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As story after story of sexual harassment and assault hit the internet with the growth of the recent Me Too movement, many were surprised by the ubiquity of these occurrences. Or, more accurately, many **men** were surprised, as most women were already fully cognizant and had more likely than not experienced their own #metoo moments. How is it that so many men had failed to notice these atrocities that were occurring all around them? Perhaps they were desensitized by a culture that has historically likened women to property—property that the tenth commandment ranks after your neighbor's house but ahead of his servants and animals when advising against coveting others' belongings. We learn in the Bible that in exchange for fourteen years of labor, Jacob was given a payment of Laban's daughters as his wives, without mention of Leah's or Rachel's feelings on the matter.

Fortunately, we have become more enlightened in modern times, and women are no longer regarded as property, but relics of these ancient beliefs persist. Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse remain far too prevalent in our society. The Me Too movement has brought to light just how widespread these transgressions are, extending far beyond the movement's origin in Hollywood with the despicable Harvey Weinstein into every profession and every demographic, even the Jewish community, where #GamAni has become a correlated hashtag. In either language, these two simple words have created a sense of empowerment and community among countless women over the past few years, giving them the courage to speak up about their encounters with sexual assault, harassment and domestic abuse. Hopefully the outrage contained in this volume of stories will help make it universally understood that women are not voiceless objects to which you can do whatever you want.

I am enrolled in a Women's Studies course at school and we discuss issues like the Me Too and Time's Up movements. Learning about these issues has made me realize the amount of change that our world still needs. Even with the #metoo movement inspiring greater numbers of women to speak up, only 230 of every 1,000 rapes and 310 of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to the police. One of the reasons for this is the backlash many women face when coming forward with their cases. Women fear that they will be shamed for their actions and told that their attire or behaviors meant they were "asking for it," or that reporting these crimes will not make a significant difference, as 995 of every 1,000 rape perpetrators walk free. ("The Criminal Justice System: Statistics")

The Me Too movement could help alter the victim-blaming mindset by demonstrating that assault and harassment occur to the full spectrum of women, regardless of the woman's actions. We need to change society's tendency to blame the woman and hold males accountable for their behaviors beginning at an early age in school. For example, our school dress code restricts girls from wearing revealing clothing in order to avoid being a distraction for the boys, but I propose that we instead teach

boys that controlling their focus and behavior is their personal responsibility. Also, it has unfortunately become commonplace for teenage boys to sexually harass their female counterparts by asking them to send nude pictures over text or Snapchat, reducing girls to nothing more than a sexual object created for man's pleasure. Girls are often told in cyber-safety presentations, "don't send nude photos!" While that is good advice, boys should be told more often by people other than their victims, "don't ask for nude photos!"

This increase in individual responsibility, or *Achrayut*, among boys and men is the first of a number of Jewish values that, if all followed faithfully by every Jewish person, could eliminate sexual harassment and assault and domestic violence within the Jewish community. Practicing *Rodef Shalom*, the pursuit of understanding, empathy, and mutual respect, is also crucial to the prevention of these sexual offenses. Men who honor women and have empathy towards them will not consider them as property or objects who can be mistreated. *Rodef Shalom*, and *Chessed*, or compassion, will help men view women as the wonderful human beings they are, who should be respected and protected. The Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam*, which is a communal responsibility to help heal the world, can also assist in eliminating sexual crimes against women. Men should be vocal and intervene when they see other men treating women improperly. They must heed the words *al ta'amod al dam re'echa* which means do not stand idly by while others are in danger. It will take full participation from the entire community to change the prevailing attitude that "boys will be boys" and their inappropriate behavior can be overlooked. With cooperation from the community, we can become further enlightened and realize that men and women deserve equal treatment and equal respect. After all, *Bereshit* tells us that **both** male and female are created in the image of G-d. Though our Jewish history is not without disheartening examples of the mistreatment of women, with vigilance we can ensure that we do not repeat past wrongs in our future.

Change never comes easily, but the Me Too movement is a great catalyst for change because bringing awareness to an issue through open dialogue and discussion is a powerful tool to begin making a difference. As we educate boys to be responsible for their actions and teach them within our community to follow the principles of *Rodef Shalom*, *Chessed* and *Tikkun Olam*, we can hopefully prevent sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic abuse in the future. Perhaps one day we will instead see a string of posts with the hashtag #notme.