

# Drawing From

# Miriam's Well

In the heart of the Jewish tradition lies a story of liberation and resilience—the Israelites' escape from slavery and treacherous journey to freedom. Exodus offers profound insights into the experiences of those affected by domestic violence.

Consider for a moment the parallels between the plight of the enslaved Israelites and the struggles faced by victims of domestic violence. Living at the mercy of another, living in fear, being controlled by the threat of violence. Experiences of psychological torture, confinement, forced labor, and sometimes physical torture too. These are realities shared by 1 in 4 Jewish women who experience domestic violence in their lifetime, along with gay men and trans individuals at similar rates.

Just as the Israelites hesitated to leave Mitzrayim despite the cruelty they endured, survivors of domestic violence often grapple with the daunting decision to break free. Fear of the unknown may be worse than familiar pain. A better life or Promised Land seem impossible to attain. It's a journey fraught with uncertainties and dangers, reminiscent of the Israelites' trek through the desert. Many survivors of abuse leave behind all their possessions when they escape. They may face homelessness, hunger, harassment, legal battles, loneliness and danger on the journey. Their abuser may be close behind, like Pharaoh, stalking and pursuing them. Statistically, leaving is the most dangerous time for survivors of domestic violence: more DV murders take place after the survivor has left the relationship.

Our Exodus story calls us to understand just how hard it is to leave.

It also calls us to offer spiritual and physical nourishment on the journey.

In the desert wilderness, where hunger and thirst loomed, the Talmud speaks of a miraculous Well bestowed upon the Israelites in merit of Miriam, prophetess and sister of Moses. This Well, brimming with the waters of life, follows Miriam on the journey through the desert, offering sustenance and strength to all who drew from it.

The Shalom Bayit community is the Well that survivors can draw from on their journey from subjugation to freedom. Our programs offer expert guidance, safe passage, tangible resources, and spiritual sustenance. Your presence and financial support tonight make that possible.

Everyone can play a role in this quiet exodus from enslavement to freedom. You can BE THE WELL when you listen, believe, and support survivors; when you offer resources; when you challenge the societal norms that perpetuate sexism and abuses of power. It's a collective obligation rooted in the Jewish values of justice and compassion. As advocates and supporters, you help ensure that no one journeys alone.

Together, let us uphold the sacred duty to build a future with shalom in every home.

## Be The Well