FOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The caged bird says: you see my food, but you do not see my captivity.
(Kohelet Rabbah)

The Haggadah speaks of four children: one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to ask. Tonight we speak of four community members and their responses to domestic violence. We acknowledge that at different times in our lives we all have played the part of each of the four community members.

The Wise Community Member asks, “How can we, as individuals and as a community, address domestic violence?” This community member accepts personal and communal responsibility, recognizing that when one is oppressed we are all oppressed.

To this community member you can explain that the social institutions, laws, and norms within our society, as well as the attitudes and behaviors within our interpersonal relationships, perpetuate domestic violence. You can discuss ways to create change within your life and community.

The Wicked Community Member asks, “Why don’t they just leave?” This person adds to the shame and isolation of those experiencing abuse by blaming them for the abusive behavior of other people.

To this community member you can respond by saying, “Why is it that you don’t ask why people batter? You must hold those who batter accountable for their actions while creating safety and autonomy for those who experience abuse.”

The Simple Community Member asks, “What is domestic violence?”

To this community member you can say, “Domestic violence occurs when a person uses a pattern of coercive behaviors to gain and maintain control over an intimate partner. These behaviors hurt us all.”

The Community Member Who Does Not Know How to Ask can be told:

“Silence is part of the problem; it benefits those who batter. Domestic violence exists in every community. Freedom requires the end of violence in all of our relationships and institutions.”