

MAKE SURE A CROWD SEEKS YOUR WELFARE

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“You’ve got a Jewish community looking out for your welfare, you’ve got a federation of Jews of all stripes who say: We are with you in this, and you’re not alone.”

Sometimes you find a text that is 2,000 years old, and you feel like it’s written just for us, today.

We’re in a time of uncertainty, and that uncertainty is based on real things that are scary — about our future, our job, our health, the economy. In many ways, fear is an imagination of what’s going to happen in the future. The Talmud, recognizing this as human nature, shares a relevant thought.

A passage on Yevamot 63b says, **“Do not suffer from tomorrow’s trouble. That is, do not worry about problems that might arise in the future, as you do not know what a day will bring.** Perhaps when tomorrow comes, the individual who was so worried will not be among the living, and he was consequently upset over a world that is not his.”

It’s not the most cheery way to think about the passage — that “maybe you’ll be dead tomorrow, so don’t worry about the future!” I don’t think that was the intention. Rather, perhaps the intention is that none of us know when our last day will be on this earth. If we’re constantly worrying about what might be, we’re not living in the present moment, and we’re living in a continuous state of fear.

Fear in some ways is an imagination of what might be. To worry about *that* is its own kind of insanity because it hasn’t happened yet. Now, that’s different from taking *precaution*, and different from real danger. Real danger you stay away from, but fear is a *choice* — and that’s what the Talmud is telling us. We’re living in hard times, and there is truly danger out there and we need to take precautions. But the Talmud is telling us, do not live in a state of fear.

Now what I love is the very next line of the Talmud. While the first part tells us not to fear the imagined threats, the second instructs us to still be responsible. It says, “Prevent a public crowd from inside your home. Do not let many people enter, and do not even bring all your friends into your house. **Make sure, however, that a crowd seeks your welfare, and that you have many allies.**”

The Talmud is telling us that while we shouldn’t live in fear of what could be, we also shouldn’t be cavalier and irresponsible when it comes to the real dangers presented to us. The second half of this line says, “Make sure you have a lot of allies, that you have a community that’s paying attention to your welfare.” **Just because we might need to be physically distanced right now doesn’t mean we aren’t together. You should know that you have allies out there — family and friends who are caring for you.** You’ve got a Jewish community looking out for your welfare, you’ve got a federation of Jews of all stripes who say: We are with you in this, and you’re not alone.

