

You will flee, though none chase after you. (26:17)

Fear of an unknown enemy (or demons, in today's vernacular) is a terrible curse. It is a miserable way to live. To be beset by imagined fears and phobias takes a toll on a person. His life comes to a halt, his cognitive lucidity off balance, because he is afraid to do anything out of fear of consequences. The systems upon which a person's basic needs are built are interrupted, often taking down the "victim" and those who have the misfortune to be in his proximity.

A modern-day term for describing fear of an unknown enemy which one has convinced himself exists, is the word anxiety. As *Rabbi Abraham Twerski, zl*, writes: "Anxiety is much like fear, except that, when one is fearful, the object of his fear is known, is tangible, whereas, when one suffers from the invisible enemy called anxiety, the object of his fear is unknown. One can escape a known fear, but a fear that is unknown, from what will he escape? Himself? *HaElokim yivakeish es ha'nirdaf*, "Hashem seeks the pursued." (*Koheles* 3:15). The one who is being pursued by another immediately receives Hashem's protection. He protects the one who is weak, who is the victim – even if he is unworthy of His protection. Hashem always stands up for the underdog. This is only possible when he has a known pursuer. If, however, one is a victim of anxiety – whose pursuer is conjured up by his imagination – from whom will Hashem protect him?"

Anxiety comes in various degrees and sizes. Some worry about everything, until they fear leaving the comfort of their home. Others function between episodes of anxiety. This invisible enemy is a curse from the Torah in which the victim is on a road toward self-destruction. Can one have a worse enemy than himself? How does one cope with this illness? Anything that can help a person feel more secure, less anxious, will relieve his symptoms. As Rabbi Twerski observes, anyone who has a firm, unshakable *bitachon*, trust in the Almighty, truly believes that Hashem will protect him from harm. It does not come easily, but, if one tries hard, it will come.

Rabbi Twerski writes that he received a lesson in *bitachon* from a woman who had grappled with addiction of sorts for a portion of her adult life. She was now a recovering addict with a story concerning how she achieved this plateau. She said, "I am a rabid New York Jets fan, and I never miss a game. One weekend, I was called away and could not personally attend the game. I asked my friend to record the game on her VCR. When I returned, she handed me the tape and said, 'By the way, the Jets won.'

"I began watching the game but, for some reason, I just was not as nervous when they were down in points or had committed a foolish error in playing. Normally, at this point, I would be a basket case, pacing back and forth, smacking the refrigerator and kicking the stove. This time, I was perfectly calm and relaxed, because I knew that, despite the errors, they were to go on and win the game.

"When I entered the recovery program (Rabbi Dr. Twerski was founder and medical director of Gateway Rehabilitation center in Pittsburgh), I made a conscious decision to turn my life around. I

would do this by placing my life and trust in Him. I accept His will and look forward to a positive outcome. I know that eventually everything will work out because my life is in his hands. True, there are nail-biting, twenty minutes behind at half time moments, but I do not panic, because I know that, at the end of the day, I will win.”

Bitachon does not just mean trust in Him. It means relying on Him by placing our complete trust in Him. We believe that He orchestrates whatever happens in our lives and is good. Even if we do not see or understand the good inherent in everything that happens – we trust Hashem that it benefits us. One who lives his life in such a frame of mind copes with anxiety, triumphs over panic, and sees adversity as a surmountable challenge.

Hashem is the Master Conductor, Who orchestrates every event that occurs and manipulates circumstances in such a manner that only much later do we understand. Things happen for our benefit, which, due to our shortsightedness, elude us at that moment. Only later does clarity prevail and the truth revealed. Trusting in Hashem is the only way to get through what appears, at the time, to be a challenge. Patience and perseverance, which result from trust, avail us the opportunity to see the happy ending.

A *Rav* in Chadera had an idea to unite the various families which comprised his *shul*: a *Shabbaton* on *Shabbos HaGadol*. Thus, the women would have the opportunity to rest in preparation for *Pesach*. A hotel was selected, and everything seemed to be going along well until the day of the event when the *Rav* realized that he had more people than tables and chairs. He would have to get more. It was already past candlelighting time when he instructed his staff to bring out more tables and chairs. As would happen when people are rushing, a worker accidentally bumped the table he was moving into the table that was filled with burning tea lights. The tablecloth caught fire, and, within minutes, that area of the dining room was aflame.

The firefighters came within minutes and quickly extinguished the fire. One of the firefighters, who was a traditional Jew, asked if he could join the *minyan* in order to say *kaddish* for his father. Admittedly, he was not much of a *shul* attendee – except for *yahrzeits*. Tonight was his father’s *yahrzeit*, but he was on call. How excited he was that it “just worked out” that he had a *minyan* to say *kaddish*.

There is more. In the coming weeks, the firefighter became a regular *shul* attendee, a practice which altered his life. The story continues, until it was revealed that the hotel which was the scene of the fire was actually targeted by a group of terrorists from Jenin, who had conspired with a kitchen worker to plant bombs throughout the hotel. They were on the way to the hotel when they saw the firetrucks and police vehicles. They changed their minds and did an about face. Sadly, they carried out their merciless terror a few days later, when, during the *Seder* night, they massacred 30 civilians and injured 140 in what became known as the Passover Massacre of 2002. Hashem has his ways: providing a venue for *kaddish* for a fireman, saving a hotel filled with guests. Unfortunately, for reasons beyond us, the Heavenly decree was for the other martyrs to perish. We

never know, but we must continue to trust.