individual, or of that group of individual, ^{or} of mankind, because if you hate life, you are afraid of life.

Fear makes us suspicious. It poisons all of our normal human relationships, and fear betrays and defeats us in every decisive hour of our lives. You can move steadily on in life through months and years until a great decision upon which depends all - and in that critical moment of decision, your acts will find ^{you} out, betray you.

And every great religion has come to deliver men from fear. Sometimes people who don't know, but think they know, make the grave observation that religion is born out of fear, that because men feared gods, they worshipped them and brought them sacrifices. And, of course, these enlightened people have no fears, and they therefore don't need religion. The true story, of course, is the reverse. Men turned to religion to be delivered from fear, to overcome fear. Men turned to religion to give them confidence and assurance and hope in their dark, danger-beset, fear-infested world in which they found themselves. There were fears all round them, fears of beasts, fears of the unknown world of the mind, within themselves, fears of the present, fear of the past and fear of the future, fear of life and fear of death. And in that web of entangled fears, the human being needed some focus of confidence, courage and hope to enable him to live; hence God; hence Religion. Men turn to their God not because they are afraid of him, but because they need him to help them surmount the fears which beset them.

From the Book of Proverbs we read: "The Fear of Man is like a snare unto him. But whoso putteth his trust in God, shall be set on a high and secure eminence." To save himself from the snare of fears about him, man turns to confidence in God who gives him a sense of security and ~~hinder~~ mastery of fear.

Our religion counselled men to exchange all their fears - their fear of life and of death, of pain, of poverty, of evils known and unknown - exchange them all for the one fear which is no fear at all - their trust, a trust in God. "Do not be afraid of the sudden fears that trap you and from the destructiveness of the evil-doers when they come to you. Have confidence in God. He will keep your foot from being caught."

There are a hundred admonitions in the Bible not to be afraid, and only

one harsh admonition to be afraid, the one instance where a human being is admonished to be afraid is: "Be afraid of your God!" That, of course, is no fear at all. Observe the moral law, lead the righteous life and you need have no fear. When Adam sinned, when he disobeyed a commandment of God and the voice of God came to him in the Garden of Eden: "Where art thou?" Adam said: "I heard Thy voice, and I was afraid." God said to Adam, according to the sayings of the Rabbis, "When you heard my voice before, you were not afraid, now that you have sinned, you have learned fear."

Fear in God, obedience to God's moral law. The prophet Isaiah turned to his people and said: "Fear ye not their fear, nor account it dreadful. "The Lord of Hosts...let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread."

In other words, faith is a dyke against all fear, against all the dark waters of dread and terror and anxiety and worries which beset a human being.

"Though you walk in the shadow of the Valley of Death, fear no evil." Why? "The Lord is my light and salvation. Of Whom need I fear?" That is the function of religion in the world - to substitute one fear, one trust, one reverence for the myriads of fears which undermine the happiness of the human being.

God does not want men to fear. To every great figure of the Bible, there is answered, when you come to think of it - to every great figure of the Bible, in the one great crisis of their lives came the challenge of "Do not be afraid!"

When Abraham set out on his journey to the unknown world, he was told: "Be not afraid. I will be your shield!" To Isaac, God said: "Do not fear, I will be with you and I will bless you." When Jacob was about to leave the Land of Canaan to go down into Egypt where for four hundred years thereafter his descendants lived in slavery and Jacob hesitated, he

was told: "Do not be afraid!" When the Children of Israel found themselves in the Red Sea after they had left Egypt, with the waters in front of them, and behind the pursuing Egyptians, with death before them and death behind, there came the voice of God which said unto them: "Do not be afraid! Stand firm!" Moses wandered through the wilderness and faced with the prospect of fighting every foot of the way for his promised land, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go up! Conquer! Do not be afraid!" When Moses died and Joshua took over command the same words were spoken to him. It is amazing - the recurrence of the phrase. It is not an accident. "Be strong and be courageous! Do not be afraid. Do not be frightened!"

And how often, too, the prophets, especially those of the Exile, when the Children of Israel were scattered and dispersed and found themselves impoverished, hopeless, away from their native lands - how often these prophets repeated: "Don't be afraid. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob! Do not be afraid of the mighty forces about you."

That is our religion. That is true of all great religions of mankind - to emancipate human beings from the paralyzing fears, known and unknown, and to set them forth on the great heroic roads of adventure. That gives them confidence to move forward. That is the purpose of religion.

Many of our fears, my friends, are imaginary. When you come to think of it, human beings suffer far more from things which never happened to them. Human imagination conjured up devils, ghosts, terrors. They are not found in nature. Most of the fears of the average human being are imaginative, which once confronted by facts, by realities, are discredited, destroyed.

There is an interesting fairy tale told by Hans Christian Anderson which is called the "Invisible Cloth". Some of you may recall it from your childhood reading. Two weavers came to a country and announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth imaginable. These weavers were rogues,

they were out to get money. They announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth if they were given gold and silver. They were given the gold and silver. They announced that it would be invisible to all those who were unfit for the offices which they occupied. Only those people who were fit for office of wise men could be able to see this most wonderful cloth. And the king of the country was greatly intrigued by what the weavers told him and he gave them silver and gold to weave him one of these marvelous cloths.

And these two rogues proceeded to set up a weaving loom and went through the motions of weaving this invisible cloth. The silver and the gold they put away for themselves. After a few weeks went by, the king sent one of his ministers to find out how the cloth was getting along. The minister went to the weavers and looked at the loom and saw nothing, for nothing was there. But he was afraid to say that he saw nothing because he knew that the cloth was invisible to people who were unfit for the office he occupied. And he didn't want to be known as unfit, or a fool. So he stood there and admired the beautiful cloth on the loom. "How superb! What an admirable design!"

And a week or two later the king said to another officer to see how the cloth was getting along. He, too, was at first startled. He saw nothing and knowing that the minister had been there before him and had praised the beautiful cloth, and also not wanting to be known as unfit for the position he occupied, he, too, praised the cloth.

And finally this invisible cloth was completed and the two weavers took it to the palace of the king and showed the cloth to him. At first the king, too, was confounded. He saw nothing, but then he, too, remembered that this cloth was invisible only to those who were unfit to occupy high positions. He also remembered that his own minister and officer had praised it, so he, too, praised it. He took off his garments and put on the invisible cloth and stood

before the mirror and admired himself. The king, attired in this garment which was invisible stood under a canopy and marched through the streets of the city and all the people stood on the curb, not wanting to known as fools and simpletons, looked at the king and said: What a marvelous cloth! What a marvelous garment. But there was one little child, a little child who knew no "chochmos" who was startled by the king's appearance and said: "But the king has nothing on." And that cry was taken on by other children: "The king has nothing on - the king is naked". Soon a great laughter broke through the crowd, the whole assembled multitude. The king was led back in confusion to the Palace.

A very profound fairy tale.

How often do we deck ourselves out in invisible, unreal, non-existent fears which cling to us in our imagination, worries, anxieties, concerns for which there is no place in reality at all - fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of losing money, fear of taking a chance, fear of trying a new job, fear of starting out, fear of competitors, fear of being unpopular, fear of a crowd, fear of speaking one's own mind - all of these fears choking the free courageous impulses of which we are capable, the daring, the adventure, All these fears which bog us down, which make us small men - if only we had the courage to speak up. These fears - they are frauds! Men today are afraid of this new world which has come to be. They anticipate collapse, some terrible catastrophe. They fear that mankind is going through some vast tribulation. Mankind has come through similar tribulations. Mankind will emerge from this one and will carry on along those highways of progress in the future.

In 1803, at the time when Napoleon was at his height, William Wordsworth wrote the following:

"When, looking on the present face of things,

"I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
"Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
"With mighty Nations for his underlings,
"That great events with which old story rings
"Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
"Nothing is left which I can venerate;
"So that a doubt almost within me springs
"Of Providence, such emptiness at length
"Seems at the heart of all things."

One hundred and fifty-seven years ago, this poet saw the end of the world.
Because of Napoleon he lost faith in the times and in God.

Jews are today beset with fears, but so many of us have become afraid of what the Bible calls the "sound of a withering leaf upon the ground." That sort of fear, my friends, may take us to our ruin. We have gone through such fiery furnaces before and we have come through cleansed, and more strengthened than before. What we Jews need today is courage, a cool courage to fight force, that is characteristic of seasoned soldiers such as we are.

I hear of men and women saying - oh, this is the end for us. The world is set to destroy us. We are not going to have children. There is nothing to look forward to. This picture is doubtless conjured up by a sickly imagination. Right through our long past, the longest continuous experience of any people that has come down from antiquity - our past recalls many such similar triumphs, of ultimate victory of Israel. "Even when I go through the shadow of the valley of death" - and this day is the valley of the shadow of death - "I will fear no evil, for I am with you." "What are you afraid of?"

If you are afraid, then you simply have not exchanged your fears - all of them - for the one reverential fear which should be yours - the fear of God, the God who sleepeth not, who has not forsaken his people.

When a man appears before the Judgment Seat, the first question put to him, say the Rabbis, is "Did you hope for salvation? Did you have hope, or were you afraid?" "Did you have confidence?" Let us remember that as men and women, as members of the Household of Israel...



- 1) I do not wish to discuss this morning pathol. F. or neurasthenic F. that is a subject for Psychologist Psych-analysts, and for clinical diagnosis other after others. It is a form of disease, as are all nervous derangements, requiring and while Rel. has occasionally been remarkably helpful, in the field belongs primarily to the physician rather > to the minister.

There are men & women who are the victims of all kinds of phobias - psychically "allergic", as it were, to open spaces, crowds, to crowds or to multitudes, to altitudes or bridges, to spiders, caterpillars, cats or snakes or snails. Some of these are not very serious. Then one other who are the victims of a continuous condition of mental strain caused by a fear unreasoning & unaccountable fear bordering on hysteria. Very serious! Need the attention of the doctor. Their tangled, secret inner life and experiences need skilful probing and rectification - if possible.

- 2) Nor do I wish to discuss Real F. - which is main normal reactions to danger. There is nothing wrong with that and every normal human being experiences such F. at one time or another - Whenever he finds himself in danger. This F. is nature's signal for flight or for taking steps for defense. It is the instinct for self-preservation.

Such F. when not extreme is often the mother of wisdom, caution, and safety and insight.

"A good scare is worth more to a man > good advice"

3/ Human race exhibited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of loud noises, of falling - a snake, of strange people, a of darkness. — Date back to ancestral life of race - even to intra-human experiences of race - to experiences of man in jungle - a cannibal or savage, as hunter and hunted, by man and by beasts, - his bitter struggle for survival, against dangers which lurked all about him. - Myriad of years - dark, abundant deposit in sub-conscious life - of instinctive reactions to certain stimuli - of ~~warnings~~ ^{fatal} the meaning of certain words, movements, appearances - and of how he must meet them. F., it has been demonstrated, ^{causes} ~~causes~~ certain ^{excess} ~~excess~~ def. ^{physical and} chemical changes in the organism. It causes an discharge, adrenalin from the glands which stimulate the nervous system, more sugar is poured into the blood, creating additional energy. The blood is drawn from skin and digestive organs and ~~is~~ channelled into the brain and muscles when it is needed for defense. In other words F. prepares man either for necessary flight from danger or for combat.

4/ This might be called normal F. - which disappears with the danger which stimulates it and which is commensurate with that danger. At times F. is excessive - out of all proportion to the

danger which threatens. It overwhelms the man. Instead^{of exposing him for action} - it paralyzes him. His defences collapse. He is completely demoralized. His will is prostrate. All reason vanishes. He is a bundle of chaotic reflexes - a licked and shamed man in blind panic and funk.

Such man are called harmless - cowards. The fault is not always theirs. Heredity & environment, training & example, thyroid glands and diet may have much to do with it.

Much can be done to keep the phenomenon of F. from becoming extreme and destructive in the life of an individual. Courage is a habit which can be developed just as truthfulness, or charabanciness, or other desirable qualities of life. Every soldier is afraid, but the discipline & training to face danger fearlessly helps him over his attacks of F. - At first it is very hard - for the seasoned soldier it is easy. From childhood men should be trained to face the things or situations which frighten them - and conquer them. Until the mastering of an instinctive fear becomes a matter of course.

Unmanipable, - persistent - all-pervading
S/F. is an ugly thing - even if it is not itself actually harmful in acts of physical cowardice. It destroys character.

F. makes us cruel - for it makes men desperate, desperate people feel no pity.

F. makes us hate - for we hate the people we fear.

F. makes us suspicious - and poisons all usual human relationships.
F. betrays and defeats us in every decision having an issue..

6) Every great Rel - not to be afraid of F.
Rel. born out of F. - To overcome F. ! To give man confidence, assurance, all-conquering hope, in his dark, danger-laden, fear-infested world in which he lived.

וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל - וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

"The Fear, Man is like a Snare unto him
"But whose putteth his trust in God, shall he sit on a high and secure eminence."

Rel. counselled man to exchange all his fears of life and death - of Poverty, Pain, - of evil known and unknown - for the one Fear of God - And that - not a Fear - but a Trust!

וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל - וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל - וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

Only one Fear! - observe moral law
And you are delivered from all other fears!
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל - וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

Isaiah: "Fear ye not their fear, nor account it dreadful

"The Lord of Hosts.. let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread.
Earth is a Dyke against F.! where dark waters are everywhere."

7) God does not want men to fear! Kings, potentates,
the powerful, the earth - or enemies, or want, or loneliness,
a old age, or death -

To every one, the men, the Bible - great crises - לוא ה

Abraham -

וא אברהם - אלהים יצא

Hagar -

זה דבר עז - ואלה הן הסיבות

Isaac -

וא אברהם - מן הדרך אלך אלך

Jacob -

וא אברהם יצא

Israel -

Red Sea - ואלה הן הסיבות

Moses -

עג -

Joshua -

on the ground

אלה הן הסיבות

Samuel -

אלה הן הסיבות

Israel -

אלה הן הסיבות
disappeared
upheld
strong the

8) Many F. are imaginary. Conjured up by imaginations.
Not free to see with simple facts - stand exposed
and discredited - (Hells)

Men have conjured up devils, ghosts, witches
terror - Men have feared far more the things which
never existed - than the real things of life.

Emperor - 2 robes - weavers - wonderful cloth - invisible 16
"to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was
a fool". Set up 2 looms - appeared to work -
asked for the most delicate silk - finest gold thread
put them in their knapsacks - continued to work at
empty looms - Old Minister - Admirable
pattern color - Another officer - praised it to the Emperor
Emperor - "How beautiful!" - Procession -
Most huge boxes - Palace - Undressed - Dressed
How splendid his robes! Perfect Fit!
- looking glass - Then streets - Canopy
People -
"But the emperor has nothing on!" - said a little
child - cry - laughter

9/ So we deck out our lives with imaginary F.
Worries, anxieties, concerns
F. of Future - Failing ^{losing their things} - Taking a chance - Trying a new job
Starting Fresh - F. of competitors -
F. ~~that~~ to be different - Unpopular - Crowd -
Speak your mind -
Choke the free, courageous impulses, the daring,
the adventure, the play & spirit - bog down!

10/ Men are to-day afraid, the future - Fear, the Negro.
Quote William Wordsworth J. Callahan!

11/ Jews are to-day beset with Fears -
Enough to harrow our souls. בְּיָדָם בְּיָדָם בְּיָדָם

Decay us to our ruin!

Courage! under fire! Seasoned veterans!

אֲנִי הָיִיתִי כֵּן



When, looking on the present face of things,
I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
With mighty Nations for his underlings,
That great events with which old story rings
Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
Nothing is left which I can venerate;
So that a doubt almost within me springs
Of Providence, such emptiness at length
Seems at the heart of all things.

From OCTOBER, 1803

By

William Wordsworth



There are men and women who are the victims of all kinds of phobias, people who are, so to speak, psychically allergic to certain things. Some have a phobia ^{of} for open spaces; some ^{of} for closed spaces. Some are afraid of crowds; some of being alone, ~~of solitude~~. Some are afraid of ^{heights;} high altitudes; some are afraid of crossing the street. Some are afraid of spiders, caterpillars, cats, snakes or a little mouse. Some of these fears are not very serious, but there are ^{people who} those who become the victims of a continuous condition of mental strain and anxiety, of unreasoning and unaccountable fear bordering on hysteria. They require the attention of a physician.

That kind of fear I do not wish to discuss, because I am not able to discuss it with authority. Nor do I wish to discuss real fear, which is man's normal reaction to real danger. I do not wish to discuss it, because there is nothing to discuss. There is nothing wrong with real fear. Every normal human being experiences it at one time or another. Such fear is nature's danger signal. It is nature's warning to the individual to take steps either away from the danger or to defend himself from that danger. Such fear, when it is not ^{reme} extreme, is often the mother of wise caution.

Sometimes a good scare is worth more to a man than good advice. There is nothing wrong about that. The human race has inherited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of certain things - loud noises, for instance, and falling; some say even of strange people and of darkness. These fears date back to the ^{early} ancestral life of the race. They date back even to the infra-human experiences in those long eons in the jungle, the experiences of man during his savage period, when he was hunted by men and by beasts. These experiences have left in the subconscious life of the individual a dark deposit of what you might call instinctive reactions to certain stimuli, ^{an instinctive sense of} the fateful meaning of certain sounds, movements, and appearances and of how man must be prepared to meet them. It has been demonstrated that fear causes certain definite physical and chemical changes in the organism, changes

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which are necessary in order to equip man to defend himself against sudden assaults of danger. Fear, for example, causes an excessive ~~amount~~ glandular discharge of adrenalin which stimulates the nervous system, and more sugar is poured into the blood, creating additional energy. The blood is drained from skin and digestive organs and is channelled into the brain and muscles, where it is needed for defense. In other words, real fear prepares a man for necessary flight from danger or for necessary combat.

Such fear is not a cause for concern. It disappears with the danger which stimulates it, and it is commensurate with the danger.

But ^{a man} there can be an excessive fear, out of all proportion to the danger which threatens ^{him} ~~men~~. Instead of equipping ^{him} ~~man~~ for action, it paralyzes him. His defenses collapse. He becomes demoralized. His will is prostrate. Reason vanishes. He is a bundle of chaotic reflexes, a licked and shattered man, blind, manic and ~~funk~~. A human ^{being} caught up in such a panicky fear is frequently called harsh names; ~~a coward~~; but the fault is not always a fault of character. Heredity and environment and training, ~~and the thyroid glands~~, may have much to do with it.

Much can be done to keep these besetting fears of man within reasonable bounds. Much can be done to keep the phenomenon of fear from becoming destructive. Courage is a habit which can be developed. It is not true that courage is simply inherited. Courage can be developed like truthfulness and cleanliness. A person can be trained to have courage. Every soldier, for example, is afraid. Every man who finds himself ~~in~~ in the firing line, danger lurking all around, ahead of him, beneath him, and over him, is afraid. But the discipline of training carries him along. At first it is hard; panic threatens to demoralize him, but it becomes easier as he time and again succeeds through force of habit, effort, and the exercise of will in mastering himself. A seasoned soldier, while he is not unafraid, is able to meet danger and curb panic and carry on.

From childhood on, men should be trained to face up to the dark and frightening possibilities in life. The trick is not to run away from fright-producing situations, but to confront them. This can be terrifyingly

difficult, but life becomes increasingly less difficult as ^{we} you face up to dangers which have a tendency to shatter and demoralize us. It must be done, this training in courage, because unquenchable fear, persistent, all-pervading fear is an ugly thing. Even when it does not ~~betray~~ itself in action, it is still ugly and dangerous, because it undermines character.

Fear makes us cruel, for fear makes men desperate, and desperate people are cruel in their panic. When you see a man who is cruel, you can write it down that that man is weak, afraid of things sometimes unknown to himself. He ^{may} ~~might~~ be physically powerful, but somewhere inside he has a gnawing fear ^h which is undermining his spiritual strength, and that weakness is manifesting itself in desperation. A really strong man is never cruel.

Fear makes us hate, for we hate the people we fear. When you find someone who hates other individuals, or groups of individuals, or mankind, you can write it down that that man is afraid of that individual, or of that group of individuals, or of mankind, because if you hate life, you are afraid of life.

Fear makes us suspicious. It poisons all our normal human relationships, and fear betrays and defeats us in every decisive hour of our lives. You can move steadily on in life through months and years until ^{there comes} a great decision upon which all depends ^T ~~and in~~ that critical moment your fears will find you out and betray you.

Every great religion ^{arose} ~~had come~~ to deliver men from fear. Sometimes people who do not know, but think they know, make the observation that religion is born out of fear; that because men feared gods, they worshipped them and brought them sacrifices. Of course, these enlightened people have no fears, and they therefore do not need religion. The truth is ^{that} ~~the reverse~~. Men turned to religion to be delivered from fear, to overcome fear. Men turned to religion to give them confidence and assurance and hope in the ^L dark, danger-beset, fear-infested world in which they found themselves. They were beset by fear of the beasts, fear of the

past, fear of the future, fear of life, and fear of death. Because of that ~~tangled~~ web of ^{en}tangled fears, the human being needed some focus of confidence, and hope to enable him to live: hence God; hence religion. Men turn to their God not because they are afraid of Him, but because they need Him to help them surmount the fears which beset them.

From the Book of Proverbs we read: "The fear of man is like a snare unto him. But whoso putteth his trust in God, shall be set on a high and secure eminence." To save himself from the snare of fears about him, man turns in confidence to God. Our religion counselled men to exchange all their fears, their fear of life and of death, of pain, of poverty, of evils known and unknown, exchange them all for the one fear which is no fear at all, their trust in God. "Do not be afraid of the sudden fears that trap you, and from the destructiveness of the evil-doers when they come to you. Have confidence in God. He will keep your foot from being caught."

There are a hundred admonitions in the Bible not to be afraid, and only one harsh admonition to be afraid. The single exception is: "Be afraid of your God." Such fear, of course, is no fear at all. Observe the moral law, lead the righteous life, and you need have no fear. When Adam disobeyed a commandment of God, the voice came to him in the Garden of Eden: "Where art thou?" Adam said, "I heard Thy voice and I was afraid." God said to Adam, according to the sayings of the rabbis, "When you heard My voice before, you were not afraid; now that you have sinned, you have learned fear." The prophet Isaiah turned to his people and said: "Fear not their fear, nor account it dreadful. The Lord of Hosts, let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread." In other words, faith is a dyke against all fear, against all the dark waters of dread and terror and anxiety and worries which beset a human being.

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear
"Though you walk through the shadow of the Valley of Death, fear no evil." Why? "The Lord is with thee." "The Lord is my light and salvation. Of whom need I fear?" That is the function of religion in the world - to substitute

one fear, one trust, one reverence for the myriads of fears which undermine the happiness of the human being.

God does not want men to fear. When you come to think of it, to every great figure of the Bible, in the one crisis of their lives, there came the challenge: "Do not be afraid." When Abraham set out on his journey to the unknown future, he was told: "Do not be afraid. I will be your shield." To Isaac, God said: "Do not fear, I will be with you and I will bless you." When Jacob was about to leave the Land of Canaan to go down into Egypt, he hesitated, ~~he~~ and was told: "Do not be afraid!" When the children of Israel found themselves by the Red Sea with the waters in front of them and behind them, the pursuing Egyptians with death before them and death behind, there came the voice of God: "Do not be afraid! Stand firm!" When Moses was faced with the prospect of fighting every foot of the way for his promised land, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go up! Conquer! Do not be afraid!" When Moses died and Joshua took command, the same words were spoken to him. It is amazing - the recurrence of the phrase. It is not an accident. "Be strong and be courageous! Do not be afraid! Do not be frightened!"

How often too, the prophets, especially those of the Exile, when the children of Israel were scattered and dispersed and found themselves impoverished, hopeless, away from their native lands - how often these prophets repeated: "Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob!" Do not be afraid of the mighty forces about you.


That is the purpose of our religion, to emancipate human beings from paralyzing fears, known and unknown, and to set ~~men~~ ^{them} free on the great heroic roads of adventure. Faith gives us confidence to move forward.

Many of our fears are imaginary. Human beings suffer far more from things which never happened to them than from physical pain. The imagination conjures up devils, ghosts, terrors not found in nature. ~~Most of our fears are imaginative, which once confronted by the realities are discredited, destroyed.~~

There is ^{a famous story} ~~an interesting fairy tale told~~ by Hans Christian Anderson ^{called "The Emperor's New Clothes"} ~~which is called "The invisible cloth"~~, which you ^{will} ~~may~~ recall from childhood

reading. Two weavers came to a country and announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth imaginable. These weavers were rogues; they were out to get money. They announced that the cloth had the peculiarity of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for the office he occupied or who was hopelessly stupid. The emperor of the country was greatly intrigued by what the weavers told him, and he gave them a large sum of money to weave him some of this marvelous cloth. The two rogues proceeded to set up a loom and went through the motions of weaving the cloth, demanding the most delicate silk and the finest gold thread, which they promptly put away for themselves. After a few weeks had gone by, the emperor sent one of his ministers to find out how they were doing. The minister went to the weavers, and looked at the loom and saw nothing, for nothing was there. But he was afraid to say that he saw nothing. He did not want to be known as unfit, or a fool. So he stood there and admired the beautiful cloth on the loom. "How superb! What an admirable design!"

A week or two later the emperor asked another officer to see how the cloth was getting along. He too saw nothing, but knowing that the minister had been there before him and had praised the cloth, and not wanting to be known as unfit for the position he occupied, he too praised the cloth. Finally the invisible clothes were completed, and the two weavers took them to the palace. The emperor, of course, saw nothing, but then he remembered that the cloth was invisible to those who were unfit to occupy their positions. He remembered that his own minister and officer had praised it. He took off his garments, put on the invisible clothes, and stood before the mirror admiring himself. Attired in his new clothes, he marched through the streets of the city under a canopy, and all the people on the curb, not wanting to be known as fools and simpletons, looked at the emperor and said: "What marvelous new clothes! But there was one little child, a little child who knew no chochnos, who was startled



"But he hasn't got anything on!"

by the ^{emperor's} king's appearance and said: "The king has nothing on." And that cry was ^{whispered from one to the other:} taken on by other children: "The king has nothing on. The king is naked." Soon great laughter broke from the crowd. The king was led back in great confusion to the palace. ^{emperor knew the people were right, but he could do nothing but go through with the procession.}

How often do we deck ourselves out in invisible, unreal, ~~non-existent~~ fears which cling in our imagination; worries, anxieties, concerns for which there is no place in reality at all; fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of losing money, fear of taking a chance, fear of trying a new job, fear of starting out, fear of competitors, fear of being unpopular, fear of a crowd, fear of speaking our mind, all of these fears choking ^{the} energies, ^{the daring, the adventure} of which we are capable. These fears bog us down. They make us small men. If only we had the courage to speak up. These fears ^{they} are frauds! Men today are afraid of the new world which has come to be. They anticipate collapse, some terrible catastrophe. They fear that mankind is going through some vast tribulation. Mankind has come through similar tribulations. Mankind will emerge from this one, and will carry on along these highways of progress in the future.

In 1803, at ^{when} the time Napoleon was at his height, William Wordsworth wrote the following:

extract

"When, looking on the present face of things,
I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
~~With mighty Nations for his underlings,~~
Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
With mighty Nations for his underlings,
That great events ~~which~~ with which old story rings
Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
Nothing is left which I can venerate;
So that a doubt almost within me springs
Of Providence, such emptiness at length
Seems at the heart of things."

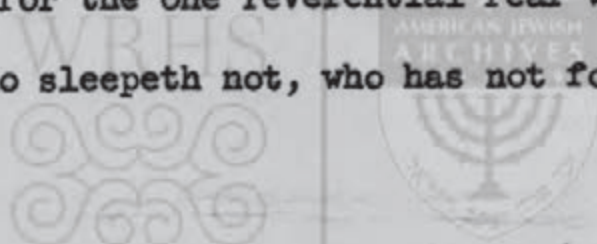
One hundred and fifty-seven years ago, the poet saw the end of the world. Because of Napoleon he lost faith in the times and in God.

Jews today are beset with real fears, but many of us also have become afraid of what the Bible calls the "sound of a withering leaf upon the ground." That sort of fear may take us to our ruin. We have gone through the

fiery furnaces before and we have come through cleansed, and strengthened. What we Jews need today is courage, the cool courage to fight that is characteristic of seasoned soldiers such as we are.

I hear of men and women saying, oh, this is the end for us. The world is set to destroy us. We are not going to have children. There is nothing to look forward to. ~~This picture is doubtless conjured up by a sickly imagination.~~ Our long past, the longest ~~in~~ continuous experience of any people that has come down from antiquity - our past recalls many ~~such~~ similar tribulations and ultimate victory for Israel. ^{"Though I walk valley of the shadow of death"} ~~"Even when I go through the shadow of the Valley of Death"~~ - and this day is the Valley of Death - ^{"I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me"} What are you afraid of?

If you are afraid, then you simply have not exchanged your fears - all of them - for the one reverential fear which should be yours, the fear of God, the God who sleepeth not, who has not forsaken His people.



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63

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF

at The Temple January 21, 1940

There are men and women who are the victims of all kinds of phobias, people who are, so to speak, psychically allergic to certain things, certain objects. Some have a phobia for open spaces; some for closed spaces. Some are afraid. Some are afraid of crowds. Some are afraid of being alone, solitude. Some are afraid of high altitudes. Some are afraid of walking across the street. Some are afraid of spiders, caterpillars, cats, snakes or a little mouse. Some of these fears are not very serious. There are other men and women who are the victims of a continuous condition of mental strain and anxiety, of unreasoning and unaccountable fear bordering on hysteria. But that requires the attention of a physician. The tangled secret inner life and experiences of such people need some skilful probing and rectification, if possible.

That kind of fear I do not wish to discuss because I am not able to discuss it with authority. Nor do I wish to discuss real fear, which is man's normal reaction to danger. I do not wish to discuss it because there is nothing to discuss. There is nothing wrong with this kind of fear. And every normal human being experiences it one time or another. This fear is nature's danger signal. It is nature's warning to an individual to take steps either to flee, to run away from the danger or to take steps to defend himself from that danger. ~~see p. 2~~ Such fear when it is not extreme is often the mother of wise caution ^{and foresight} on the part of a human being for ^{his} caution, safety and foresight.

A good scare is worth more to a man than good advice. There is nothing wrong about that. The human race has inherited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of certain things -- loud noises, for example,

and falling

to us to make quick and necessary preparations as a part of the strategy of self-preservation. And such fear when it is not extreme is often the mother of wise caution on the part of a human being for caution, safety and foresight.

A good scare is worth more to a man than good advice. There is nothing wrong about that. The human race has inherited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of certain things - loud noises, for example, falling. Some even say of strange people, of darkness. But these fears date back to the ancestral life of the race. They date back even to the infra-human experiences of what we believe to be the human race, the experience of man in those long eons in the jungle, the experiences of man during his cannibal period, during his savage period, when he was hunted by men and by beasts. These fears date back to the story of man's bitter struggle for survival, through myriads of years. And they have left these experiences have left in the sub-conscious life of the individual a dark deposit of what you might call instinctive reactions to certain stimuli, the fateful meaning of certain sounds, movements and appearances and of how man must be prepared to meet them. It has been demonstrated that fear causes certain definite physical and chemical changes in the organism, changes which are necessary in order to equip man to defend himself against sudden assaults of danger. Fear, for example, causes an excessive discharge of adrenalin from the glands which stimulate the nervous system and more sugar is poured into the blood, creating additional energy. The blood is drained from skin and digestive organs and is channelled into the brain and muscles where it is needed for defense. In other words, this kind of fear is normal fear. It prepares a man for necessary flight from danger or for necessary combat.

This fear is not cause of worry. It disappears with the danger which stimulates it and it is commensurate with the danger.

But at times there is an excessive fear, out of all proportion to the danger which threatens men. At times that fear completely overwhelms man, and instead of equipping him for action, it paralyzes him. His defenses collapse. He is completely demoralized. His will is prostrate. All reason vanishes. He is a bundle of chaotic reflexes, a licked and shattered man, blind, manic and funk.

A human being caught up in such a panicky fear is frequently called harsh names, cowards. The fault is not always that of the man himself. It is not always the fault of character. Heredity and environment and training and example and the thyroid glands and diet may have much to do with it.

And much can be done to keep this fear within reasonable bounds, these besetting fears of man. Much can be done to keep the phenomenon of fear from becoming extreme, destructive.

Courage is a habit which can be developed to a large extent like cleanliness. It is not true that courage is always inherited. Courage can be developed like so many other qualities such as truthfulness and cleanliness. A person can be trained to have courage. Every soldier, for example, is afraid. Every human being who finds himself at the front line trenches, in the firing line, danger lurking all around, in front of him, ahead of him and beneath him and over him is afraid. But the discipline of training to face danger fearlessly, helps a soldier over his attacks of fear. And at first it is very hard - this panicky, driving, demoralizing fear, but it becomes easier as he time and again succeeds through much effort and the exercise of will to master it. It becomes increasingly easier to master fear. And so, a seasoned soldier, while he is not unafraid, is fearless, and is able to meet danger and curb the demoralizing affect which fear might have upon him.

And, therefore, from childhood on, men should be trained to face the things and the situations which frighten them, and to surmount them until

the mastery of all fears become a matter of course. The trick is not to run away from fright-producing situations, but to confront them. They are terrifyingly difficult at times but they become increasingly less difficult as you face these dangers which have a tendency to shatter us and demoralize us. It must be done, this training in courage, because unquenchable fear, persistent, all-pervading fear is an ugly thing. Even when it does not betray itself in action, it is still an ugly and dangerous thing, because it under-mines character.

Fear makes us cruel in all human situations, for fear makes man desperate, and desperate people feel fear. When you see a man who is cruel, you can write it down that that man is not strong - that that man is weak, afraid of things sometimes unknown to himself. He might be physically powerful, but somewhere inside of himself he has a gnawing, cankerous fear which is undermining his spiritual strength, and that weakness is manifesting itself in desperation.

A really strong man is never cruel. Fear makes us hate, for we hate the people we fear. When you find an individual who hates other individuals, or who hates groups of individuals, or who hates mankind, you can write it down that that man is afraid of that individual, or of that group of individual, ^{or} of mankind, because if you hate life, you are afraid of life.

Fear makes us suspicious. It poisons all of our normal human relationships, and fear betrays and defeats us in every decisive hour of our lives. You can move steadily on in life through months and years until a great decision upon which depends all - and in that critical moment of decision, your acts will find ^{you} out, betray you.

And every great religion has come to deliver men from fear. Sometimes people who don't know, but think they know, make the grave observation that religion is born out of fear, that because men feared gods, they worshipped them and brought them sacrifices. And, of course, these enlightened people have no fears, and they therefore don't need religion. The true story, of course, is the reverse. Men turned to religion to be delivered from fear, to overcome fear. Men turned to religion to give them confidence and assurance and hope in the dark, danger-beset, fear-infested world in which they found themselves. There were fears all round them, fears of beasts, fears of the unknown world of the mind, within themselves, fears of the present, fear of the past and fear of the future, fear of life and fear of death. And in that web of entangled fears, the human being needed some focus of confidence, courage and hope to enable him to live; hence God; hence Religion. Men turn to their God not because they are afraid of him, but because they need him to help them surmount the fears which beset them.

From the Book of Proverbs we read: "The Fear of Man is like a snare unto him. But whoso putteth his trust in God, shall be set on a high and secure eminence." To save himself from the snare of fears about him, man turns to confidence in God who gives him a sense of security and ^a mastery of fear.

Our religion counselled men to exchange all their fears - their fear of life and of death, of pain, of poverty, of evils known and unknown - exchange them all for the one fear which is no fear at all - their trust, a trust in God. "Do not be afraid of the sudden fears that trap you and from the destructiveness of the evil-doers when they come to you. Have confidence in God. He will keep your foot from being caught."

There are a hundred admonitions in the Bible not to be afraid, and only

one harsh admonition to be afraid, the one instance where a human being is admonished to be afraid is: "Be afraid of your God!" That, of course, is no fear at all. Observe the moral law, lead the righteous life and you need have no fear. When Adam sinned, when he disobeyed a commandment of God and the voice of God came to him in the Garden of Eden: "Where art thou?" Adam said: "I heard Thy voice, and I was afraid." God said to Adam, according to the sayings of the Rabbis, "When you heard my voice before, you were not afraid, now that you have sinned, you have learned fear."

Fear in God, obedience to God's moral law. The prophet Isaiah turned to his people and said: "Fear ye not their fear, nor account it dreadful. "The Lord of Hosts...let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread."

In other words, faith is a dyke against all fear, against all the dark waters of dread and terror and anxiety and worries which beset a human being.

"Though you walk in the shadow of the Valley of Death, fear no evil." Why? "The Lord is my light and salvation. Of Whom need I fear?" That is the function of religion in the world - to substitute one fear, one trust, one reverence for the myriads of fears which undermine the happiness of the human being.

God does not want men to fear. To every great figure of the Bible, there is answered, when you come to think of it - to every great figure of the Bible, in the one great crisis of their lives came the challenge of "Do not be afraid!"

When Abraham set out on his journey to the unknown world, he was told: "Be not afraid. I will be your shield!" To Isaac, God said: "Do not fear, I will be with you and I will bless you." When Jacob was about to leave the Land of Canaan to go down into Egypt where for four hundred years thereafter his descendants lived in slavery and Jacob hesitated, he

*quote reads:
Fear not,
neither let thy
heart be faint
Is. 7, 4
"Sanctify the
Lord of Hosts
Himself, and
let him be
your fear
and let
Him be your
dread."
Is VIII, 13*

was told: "Do not be afraid!" When the Children of Israel found themselves in the Red Sea after they had left Egypt, with the waters in front of them, and behind ^{them} the pursuing Egyptians, with death before them and death behind, there came the voice of God which said unto them: "Do not be afraid! Stand firm!" Moses wandered through the wilderness and faced with the prospect of fighting every foot of the way for his promised land, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go up! Conquer! Do not be afraid!" When Moses died and Joshua took over command the same words were spoken to him. It is amazing - the recurrence of the phrase. It is not an accident. "Be strong and be courageous! Do not be afraid! Do not be frightened!"

And how often, too, the prophets, especially those of the Exile, when the Children of Israel were scattered and dispersed and found themselves impoverished, hopeless, away from their native lands - how often these prophets repeated: "Don't be afraid. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob! Do not be afraid of the mighty forces about you."

That is our religion. That is true of all great religions of mankind - to emancipate human beings from the paralyzing fears, known and unknown, and to set them forth on the great heroic roads of adventure. That gives them confidence to move forward. That is the purpose of religion.

Many of our fears, ~~my friends~~, are imaginary. When you come to think of it, human beings suffer far more from things which never happened to them. Human imagination conjured up devils, ghosts, terrors. They are not found in nature. Most of the fears of the average human being are imaginative, which once confronted by facts, by realities, are discredited, destroyed.

There is an interesting fairy tale told by Hans Christian Anderson which is called ^{the} "Invisible Cloth". Some of you may recall it from your childhood reading. Two weavers came to a country and announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth imaginable. These weavers were rogues,

they were out to get money. They announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth if they were given gold and silver. They were given the gold and silver. They announced that it would be invisible to all those who were unfit for the offices which they occupied. Only those people who were fit for office of wise men could be able to see this most wonderful cloth. And the king of the country was greatly intrigued by what the weavers told him and he gave them silver and gold to weave him one of these marvelous cloths.

And these two rogues proceeded to set up a weaving loom and went through the motions of weaving this invisible cloth. The silver and the gold they put away for themselves. After a few weeks went by, the king sent one of his ministers to find out how the cloth was getting along. The minister went to the weavers and looked at the loom and saw nothing, for nothing was there. But he was afraid to say that he saw nothing because he knew that the cloth was invisible to people who were unfit for the office he occupied. And he didn't want to be known as unfit, or a fool. So he stood there and admired the beautiful cloth on the loom. "How superb! What an admirable design!"

And ^{just} a week or two later the king said to another officer to see how the cloth was getting along. He, too, was at first startled. He saw nothing and knowing that the minister had been there before him and had praised the beautiful cloth, and also not wanting to be known as unfit for the position he occupied, he, too, praised the cloth.

And finally this invisible cloth was completed and the two weavers took it to the palace of the king and showed the cloth to him. At first the king, too, was confounded. He saw nothing, but then he, too, remembered that this cloth was invisible only to those who were unfit to occupy high positions. He also remembered that his own minister and officer had praised it, so he, too, praised it. He took off his garments and put on the invisible cloth and stood

before the mirror and admired himself. The king, attired in this garment which was invisible stood under a canopy and marched through the streets of the city and all the people stood on the curb, not wanting to known as fools and simpletons, looked at the king and said: What a marvelous cloth! What a marvelous garment. But there was one little child, a little child who knew no "chochmos" who was startled by the king's appearance and said: "But the king has nothing on." And that cry was taken on by other children: "The king has nothing on - the king is naked". Soon a great laughter broke through the crowd, the whole assembled multitude. The king was led back in confusion to the Palace.

A very profound fairy tale.

How often do we deck ourselves out in invisible, unreal, non-existent fears which cling to us in our imagination; worries, anxieties, concerns for which there is no place in reality at all - fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of losing money, fear of taking a chance, fear of trying a new job, fear of starting out, fear of competitors, fear of being unpopular, fear of a crowd, fear of speaking one's own mind - all of these fears choking the free courageous impulses of which we are capable, the daring, the adventure, all these fears which bog us down, which make us small men. If only we had the courage to speak up. These fears - they are frauds! Men today are afraid of this new world which has come to be. They anticipate collapse, some terrible catastrophe. They fear that mankind is going through some vast tribulation. Mankind has come through similar tribulations. Mankind will emerge from this one and will carry on along those highways of progress in the future.

In 1803, at the time when Napoleon was at his height, William Wordsworth wrote the following:

"When, looking on the present face of things,

"I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
"Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
"With mighty Nations for his underlings,
"That great events with which old story rings
"Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
"Nothing is left which I can venerate;
"So that a doubt almost within me springs
"Of Providence, such emptiness at length
"Seems at the heart of all things."

One hundred and fifty-seven years ago, this poet saw the end of the world.
Because of Napoleon he lost faith in the times and in God.

Jews are today beset with fears, but so many of us have become afraid of what the Bible calls the "sound of a withering leaf upon the ground." That sort of fear, my friends, may take us to our ruin. We have gone through such fiery furnaces before and we have come through cleansed, and more strengthened than before. What we Jews need today is courage, a cool courage to fight force, that is characteristic of seasoned soldiers such as we are.

I hear of men and women saying - oh, this is the end for us. The world is set to destroy us. We are not going to have children. There is nothing to look forward to. This picture is doubtless conjured up by a sickly imagination. Right through our long past, the longest continuous experience of any people that has come down from antiquity - our past recalls many such similar triumphs, of ultimate victory of Israel. "Even when I go through the shadow of the valley of death" - and this day is the valley of the shadow of death - "I will fear no evil, for *Thou art with me* ~~I am with you~~." "What are you afraid of?"

If you are afraid, then you simply have not exchanged your fears - all of them - for the one reverential fear which should be yours - the fear of God, the God who sleepeth not, who has not forsaken his people.

When a man appears before the Judgment Seat, the first question put to him, say the Rabbis, is "Did you hope for salvation? Did you have hope, or were you afraid?" "Did you have confidence?" Let us remember that as men and women, as members of the Household of Israel...



WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
Some Fears Which Beset Men and How to Overcome Them.

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday Morning, January 21, 1940

What Are You Afraid Of

Jan 21, 1940

~~My dear Friends:~~

over
mean here
I will not discuss with you this morning pathological fears or neurotic fears. That is a subject for the psychologist, and psycho-analyst. That is a subject for clinical diagnosis and therapeutics. That is a form of disease, as are all nervous derangements and while Religion has from time to time been remarkably helpful in this field, the field belongs principally to the physician and not to the minister.

There are men and women who are the victims of all kinds of ^{phobias} fobias, people who are, so to speak, psychically allergic to certain things, certain objects. Some have a ^{phobia} fobia for open spaces; Some have ~~a fobia~~ for closed spaces. Some are afraid. Some are afraid of crowds. Some are afraid of being alone, solitude. Some are afraid of high altitudes. Some are afraid of walking across the street. Some are afraid of spiders, caterpillars, cats, snakes or a little mouse. Some of these fears are not very serious. There are other men and women who are the victims of a continuous condition of mental strain and anxiety, of unreasoning and unaccountable fear bordering on hysteria. But that requires the attention of a physician. The tangled ~~secret~~ inner life and experiences of such people need some skilful probing and rectification, if possible.

That kind of fear I do not wish to discuss because I am not able to discuss it with authority. Nor do I wish to discuss real fear, ~~real~~ ~~fear~~ which is man's normal reaction to danger. I do not wish to discuss it because there is nothing to discuss. There is nothing wrong with this kind of fear. And every normal human being experiences it one time or another. This fear is nature's danger signal. It is nature's warning to an individual to take steps either to flee, to run away from the danger or to take steps to defend himself from that danger. ~~This fear is a sort of advanced notice~~

to us to make quick and necessary preparations as a part of the strategy of self-preservation. And such fear when it is not extreme is often the mother of wise caution on the part of a human being for caution, safety and foresight.

A good scare is worth more to a man than good advice. There is nothing wrong about that. The human race has inherited certain primitive fears. Infants are known to be afraid of certain things - loud noises, for example, falling. Some even say of strange people, of darkness. But these fears date back to the ancestral life of the race. They date back even to the infra-human experiences of what we believe to be the human race, the experience of man in those long eons in the jungle, the experiences of man during his cannibal period, during his savage period, when he was hunted by men and by beasts. These fears date back to the story of man's bitter struggle for survival, through myriads of years. ~~And they have left~~ these experiences have left in the sub-conscious life of the individual a dark deposit of what you might call instinctive reactions to certain stimuli, the fateful meaning of certain sounds, movements and appearances and of how man must be prepared to meet them. It has been demonstrated that fear causes certain definite physical and chemical changes in the organism, changes which are necessary in order to equip man to defend himself against sudden assaults of danger. Fear, for example, causes an excessive discharge of adrenalin from the glands which stimulate the nervous system and more sugar is poured into the blood, creating additional energy. The blood is drained from skin and digestive organs and is channelled into the brain and muscles where it is needed for defense. In other words, this kind of fear is normal fear. It prepares a man for necessary flight from danger or for necessary combat.

This fear is not cause of worry. It disappears with the danger which stimulates it and it is commensurate with the danger.

But at times there is an excessive fear, out of all proportion to the danger which threatens men. At times that fear completely overwhelms man, and instead of equipping him for action, it paralyzes him. His defenses collapse. He is completely demoralized. His will is prostrate. All reason vanishes. He is a bundle of chaotic reflexes, a licked and shattered man blind manic and funk.

A human being caught up in such a panicky fear is frequently called harsh names, cowards. The fault is not always that of the man himself. It is not always the fault of character. Heredity and environment and training and example and the thyroid glands and diet may have much to do with it.

And much can be done to keep this fear within reasonable bounds, these besetting fears of man. Much can be done to keep the phenomenon of fear from becoming extreme, destructive.

Courage is a habit which can be developed to a large extent like cleanliness. It is not true that courage is always inherited. Courage can be developed like so many other qualities such as truthfulness and cleanliness. A person can be trained to have courage. Every soldier, for example, is afraid. Every human being who finds himself at the Front line trenches, in the firing line, danger lurking all around, in front of him, ahead of him and beneath him and over him is afraid. But the discipline of training to face danger fearlessly, helps a soldier over his attacks of fear. And at first it is very hard - this panicky, driving, demoralizing fear, but it becomes easier as he time and again succeeds through much effort and the exercise of will to master it. It becomes increasingly easier to master fear. And ~~say~~ a seasoned soldier, while he is not unafraid, is fearless, and is able to meet danger and curb the demoralizing affect which fear might have upon him.

And, therefore, from childhood on, men should be trained to face the things and the situations which frighten them, and to surmount them until

the mastery of all fears become a matter of course. The trick is not to run away from fright-producing situations, but to confront them. They are terrifyingly difficult at times but they become increasingly less difficult as you face these dangers which have a tendency to shatter us and demoralize us. It must be done, this training in courage, because unquenchable fear, persistent, all-pervading fear is an ugly thing. Even when it does not betray itself in action, it is still an ugly and dangerous thing, because it under-mines character.

Fear makes us cruel in all human situations, for fear makes man desperate, and desperate people feel fear. When you see a man who is cruel, you can write it down that that man is not strong - that that man is weak, afraid of things sometimes unknown to himself. He might be physically powerful, but somewhere inside of himself he has a gnawing, cankerous fear which is undermining his spiritual strength, and that weakness is manifesting itself in desperation.

A really strong man is never cruel. Fear makes us hate, for we hate the people we fear. When you find an individual who hates other individuals, or ~~who~~ hates groups of individuals, or ~~who~~ hates mankind, you can write it down that that man is afraid of that individual, or of that group of individual, ^{or} of mankind, because if you hate life, you are afraid of life.

Fear makes us suspicious. It poisons all of our normal human relationships, and fear betrays and defeats us in every decisive hour of our lives. You can move steadily on in life through months and years until a great decision upon which depends all - and in that critical moment of decision, your acts will find ^{you} out, betray you.

And every great religion has come to deliver men from fear. Sometimes people who don't know, but think they know, make the grave observation that religion is born out of fear, that because men feared gods, they worshipped them and brought them sacrifices. And, of course, these enlightened people have no fears, and they therefore don't need religion. The true story, ~~of course,~~ is the reverse. Men turned to religion to be delivered from fear, to overcome fear. Men turned to religion to give them confidence and assurance and hope in the dark, danger-beset, fear-infested world in which they found themselves. There were fears all round them, fears of beasts, fears of the unknown world of the mind, within themselves, fears of the present, fear of the past and fear of the future, fear of life and fear of death. And in that web of entangled fears, the human being needed some focus of confidence, courage and hope to enable him to live; hence God; hence Religion. Men turn to their God not because they are afraid of him, but because they need him to help them surmount the fears which beset them.

From the Book of Proverbs we read: "The Fear of Man is like a snare unto him. But whoso putteth his trust in God, shall be set on a high and secure eminence." To save himself from the snare of fears about him, man turns to confidence in God who gives him a sense of security and ~~him~~ mastery of fear.

Our religion counselled men to exchange all their fears - their fear of life and of death, of pain, of poverty, of evils known and unknown - exchange them all for the one fear which is no fear at all - their trust, a trust in God. "Do not be afraid of the sudden fears that trap you and from the destructiveness of the evil-doers when they come to you. Have confidence in God. He will keep your foot from being caught."

There are a hundred admonitions in the Bible not to be afraid, and only

one harsh admonition to be afraid, The one instance where a human being is admonished to be afraid is: "Be afraid of your God!" That, of course, is no fear at all. Observe the moral law, lead the righteous life and you need have no fear. When Adam sinned, when he disobeyed a commandment of God and the voice of God came to him in the Garden of Eden: "Where art thou?" Adam said: "I heard Thy voice, and I was afraid." God said to Adam, according to the sayings of the Rabbis, "When you heard my voice before, you were not afraid, now that you have sinned, you have learned fear."

Fear in God, obedience to God's moral law. The prophet Isaiah turned to his people and said: "Fear ye not their fear, nor account it dreadful. "The Lord of Hosts...let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread." chak

In other words, faith is a dyke against all fear, against all the dark waters of dread and terror and anxiety and worries which beset a human being.

"Though you walk in the shadow of the Valley of Death, fear no evil." Why? "The Lord is my light and salvation. Of Whom need I fear?" That is the function of religion in the world - to substitute one fear, one trust, one reverence for the myriads of fears which undermine the happiness of the human being.

God does not want men to fear. ~~To every great figure of the Bible,~~
~~there is answered,~~ when you come to think of it - to every great figure of the Bible, in the one great crisis of their lives came the challenge of "Do not be afraid!"

When Abraham set out on his journey to the unknown world, he was told: "Be not afraid. I will be your shield!" To Isaac, God said: "Do not fear, I will be with you and I will bless you." When Jacob was about to leave the Land of Canaan to go down into Egypt where for four hundred years thereafter his descendants lived in slavery and Jacob hesitated, he

was told: "Do not be afraid!" When the Children of Israel found themselves in the Red Sea after they had left Egypt, with the waters in front of them, and behind the pursuing Egyptians, with death before them and death behind, there came the voice of God which said unto them: "Do not be afraid! Stand firm!" Moses wandered through the wilderness and faced with the prospect of fighting every foot of the way for his promised land, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go up! Conquer! Do not be afraid!" When Moses died and Joshua took over command the same words were spoken to him. It is amazing - the recurrence of the phrase. It is not an accident. "Be strong and be courageous! Do not be afraid. Do not be frightened!"

And how often, too, the prophets, especially those of the Exile, when the Children of Israel were scattered and dispersed and found themselves impoverished, hopeless, away from their native lands - how often these prophets repeated: "Don't be afraid. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob! Do not be afraid of the mighty forces about you."

That is our religion. That is true of all great religions of mankind - to emancipate human beings from the paralyzing fears, known and unknown, and to set them forth on the great heroic roads of adventure. That gives them confidence to move forward. That is the purpose of religion.

Many of our fears, ~~my friends~~, are imaginary. When you come to think of it, ~~human being suffer far more from things which never happened to~~ them. Human imagination conjured up devils, ghosts, terrors. They are not found in nature. Most of the fears of the average human being are imaginative, which once confronted by facts, by realities, are discredited, destroyed.

There is an interesting fairy tale told by Hans Christian Anderson which is called the "Invisible Cloth". Some of you may recall it from your childhood reading. Two weavers came to a country and announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth imaginable. These weavers were rogues,

they were out to get money. They announced that they could weave the most beautiful cloth if they were given gold and silver. They were given the gold and silver. They announced that it would be invisible to all those who were unfit for the offices which they occupied. Only those people who were fit for office of wise men could be able to see this most wonderful cloth. And the king of the country was greatly intrigued by what the weavers told him and he gave them silver and gold to weave him one of these marvelous cloths.

And these two rogues proceeded to set up a weaving loom and went through the motions of weaving this invisible cloth. The silver and the gold they put away for themselves. After a few weeks went by, the king sent one of his ministers to find out how the cloth was getting along. The minister went to the weavers and looked at the loom and saw nothing, for nothing was there. But he was afraid to say that he saw nothing because he knew that the cloth was invisible to people who were unfit for the office he occupied. And he didn't want to be known as unfit, or a fool. So he stood there and admired the beautiful cloth on the loom. "How superb! What an admirable design!"

And ^{next} a week or two later the king said to another officer to see how the cloth was getting along. He, too, was at first startled. He saw nothing and knowing that the minister had been there before him and had praised the beautiful cloth, and also not wanting to be known as unfit for the position he occupied, he, too, praised the cloth.

And finally this invisible cloth was completed and the two weavers took it to the palace of the king and showed the cloth to him. At first the king, too, was confounded. He saw nothing, but then he, too, remembered that this cloth was invisible only to those who were unfit to occupy high positions. He also remembered that his own minister and officer had praised it, so he, too, praised it. He took off his garments and put on the invisible cloth and stood

before the mirror and admired himself. The king, attired in this garment which was invisible stood under a canopy and marched through the streets of the city and all the people stood on the curb, not wanting to known as fools and simpletons, looked at the king and said: What a marvelous cloth! What a marvelous garment. But there was one little child, a little child who knew no "chochmos" who was startled by the king's appearance and said: "But the king has nothing on." And that cry was taken on by other children: "The king has nothing on - the king is naked". Soon a great laughter broke through the crowd, the whole assembled multitude. The king was led back in confusion to the Palace.

A very profound fairy tale.

How often do we deck ourselves out in invisible, unreal, non-existent fears which cling to us in our imagination, worries, anxieties, concerns for which there is no place in reality at all - fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of losing money, fear of taking a chance, fear of trying a new job, fear of starting out, fear of competitors, fear of being unpopular, fear of a crowd, fear of speaking one's own mind - all of these fears choking the free courageous impulses of which we are capable, the daring, the adventure, All these fears which bog us down, which make us small men - if only we had the courage to speak up. These fears - they are frauds! Men today are afraid of this new world which has come to be. They anticipate collapse, some terrible catastrophe. They fear that mankind is going through some vast tribulation. Mankind has come through similar tribulations. Mankind will emerge from this one and will carry on along those highways of progress in the future.

In 1803, at the time when Napoleon was at his height, William Wordsworth wrote the following:

"When, looking on the present face of things,

"I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
"Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
"With mighty Nations for his underlings,
"That great events with which old story rings
"Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
"Nothing is left which I can venerate;
"So that a doubt almost within me springs
"Of Providence, such emptiness at length
"Seems at the heart of all things."

One hundred and fifty-seven years ago, this poet saw the end of the world.
Because of Napoleon he lost faith in the times and in God.

Jews are today beset with fears, but so many of us have become afraid of what the Bible calls the "sound of a withering leaf upon the ground." That sort of fear, my friends, may take us to our ruin. We have gone through such fiery furnaces before and we have come through cleansed, and more strengthened than before. What we Jews need today is courage, a cool courage to fight force, that is characteristic of seasoned soldiers such as we are.

I hear of men and women saying - oh, this is the end for us. The world is set to destroy us. We are not going to have children. There is nothing to look forward to. This picture is doubtless conjured up by a sickly imagination. Right through our long past, the longest continuous experience of any people that has come down from antiquity - our past recalls many such similar triumphs, of ultimate victory of Israel. "Even when I go through the shadow of the valley of death" - and this day is the valley of the shadow of death - "I will fear no evil, for I am with you." "What are you afraid of?"

If you are afraid, then you simply have not exchanged your fears - all of them - for the one reverential fear which should be yours - the fear of God, the God who sleepeth not, who has not forsaken his people.

When a man appears before the Judgment Seat, the first question put to him, say the Rabbis, is "Did you hope for salvation? Did you have hope, or were you afraid?" "Did you have confidence?" Let us remember that as men and women, as members of the Household of Israel...

