

# Purple Shabbat Talking Points



## Selichot

The period of Selichot provides a powerful opportunity to address the issues of abuse within our communities. Selichot (penitential prayers) are recited during the period leading up to the High Holidays, providing a time for introspection, repentance, and seeking forgiveness. Selichot emphasize the importance of recognizing and admitting one's sins, pursuing teshuva (repentance), apologizing, and cultivating empathy and compassion. While Selichot focuses on repentance for wrongdoers, it also highlights the importance of community support for those who have been harmed, like creating safe spaces in synagogues and Jewish communal spaces, listening and validating survivors in the community, and offering healing and support for survivors of domestic violence. By embracing these concepts, we can work toward healing and transformation. This time of reflection and prayer calls us to create a community where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where wrongdoers take responsibility for their actions, and where survivors find the support and healing they need. May our prayers and efforts during Selichot inspire us to build a more compassionate and just world.

## September 21, 2024 - Ki Tavo

In Parshat Ki Tavo, Moses informs the Israelites that their actions will provide either a blessing or a curse. Each statement is followed by “V’amar kol ha-am, Amen” “And all the people shall say, Amen.” This is a collective call to action, a communal understanding that our behaviors matter. Research tells us that over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men are victims of intimate partner violence. Survivors of intimate partner violence intimately know ways in which actions and behaviors can be used to harm another person. We, as a community, must also understand the implication of our actions, how we choose to empower and support survivors, and how the things we say or do help survivors heal. We have the power to make a difference with our actions, and provide a communal understanding that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated in our communities.

## September 28, 2024 - Nitzavim-Vayeilech

Parshat Vayeilech marks one of the final addresses of Moses to the Israelites before his passing. In it, Moses reassures the people that even after he is gone, God will continue to lead and protect them, passing on his leadership role to Joshua. Moses’ farewell address reminds us of the importance of leadership in fostering a community where relationships are built on respect and dignity. Abuse in any form—be it physical, emotional, or psychological—violates the sacred trust and mutual respect that should characterize healthy relationships. Just as Joshua was entrusted with leadership after Moses, leaders today bear the responsibility to cultivate environments that nurture healthy relationships and reject any form of abuse. In applying the lessons of Parshat Vayeilech to our lives today, we are called to uphold the principles of justice, compassion, and integrity in all our relationships. We must actively work to create communities where abuse has no place, where victims are supported, and where perpetrators are held accountable. By doing so, we honor the teachings of Torah and contribute to a world that reflects the values of compassion and respect for all.

## October 2-4, 2024 - Rosh Hashana

This week we celebrate Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. We begin a new year and rejoice in the renewed time with family, friends, and community. What we learn is that endings are not always the end, but the chance to start again. Research tells us that for domestic violence survivors, leaving the relationship is the most dangerous time. However, leaving abusive relationships is not the end, it is merely the chance to begin again in a safe place. Helping the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence survivors begin again through emotional support, financial freedom, and spiritual community allows survivors to start a new cycle, a new journey. Rosh Hashanah offers a powerful framework for addressing issues of domestic violence within our relationships and communities. By embracing the themes of reflection, repentance, renewal, and hope, we can work towards healing and transformation. It's a time to commit to creating a world where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, where relationships are built on mutual care and compassion, and where the cycle of abuse is broken through sincere teshuva and communal support. May this Rosh Hashanah inspire us all to strive for justice, healing, and the creation of a more loving and peaceful world.

## October 5, 2024 - Haazinu

Parshat Haazinu begins with Moses telling the Israelites to “give ear” or listen to the message he is about to deliver. One of the hardest skills for people is to fully listen to what others have to say, to give full attention to the person in front of them. For the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, it's so essential that we as a community learn to listen to the story, heart, and soul of survivors. As a Jewish community, we have a responsibility to lend a listening ear. “Shema Yisrael” “Hear O' Israel” is a core tenant of our Jewish religion and community, working to hear and listen our fellow community members. By listening and hearing each other, we work to raise each other up, empower survivors, and provide a communal understanding that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated in our communities.

## October 11-12, 2024 - Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the day of Atonement, the day to apologize for actions we've taken in the past year that have hurt those we love and care about. Yom Kippur is a day to reflect on who we've been, and become who we want to be. But apologizing for hurting another person is only half the battle. Apologizing with new healthy actions is where real atonement comes in. In cases of intimate partner violence, there might be empty apologies, but no healthy safe actions are rare to follow. We, as a community, must choose positive actions to help survivors of intimate partner violence. We must choose this year to empower and support survivors, and understand how the things we say or do help survivors heal. We have the power to make a difference with our new actions, and provide a communal understanding that intimate partner violence will not be tolerated in our communities this new year.

## **October 16-23, 2024 - Sukkot**

This week we celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. One of the mitzvot to be done is to be in the Sukkah as much as possible, including eating our meals, sleeping, and spending our time. This serves to remind us of the dependency we had on these human-made structures that were built as the Israelites made their way through the desert for 40 years on their journey to Israel. However, the sukkah is a temporary dwelling, open to the elements of the world. It reminds us that a safe home is not a given experience for everyone. Individuals in abusive relationships are not safe in their own homes, do not have a sukkat shalom, a shelter of peace. For the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, home always feels like a temporary dwelling in which they are not comfortable or safe. As we celebrate this holiday with family and friends, let us work together to build a safer home and community for all people, for all Jews, as “kol Yisrael araeivim zeh bazeh” ; all Jews are responsible for each other.

## **October 24-25, 2024 - Shmini Atzeret & Simchat Torah**

This weekend, we celebrate the holidays of Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. These celebrations center around the finishing of the Torah, ending with V’zot Habracha and immediately beginning again with Bereshit. We begin a new cycle, rejoice in the idea that we never truly end learning, studying, and celebrating Torah. What we learn is that endings are not always the end, but the chance to start again. Research tells us that for domestic violence survivors, leaving the relationship is the most dangerous time. However, leaving abusive relationships is not the end, it is merely the chance to begin again in a safe place. Helping the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence begin again through emotional support, financial freedom, and spiritual community allows survivors to start a new cycle, a new journey. This Simchat Torah, as we end Vzot Habracha and say together “Chazak Chazak Venitchazek” “Be strong, be strong, and we will be strong”/ “Chazak U’Baruch” “Be strong and blessed”, let us be strong together, be strong for each other, and work together to help one other begin again.

## **October 26, 2024 - Vezot Habracha**

In Parshat Vezot Habracha, we read about the death of Moses, the greatest leader of the ancient Israelites. As we read, we keep in mind that Moses spoke with a stutter and begged God to choose someone else to lead. How did this man, with a life full of obstacles, become the greatest leader of the Israelites? Moses became confident, strong-willed, and independent through a deep level of resilience. For the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, there is an outstanding level of resilience in these individuals. Survivors amaze with their ability to find their inner confidence and independence through a lifetime of obstacle and struggle and we are reminded time and time again of their incredible resilience.

## October 26, 2024 - Beresheit

In Parshat Bereshit, we read; “Va’yivrah Elokeim et ha-adam b’tzalmo b’tzelem Elokeim” “And God created humankind in the divine image, creating it in the image of God.” This line reminds us that all humans are holy, all humans are worthy, and all humans deserve to be safe and loved. For survivors of intimate partner violence, this may feel like a far cry from their reality. For the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, they may feel as though they deserve the abuse, it was their fault, and nothing will ever get better. However, it’s crucial for us to remember that we are made btzelem Elokeim, in the image of God, and that no one deserves to be treated as anything less.

## November 2, 2024 - Noach

In Parshat Noach, we read that the people were misbehaving, and God destroyed them all. “V’tishacheik ha-aretz lifnei ha-Elokeim” “The earth became corrupt before God.” Commentary suggests that this corruption and lawlessness was happening behind closed doors, hidden from neighbors, family, and the community. So too for the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, it takes place behind closed doors and closed eyes. We know that domestic violence happens in the Jewish community at the same rates as everywhere else, but its existence is often overlooked or denied. This is one of the reasons why Purple Shabbat exists. To raise awareness, and to give us the strength to address abuse within Jewish communities. It is our duty to create a space where healing can begin, and where our profound teachings can restore and renew. Let’s make sure we utilize Torah and halacha to uplift and heal, and never as an excuse to cause harm as “kol Yisrael araeivim zeh bazeh”; all Jews are responsible for each other.

## November 9, 2024 - Lech L’cha

Parshat Lech Lecha tells us the story of Avram and his wife Sarai, who was unable to conceive. We read how after Hagar, Sarai’s maidservant, became pregnant from Avram, Sarai treated her harshly. The story continues that Hagar ran away, where she was met with a messenger from God, who instructed Hagar to “shuvi v’hitani” “go back and submit.” Research tells us that survivors of intimate partner violence leave and return to their abusive partner, on average 7 times before leaving for good. It is so common that for the over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women and 1 in 4 (28.5%) men that are victims of intimate partner violence, they will hear phrases similar to that of Hagar, encouraging them to return, to try harder, to work it out. However, survivors deserve to be safe, respected, and supported. This is one of the reasons why Purple Shabbat exists: to raise awareness and to give us the strength to address abuse within Jewish communities. Supporting survivors with a holistic approach means meeting a survivor where they are at, and helping them to “lech lecha” “go forth” in their journey to safety.

## **November 16, 2024 - Vayera**

In Parshat Vayera, we read about multiple instances of violence and abuse, particularly against women. In this parsha, we see Abraham pass his wife, Sarah, off as his sister in order to protect himself in the land of Gerar. God protects Sarah by refusing King Abimelech from touching her and threatening him with death. During this parsha, we also read about Lot offering his two daughters to a crowd saying “ohtzi’ahna et-hen aleichem v’ahsoo lahen katov b’aynaychem” “Let me bring them out to you and you may do to them as you please.” Violence against women is so common that research tells us over 1 in 3 (35.6%) women are victims of intimate partner violence, and we know that Intimate partner violence happens in the Jewish community at the same rate as the general population. Judith Plaskow, noted feminist theologian, speaks about Parshat Vayera, “It provides us with opportunities to look honestly at ourselves and the world we have created, to reflect on destructive patterns of human relating, and to ask how we might address and change them...can we see the casual acceptance, indeed the invisibility, of violence against women that is so ubiquitous in many cultures, including our own?” It’s our job as a Jewish community to support survivors and reduce the tolerance for abuse in our Jewish communal spaces. We must empower survivors to come forward, we must talk about abuse, and we must support each other in the journey to lead happy, healthy, safe lives.

## **November 21, 2024 - Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving, a time of gratitude and reflection, provides an opportunity to consider how we can extend our thankfulness beyond our immediate blessings and towards fostering supportive and loving communities. As we gather with loved ones, it's crucial to remember those who may be experiencing hardship, including domestic violence. While we count our blessings, we should also become aware of those who are suffering. Gratitude should inspire empathy and action. Acknowledging our own safe and loving environments can prompt us to think of those who do not share these blessings and who live in fear and pain. Thanksgiving gatherings highlight the strength and support that come from community. This sense of community responsibility extends to caring for those who are vulnerable, including victims of domestic violence. It's a reminder that we must work together to create safe environments for everyone. This Thanksgiving, let our thankfulness inspire us to take meaningful actions to support and protect those who are vulnerable, ensuring that our communities are safe and nurturing for all.

## November 23, 2024 - Chayei Sara

In this week's Parsha, Chayei Sarah, we read about the journey Avraham's messenger takes to find a wife for Avraham's son, Isaac. The messenger arrives at a well and Rebecca soon arrives to get water. During their encounter, Rebecca offers water from her jar and offers to get water for the messenger's camels. Based on these actions, the messenger decides that she will be the wife of Isaac. After the messenger asks Rebecca to return with him to Isaac, we read that Rebecca's brother, Laban, asked Rebecca: "Ha-tailchi eim-haeish hazeh" "Will you go with this man?" Though it may not seem significant, this question is a critical element to the story; this question provides Rebecca with an opportunity to act with autonomy. Rebecca is asked for her consent, something we don't see very often in the stories we read in the Torah. When we think about IPV, it's important that we understand the root cause: it comes down to having power and control over another person. The tactics and behaviors we often associate with IPV further show that one person has control and say in the relationship, and therefore there is an absence of autonomy and consent. Survivors of IPV are often stripped of choice, stripped of having a say over their own lives, time, and decisions. Our goal by providing trauma-informed services to our clients, is to help return that choice and control to their lives.

## November 30, 2024 - Toldot

This week we read Parshat Toldot, which tells the story of Jacob and Esau. During this story, Jacob is forced to flee from his home and takes up residence with his Uncle Laban. For many survivors of intimate partner violence, they might not have, or may not feel as though they have, someone whom they can rely on. During abuse, support systems are often stripped away, leaving the survivor feeling as though they need to fend for themselves. If a survivor needs to flee their home, where can they go? Knowing their family, friends, and community are there to support them could make the difference in a survivor leaving and staying. It's our role as a Jewish community to empower survivors with encouragement and support, helping these resilient individuals know their community is behind them.

## December 7, 2024 - Vayetzei

In Parshat Vayetzei, we read about how Laban forced Jacob to work for seven years in order to marry his daughter Rachel, only to trick him into marrying his other daughter, Leah, first. Laban also withheld money from Jacob for his work with Laban's flocks. Jacob, Rachel, and Leah decide to leave, which prompts Laban to chase after them, and Jacob responds with a response full of years of anger towards Laban. Instead of answering for his actions, Laban flips the blame back onto Jacob. This is a common tactic abusive partners use to maintain control over survivors. Emotional abuse is one of several types of abuse seen in abusive relationships, along with physical violence, sexual abuse, financial abuse, stalking, and more. Being educated on the signs of abuse is crucial in being able to support survivors on their journey towards healing, and reducing the tolerance of abuse in our Jewish spaces.

## **December 14, 2024 - Vayishlach**

The story of Dinah can be seen as an early biblical reflection on the complexities of relationships, power dynamics, and the consequences of violence. Dinah's story is a reminder of the prevalence of sexual violence, abuse, and the suffering they cause. It challenges us to consider how societies respond to such violence and how victims are treated. The rape of Dinah is an obvious act of exerting power and control, a dynamic that is central to many instances of domestic violence. Understanding this dynamic is crucial in addressing and preventing such violence in relationships today. Dinah's voice is also absent from the narrative. At JCADA, we emphasize the importance of listening to and empowering victims, ensuring their voices and choices are central to any response. Raising awareness about the dynamics of power and control in relationships, educating individuals about consent, and promoting respectful and healthy relationships are essential steps in preventing domestic violence. The story of Dinah invites us to reflect deeply on the issues of sexual violence, abuse, justice, and the treatment of victims. By examining these themes through this lens, we can gain insights into the contemporary issues of domestic violence and relationships. Our challenge is to create a society where victims are heard, supported, and protected, and where justice is pursued in a manner that promotes healing and prevents further harm.