

Chapter five was done, but the next part of my life had just begun. I set down my novel as a stream of invective resonated from the basement. With trepidation, I quickly made my way over to the commotion; I was not prepared for what was about to occur. My father assumed a boxing stance and threw punches near the face of my mom. He proclaimed that he would flatten and kill her. My mother sobbed and powerlessly stood there. This ordeal was just the first of many episodes of paternal abuse. With repercussions of isolation and low self-esteem, the harm caused my mom to circle the drain. It took countless years before this strong, motherly warrior finally left.

My mom used to not glide high; she timidly fluttered. Sequestered in her cerebral nest, the apprehension of departing from her manipulative husband led to her prolonged journey in leaving the abusive relationship. Eventually, she knocked down several barriers and like a dove, high above the horizon, she soared. My mother is not alone. There are countless individuals who have gone through or know someone who has gone through similar circumstances. Societal changes involving empowering discourse, boundless compassion, and improved education are all necessary to eliminate domestic abuse, so that each victim can spread her wings and fly.

Domestic abuse is often misunderstood. It is typical to wonder why a victim wouldn't just leave an abusive home or relationship. There are a myriad of barriers that keep an individual from leaving the maltreatment. Manifested in control and power, abuse leaves victims with shame, limited freedom, and fear. The status quo may seem more ideal, especially with a lack of support. Neglect and apathy are domestic violence's two most detrimental allies. The Torah declares, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?" (Genesis 1:27). These words not only promote kavod habriyot - "human dignity" - but also the respect, which all individuals deserve. An important way of empowering survivors of domestic violence is through thoughtful conversation. Instead of blaming survivors, one must speak up for them. It is the duty of a person to openly challenge any dehumanizing dialogue that engages in victim-blaming. It is not possible to overcome injustice by condemning the persecuted for their own persecution.

Furthermore, all people must care for one another. The Jewish scripture mandates to "not stand idly on the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16). These words instruct people about the importance of getting involved to stop oppression. It is too often that witnesses see, hear, or perceive acts of domestic violence but decide to not get involved. Witnesses should never ignore signs, and instead be available to listen to others without judgement. It is an act of chesed - "loving-kindness" - to offer support to an individual. Every human should offer a helping hand and a giving heart to all people. A smiling individual may actually be hiding hundreds of scars on her arms and legs from daily physical violence. No one knows for certain what someone is going through or how she feels internally. In addition, tikkun olam - "repair of the world" - will help create a future free of domestic abuse. An individual should engage in local acts of social responsibility in order to foster open-mindedness and brighten the community. Whether it be asking someone how she feels or advocating for instruction in schools on how to prevent domestic abuse, a person should go out of his way to do a gesture that will benefit others in the community.

While the aforementioned proposals would primarily happen on a local scale, activism to terminate domestic abuse needs to occur on a global scale. All humans should strive to abide by tze u'Imad - "go out and learn." The proliferation and advancement of education regarding domestic abuse will produce the essential understanding individuals need to recognize the signs and evade abuse. Knowledge allows people to see the world through new perspectives and empathize with individuals who come from all walks of life. Education about respecting others needs to begin at a young age. Adults need to teach children that it is not okay to physically, emotionally, or verbally attack anyone. Parental abuse can perpetuate generations of abuse. Children may grow up witnessing the attacks and think that they are a normal part of life. It is important to break this cycle. A child needs to know right from wrong and have someone to confide in such as a school counselor or a clergy member. Adults should not only go out of their way to help relieve children's apprehension, but also to amplify the truths of abuse. With the contemporary advancement of technology, news can be found at a users fingertips in just a matter of seconds. From glorifying hypermasculinity to trivializing sexual assault, the media has been noted to perpetuate domestic abuse. It is time to end the normalization and desensitization of domestic violence in the public's eye. Making the media accountable for reports that do not take abuse seriously will help discourage harassment and show children, who are constantly online, that abuse is never fine. Expressing disappointment about callous coverage of victims to editors of newspapers will help end the facetious portrayal of abuse in news coverage.

Judaism is an emblem of resilience. Jews have faced countless traumas, from the destruction of the Second Temple in Israel to the persecution of Jews during the Spanish Inquisition. Throughout every catastrophe, however, the Jewish people have survived. Judaism's practical and spiritual teachings of kavod habriyot, chesed, and tze u'Imad, will once again allow individuals to transcend and put an end to domestic abuse.