

SWEETNESS AND JUSTICE

Keshet

Noah Gibbons-Shapiro and Hayden

In their “Sweetness and Justice” series, Keshet is publishing writing from trans and non-binary Jewish teens reflecting on the question: “What can we do to bring the values of inclusion, equity, and liberation to the world?” In the two pieces below, writers Hayden and Noah each share their thoughts on what truly creates safe space and community care.

How can we work in the coming year towards a truer and more authentic understanding of “shalom bayit” or “peaceful homes,” including the many spaces both physical and virtual where we gather and show up for each other? What spaces in your own life do you seek out to feel genuinely seen and supported? How are you working to make those kinds of spaces available to more people, especially after a year like this past one when we know that so many were stuck in spaces that may not have been the safest for them? What kind of welcome do we owe to each other, and how can we invite others into community with us joyfully and with care and intention?

Shalom Bayit – Noah Gibbons-Shapiro, 18, they/them, San Jose CA

Trans folks often have a complicated relationship to home and our biological families. One of the places I truly feel shalom bayit, or peace in the home, is in direct community with other trans people. Together, we can create an incredibly loving community where we treat each other as family because we are a chosen family for each other. Through our shared experiences as trans people, we create a home for ourselves and each other.

In community, we can create a peaceful system where we are all respected and loved authentically and holistically as our transgender selves. In my experience, this is the time when I feel most at home and most peaceful, entirely trans and entirely loved.

Kol Yisrael Arevin Zeh Bazeh – Hayden, 17, they/them, Houston TX

The Talmud says “כל ישראל ארבים זה בזה” – Kol Yisrael Arevin Zeh Bazeh. In English this means, “All Israel is responsible for one another.” The Talmud makes clear that we, as Jews, are responsible for caring for each other, for creating a safe environment, and for standing up for one another.

I come from an Orthodox-ish background where I experienced, on many occasions, feeling uncomfortable and ashamed. The rabbis I knew thought that people like me were wrong. My identity didn’t fit into the natural order of things. There were stares and gossip behind my back when I walked into an Orthodox synagogue because I don’t look like the rest of the Jewish teens there, with my short dyed hair and androgynous presentation.

As Jews, we have this amazing opportunity to ensure that the space we hold in this world is inclusive to everyone. It is on us to make sure we accept and care for our fellow Jews. We could have a world where trans Jews feel comfortable coming out in their Jewish communities, where congregations have inclusive policies in place, where rabbis are a guiding source for youth, and even where choosing a side of the mechitza to be on isn’t a painful decision. It’s our responsibility that we ensure that our communities and our world are safe for everyone, regardless of whether they are trans.

[RETURN TO MENU](#)