



Parshat Vayeliech Purple Shabbat, October 1, 2022

Shabbat Shalom! My name is Amanda Katz, and I am the Executive Director of The Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, or JCADA, or “the bathroom sign people.” Today October 1st, is the first day of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, purple is the signature color of Domestic Violence Awareness, and we named this campaign PURPLE SHABBAT to speak about our issue in our local synagogues, from the bimah. During the month, and around the area, dozens of Rabbis, Cantors and Lay Leadership will be speaking loudly about a quiet issue. Purple Shabbat exists so that everyone in our Kehillah knows that they are not alone, and that they will be supported.

JCADA was founded 22 years ago by Jewish women for Jewish women, with one part time counselor. Today we serve everyone, regardless of their religion, race or gender, in the Greater Washington Area. Today we have 23 staff members – educators, therapists, attorneys and victim advocates with one mission – to help survivors of intimate partner violence feel empowered and safe, and to educate the Jewish community about intimate partner violence, in order to lower our tolerance for abuse.

IPV happens in the Jewish community at the same rate as everywhere else. According to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of IPV-related impact. Over 43 million women and 38 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Did anyone here watch Maid? The Netflix series based on a true story of abuse and the aftermath by Stephanie Land. My staff either couldn't watch because it was too close to their everyday work, or we were obsessively discussing each of the nuances of her isolation, navigation of the systems, and eventual empowerment. I highly recommend.

This week's parsha is Vayeliech, which is when Moshe talks to the Israelites before his death. Moshe isn't allowed to enter the land of Israel, so he gives instructions and advice to Joshua, his successor, and to the Israelites in general before they move forward.

The idea that Moshe was preparing his people to be successful on their own is very similar to the process of empowerment and healing for survivors of intimate partner violence that we undertake at JCADA. We give survivors time to heal, and resources and choices so they feel empowered to make their own next steps. We also want the survivors in our community to feel empowered and safe within the community, and with their spiritual leaders, and their families.

Early in the parsha there is a line that is mentioned twice 'G-d will not fail you nor forsake you"- I see this in the context of support. We know that survivors most of the time will not talk about their abuse or their abusers, because they are concerned about judgement or being left out. Survivors in our community oftentimes feel very isolated, like their situation is a Shonda or shame that they want to hide. Just like G-d was with Israelites as they crossed the Jordan, we need to support each survivor and walk with them into their personal promised land.

Purple Shabbat gives us the opportunity to use the sanctity of Shabbat to focus on an issue that is all around us, yet often overlooked. JCADA is here for our community, and we are grateful for the opportunity to bring everyone together for this purple shabbat.

So what can you do ? Learn more about IPV through JCADA, support our agency, or even learn how to support a friend who discloses their situation to you. Only in partnership with each other will we stitch together enough of a safety net for our survivors, and enough education to prevent the violence, so that no one needs our services. Please help us work ourselves out of a job!

Shabbat Shalom and Shana Tova.