Selected Jewish Texts Relevant to the Problem of Trafficking in Women
Naomi Graetz, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

I. R. Abbahu said on R. Hanina’s authority: Better had a man secretly transgressed than publicly profane God’s name... R. II’ai the Elder said: If a man sees that his [evil] desire is conquering him, let him go to a place where he is unknown, don black and cover himself with black, and do as his heart desires, but let him not publicly profane God’s name. (B. Kiddushin 40a, but see also B. Hagiga 16a)

II. There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. If the Egyptians see you, and think, ‘She is his wife,’ they will kill me and let you live. Please say that you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you...” And because of her, it went well with Abram; he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels (Gen. 12:10-16).

III. When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not be freed as male slaves are. If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her. And if he designated her for his son, he shall deal with her as is the practice with free maidens. If he marries another, he must not withhold from this one her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. If he fails her in these three ways, she shall go free, without payment.

IV. The king’s servants who attended him said, “Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for Your Majesty. Let Your Majesty appoint officers in every province of your realm to assemble all the beautiful young virgins at the fortress Shushan...” And let the maiden who pleases Your Majesty be queen instead of Vashti.” When the king’s order and edict was proclaimed, and when many girls were assembled in the fortress Shushan under the supervision of Hegai, Esther too was taken into the king’s palace... When each girl’s turn came to go to King Ahasuerus at the end of the twelve months’ treatment, thanks and eminence were given to her, and the king was pleased with her...
Such male and female slaves as you may acquire among you, whom they begot in your land. You shall not rule over them ruthlessly; you shall fear your God (Lev. 25: 39-43).

VI. If your kinsman under you continues in straits and must give himself over to you, do not subject him to the treatment of a slave. He shall remain with you only until the jubilee year. Then he and his children with him shall be free of your authority; he shall go back to his family and return to his ancestral holding.— For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude. — You shall not rule over him ruthlessly; you shall fear your God (Lev. 25: 39-43).

VII. Such male and female slaves as you may acquire among you shall become your property; you may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property for all time. Such you may treat as slaves “But as for your Israelite kinsmen, no one shall rule ruthlessly over the other” (Lev. 25: 44-46).

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November, 2009
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VIII. "Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity" (Lev. 19:29).

IX. "Whoever hands his unmarried daughter (to a man) not for the purposes of marriage, as well as the woman who delivers herself not for the purposes of marriage, could lead to the whole world being filled with mamzerim since “from his consenting with many women and not knowing with whom—he could marry his own daughter, or marry her to his son” (Mamzer, Sifra, Kedoshim 7, 5)

X. The redemption of prisoners has a higher priority than supporting the poor and there is no greater mitzvah than that, for the prisoner is among the poor, thirsty and naked and in a life-threatening situation. Those who turn a blind eye from redemption violate a multitude of laws…thus there is no greater mitzvah than the redemption of prisoners. (Rambam Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 8:10)

XI. “Whoever steals a human soul transgresses a negative commandment, as it is said (Ex. 20:13), ‘Do not steal.’ This verse which is said in the ‘Ten Words’ is a warning to the one [who would] steal living souls.” (Mishneh Torah (Hilkhot Geneivah 9:1).

XII. Rab and R. Hanina, R. Johanan and R. Habiba taught… All who can protest against [something wrong that] one of their family [is doing] and does not protest, is held accountable for their family. [All who can protest against something wrong that] a citizen of their city [is doing and does not protest], is held accountable for all citizens of the city. [All who can protest against something wrong that is being done] in the whole world, is accountable together with all citizens of the world. R. Papa observed, And the household members of the Head of the Diaspora are accountable for the whole world. As R. Hanina said it is written “The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders of his people,

Rabbis for Human Rights-North America
November, 2009
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and the princes thereof” (Is. 3). How did the elders sin? Because the elders because do not protest against the princes. (B Shabbat 54b-55a)