REJECTION: THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In this chapter, I will focus on rabbis’ attitudes to domestic violence. Rabbinic opponents of domestic violence can be divided into two groups: the ‘unqualified’ rejectors and the ‘qualified’ rejectors. The ‘unqualified’ rejectors state that domestic violence is sufficient grounds for divorce. Rabbis who hold the ‘qualified’ attitude, however, are nominally opposed to domestic violence while still taking an evasive attitude, which will be discussed fully in Chapter 10.

Unqualified rejection does not allow compromise. It looks injustice squarely in the eye and will not tolerate what is wrong. In order to combat the injustice, it will challenge the status quo that is at its heart, in this case forcing a woman to remain married to a violent husband.

“Rejection” confronts the problem of domestic violence head on: it does not deny it, accept it, or excuse it. It clearly states that domestic violence is wrong and demands an end to it, as well as some form of redress for the victim.

The rabbis who accept that there is a problem have adopted a position of unconditional rejection. Some of them relate creatively to halakha by use of *takkanot* [rabbinic decrees that address a contemporary problem]or creative legislation to change what they perceive to be an unjust law.