

שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת

Shalom Bayit / Peace in the home

At what cost harmony?

Unafraid to Speak

Deborah Rosenbloom

Harmony in the home — *shalom bayit* — is a foundational Jewish principle. But where there are conflicting needs or desires, compromise may be necessary to achieve this idyllic state. As we learn in the Talmud, “Rava said: It is obvious to me [that if one must choose between] the Shabbat light and the Hanukkah light, the former is preferable, on account of peace of the home.” (BT Shabbat 23b) While the family can enjoy the illumination of Shabbat candles, it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the Chanukah candles.

The overarching question is: At *what* cost, and at *whose* cost, is *shalom bayit* created? When is *shalom bayit* a façade masking suffering and pain, making it essential to speak out and speak up? Historically, the burden of *shalom bayit* has been placed on the wife, reflecting the patriarchy of traditional Judaism and the notion that the wife is the foundation of the home and determines its character and atmosphere. (Chabad Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson’s *Igrot Kodesh*) The textual origin may be found in a talmudic discussion where the word *bayit* is understood to mean “wife.” “Rabbi Yosei said . . . ‘In all my days, I did not call my wife, my wife. . . . Rather, I called my wife my home, because she is the essence of the home.’” (BT Shabbat 118b)

Jewish tradition traces *shalom bayit*’s origins back to Sarah and Abraham. This first “Jewish couple” provides a window into a relationship that appears to be conflict-free but, on closer scrutiny, is more complicated. In Genesis 12:11-20, we learn that, as they journey to Egypt to escape famine, Abraham politely asks Sarah to pretend they are brother and sister, rather than husband and wife. He is fearful that, as a husband, he will be killed so Pharaoh can take Sarah for himself, whereas a brother would not be an impediment to Pharaoh’s desires.

Simply stated, in a shocking lack of faith in God, he asks her to sacrifice herself in order to save him. Though Sarah did not have the power to refuse her husband’s request, at least the appearance of a request was presented. After being taken into Pharaoh’s household, she is released when her true status is revealed.

The story repeats itself with King Abimelech, the king of Gerar (Gen: 20:1-18), but here Abraham simply assumes Sarah’s consent — although we know that consent once given does not mean consent for all time. Sarah again is silent, presumably now long-accustomed to subordination and to maintaining the appearance of *shalom bayit*. The sad irony is that, by submitting to her husband’s will, there will no longer be a safe *bayit*, a home, for her, let alone a harmonious one.

Sarah is not always submissive to her husband. On behalf of her only child, Isaac, she finally speaks up, forgoing the façade of agreeability and *shalom bayit*. Sarah demands that Abraham throw Hagar and their son Ishmael out of the household because she perceives that their presence puts Isaac at risk. Upset at this disruption to his domestic peace, Abraham turns to God — only to be told that now he must submit to Sarah’s demand.

“*Shtika k’hoda-ah*” say the rabbis: “silence presumes agreement.” But this silence can also enable injustice and suffering. When fear prohibits an individual’s outcry — whether at home, at work, or in a public space — each of us is obligated to disturb the silence in whatever ways we can. A home where one is afraid to speak out and speak up is not enlightened; it is a home robbed of the light that Rava taught is essential to *shalom bayit*.

Deborah Rosenbloom is Jewish Women International’s vice president of programs and new initiatives, responsible for JWI’s programmatic work to end gender-based violence. She appreciates the insights of Rabbi Richard Hirsh, David Levin, and Susan Tomchin on this essay.

NiSh'ma

On this page, we offer three takes on a Mishnaic passage about the power of our actions. Our commentators share stories of their soul-destroying experiences and recovery. Our online version is interactive, and we welcome your comments. —S.B.



Naomi Tucker: Destroying a soul — hurting someone in a manner that damages the essence of who they are — is posited here as the worst kind of destruction. Judaism views body and soul as interconnected, equally holy aspects of our humanity. This verse is a clarion call for us to pay attention to emotional abuse.

Talmudic prohibitions of emotional harm are strong and clear. Humiliating someone is tantamount to shedding blood. (Bava Metzia 58b-59a) Verbal abuse (*ona'at d'varim*, oppression by means of words) is worse than stealing money because it robs the victim of their own divinity. An attack on one's psyche or dignity conflicts with the value Judaism places on life itself.

Physical violence may be easier to recognize, legislate, and condemn. But women who have survived intimate partner abuse will attest to this: Long after the physical injuries or bruises heal, emotional scars remain. This is the assault on the soul.

Domestic abuse is perpetuated when society does not insist on social consequences for “destroying a soul.” Jewish teachings call for a more active approach. Everyone deserves relationships that are safe and healthy, particularly in the place that matters most — at home. Harming one person is an assault on the divine spark in all of us. We are all created in God's image, *b'tzelem Elohim*: Every soul is blessed and beautiful, holy and worthy. Our behavior in communal, professional, and interpersonal relationships should reflect that holiness, lifting each other up with dignity and respect — and that is when we will stop violence against women in its tracks.

Naomi Tucker is the founding executive director of Shalom Bayit, Northern California's hub for organizing domestic violence response through a Jewish lens. She has worked in the battered women's movement since 1983 and is a national consultant on faith-based approaches to ending violence in the home.



Beth Leventhal: When I was in my twenties, I was abused by my partner. I didn't know it was abuse. Domestic abuse was something that happened in heterosexual couples: men hurting women. My partner was a woman, a lesbian, a feminist. I had no framework to understand what was happening to me.

Nobody spoke about LGBTQ/T partner abuse. Nobody said it happened at the same rate as heterosexual, cisgender (non-transgender) people (25-33 percent of relationships), or that the abuse experience is similar — everything from subtle manipulation to murder. Although male violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon with devastating consequences, we must not equate domestic abuse with male violence against women. That would ignore LGBTQ/T survivors, leaving them without the words to name — and be able to act on — the abuse they experience.

As Naomi Tucker so eloquently states, emotional abuse eats away at one's soul — intangible, but equally destructive. For me, the effect was to be left feeling guilty, unloving and unlovable, defeated, and both afraid to be with my partner and afraid to leave her. Only later, when I felt that my ex had destroyed my soul, did my therapist reassure me that my soul had simply and silently moved aside to avoid being damaged. She gave me a first glimmer of hope that I would one day feel whole again.

Beth Leventhal has been working to end partner abuse since 1986. She is founder and co-executive director of The Network/La Red (tnlr.org/en) and a founding member of Boston's GLBT Domestic Violence Coalition. She wrote and produced the audio program “Voices of Battered Lesbians” and is the co-editor of *Same-Sex Domestic Violence: Strategies for Change*.



Ruth Gerson: The rabbis teach that when a soul is destroyed it is as though the person destroyed an entire world.

Hope: But it is also true that whoever saves a single soul, it is as though they had saved the entire world? Did Mr. Spooner save you?

Mom: He did. He was a retired marine working as a teacher in the New York City public school system. He gave his retirement years to kids who really needed him, and he provided mentorship that — I feel, personally— saved my life. Where others might have destroyed my soul, Mr. Spooner saved it.

Hope: What did he save you from?

Mom: My anger, I guess.

Hope: What do you mean?

Mom: When you're older, I can tell you.

Hope: Tell me now.

Mom: (Pause) When I was growing up, the people in my family, they suffered greatly, and because they suffered, they felt very angry and they wanted to destroy the world. So, they hurt me a lot, every day, and I became very sad, and lonely. My soul was dim.

Hope: What did you do?

Mom: I believed God loved me.

Hope: Why?

Mom: God showed me. God gave me my teachers, my friends, who poured themselves into me. They made me laugh. They kept me company. They gave me hugs. They challenged my mind. They relieved my suffering, and saved my soul.

Hope: Did you save the world, Mama?

Mom: (Laughs) No, but I am a teacher now, and a mom, and a friend, and I always put my whole heart into the souls around me, and you and your sisters, and maybe one of you will save the world, or one of your children, or your children's children. I can do this because of them. Creating and destroying, saving and killing, order and chaos — we can choose. God has given us this immense gift. We have consciousness and we can choose what we do. Each good act makes more good, until the goodness created can save the world.

Hope: How can I do good, Mama?

Mom: Oh, my sweet, it's easy to do good when you feel good. It's natural. But, it is much more difficult when you are suffering. . . . When you are angry, stop. Stop and listen to God. Wait and breathe. You may wait only a moment or you may wait many years, if someone has hurt you very badly. But, eventually, you will let God in and you will know what to do and you will create something beautiful.

Ruth Gerson is a singer/songwriter from New York City, currently living in Los Gatos, Calif. A teacher of voice and songwriting, her voice and music have been featured in many films, commercials, and on television.

Jewish sensibilities are approaches to living and learning that permeate Jewish culture. The ideas, values, emotions, and behaviors they express — emanating from Jewish history, stories, and sources — provide inspiration and guidance that help us to respond creatively and thoughtfully to life's challenges and opportunities. Sensibilities are culturally informed senses or memes. This month, *Sh'ma Now* examines what disrupts our notions of "peace in the home."

Layers of Shame, Voices of Dignity

Nancy Aiken

My work with victims of sexual abuse is both instructive and sobering. The first time Rivka's husband slapped her, they had been married only a month. The month had been so good: She loved her in-laws and apartment, and her husband was well regarded in the community. Only one bad day meant 97 percent of her married life was fine. Rivka rededicated herself to being a good wife and never told anyone what happened. But she continued to endure abuse. Eventually, though, after ten years, four children who witnessed the abuse, and several broken bones, the balance tipped; no amount of justification could make Rivka feel like her life was good.

Many women who are victims of abuse report making similar calculations, trying to determine whether or not the abuse they suffer is worth the shame and uncertainty that await them if they reveal their secret. On each side of the equation, either telling someone or remaining quiet, one needs to consider physical, emotional, and financial factors. And for a Jewish woman who believes that the responsibility for maintaining *shalom bayit* is hers, there is additional spiritual anguish that reaches deeply to her core.

But the current #MeToo movement has many women — including Jewish women — rethinking their silence about the traumatizing events that happened to them at the hands of men in positions of power in their families, workplaces, and communities. On Facebook alone, the hashtag was used by more than 4.7 million people in 12 million posts during the first 24 hours.

Rachel is 24 years old and even before the #MeToo movement, she believed remaining silent in the wake of abuse was misguided. Four years ago, she spoke out after she was groped by a much older, revered Orthodox man to whom her mother directed her for vocational advice. That incident triggered feelings associated with her childhood abuse

and sent her into a dark despair. She reports that she finally began to heal through a practice of artistic expression, and she is writing a book that explores this method.

Surviving abuse is challenging for anyone. But unlike Rachel, Gershon was unwilling to speak about the abuse he endured as an adolescent. He broke his silence only after he watched a television program about the 2002 Catholic Church scandal. Then, he revealed his secret to his wife. Gershon decided to go public and name his abuser after he was invited to be a compassionate witness at a meeting of abuse survivors to discuss some collective action to call attention to the growing communal problem. During the meeting, a young man began to cry and complained of the futility of talking; he said that no one with power would address this problem. Gershon realized he was in the position to help and felt it unfair to ask them to endure the pain of speaking out if he was unwilling to do so as well. And yet, even given his stature in the community, after he wrote about his experience, his Orthodox community abandoned him; Shabbat lunch invitations dried up, and he felt deep pain when he heard his sons defending his breaking the silence.



"The Survivors" by Shula Singer Arbel

Victims often blame themselves, especially in the absence of physical injuries or when the abuser is known. And when perpetrators have professed love, affection, or even neutral collegiality, victims begin to look inward for explanations: *What did I do wrong? What should I have done differently?* This is a normal process in any distressing event. We look inward because internal information is most readily available and is under our control. In essence, it is a defense mechanism against facing the terrifying notion that life's terrors are random. Our emotional response is to find the cause within ourselves to give us the false hope that we can protect ourselves from such affronts in the future.

But if victims build the rest of their lives on the premise that they brought this evil upon themselves, then the aftermath — which could include depression, promiscuity, addiction, and unhealthy relationships — can also be labeled as their "fault." And that downward spiral can make speaking out even more difficult because the event itself gets buried under layers of dysfunction and fear.

It matters when someone speaks up and disrupts what is presumed to be *shalom bayit*. Though initially painful, it is the only way for healing to even begin. Unbeknownst to Rivka, Rachel, or Gershon, four rabbis in their Greater Baltimore area have begun to explore initiatives to address suspected sexual abuse. Though these survivors and clergy members don't necessarily know one another, in the future — when they silently wonder if anyone else cares — they should know that, somewhere close by, someone is saying yes, "me too."

Nancy Aiken has worked for sixteen years at CHANA, the Jewish response to abuse and trauma in the Baltimore community.

Family and/or Kugel

Israel Heller

When I was 18 years old, my parents kicked me out of our home because I failed to adhere to their standard of Jewish law. It was the summer of 2008, and we had lived together on a tree-lined street in Boro Park. The following summer, my parents' marriage dissolved. They had been set up by a matchmaker as a "pairing off of damaged goods"; each of them struggled with mental illness. My mother was a roiling sea of diagnoses and menacing acronyms. She saw my early precocious behavior and later stubborn auto-didacticism as something suspicious, what their communities and spiritual leaders, friends, and rabbis all told them to fear and stamp out. When I clothed my insistent curiosity in blue denim and the black Baphomet-lined garb of the youthfully disaffected, it confirmed what my parents had seemed to have always known and never hesitated to act on: that I was not merely different but consciously adversarial to their way of life, a life ostensibly crafted in the shape of God's will.

Our rabbis in yeshiva often spoke of *shalom bayis* (or *shalom bayit*). They would refer to Maimonides' writings on Hanukkah, that lighting the Shabbat lamp (then oil, now could be candles) takes precedence over the Hanukkah menorah because it contributes to *shalom bayit*, "altz shalom bayis" as they

would put it. (Laws of Hanukkah 4:14) I knew early on that my home — where unasked questions, untreated emotional realities, and deeply temperamental theologies held sway — was different from what the rabbis described as *shalom bayit*. From the time I was 8 years old, I saw the violent disordered chaos in my home. And eventually, I came to understand that I, too, because I rejected the strictures of the home, disrupted my family's *shalom bayit*.

Though I couldn't situate experiences of *shalom bayit* within my own home life, I came to learn about it in the homes of my father's rabbinic colleagues. When my mother was in the hospital, my father had us eat our Shabbat meals with various, generally prestigious, rabbis he knew and their families. These other homes provided a prism through which I personally came to understand the concept of *shalom bayit*.

One Friday night, at the home of an avuncular and genuinely kind elderly and learned man, whom my father drove home daily, his wife brought out a very strange kugel. She was cheerfully diminutive, carrying a regular-sized pan but not a regular-sized kugel. Rather, the kugel was weirdly bifurcated: half featured the charred brown that spoke of potato kugel, which I certainly was wanting and expecting, and the other half was a bright amber orange, utterly alien to my still immature palate. I couldn't help myself, and so I asked the rebbetzin about the dish. "Oh," she replied brightly, "it's *shalom bayis* kugel!" I remember laughing while they each explained that their variegated tastes for kugel achieved a symbiotic and to them delicious resolution when cooked together.

That kugel is what comes to mind when I think of the concept of *shalom bayit* — the rabbis who constructed the idea and the ultra-Orthodox communal structures that continue to rely on it to undergird their existence. Their lives are bifurcated like that kugel: the sublime and the absurd.

Israel Heller is a writer and activist living in New York City. He has spent time living and working in New Orleans, Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.

The Wisdom of the Wife House

Jane Kanarek

If a man has only enough money to purchase either Shabbat candles or Hanukkah candles, which should he buy? According to the talmudic sage Rava, he

should purchase the oil to light Shabbat candles because they are essential for "the peace of his house (*shalom beito*)." (B. Shabbat 23b) Although the Talmud connects this choice to the pain that the *entire* household would feel spending Shabbat in a darkened home, the commandment to light Shabbat candles comes to be viewed specifically as a "women's commandment."

Just as kindling the Shabbat candles becomes a woman's obligation, so too maintaining "the peace of *his* house" becomes a woman's responsibility. This charge, referred to simply as *shalom bayit* (omitting the possessive grammar of Rava's original phrase), highlights one of the more troubling aspects of *shalom bayit*: It is a woman's charge to maintain household peace at the expense of her own needs, experiences, and perhaps even her own knowledge. Indeed, this concept of woman as peace-maintainer is even more problematic when we combine it with the common talmudic terminology for wife: "house." Women/wives are imagined both as peace-makers and as inanimate structures, architectural spaces that a man may inhabit.

However, a talmudic anecdote about cooking on a festival day questions these reductions of women to peace-makers and houses. One of the requirements for cooking on a festival day is that particular aspects should be done differently from the methods used on a regular weekday. Tractate Betzah (29b) relates a story about the wives of Rav Yosef and Rav Ashi who were each sifting flour in a manner different from that which they would have used on an ordinary weekday. The wife of Rav Yosef used the back of her sieve, and the wife of Rav Ashi sifted flour onto a table instead of into a bowl. In the first case, Rav Yosef tells his wife that he wants good bread, implying that she does not need to sift the flour in an unusual manner on a festival day. Rav Ashi, however, defends his wife's practice. She is the daughter of Rami bar Hama, a man known to be meticulous in his actions, and so Rav Ashi simply assumes she is emulating her father's behavior.

On the one hand, as is common in talmudic narratives, these two women do not have names. Instead, the Talmud identifies them as "the house of Rav Yosef" and "the house of Rav Ashi." Not only are these women unnamed but they are conceptualized as the inanimate house. On the other hand, when we read this passage more closely, the story of "wife as house" becomes more complicated. The Talmud depicts these two women as having

potentially authoritative knowledge about the correct manner for sifting flour on a festival day. In one case (that of Rav Yosef's wife), the man criticizes her behavior. In the other (that of Rav Ashi's wife), the man defends her behavior. While the passage does not say which of these two women is correct, by even mentioning them, the discussion acknowledges that these "houses/wives" can set legal precedent. Note, too, that these women do not ask their husbands about how to sift flour; each woman acts as she deems correct. Further, though Rav Ashi believes that his wife learned her action from watching her father, we do not know if this is actually the case. It is possible that sifting flour onto the table is what Rav Ashi's wife/house herself understands to be the correct process of sifting flour on a festival day. Indeed, these women know halakhah (rabbinic law), and the Talmud depicts each as acting in accordance with her own knowledge. The wife/house of the rabbi is not only a space to be inhabited by a man but also a place where a woman knows. She is concerned not just with maintaining peace but also with acting on her own authority.

Although I would prefer that we know the names of these two women, I want to reread their designation as "house" beyond its connotations of inanimate space. We can understand the story of these women sifting flour and knowing halakhah as symbolic of a wide range of knowledge that we often ignore. We might understand "wife/house" as representing a woman's lost knowledge and ask: What might our Jewish community look like if we could remember, recreate, create, and integrate at least some of this missing knowledge into what it means to be Jewish today?

Rabbi **Jane Kanarek** is an associate professor of rabbinics and an associate dean in the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College.

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"Consider and Converse: *Shalom Bayit*" is a guide that walks you through this issue, inspires reflections, prompts questions, and provides ways to connect this reading with other meaningful experiences. It is found online at www.forward.com/shma-now.

Consider & Converse

A Guide to 'Shalom Bayit' —
'Peace in the Home'

Introduction

Sh'ma Now curates conversations on a single theme rooted in Jewish tradition and the contemporary moment. At the heart of this issue of *Sh'ma Now* is the theme of "shalom bayit" — "peace in the home." A foundational Jewish principle, we explore what happens when shalom bayit is a facade, when the notion of family harmony masks pain and abuse. This month, we also explore what disrupts family peace, and what price someone pays for that act of disruption.

Sh'ma Now has never viewed learning or "meaning-making" as solely an individual activity. That's why we have included this guide, which is specifically designed to help you to consider the idea of going forth independently or with others, formally and informally.

How to Begin

This guide offers a variety of suggestions, including activities and prompts for individual contemplation and informal or structured conversations. We suggest that you use this guide to share reflections and thoughts over a Shabbat meal, or, for those who are more adventurous, to lead a planned, structured conversation, inviting a small group of friends and family to your home or to a coffee shop. If you would like more information about ways in which this journal can be used, please contact Susan Berrin, *Sh'ma Now* editor-in-chief, at SBerrin@shma.com. You can also print out a PDF file of the entire issue at <http://forward.com/shma-now/>.

Guidelines for Discussion

If you wish to hold a structured conversation, the following guidelines may help you to create a space that allows for honest personal exploration through sharing:

- Create a sense of shared purpose that can foster the kind of internal reflection that happens through group conversation.
- Remind participants of simple ground rules for conversations. For example: Avoid commenting on and critiquing each other's comments. Make room for everyone to speak. Step into or away from the conversation appropriately. No one participant should dominate the conversation. Let silence sit, allowing participants to gather their thoughts.
- For each of the questions below, we recommend that you print out the article in question, or provide the link to it, and we ask that you take a moment to read it in print or on screen, before the conversation begins.
- Allow people a few minutes to absorb the article, perhaps even to read it a second time, before moving into the discussion.

Consider & Converse

A Guide to 'Shalom Bayit' —
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Interpretive Questions

can focus the reader on the ideas in the articles.

- **Deborah Rosenbloom**, who works at Jewish Women International as the person responsible for directing and implementing their work to end and prevent violence against women and girls, [page 1] introduces readers to the concept of “harmony in the home — *shalom bayit*. First, she explains that traditionally, “the burden of *shalom bayit* has been placed on the wife, reflecting the patriarchy of traditional Judaism and the notion that the wife is the foundation of the home who determines its character and atmosphere.” Then, she considers how the first “Jewish couple,” Abraham and Sarah, exemplify a more complicated home than what appears on the surface. When Abraham asks his wife to pretend to Pharaoh to be his sister — thereby saving himself — he not only shows a lack of faith in God, but he also puts his wife in a position where she cannot refuse her husband’s request. The story raises several questions: At what cost are women burdened to remain silent for the “greater good of family harmony, *shalom bayit*? How do we reconcile the patriarchal values of our ancestors with today’s modern norms? In what arenas do women remain silent — even today — to further family harmony? How might we move to make this family-oriented burden more equitable?
- Rabbi **Jane Kanarek**, who teaches Talmud at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, [page 4] offers a close reading and analysis of a talmudic anecdote about cooking on a festival day that upends the notion of “woman as house” (the word “*bayit*,” in some instances, meaning “woman”). Jane writes: “One of the requirements for cooking on a festival day is that particular aspects should be done differently from the methods used on a regular weekday. Tractate Betzah (29b) relates a story about the wives of Rav Yosef and Rav Ashi who were each sifting flour in a manner different from that which they would have used on an ordinary week day. The wife of Rav Yosef used the back of her sieve, and the wife of Rav Ashi sifted flour onto a table instead of into a bowl. In the first case, Rav Yosef tells his wife that he wants good bread, implying that she does not need to sift the flour in an unusual manner on a festival day. Rav Ashi, however, defends his wife’s practice. She is the daughter of Rami bar Hama, a man meticulous in his actions, and what she saw her father do in his house must be the reason for her own behavior.” What do we learn from this anecdote? How far do we interpret and extrapolate learnings from a text many hundreds of years old? How do we apply the wisdom and lessons from our sources to everyday life? Can you give an example of how you navigate some of today’s complex questions and decisions based on the wisdom of your ancestors?

Reflective Questions

can help one to integrate the ideas in these articles with one’s own sense of self.

- **Nancy Aiken**, who works with victims of trauma and abuse in the Baltimore area, [page 3] shares several stories of women and men who have been abused. What factors are at play that hinder speaking up? What compels disrupting the violence? What do you imagine the impact of the #MeToo movement? How do you understand the distinctions between “harassment” and “assault” and “abuse”? Have you experienced sexual harassment and how did you decide to deal with it? Did you share your experiences with others? Have you healed from the experience?

Consider & Converse

A Guide to 'Shalom Bayit' —
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- **Israel Heller** [page 3] shares his personal story about disruption in the home where he grew up. After failing to adhere to his parents' standards of Jewish law, he was "kicked out" of his Boro Park home. Although he learned about *shalom bayit* at yeshiva, he couldn't see the concept working in his home. Finally, he understands it as a visitor in the home of his rabbi. He writes: "One Friday night, at the home of an avuncular and genuinely kind elderly and learned man, whom my father drove home daily, his wife brought out a very strange kugel. She was cheerfully diminutive, carrying a regular-sized pan but not a regular-sized kugel. Rather, the kugel was weirdly bifurcated: half featured the charred brown that spoke of potato kugel, which I certainly was wanting and expecting, and the other half was a bright amber orange, utterly alien to my still immature palate. I couldn't help myself, and so I asked the rebbetzin about the dish. 'Oh,' she replied brightly, 'it's *shalom bayis* kugel!' I remember laughing while they each explained that their variegated tastes for kugel achieved a symbiotic and to them delicious resolution when cooked together." In what ways do you accommodate your family and close friends for the sake of *shalom bayit*? Where does that accommodation take place? In the kitchen? Around the family table? Making decisions around Jewish observance? What else? Has there ever been a time when you disrupted *shalom bayit*? What was the byproduct of that disruption?
- In *NiSh'ma* [page 2], our simulated Talmud page, three writers explore the *Mishna*, "*Whoever destroys a single soul it is as though they had destroyed an entire world. And anyone who sustains one soul it is as if they sustained an entire world.*" **Naomi Tucker** writes that "Destroying a soul — hurting someone in a manner that damages the essence of who they are — is posited here [in this *Mishna*] as the worst kind of destruction. Judaism views body and soul as interconnected, equally holy aspects of our humanity." She reminds us that "Humiliating someone is tantamount to shedding blood." As the executive director of a nonprofit aimed at educating and helping people who have encountered domestic abuse, she is very aware of the emotional toil that abuse takes—long after the physical abuse has been acknowledged. "But women who have survived intimate partner abuse will attest to this: Long after the physical injuries or bruises heal, emotional scars remain. This is the assault on the soul." How might Jewish communities address issues of domestic violence as well as sexual harassment more systematically? How do you envision change happening? Have you been drawn to the #MeToo movement? How do you help someone that you know has experienced abuse? **Ruth Gerson** shares a conversation with her daughter Hope about a teacher who changed her life. And **Beth Leventhal** shares a story of abuse in the LGBTQ community. How might we make a significant impact in changing the way our organizations enable abuse and protect abusers?