

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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Have Courage

There are always reasons to be afraid. The prevalence of danger can be incapacitating. The same inaction that afflicts a frightened individual can befall a people: then optimism is really fear in disguise and indolence is the result of feeling paralyzed by the possibilities of failure.

"We see intelligence seeking justifications for its fear, and finding them readily, for every cowardice has its own philosophy." So said Albert Camus in *Homage to an Exile* almost sixty years ago. Speaking about a man 'of freedom and courage,' Camus declared, "those who are like him must come toward him...and tell him straight from the heart that he is not alone and that his action is not futile, that there always comes a day when the palaces of oppression crumble, when exile comes to an end, when liberty catches fire."

The world is full of perils but shrinking from them does not diminish them. The timid are not less often hurt, just less vividly alive. As Camus wrote in *Reflections on the Guillotine*: "Knowing you are going to die is nothing," said a condemned man in Fresnes. "But not knowing whether or not you are going to live, that's terror and anguish." In his final instructions to Joshua, Moses says, "Be strong. Have courage."

Rabbi Wolpe's new book David: The Divided Heart is available now.