Engaging Jewish Communities in Ending Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

A Toolkit and Resource Guide

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Engaging Jewish Communities in Ending Sexual Exploitation is a resource created by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) for groups within faith communities (i.e., women’s groups, study groups, social groups, etc.) and any other individuals of faith who are passionate about ending sexual exploitation. This toolkit provides background information on issues surrounding prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation both generally and affecting Chicago specifically, including pathways to entry, barriers to exiting, and the role that customers and pimps play in maintaining and profiting from the sex trade. This kit can be used to raise awareness and mobilize your community join the fight to end sexual exploitation.

This toolkit includes the following resources:

- Passages that can help you explore the issues surrounding prostitution in a way that is spiritually relevant to your community
- Practical action steps to eliminate the exploitation of women and children

Additionally, there are supplemental materials available on our website (http://www.caase.org/toolkits) where you can find information on organizations you may want to partner with, as well as movies and books to raise awareness.

The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) addresses the culture, institutions, and individuals that perpetrate, profit from, or support sexual exploitation. Our work includes prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services.

CAASE envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade.

Slavery is happening in our communities, but often we do not see it. Simply by becoming aware of the possibility of slavery in our neighborhoods and learning to recognize signs of slavery, we can begin to end this shameful modern institution.

—Rabbis for Human Rights
How Jewish Communities Can Help

Jewish tradition is rooted in the concepts of *tzedakah* and *chesed*. These overarching values form the foundation for Jewish leadership roles in social justice efforts throughout the world. With a long history of striving to make the world better for all, Jewish communities can play a key role in the fight to end human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Between 16,000 and 24,000 women and girls are impacted by the sex trade in Chicago on any given day, most of whom experience high rates of physical and psychological harm.¹ This kit is a tool that can be a catalyst for activism within congregations to fight back against this injustice.

Prostitution and human trafficking are human rights violations that occur in neighborhoods all over Chicago, throughout Illinois, and indeed worldwide. As long as people remain unaware of the root cause and extent of sexual exploitation, victims will continue to be traumatized. Jewish communities can be a vehicle for both raising awareness and advocating on behalf of the victims of sexual exploitation.

This toolkit focuses specifically on the importance of *ending the demand* for paid sex. While this is just one piece of a complicated puzzle, it is the piece that is most commonly overlooked. Providing prostituted individuals with social services and other resources is vital for helping them escape prostitution, but as long as demand exists, vulnerable individuals will continue to be recruited and coerced into the sex trade. That is why we are reaching out to you to help us *end the demand*.

We hope that you will use this toolkit to educate your fellow congregation members about the harms of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and work with them to identify ways to take action.

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Activist Spotlight: Bertha Pappenheim

In the early 1900s, dozens of women from Jewish feminist organizations volunteered to take action against human trafficking by searching European and American seaports and train stations for young women traveling alone. They offered the girls assistance with finding jobs and housing in hopes of preventing the young women from being manipulated into prostitution. They also passed out fliers warning the girls of the possible dangers that awaited them at their destinations and whom they could contact if they ever felt they were at risk.

Bertha Pappenheim was one of the leaders of the movement. She decided at a young age to dedicate her life to helping women and children in the Jewish community. Her work included rescuing 120 Jewish children from Russian pogroms, setting up an orphanage in Frankfurt, and founding the *Judischer Frauenbund*, a Jewish organization that raised awareness about white slavery. Bertha toured Eastern Europe and the Middle East to learn about the conditions in which poor small-town Jewish girls lived and why they were so easily tricked by traffickers. She met with many Jewish leaders on her journey and worked to get them involved in the struggle to end human trafficking.

Through her work, Bertha became the most influential advocate on behalf of trafficked Jewish women and girls of her time. Though she met a great deal of opposition from people who did not want to acknowledge that human trafficking was occurring in their communities, she never let others’ resistance prevent her from devoting her life to activism.
SLAVERY: *What is the age-old issue?*

Human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, is pervasive nationally and internationally. There are more people enslaved today than at the peak of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the United States, a person is a victim of sex trafficking if s/he is being exploited to engage in commercial sex.

A person is a victim of a severe form of sex trafficking if:

s/he is being forced, coerced, or tricked to either work or engage in sex for money, and s/he would experience serious harm if s/he tried to leave situation.

**OR**

s/he is under 18 and is having sex for money—it isn’t necessary to prove force or coercion for minors: the law recognizes that children cannot meaningfully consent to sex.

While transportation or movement can be involved in human trafficking, trafficking is simply forced/coerced labor; it doesn’t require transportation or movement across borders.

“*Victims are deceived, lured, and/or kidnapped.*”

Kidnapping has been condemned from the earliest days of Jewish life. Joseph was kidnapped by his own brothers and sold into Egyptian slavery, where the mistress of the house thought she had a right to do with him anything she wanted, even sexually. Joseph fled and ended up in the dungeon. The Ten Commandments’ prohibition “You shall not steal” is interpreted to refer to the stealing of persons because stealing material goods is proscribed in Lev. 19:11 and because the command lies next to two offenses against the human person: murder and adultery.

The Torah prohibits putting a stumbling block before the blind, which is interpreted to mean that deceiving and luring anyone with false advertising or false claims violates the commandment. Those who offer a modeling career only to kidnap and force people into prostitution put a stumbling block before the blind. Cases exist in Jewish history of procurers marrying impoverished women to enslave them in prostitution. Well-documented violations of this Torah law—and of the law of all civilized lands—have occurred time and again, as desperate, naïvely trusting youth are promised acting, modeling, and other lucrative careers only to have their passports seized once they put themselves in the hands of the enslavers. They are then shipped abroad and forced into prostitution.

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1 Ecclesiastes 4:1

2 Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking.
Consider Rahab, the prostituted woman of Jericho (Joshua 2:1). She gave aid to Israelite spies, and when Joshua led the Israelites into the Holy Land, she was spared. Jewish tradition then credits her with walking away from her past to become a religious Jew.

Why did Rahab hide the Israelite spies? Could it have been because she realized the hopelessness of her situation? Unless there was a veritable social revolution, she had no way out of her predicament. As her exit strategy, she backed the newcomers in the hope that when at last they rose to power, she would arise out of her sexual enslavement.

In our time, too, most of those enslaved as prostituted women see no way out of their situation. They are often drugged, under surveillance, deprived of sleep, and held against their will. They may be young runaways picked up at a bus station, sheltered, and later intimidated into submission. Or they may be illegal immigrants who fear deportation or reprisals against their loved ones at home by the gang that kidnapped them. Today’s trafficked women need a virtual revolution in law and public values to free them.

The Exodus from Egypt (Mitzrayim) was also an exodus from mei tzarim, a place of narrow straits. The Israelites leave for wide-open expanses of physical and spiritual liberation. The bondage in Mitzrayim is fully ended by the liberating and open expanses of redemption in Canaan, which occurs thanks to Rahab’s trust in the Israelites and their destiny.

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“Sexual slaves are unable to free themselves.”³

³ Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking.

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**ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE**

**Learn more about the issue:** There are many films and books about human trafficking and prostitution. Expand your personal knowledge about these issues by checking out any of our recommended resources or facilitate a book club or film screening for a group of friends or your community of faith (see the supplemental materials for suggested books and films).

**Pray:** Pray for justice and healing in your worship services, small group meetings, or personal practice. Here is one example adapted from a prayer offered by the Sisters of the Holy Family:

> God of all peoples, awaken our hearts and deepen our commitment to work for a world where every person is free and able to live their lives fully and joyfully. We ask for conversion of heart for traffickers and for strong laws that protect victims and resources so that they may lead fulfilling lives. Help us to grow in our awareness that we are all connected. Give us wisdom, inspiration, and courage to stand in solidarity, so that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all your people. Amen.

**Participate in National Human Trafficking Awareness Month:** In 2012, President Obama declared January to be National Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Throughout the month, events are held to raise awareness about and promote taking action against human trafficking. Choose an action from this section, create your own, or join an event planned by another organization to commemorate this month.
Many people believe that individuals in prostitution are there by choice. But research conducted both in Chicago and nationwide reveals that a substantial percentage of women in prostitution are homeless, survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, and first sold for sex at a very young age.

The overwhelming majority of individuals engaged in prostitution have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, with estimates ranging from 65 to 90 percent, and nationally, the average age of entry for females in the sex trade is 11 to 14 years old. According to an FBI estimate, a woman’s average life expectancy is only seven years after the date of entry into prostitution. Moreover, women and girls in the sex industry also have a mortality rate that is 40 times higher than the national average.

Prostitution is a human rights abuse and constitutes violence against women and girls.

The sexual and physical violence and psychological harm inherent in prostitution erodes an individual’s human dignity, concept of self-worth, and even basic health.

In Genesis 34, Dinah is raped by Hamor. He then falls in love with her and wants to marry her, but our ancestors, Dinah’s brothers, say, “Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?” From the most ancient of days, every man knows that a prostitute lives in danger of physical harm and that treating someone “like a prostitute” means to show no respect for their physical person. Human rights begin when we acknowledge that everyone has a right to the physical safety of his or her person.

In Biblical days, desperate families sold children or adult daughters into sexual slavery. How sad that this practice continues in our own day. The effect of such violence is what Torah views as the degradation of society: "Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.” (Lev. 19:29)

Every 60 seconds, two more children are forced into slavery.
—Stop the Traffik

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5 US Department of Justice, Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors (Washington, DC, 2007).
7 Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temples Committee Against Human Trafficking.
Mercy and Justice: Gender Inequality

Human beings are created B’tselem Elohim, in the image of God, who “created them male and female.” (Gen. 1:27) At the outset, in the first creation story, men and women are created equally and are blessed.

In parshat Nitsavim (Deut. 29:9), Torah clearly establishes the covenant equally among men and women. While working out that equality in Jewish life is a continuing process, there is no doubt that the vision of the covenant includes all Jewish persons equally. We have the religious foundation stones upon which to build an edifice of gender equality.

So long as there is prostitution, gender equality cannot exist, for prostituted individuals are not perceived as human beings made in the Divine image and worthy of respect. Those who hold them in thrall and those who pay for sex perceive them as mere objects to be used for the fulfillment of the exploiters’ own needs or desires.

No one chooses prostitution: it’s a choice of no choice.

History shows that prostitution is, in the vast majority of cases, the last resort of impoverished women. On March 30, 2008, an Israeli Knesset committee was shocked by testimonies of prostituted women who chose to share their life stories publicly. One said, “I sat there with my head hung low and a client came and picked me. That was the moment when I broke and became a different person. A person who works as a prostitute is trying to overcome the shame. They are lying to themselves in an effort to repress it, to say you can get used to this, but you can’t.”

Their harsh experiences convinced parliament members to withdraw a proposal to legalize prostitution, realizing that women do not choose to be prostituted.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Adopt congregational fasting/prayer: Choose a time of year and a length of time appropriate for your congregation or group to fast and pray for the sexually exploited individuals in your community. Incorporate into this time opportunities to teach your congregation or group about the issues facing women in prostitution and appropriate responses to the problem.

Ask your rabbi to address the issue in a sermon: Raise awareness about sexual exploitation in your congregation by asking your rabbi to address the issue in a religious sermon. Rabbis for Human Rights—North America offers a sample of a Yom Kippur sermon, which can be found at http://www.rhrna.org/issuescampaigns/slavery-a-human-trafficking/resources/126-yomkippursermononsextrafficking5771.html

Make counseling available: Depending on the size and makeup of your synagogue, licensed counselors or therapists may already be part of your community. If you have the resources, your congregation should consider the benefits of adding a counselor to your staff to provide trauma treatment and counseling services to victims. And if you are a small synagogue with minimal resources, just being able to refer someone to a counseling service can be incredibly helpful to those in need and promotes the establishment of a safe, supportive network for victims. Train your leaders and staff that when speaking with victims, they should listen to the story, believe it, and refer the person to proper counseling.

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8 Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking
9 Ibid.
**SERVING OTHERS**

**Isaiah 61:1-3**

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;
3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Individuals involved in the sex trade need a variety of social services and other resources to exit the sex trade safely. Unfortunately, instead of viewing these individuals as victims in need of assistance, society tends to label them as criminals.

Although ample research demonstrates that the customers, pimps, and traffickers are fueling the sex trade and abusing women and girls in prostitution, the criminal justice and legal systems continue to target and punish the victims. This one-sided focus fails to address the root cause of prostitution: the demand to purchase sex.

As long as demand exists, more vulnerable women and children will be forced, coerced, and manipulated to meet the demand. The equation is simple: eliminate demand, eliminate commercial sexual exploitation.

**Prostitute women and girls are victims.**

Beruria, the scholarly wife of Rabbi Meir, was the daughter of Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon. When the Roman authorities slew Hanina for teaching Torah, his persecutors captured another daughter of Hanina who supported her father in his cause. They forced her into the life of a slave in a brothel. Beruria said to her husband, “I am ashamed to have my sister placed in a brothel.” So Meir took a double measure of denarii and succeeded in releasing his sister-in-law.

He fulfilled the mitzvah of *pidyon shevuyim*, redeeming the captive, but he had to flee the country for a time.

Is there much difference between what the Roman Empire did to Beruria’s sister and what today’s traffickers do to lonely young women from rural areas that arrive in the city looking for a new life, bewildered and afraid? These women are readily identified, offered housing or a party to attend, given drugs, and held in poverty and addiction to do the will of their captors.

The john, too, victimizes the prostituted woman, for men are almost always stronger than women and can force their way upon them. Sex happens in isolated places, often where the woman cannot call out for help, and she may be coerced to act against her will on pain of physical harm. In short, she is victimized time and again.

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10 Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking
In the transaction of buying and selling sex, men who buy sex, human traffickers, and pimps are criminals.\textsuperscript{11}

Initially, Torah prohibits women from becoming prostitutes: “There shall be no harlot among the daughters of Israel.” (Deut. 23:18) At the end of the Middle Ages, it was decided that a married man who frequented prostituted women was obliged to give his wife a divorce. This law pinpoints the john as the central problem in the equation.

By the 16th century, Jewish communities began to impose heavy fines on landlords who rented their houses for the purpose of prostitution. Anybody who knew of such a case was obliged to report it, and the bawdy house would be closed. Thus, those who profited from prostitution even tangentially were held responsible to cease and desist.

Recently, a law was proposed to Knesset to hold the john responsible for solicitation of paid sex. As of 2008, the law has not passed, but its proposal and serious debate demonstrate Israel’s awareness that men, the users, are at the center of the transgression.

Demand for paid sex fuels human trafficking for prostitution.

Not everyone knows that in the matter of theft, Judaism also holds the receiver responsible. If no one were willing to receive stolen goods, crimes of theft would drop markedly. It’s a function of the free market.

Comparably, if no one bought sex, virtually no sex would be for sale. Those who buy sex must reckon with the fact that their presence in that “market” gives unscrupulous and violent men cause to dominate, enslave, and abuse women and children, often moving the enslaved across the country or across borders in order to profit from willing buyers of sex.

\textsuperscript{11} Teachings prepared by Temple Emanu-El-Beth-Sholom’s Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking

\textbf{ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE}

\textbf{Sign up for End Demand Illinois Action Alerts:} The End Demand Illinois Campaign is shifting law enforcement’s attention to sex traffickers and people who buy sex, while creating a network of support for survivors of the sex trade. Sign up at \url{http://www.enddemandillinois.org/}

\textbf{Watch Demand with members of your congregation:} This documentary exposes the men who buy commercial sex, the vulnerable women and children sold as commodities, and the facilitators of the trade within the marketplace of exploitation. You can watch the movie online at: \url{http://www.sharedhope.org/Media/VideoResources.aspx}

\textbf{Host} a book club or movie screening for your parish or faith-based group and discuss what you learn as well as steps you can take to help prostituted women and children. Refer to the supplemental materials to find relevant books and movies. \url{http://www.caase.org/toolkits}

\textbf{Serve fair-trade coffee or have traffick-free chocolate parties:} Buy fair-trade and traffick-free chocolate and coffee and use them to start conversations with congregation members and friends about human trafficking, both abroad and in Illinois. Use fair-trade coffee at religious functions and encourage surrounding communities (especially schools and colleges) to do the same. Challenge members of your congregation to purchase food, clothing, and other products that are fair trade. Go to \url{http://www.slavefree.com} or \url{http://www.equalexchange.com} to learn more about slave-free products. Free-trade items can be purchased for gifts for all occasions throughout the year.
MORE ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Add a personal dimension: Sometimes we find ourselves so removed from an issue that we cannot imagine that it is happening in our communities. As a faith leader, you can help raise awareness about human trafficking and sexual exploitation by hosting an “educational hour” and inviting a prostitution survivor or expert to share their experiences and expertise with your congregation. This is a great opportunity to create dialogue on these important issues. If you are interested in having someone speak to your community, please contact the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation at info@caase.org.

Volunteer: Partner with organizations that are working on this issue. Many organizations and coalitions are looking for individuals to help support their goals through volunteer time, collaborative community efforts, and donations. Work with the members of your congregation to identify their skill sets and how they can contribute to the missions of potential partnering organizations. Areas of need are medical care, translation, job placement, housing, legal services, and mentoring. Your community of faith can also help by organizing a clothing, blanket, or food drive. Chicago-based organizations working to end sexual exploitation can be found in the supplemental materials.

Talk with congregants who are government and law enforcement officials: Set up a meeting to discuss the reality of human trafficking and the efforts of anti-trafficking organizations working on the issue. Tell them how to get involved in the work of these organizations.

Build a relationship with your local elected officials: Help your representatives understand how important it is not to revictimize women in their community. Advocate for targeting those causing the harm—pimps, traffickers, and customers—instead of revictimizing prostituted individuals with arrest and incarceration. Most political leaders allot one day per week to meet with their constituents. Chicago residents can find their alderman at http://www.chicityclerk.com/citycouncil/alderman/find.html.

Contact your legislators: Your voice counts! Keep abreast of relevant legislation and support initiatives that provide resources to women and hold perpetrators accountable. An easy way for you and your congregation to voice your opinions and make an impact on this issue is to write, call, or meet your local legislator. Each Illinois legislator has a Springfield office and a community office. And each US legislator has a DC office and a local office. You can find your local and national representatives at http://www.capwiz.com/cfw/state/main/?state=IL&view=myofficials#0.

Monitor the Media: If you see something in the media that promotes or glorifies the exploitation of women, write letters to the editor and/or producer. All forms of media (newspapers, magazines, television programs, etc.) have avenues for this. If you see advertising or billboards that are offensive or degrading, contact the company or publisher and inform them of your opinion. To access CAASE’s guide on how to respond to harmful depictions of the sex trade in the media, please visit http://www.caase.org/toolkits.

For those of us who are in a position to do something to combat human slavery, however small our contribution, neutrality is a sin.
—Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz, Department of Defense
Connect the issue to religious and secular holidays: Harness the goodwill of the holidays and holy days when people come together to celebrate what matters to them most, and use these opportunities to educate individuals about sexual exploitation and trafficking. Two occasions that can be connected to the issue are Passover and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Think creatively to make this issue relevant to other holidays.

Passover (Pesach): Passover, or Pesach, is one of the most well-known Jewish holidays and is rooted in the history of the Jewish transition from enslavement in Egypt to freedom. Approximately 3,000 years ago in Egypt, God had mercy on the Jews who were being oppressed by Pharaoh and led them out of slavery and oppression. Passover is celebrated once a year as a means of passing on to the next generation a crucial piece of Jewish history and an understanding of the horrors of exploitation and slavery and of the human right to freedom. Use this holiday to explore themes and issues surrounding slavery and exploitation.

Use each of the four glasses of wine to raise awareness about four different victims or types of exploitation (forced prostitution, forced labor, domestic servitude, organ trade, child soldiers, mail-order brides, etc.)

Continue to add to the significance of the Seder plate by adding something to commemorate victims and survivors of exploitation, such as a food made with slave-free labor. You can find ideas at http://www.slavefree.com.

Include a table card designed to peak the curiosity of the participants and encourage them to ask questions about human trafficking. Your text could note, “We were slaves in Egypt. They are slaves in the US.” An example is located at http://www.tfht.org/media/passoverpacketing-final.pdf.

For a D’var Torah or a testimony reading to include in your Seder, go to http://www.tfht.org/media/passoverpacketing-final.pdf. Also, create your own anti-trafficking Seder by using CAASE’s Freedom Haggadah, which can be found at http://www.caase.org/toolkits.

Proverbs 14:31
Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

Psalm 82:3
Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Proverbs 31:9
Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.
Thank you for using our toolkit for Jewish communities. We hope that you found the resource helpful. Faith-based communities regularly perform inspiring work that is rooted in love, compassion, and leadership. Therefore, Jewish communities are in a strategic position to work towards eliminating human trafficking and sexual exploitation. CAASE is always available to answer any questions, suggestions, or concerns that you may have while reading and working with this toolkit. Please do not hesitate to contact us at outreach@caase.org.

We also encourage you to look at the supplemental information provided in addition to this toolkit. These materials include

- Religious statements against sexual exploitation
- Faith-based programs/curricula
- Chicago-based organizations: Direct Services/Outreach
- Chicago-based organizations: Advocacy
- Must-see films
- Must-read books

Lastly, we would greatly appreciate your feedback regarding your experience with the toolkit. You can fill out a brief survey online at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W5NZRXM.