

RHR-NA would like to thank Naomi Graetz for sharing with us her extensive research and knowledge on this subject, and for preparing this resource. For more background on this topic, her article written with Julie Cwikel "Trafficking and Prostitution: Lessons from Jewish Sources," [The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies, 20 (2007): 25-58] can be found on the RHR-NA website at <http://www.rhr-na.org/resource/trafficking-and-prostitution-lessons-from-jewish-sources>, and we suggest reading it as preparation for teaching this text.

I) The commentator R. Hananel interprets R. Il'ail's suggestion as a preventive measure and not as permission to visit a prostitute. However, this text has been understood by many to imply that using commercial sex services, although not desirable, is preferable to masturbation and the wasting of seed and that, if one must, one should go where one is not known. Yet it is clear that attitudes towards this famous text, as well as to prostitution and trafficking vary, depending on time and place.

Is it really better to transgress secretly than publicly profane God's name? Have attitudes to masturbation changed since ancient times? Are there any victims when "seed is wasted"?

What might this approach say about the one engaged as a prostitute?

What is the power dynamic in this text?

II) How does Abraham use his wife Sarah for financial gain?

Could this be seen as a form of pimping?

Why does he not attempt to retrieve her from Pharaoh?

What might her voice in this text say?

III) What is the power dynamic in this text between father and daughter? Between the owner and the female slave?

What are the rights of the female slave? Are female slaves better off than male slaves?

Why are children sold into prostitution by their parents? Have things changed since ancient times?

IV) In this text from Esther, women are gathered up from all over the king's realm, brought to him for his inspection and use and after one night with him they are sent back to the harem as used goods, deprived of their freedom, presumably unavailable to other men.

Why do you think that feminists have recently looked at this story from the perspective of trafficking?

Is this a text about pimping? Who has power in this text? Why would Mordechai allow Esther to be part of this? Do the means justify the ends?

V) Does Naomi use Ruth for monetary gain?

Is it significant here that Ruth is a Moabite and is used this way?

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Given that Ruth is the ancestor of David, does this text justify using women as a means for monetary gain?

VI + VII) How does the Israelite slave differ from the foreign slave?

Why is this true?

Can the non-Jewish slave be treated less humanely than the Israelite slave?

Based on this difference, can we expect a different attitude in Jewish sources between the prostitution of Jewish and non-Jewish woman? Might that attitude be reflected today in the experience of non-Jewish women trafficked into Israel?

VIII + IX) The word “zonah” comes from the root “zun” meaning provide or nourish as in the word “*tezuna*” or nutrition. It is usually translated as “prostitute” or “harlot,” i.e., a provider of sexual services. The word later is used for those who “go astray” either after false gods as well as after random sexual partners. *Zenut* thus means adultery, actions of a dubious moral nature as well as prostitution. A zonah can be an adulterer or any woman of loose morals.

What might text 8 mean by turning your daughter into a harlot, given what we have seen in the text from Exodus?

Who has power in these texts?

How does Sifra explain the concern about *zenut*?

X) Why is the redemption of prisoners so important?

Does this seem surprising?

What might this text from Rambam teach us about the importance of ending slavery and trafficking? What about benefiting from slavery?

XI) This text is based on the rabbinic idea that the commandment “Do not steal” refers to kidnapping, in part because the other commandments around it (murder and adultery) involve capital crimes and while kidnapping is a capital crime, mere theft is not.

Why do you think kidnapping is a capital crime?

What does that tell us about both the status of victim and perpetrator?

XII) How does this text impel us to action?

Should you be held accountable for the actions of others if you keep silent? Should there be limits?

Given what we know about the ubiquity both of humane trafficking, including sex trafficking, and of slave-made goods in the world today, what are our responsibilities? Are we guilty of silence?