



## ICJW Bea Zucker Online Bible Study Program

### “The Five Books of Moses: Contemporary Issues and Classic Perspectives”

By Dr. Bonna Devora Haberman

#### Session 30 Kedoshim—All of Our Daughters

#### Text

#### ויקרא יט

א וידבר יהוה אל-מֹשֶׁה לאמר. ב דבר אל-כל-עדת בני-ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני יהוה אל־היִכָּם. ג איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואֶת-שִׁבְתִּי תישָׁמוּ רוּ אֲנִי יהוה אל־היִכָּם. ד אל-תִּפְנוּ אֶל-הָאֱלִילִים ואל־הִי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יהוה אל־היִכָּם. ה וכִּי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים ליהוה לרצֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחֶהוּ. ו ביום זִבְחֶכֶם יֹאכַל וממחרת והנותר עד-יום השלישי באש ישרף. ז ואם הֹאכַל לֹא יֹאכַל ביום השלישי פגול הוא לֹא ירצה. ח וְאִלְוֵי עַוְנוֹ יֵשׂא כִּי-אֶת-קֹדֶשׁ יהוה חָלַל וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיהָ. ט וּבִקְצָרְכֶם אֶת-קִצְיֵר אֶרְצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ לִקְצֹר וְלִקְטֹף קִצְיֵרְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט. י וְכִרְמְךָ לֹא תִעוֹלַל וּפְרֹט כִרְמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעֵנִי וְלִגְרֵךְ תִּעַזְבֵּן אִתָּם אֲנִי יהוה אל־היִכָּם. יא לֹא תִגַּן בּוֹ וְלֹא-תִכְחָשׂוּ וְלֹא-תִשְׁקְרוּ אִישׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ. יב וְלֹא-תִשָּׁבְעוּ בְשִׁמִּי לְשִׁקֵּר וְחָלַלְתָּ אֶת-שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲנִי יהוה. יג לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה קֶּדֶשׁ אֶת-רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא-תִלִּין פְּעֻלַּת שְׂכִיר אֶתְךָ עַד-בֹּקֶר. יד לֹא-תִקַּל חֵרֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכֶּשֶׁל וְיִרְאֵת מֵאֵל הֵיךְ אֲנִי יהוה. טו לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ עוֹל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט לֹא-תִשָּׂא פְנֵי-דָל וְלֹא תִהְדַּר פְּנֵי גְדוֹל בְּצִדֵּק תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתְךָ. טז לֹא-תִלַּךְ רֵכִיל בְּעַמִּיךָ לֹא תַעֲמִיד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יהוה. יז לֹא-תִשְׁנֹא אֶת-אֲחֵיךָ בַּלְבָּבְךָ הוֹכֵחַ תוֹכִיחַ אֶת-עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא. יח לֹא-תִקַּם וְלֹא-תִטֹּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ וְאֶהְבֵּת לרֵעֶךָ כַּמוֹךְ אֲנִי יהוה. יט אֶת-חֵק תִּישָׁמוּ רוּ בְהִמָּתֵךְ לֹא-תִרְבִּיעַ כְּלָאִים שְׂדֵךְ לֹא-תִזְרַע כְּלָאִים וּבְגַד כְּלָאִים שַׁעֲטָנָה לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ. כ וְאִישׁ כִּי-יִשְׁכַּב אֶת-אִשְׁהוֹ שְׁכַבְתָּ-זָרַע וְהוּא שֹׁפֵחַ נִחְרַפְתָּ לְאִישׁ וְהִפְדָּה לֹא נִפְדָּתָה אוֹ חִפְשָׁה לֹא נִתְּנָה-לָהּ בְּקִרְתָּ תִהְיֶה לֹא יוֹמְתוּ כִּי-לֹא חִפְשָׁה. כא וְהִבִּיא אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ ליהוה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֵיל אֲשֵׁם. כב וְכִפַּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן בְּאֵיל הָאֲשֵׁם לִפְנֵי יהוה עַל-חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְנִסְלַח לוֹ מִחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא. כג וְכִי-תִבֹּאוּ אוֹ-אֶל-הָאָרֶץ וְנִטַּעְתֶּם כָּל-עֵץ מֵאֲכָל וְעִרְלַתְּם עֵרְלָתוֹ אֶת-פְּרִיֹתָם שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֵרְלִים לֹא יֹאכַל. כד וּבִשְׁנָה הַרְבִּיעִת יִהְיֶה כָל-פְּרִיֹתָם דֹּשׁ הַלּוּלִים ליהוה. כה וּבִשְׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁת תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיֹתָם לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ אֲנִי יהוה אל־היִכָּם. כו לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם לֹא תִנְחָשׂוּ וְלֹא תַעֲוֹנוּ. כז לֹא תִקְפוּ פֶּאֶת רֵאשִׁיכֶם וְלֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת פֶּאֶת זִקְנֵךְ. כח וְשֹׁרֵט לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא תִתְּנוּ בַבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְכֹתֵב קַעֲקַע לֹא תִתְּנוּ בָכֶם אֲנִי יהוה. כט אֶל-תִּחַלַּל אֶת-בֵּיתְךָ לְהִזְנוֹתָהּ וְלֹא-תִזְנוּ הָאָרֶץ וּמִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ זָמָה.

#### Vayiqra 19

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. 3 You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the Lord am your God.

4 Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the Lord am your God. 5 When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the Lord, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf. 6 It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed in fire. 7 If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable. 8 And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the Lord; that person shall be cut off from his kin.



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9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.

11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. 12 You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.

13 You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

14 You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

15 You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly. 16 Do not deal basely with your countrymen. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the Lord.

17 You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord.

19 You shall observe My laws.

You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.

20 If a man has carnal relations with a woman who is a slave and has been designated for another man, but has not been redeemed or given her freedom, there shall be an indemnity; they shall not, however, be put to death, since she has not been freed. 21 But he must bring to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as his guilt offering to the Lord, a ram of guilt offering. 22 With the ram of guilt offering the priest shall make expiation for him before the Lord for the sin that he committed; and the sin that he committed will be forgiven him.

23 When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. 24 In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord; 25 and only in the fifth year may you use its fruit — that its yield to you may be increased: I the Lord am your God.

26 You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying. 27 You shall not round off the side-growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard. 28 You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves: I am the Lord.

29 Do not defile your daughter and prostitute her, lest the land fall into fornication and the land be filled with depravity.



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#### Context

Parashat Kedoshim collects together positive and negative commandments—many that are stated in other contexts. The parasha spans a wide range of prohibitions—against idolatry (Vayiqra 19:4) and falsifying weights and measures (Vayiqra 19:35), as well as obligations—to observe Shabbat (Vayiqra 19:3), to judge fairly (Vayiqra 19:15), to leave fallen fruit for the poor (Vayiqra 19:10), and perhaps most poignantly, to love our neighbor as ourself (Vayiqra 19:17). The commandments contained in this parasha point us toward being *holy*, like God, and toward being worthy to live in the land of Israel. The way of life prescribed in parashat Kedoshim is based on awareness that once we were slaves in Egypt, and that God took us out of slavery toward freedom and responsibility in the land (Vayiqra 19:35).

#### Explorations

The goal and reason for this parasha is to guide people toward living holy lives because God is holy. Kedoshim demonstrates how holiness abides in a well-integrated spiritual lifestyle, combining the observance of ritual with social conscience, caring for one another, and for the wellbeing of our community. This program binds Jews to both God and human, and to the activities of this world where we are exhorted to manifest our faith in the way we relate to one another.

Among the commandments, there are many rules to order proper intercourse—in the animate and inanimate world. Neither animals nor vegetables are permitted to intermingle, nor are threads blending animal and vegetable sources to be interwoven in cloth (Vayiqra 19:19). Prohibitions against sexual mingling are extensive: against adultery (Vayiqra 19:10), against sex with relatives by blood and marriage, against homosexuality, and against sex with animals (Vayiqra 20:10-21). In this text, disciplined sexual behavior is an important condition for holiness.

The previous parasha does not explicitly forbid sexual relations between father and daughter among the prohibitions recited on Yom Kippur (Vayiqra 18:6-23). In this parasha, the Torah specifically addresses parents,

“Do not defile your daughter and prostitute her, lest the land fall into fornication and the land be filled with depravity” (Vayiqra 19:29)

Here, prostitution is defilement-*hillul*, desecration of holiness. The word that refers to prostitution is *znut*—rendered in the [BDB Lexicon](#) as fornication, harlotry. The Torah uses the verb in the form, “do not prostitute your daughter,” that is, *cause* her to be prostituted. For *zona*, I use the term “prostituted women” to make clear the point that the Torah assumes in our verse that there is someone responsible for causing a woman to engage in prostitution. The cause might be individual(s), or society, culture, economy, or military conditions that prostitute women by force, physical and/or other.

The Torah connects holiness with guarding the sexuality of women specifically. The verse refers to a daughter, while also implying that the daughter stands for the community of Israel. Israel must honor and protect her boundaries lest they be penetrated by unlawful and/or foreign



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influence. Consider a case we will read later in Bamidbar,

While Israel was staying at Shittim, the people profaned themselves by whoring with the Moabite women, who invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. The people partook of them and worshipped that god. Thus Israel attached itself to Baal-peor, and the Lord was incensed with Israel. (Bamidbar 25:1-3)

On account of their sexual intimacy with idolators, the Israelites go astray and turn to idol-worship. The Torah points to how loose sexual boundaries affiliate with corruption in the land, and depravity in general. In this way, sex is both a metaphor for cultural and religious intermingling, and the bodily means by which it occurs. Through sexual encounter, the Israelites are vulnerable to influences that distract from faithfulness to God; the community is penetrated. This layer of the text exhorts parents to protect their children from the corruptions of naive attraction, sexual and spiritual—a concern that applies to young men and women alike.

While it is helpful to view the verse in our parasha from a national perspective, at the same time, the prohibition against prostitution relates specifically to parents and our *daughters*. The text forbids parents to sell girls and women into prostitution. Rambam explains the verse in the following way,

The father [sic] should not say, “since the Torah obligates a seducer and a rapist to pay monetary damages to the father, therefore I let out my daughter to this man that he may have sex with her for the price I set, or I allow this man to have sex with her without payment— for a person may forfeit his rights and donate his property to whomsoever he pleases. Therefore the Torah says, “**Do not degrade your daughter and prostitute her.**” (Rambam, Mishna Torah, Women, Halachot concerning an Unmarried Woman, 2:15).

Rambam relates the verse to rules in the Torah concerned with marriage:

If a man seduces a unwed woman for whom the bride-price has not been paid, and lies with her, he must make her his spouse by payment of a bride-price. If her father refuses to give her to him, he must still weigh out silver in accordance with the bride-price for unwed women. (Shmot 22:15-16)

Rambam also refers to another verse about rape that we will discuss later in the Book of Devarim. According to the Torah, the father receives the bride-price and damages (for rape) from the man who marries his daughter, seduces her, or rapes her. Rambam points out that the Torah appears to give the father so much control over his daughter's sexuality and reproductive capability that he might make the assumption that he is also entitled to receive other payment for her sexuality as well, that is, prostitute her. For this reason, Rambam interprets, the Torah sets a clear limit; it states *NO* to prostituting our daughters.

Perhaps assuming optimistically that Jewish fathers would not consider selling their daughters into prostitution as we understand it, in the talmud, the sages clarify the prohibition.



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R. Mani said: [According to them] this refers to one who marries his [young] daughter to an old man. As it has been taught: [Do not degrade your daughter and prostitute her](#); R. Eliezer said: This refers to marrying one's [young] daughter to an old man. R. Akiba said: This refers to the delay in marrying off a daughter who is already mature. (Sanhedrin 76a).

Rabbi Mani and Rabbis Eliezer understand the verse directing parents not to marry children to spouses to whom they are not attracted in order to lessen their susceptibility to adultery. The sages bring the example of age difference. Rabbi Akiba understands the verse to intend that families should not delay marriage so that young people will not succumb to temptation to have sex outside of marriage.

These varied interpreters apply the commandment to situations familiar to them in their historical and social context. Prostitution becomes a term that expresses the sages' understanding of the desecration of holiness—between women and men, among people in the community, and in the Jewish People's relation to God. They aspire to an ideal form of connection that is focused, fulfilling, and exclusive.

While the Torah prohibits the prostitution of our daughters, Jews have and continue to engage in prostitution. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jews were extensively involved in what is known as the *White Slave Trade*—the global trafficking of women into prostitution. In conditions of impoverishment, industrialization, and urbanization, religious and secular Jews sold their daughters and sisters into prostitution. Zwi Migdal was one of the infamous Jewish prostitution crime rings that operated throughout the world, from Buenos Aires to Beijing.

Sigmund Freud used a patient [Bertha Pappenheim](#) (1859-1936)—whose treatment sessions were divulged to him by Josef Breuer—to support his theory and method of cathartic talking therapy. She was known as “Anna O” in Freud's publications. While labelled *hysterical* by her male psychologists, Pappenheim cared for Jewish women exploited by prostitution, campaigned to free them, and combated the White Slave Trade. Hers and other efforts were opposed by Jewish communities and rabbis who sought to silence those who brought evidence about Jewish prostitution activities into the open.

From the 1990's, Israel's involvement in contemporary global trafficking into prostitution surged. In 2011, the US State Department annual report ranks Israel in “tier 2” status for the fifth year in a row—Israel “is not in full compliance with the minimum international standards to prevent human trafficking, but it is making efforts to bring itself up to par.”

Anti-Semites and anti-Zionists have and continue to chastise Jews and Israel on account of this deplorable activity. In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler blames prostitution on the Jews as a major cause of Germany's decline. The “prostitution of love,” he claims, is responsible for the “terrible poisoning of the health of the national body” through syphilis, a “Jewish disease.” While these are indeed preposterous claims, the level of participation of Jewish communities in the White Slave Trade raises questions about prostitution as a cultural practice, not solely a matter of individual criminals. During the 1990's, Israeli government ministries, the prisons, and the police





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were often complicit in trafficking. From 2006, anti-trafficking legislation passed as a response to the high public profile of Israel as a both a trafficking destination and transit point.

Most traditional cultures express attitudes and perform practices that contribute to, normalize and enable the acceptance of prostitution. In their foundation myths, ancient Greek and Roman culture, and many contemporary cultures normalize the violation of women's bodily integrity and full humanity. Criminals who buy and sell women on the basis of men's persistent demand to consume women for sex. The demand that makes prostitution exceedingly profitable tolerates the oppression and abuse of women and girls.

Jews and Jewish tradition are not *uniquely* guilty for the offenses of prostitution; Jewish culture does not uniquely acquiesce to or enable such relationships to women and women's sexuality. However, Jews are certainly also responsible, and often deny Jewish involvement in prostitution. We need to do our work to disable such cultural attitudes and practices in our lives and societies.

Two stories in the Talmud deal with prostitution, expressing both desire and fear.

#### Story 1

Once a man, who was very careful about the commandment of tzitzit, heard about a certain prostituted woman in one of the towns by the sea who accepted four hundred gold coins for her hire. He sent her four hundred gold coins and appointed a day with her. When he came to her door the prostituted woman's maid told her, “The man who sent you four hundred gold coins is here and waiting at the door”; to which the prostituted woman replied “Let him come in”. When he came in she prepared for him seven beds, six of silver and one of gold; and between one bed and the other there were steps of silver, but the last were of gold. She then went up to the top bed and lay down upon it naked. He too went up after her in his desire to sit naked with her, when all of a sudden the four fringes (tzitzit) of his garment struck him across the face; whereupon he slipped off the bed and sat upon the ground. She also got down from the bed and sat upon the ground and said to him, “I will not leave until you tell me what blemish you saw in me.” He replied, “never have I seen a woman as beautiful as you are; but there is one commandment which God has commanded us, it is called tzitzit, and with regard to it the expression “I am the Lord your God” is written twice, signifying, I am S/He who will exact punishment in the future and I am S/He who will give reward in the future. The tzitzit appeared to me as four witnesses”. She said, “I will not leave you until you tell me your name, the name of your town, the name of your teacher, the name of your school in which you study the Torah.” He wrote all this down and handed it to her. Thereupon she arose and divided her estate into three parts; one third for the government, one third to be distributed among the poor, and one third she took with her in her hand; the bed clothes, however, she retained. She then came to the bet hamidrash (house of study) of Rabbi Chiyya, and said to him, ‘Master, give instructions that they may make me a convert’. ‘My daughter’, he replied, ‘perhaps you have set your eyes on one of my students?’ She thereupon took out the paper and handed it to him. ‘Go’, said he ‘and enjoy your acquisition’... Those very bed-clothes which she had spread for the student for an illicit purpose she now spread out for him lawfully. (Menachot 44a)



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#### Story 2

It was said of Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordia that there was no prostituted woman in the world with whom he did not have relations. Once, upon hearing that there was a certain prostituted woman in one of the towns by the sea who accepted a purse of gold coins for her hire, he took a purse of gold coins and crossed seven rivers to reach her. As he was with her, she had flatulence and said, “As this gas will not return to its place, so will Eleazar ben Dordia never be received in repentance.”

He thereupon went, sat between two mountains and exclaimed: “O, mountains, plead for mercy for me!” They replied: “How shall we pray for thee? We stand in need of it ourselves, for it is said, “For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed!” He exclaimed: “Heaven and earth, plead for mercy for me! They, too, replied: How shall we pray for you? We stand in need of it ourselves, for it is said, “For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment.””... He then pleaded with the Sun and moon and the stars and constellations to plead for mercy on his behalf but they all gave the same answer.

Said Rabbi Eliezer, “Then it depends upon me alone!” Having placed his head between his knees, he wept aloud until his soul departed (he died). Then a bat-kol (voice from heaven) was heard proclaiming: ‘Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordia is destined for the life of the world to come!’ When Rebi heard this story he wept and said: “One person may acquire eternal life after many years, and another person in but an hour!” Rebi also said: Not only are those who repent accepted but they are even called “Rabbi!” (Avodah Zara 17a)

In these stories, prostituted women seem to be known and frequented by Jewish men. Today, prostitution is one of the scourges of humanity, subjecting millions of girls and women throughout the world to humiliation, rape, beating, drugs, theft, kidnapping, and murder. The unconscionable demand for sex exploiting girls and women preys upon the most vulnerable among humanity. Describing the trauma of prostitution, and its consequences, one fourteen year old stated: “You feel like a piece of hamburger meat – all chopped up and barely holding together” (D. Kelly Weisberg, *Children of the Night*, Toronto, Lexington Books, 1985). Canadian research concludes that girls and women in prostitution have a mortality rate 40 times higher than the national average (Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, 1985, *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada*, 350).

The experience of slavery, and of having been freed from our oppression support refined ethical sensibilities in parshat Kedoshim. One tenet of the ethics of Exodus from slavery is prohibiting the prostitution of our daughters—*all* daughters.

#### Questions for Discussion

- Considering varied interpretations—personal, social, national etc.—how do you understand the prohibition against prostituting daughters?
- Analyzing the two stories, how does the story about the woman with the silver and gold beds and the man with the tzitzit relate to the theme of holiness in Parshat Kedoshim?



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- Evaluate, among other things, the role and status of the women and men, and the perspective of the narrator of the talmudic stories. Explain the opposite outcomes for the protagonists of the two stories—happy marriage in the first and death in the second. How might these stories affect people's attitudes toward prostitution?
- What is the meaning and relevance in your life, community, and society of the prohibition against prostituting a daughter?
- Discuss whether/how spiritual aspirations and holiness are compromised when women throughout the world are subject to prostitution—according to views in this parasha, and in your view. Relate and compare this commandment to other commandments that call to respect human dignity and vulnerability.
- How, in your opinion, are holiness and/or good life connected to sexuality?

### Study Links

Judith Romney Wegner's landmark study of rabbinic texts, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah*, argues that the sages view women's sexuality and reproductive capability as property transferred between father and male spouse. Aside from sexuality, Judith Romney Wegner argues that Jewish women have wide-ranging independence under rabbinic law—with regard to property in particular. [Here](#) is a synopsis of her book by the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project at Brandeis University.

The Jewish Women's Archive published an [online synopsis](#) of White Slavery. This book, [Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation](#) in Argentina by Donna J. Guy analyzes the Argentinian prostitution scene, and the Jewish part in it.

See Edward J. Bristow's carefully researched book, *Prostitution and Prejudice: the Jewish Fight against White Slavery - 1870-1939*. I cannot provide a link to a review or synopsis of this book that is not manipulating and distorting the information, abusing the historical material for anti-Semitic purposes.

Read [this brief account](#) of Bertha Pappenheim's extraordinary work as a Jewish religious feminist activist in Europe.

By way of responding to the question, “Is one permitted to go to a prostitute according to Halacha?” [Here](#) are a few more talmudic stories about men's desire and prostitution set in an Orthodox context.

Leonard Fine writes thoughtfully [here](#)—in the San Francisco *Jewish Weekly*—about his discovery in 1998 of contemporary Israeli criminal involvement in trafficking and prostitution.

[Here](#) is the Israel entry of the US State Department's 2011 Annual Report on Trafficking in Persons.





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In prostitution, "men buy not a self but a body that performs as a self, and it is a self that conforms to the most harmful, damaging, racist and sexist concepts of women..." (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, 1995, New York, New York University Press) [Here](#) is a prostitution fact sheet; more information can be found on the site.

Many Non-Governmental Organizations are active in the struggle against prostitution and trafficking. Learn about the [Coalition Against Trafficking in Women](#), the [Polaris Project](#), the [Angel Coalition](#) operating in the FSU—in locations from which women are trafficked to Israel.

[Here](#) is a report prepared by the Israeli NGO, “Hotline for Migrant Workers” (Kav LaOved), “Human Trafficking in Israel, 2008-2009: Legislation, Enforcement, and Case Law.”

The [Task Force on Human Trafficking](#) works in Israel.

In 1998, Sweden passed the most progressive and effective legislation in the world that criminalizes the “consumer”. See [this article](#) explaining the law, “The Swedish Law that Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services.”

#### **Summary of Issues**

This parasha expresses holiness as an intricate weave of ritual and ethical behavior. The prohibition against prostituting our daughters aims to prevent desecration, both in terms of the clarity and faith of the community of Israel, and in terms of the dignity and wellbeing of girls and women. Unfortunately, this commandment is less than faithfully practiced and desecration is rampant around the world, including also in Israel.

#### **Methods & Observations**

Studying the Torah we encounter difficult problems in humanity. Many ignore issues that reflect poorly on our behavior—as individuals, communities, and as a people, or repress them. Our goal in exposing our failures with concern and sensitivity is not to draw negative attention to the Jewish People, but to take the opportunity the Torah provides to investigate and face our ethical shortcomings with the purpose of better fulfilling our spiritual aspirations to holiness.

#### **Contact**

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