

From *Sin to Shekel*: A Possible Choice For a ‘Nice’ Jewish Girl

by

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A Research Paper Submitted to the Graduate Program in Religion

In conformity with the requirements for

The degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

August, 2014

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Abstract

All prostitutes are victims of human trafficking; all prostitutes are voiceless individuals who live a denigrating and disparaging life. Statements such as these belittle these individuals, remove their sense of agency, and present a general narrative that is extremely problematic. Through using Judaism as a specific case study, I challenge discourses that present all prostitutes in a homogenized light. Analyzing Rabbinic Judaism (i.e. the Bible and the Talmud), and the current discourse of prostitution in Israel, I reveal how, although the treatment of prostitutes varies between the two, the end result is the same: prostitutes are always the ones discussed, never able to insert their voice into the conversation, and always portrayed as victimized characters who need an outsider to rescue them from their lives of denigration. Through interjecting their voices into the discussion, by relying on ‘unorthodox’ methodological tools, specifically the Internet, their voices are brought to fruition. Bringing their voices to the forefront, highlighting the same treatment and perceived characteristics of prostitutes in the Bible/Talmud and currently in Israel, I demonstrate how, whether one is discussing ‘sin’ or ‘shekel,’ prostitution is a possible choice for a ‘nice’ Jewish girl.

Acknowledgements

I would like to firstly thank all my professors this year who have helped me develop and improve as a graduate student; specifically:

My supervisor, Mari Réthelyi, for always being willing to help and talk things out throughout this year; for giving me moral support throughout my computer crisis; and for trying so desperately to convince me to get Facebook.

My second reader and program coordinator Pamela Dickey Young, for her constant support and encouragement throughout the year, and for giving me hope that one day I could produce something of artistic merit.

Ellen Goldberg, for helping me gain a better appreciation for the various applications of the theories and methods in Religious Studies, and reminding me of how much I despise the *Wizard of Oz*.

James Miller, who never made me feel as though my work was abhorrent (even though he probably should have), yet, always helped me to improve it.

Bill Morrow, for being a constant presence around the office, always willing to discuss and help me with my research, and for never (at least out loud) judging the amount of times I went to Tim Horton's/ Starbucks.

To everyone in the program:

Nathan, for (albeit briefly), making the ‘vacation office’ even less productive and even more enjoyable.

Kurosh, for giving me a work ethic to inspire to, even if it was one I never put into practice.

Alex, for loving Kingston as much as I did, and making it a more entertaining time. By the way, I know one day you’ll slay Van Helsing.

Morgan, for making this school year (and specifically) this summer so much fun. For being a great friend, although someone whose fabulous dresses, nails, and hairstyles (even with the mishap in the winter) I was always extremely envious of.

Colby, for being an unbelievable friend and being someone who I wish to emulate. There are too many possible things to thank-you for, so I will just say thank-you for helping me find my ‘place’ throughout the program.

An individual I greatly admire quoted Felix Frankfurter this year; it is a quotation that I hope that can begin to illuminate how much thanks I owe my parents and how rarely I express it—“Gratitude is one of the least articulated of the emotions, especially when it is deep.”

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge myself (narcissistic I know) for not even being able to produce a succinct acknowledgments page.

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Introduction

In an article entitled “Rethinking Canada’s Prostitution Laws,” Kate Heartfield discusses some of the debates and speculations with regards to prostitution laws in Canada. Through highlighting the possible different avenues Canada can explore,¹ she concludes that no matter what the interim or permanent decision reached regarding Canada’s prostitution laws, the one apparent issue that needs to be addressed is problematic generalizations and biases surrounding women and sex.² Furthermore, even more than challenging preconceived assumptions, she prominently and applicably describes what is at stake if an individual, or the populace as a whole, homogenizes those who practice prostitution. According to Heartfield,

Many sex workers are exploited and harmed. Many do need help or want options. But there are some who say they are not victims, that they wish to continue their work without fearing for their lives... Those women who do not see themselves as victims have to be silenced in the national discussion. They have to be told they simply don’t understand. And that’s no way to respect women’s rights and equality, either.³

This quotation speaks to the significance in being mindful of how to approach discussions and analyses of prostitution. Although Heartfield is specifically addressing debates in Canada, this quotation has significant bearing on the general discourse on prostitution.

Key sentiments obtained from Heartfield’s quotation are: prostitutes are generally reduced to one overarching narrative, belittled as individuals, removed of their agency

¹ Since this article was written earlier this year, Heartfield does not include recent developments with regards to prostitution laws in Canada that were passed this spring/summer (2014).

² Kate Heartfield, “Rethinking Canada’s Prostitution Laws.” *The Ottawa Citizen* [Ottawa, Ont.], 28 Feb. 2014: A.11.

³ Ibid.

and subsequently their humanity. These sentiments are constructed through a Judeo-Christian morality bias that deprives these individuals of their voice, as it perpetuates that they are all denigrated and exploited. By presenting a disparaging view of the life of a prostitute, this is not only a problematic, erroneous depiction of all prostitutes, but also one that fails to respect those individuals who choose to become prostitutes. Furthermore, portraying their lives as one of denigration dismisses women's agency, paternalizes them, and reduces them to minors who cannot think for, or make 'good' choices for themselves.

These are common problems and motifs prevalent when analyzing the rhetoric and debates around prostitution; it is specifically evident when examining prostitution in Judaism.⁴ Through using Jewish prostitution as a specific case study, I want to challenge morality biases that dictate that prostitutes are conceived of, and discussed of in a homogenized light. I am challenging this through highlighting that it is conceivable that prostitution can be a way of earning a living that an individual chooses. Emphasis, or awareness of the fact that prostitution can be seen by those who practice prostitution as a form of employment, will be prevalent through trying to locate the voice of the prostitute, further contesting the portrayal of them all as voiceless victims. While stipulating that there are cases where prostitutes have been victimized, I will contest the reduction of all prostitutes to victims, specifically victims of human trafficking, which is often the common discourse of prostitution in Israel.

In chapter two, I investigate prostitution in Judaism mainly in the context of present day Israel through looking at the underlying religious texts of Judaism that

⁴ I am aware of the sensitivities surrounding this topic; surrounding prostitution in general, and specifically with regards to discussing prostitution in Judaism. Specifically, I am aware of sensitivities of sex and Judaism and anti-Semitic discussion. I do not wish to participate in it with this paper; this paper does not address those biases, but the bias again women only.

influences Israeli culture today. Views on agency and morality that are located in Rabbinic Judaism are imperative to understanding Modern Judaism, and consequently views and debates on prostitution in Israel.⁵ Rabbinic Judaism is centered on discussion and debates by the rabbis on biblical scriptures. Through examination of these scriptures and debates by the rabbis, it is apparent that no such synchronized consensus on prostitution, or specifically on who constitutes a *zonah*⁶ is found in the Bible, or in the Talmud. As I will show in chapter one, while no accord is reached in these texts, the same cannot be said for recent discussion surrounding prostitution in Israel. Just to reiterate, the overarching narrative in Israel has rendered all prostitutes victims of human trafficking, removing their agency and belittling them as individuals. We see how problematic this current view is through inserting the voices of prostitutes into this discussion, through interviews and personal accounts obtained on the Internet, as I show in chapter three. Seeking to uncover these voices on the Internet, nonetheless still reveals obstacles in inquiring about these voices, as “discovering silenced voices is a difficult endeavor, and can be very frustrating, because silencing processes can be very effective.”⁷

Silenced voices are difficult to bring out of the periphery; in order to find them requires a methodological approach that is ‘unorthodox,’ i.e. relying on information obtained on the Internet. Throughout this paper other methodological tools, specifically hermeneutics and biblical exegesis, are employed as well to assist in locating these voices. Hermeneutics and biblical exegesis help in highlighting specific language and context

⁵ Tal Ilan, “Introduction,” in *A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Tal Ilan, Tamara Or, Dorothea M. Salzer, Christiane Steuer and Irina Wandrey (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 1-24, 1.

⁶ A secular term for prostitute.

⁷ Ilan. “Introduction.” 8.

according to Naomi Koltun-Fromm and Philip Gardner, both of whom have done extensive work on hermeneutics.⁸ Furthermore, and according to Daniel Patte, exegesis elucidates the discourse of the text, focusing on semantics, emphasizing that the text is a “closed system of signs.”⁹ After using exegesis, Patte iterates that hermeneutics allows one to clarify what the text means in the context of the individual interpreting it.¹⁰ In other words, and to borrow a sentiment from Phyllis Trible, through exegesis and hermeneutics, “though mute, a text speaks to attentive hearers in particular contexts.”¹¹ Thus, through hermeneutics and biblical exegesis, narratives of prostitution in the Bible can be analyzed and contextualized, highlighting the underpinnings prevalent in contemporary Israel. The significance behind examining biblical passages on prostitution shows how, although not favoured in the Bible, nor in discussion by the rabbis, prostitution not only existed, but also, while not viewed as morally sound, was not seen or discussed as a prohibited act of denigration; these sentiments however, are not palpable in Israel today. Furthermore, over three thousand years, the voice of the prostitute has been marginalized, remained silent, as prostitutes are always the ones being discussed, never able to speak for themselves, having their voices heard. Allowing these voices to go unheard generalizes and distorts views on prostitution, and the research done on this subject matter.

Angela Campbell demonstrates the issues and concerns for failing to listen to these ‘peripheral’ voices in her work entitled, “Wives’ Tales: Reflecting Research in

⁸ Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), 5. ; Philip Gardner, *Hermeneutics, History and Memory* (England: Routledge, 2010), 36.

⁹ Daniel Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 4.

Bountiful.” Although Campbell’s research is on polygamy for Status of Women Canada, she articulates how, when she was able to interview women in polygamous relationships who wanted their voices to be heard, her perception and research of these women’s lives greatly changed.¹² After conducting these interviews, she saw how important their voices are, specifically how key their voices are to a researcher.¹³ Without their voices, then she realized how the expectations and judgments of the researcher could distort the portrayal of the lives of these individuals.¹⁴ Contemplating the limitations and biases of the researcher she asks:

whether academics and policy makers can credibly assess and write about polygamy without hearing from those who abide by this practice...should we not focus specifically on accessing the experiences of *women* associated with this way of life?¹⁵

Although Campbell’s apprehensions are towards researching polygamy, using Judith R. Baskin’s chapter entitled, “Prostitution: Not a Job for a Nice Jewish Girl” in *The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism*, reveals how Campbell’s analysis is applicable to Jewish prostitution. While I wish I could say that Baskin’s title was facetious, it is unfortunately not the case; through reading her brief discussion on prostitution, she has trivialized, over-generalized and spoken of prostitution with similar laments that Campbell discusses. Of course I am not denying that in pursuing this project I do not have biases and limitations as well; nonetheless, I still wish to challenge such simplistic and problematic presentations of: ‘prostitution: not a job for a nice Jewish girl.’ After all, and as Stacy, a woman who sells sex toys in Greenwich New York describes, when asked

¹² Angela Campbell, “Wives’ Tales: Reflecting on Research in Bountiful.” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 23, Number 1-2, 2008, 121-141, 121.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 121-122.

why ‘a nice Jewish girl’ chooses to sell sex toys, replies, “perhaps a better question is why wouldn’t a nice Jewish girl get into this business.”¹⁶ Framed alternatively, why cannot prostitution be ‘a possible choice for a nice Jewish girl?’

¹⁶ N.A. “What It’s Like to Be a Jewish Woman Who Sells Luxury Sex Toys,” *Jewrotica* (Jan. 2013).

Chapter 1: From disputing ‘prostitution is not a job for a nice Jewish girl’ to locating discussion of prostitution in the Bible and Talmud

Although Baskin may definitively argue that ‘prostitution is not a job for a nice Jewish girl,’ the rabbis in the Talmud did not reach such a conclusion or a consensus for that matter on what exactly constitutes a person being rendered a prostitute, or *zonah*. It is clear, that through examination of the Bible, and through analysis of the Talmud, there is not one specific definition of *zonah*. Furthermore, and as we shall see in this chapter, not only is there no definitive explanation of who is a *zonah* in the Bible, or the Talmud, but prominent scholars and feminists, such as Rachel Biale, struggle with defining *zonah* as well. We can begin to see the complexity of *zonah* in the Bible with examination of the laws in Leviticus on prostitution.

1.1 Defining *zonah*

I have chosen to examine Leviticus 19:29, Leviticus 21:13-14, and Leviticus 21:9 in the JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh, because the first two highlight the exclusive case in which prostitution is prohibited, and the third acts as a bit of an anomaly. The three rulings in Leviticus are the following:

“Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and make the land be filled with depravity” (Leviticus XIX: 29, JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh).

אֲלֵת-תְּחִלֵּל אָתָּה-בְּתָךְ לְקָנוֹתֶה ; וְלֹא-תַזְנֵה הָאָרֶץ , וְמַלְאָה
¹⁷ הָאָרֶץ זֶה.

“He may marry only a woman who is a virgin. A widow or a divorced woman, or one who is degraded by harlotry-such he may not marry” (Leviticus XXI: 13-14).

וְהִיא , אֲשֶׁר בְּבָתוּלִיהָ יִקַּח .
 אֶלְמָנָה וְרוּשָׁה וְתַלְלָה זֹנָה , אָתָּה-אֱלֹה לֹא יִקַּח : כִּי
¹⁸ אִם-בְּתוּלָה מַעֲמִים , יִקַּח אֲשֶׁר .

“When the daughter of a priest defiles herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she defiles; she shall be put to the fire” (Leviticus XXI: 9).

וְבַת אִישׁ פָּהוּ , כִּי תִּחְלֵל לְזִנּוֹת—אָתָּה-אֲבִיךָ הִיא מְחֻלָּה , בְּאַשְׁתָּוֹתָךְ .¹⁹

The rules pertaining to harlotry are strictly with regards to a priest marrying a prostitute, and or, a priest having a daughter who becomes a prostitute. As Irene E. Riegner outlines in *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot* (VHH), clearly these laws reveal that prostitution in general was not prohibited, nor that prostitution was viewed as “socially destructive.”²⁰

Examining the laws in Leviticus reveals that in the Bible, while prostitution is generally not prohibited, the prostitute is also not held in high esteem. This sentiment is also found in the Talmud, specifically the tractate Yebamoth. Under the context of debating about two betrothed couples having intercourse, but exchanging each other’s

¹⁷ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org> (Leviticus XIX:29).

¹⁸ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org> (Leviticus XXI: 13-14).

¹⁹ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org> (Leviticus XXI: 9).

²⁰ Irene E. Riegner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: The Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009),175.

partners, the ruling given that “they must be kept apart for three months,” in case the woman is pregnant, highlights general views of prostitutes.²¹ Within this context came forth the discussion of: if three months should apply to all women; to which the response was:

All these women, with the exception of a proselyte and an emancipated slave who were of age, must wait three months. An Israelitish minor, however, need not wait three months. But how? If by a declaration of refusal, surely Samuel has already stated this one! And if by a letter of divorce, Samuel surely stated that she must wait! For Samuel said: If she exercise her right of refusal against him, she need not wait three months; if he gave her a letter of divorce she must wait three months!- [it was] rather in respect of harlotry, and harlotry with a minor is an unusual occurrence.²²

Their discussion continued on to preventative measures for those “with whom harlotry is not unusual!”²³ However, on this subject matter, Rabbi Jose had little trepidation because, “He is of the opinion that a woman who plays the harlot makes use of absorbent in order to prevent conception.”²⁴ In the tractate Yebamoth, and throughout Talmudic passages, it is apparent that while the rabbis did not forbid prostitution²⁵ their language regarding harlotry sees it as contemptible. This contempt for prostitution is revealed in the two excerpts taken from the Tractate Sotah and Tractate Abodah Zarah:

Rabbi ‘Awira expounded, sometimes in the name of R. Ammi and at other times in the name of R. Assi: Whoever eats bread without previously washing the hands is as though he had intercourse with a harlot.²⁶ And how far is one to keep away? Said R. Hisda: Four cubits. And to what to what do the Rabbis apply, *of the hire of a harlot*? – To the saying of R. Hisda. For R. Hisda said: Every harlot who allows herself to be hired will at the end have to hire [she will despised by all].²⁷

²¹ m. Yebamoth. III: IX.

²² b. Yebamoth 35a.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Except for priests to marry a prostitute, a daughter of a priest to become a prostitute, or when prostitution brings about adultery.

²⁶ b. Sotah 4b.

²⁷ b. Abodah Zarah 17a.

This passage emphasizes that while permitted, the language used to discuss prostitution is distasteful and convoluted.

We see that when looking at biblical passages on prostitution, that *zonah*, hereafter cited as *znh*, similarly to when we analyze Leviticus and select Talmudic passages, can possess various meanings beyond just the contemporary understanding of a prostitute. *Znh* can be used in a figurative way; for example, a passage that was the catalyst for the discussion by the rabbis as to who constitutes a *zonah*: Hosea IV: 10: “Truly, they shall eat, but not be sated; They shall swill, but not be satisfied, because they have forsaken the Lord to practice lechery,” is one specific instance that illustrates how *znh* can possess a metaphorical meaning (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh). Citing the work of various translators and interpreters,²⁸ in VHH, Riegner states that Hosea IV: 10 is translated as: “and they ate but they will not be satisfied, they cause themselves to participate in non-Yahwist religious praxis but they will not be full.”²⁹ Although the English translation does not directly reference *znh*³⁰ specifically, examining the Hebrew script below reveals the context and seeming meaning of *znh*.

וְאָכְלוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁבְּעוּ כִּי־הָנָנוּ וְלֹא יִפְרְצּוּ כִּי־תְּהִרְתָּה־יְהוָה עָזָבוּ
לְשָׁמָר.³¹

Similarly to Hosea IV: 10, in Hosea I: 2, *znh* is used to represent idolatry and not used as a means to discuss more contemporary definitions of harlotry. This is evident as Hosea

²⁸ Interpreters such as Jörg Jermias (1983) and Hans Walter Wolff (1977).

²⁹ Riegner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: the Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH*. 98.

³⁰ I have bolded *znh* in the Hebrew script to emphasize it to the reader.

³¹ This is not the only time *znh* appears in Hosea and is used to refer to non-Yahwist religious praxis.

I:2 reads: “When the Lord first spoke to Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land will stray from following the Lord” (JPS Hebrew English TaNaKh); or in Hebrew:

תְּחִלָּת זָכָר-יְהוָה , בְּהַוְשָׁע :
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים , לְךָ קַח-לְךָ אֲשֶׁת זְנוּנִים וַיָּלֹךְ
זְנוּנִים--כִּי-זֹנָה תִּזְוָה הָאָרֶץ , מִאָחָרִי יְהוָה .³²

In reading various verses from Hosea, it is apparent that *znh* adequately conveys Koehler’s and Baumgartner’s characterization of *znh* in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* as: “to be unfaithful in a relationship with God.”³³ Highlighting how in the Bible *znh* can possess a metaphorical meaning, unlike contemporary understandings of prostitution, stresses the necessity to discern if this was the same characterization of *znh* debated by the rabbis in the Talmud, specifically the tractate *Yebamoth*.

I have specifically chosen to highlight discussion in this tractate, as it shows the amount of discussion and discord between the rabbis as to how to define *zonah*. This specific passage shows up in the context of discussion how a priest is prohibited from marrying a woman unable to conceive children. Citing Hosea IV: 10, Rabbi Judah brings to the forefront the description that, “*And they shall eat, and not have enough, they shall commit harlotry*³⁴ *and shall not increase.*”³⁵ After a brief debate in the Talmudic passage

³² The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

³³ Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M.E.J Richardson (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1994).

³⁴ In the JPS Hebrew English TaNaKh , while *znh* appears in the Hebrew text, the English translation reads, “*Truly, they shall eat, but not be sated; They shall swill, but not be satisfied, Because they have forsaken the LORD to practice*” (Hosea IV:10).

³⁵ Rabbi Judah b. Yebamoth 61b.

of whether priests are permitted to marry minors, the discussion of those in attendance turns back to debating Rabbi Judah's assertion that "a woman incapable of procreation is regarded as a harlot."³⁶ While Rabbi Eliezer concurs with Rabbi Judah, he further elaborates the definition of who is a *zonah* alongside Rabbi Akiba. Quite divergent from Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Akiba, along with Rabbi Eliezer³⁷ state: "Zonah implies one who is a prostitute."³⁸ Rabbi Akiba's and Rabbi Eliezer's discussion with those present on what classifies one a *zonah*, continues as the following:

Rabbi Mathia b. Heresh said: Even a woman whose husband, while going to arrange for her drinking, cohabited with her on the way, is rendered a *zonah*. Rabbi Judah said: *Zonah* implies one who is incapable of procreation. And the Sages said: *Zonah* is none other than a female proselyte, a freed bondwoman, and one has been subjected to any meretricious intercourse with an unmarried woman, with no matrimonial intent, rendered her thereby a *zonah*!³⁹

This Talmudic passage highlights how Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Mathia b. Heresh, Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Eliezer have many varying views as to who constitutes a *zonah*.

Not only did the rabbis contemplate the meaning behind *zonah* centuries ago, but it is also a discussion that contemporary scholars such Biale have apprehensions with as well. In her work on studying Jewish law from a gender-conscious perspective,⁴⁰ Biale highlights the complicated definition(s) of promiscuity, harlotry and *zonah*.⁴¹ Throughout her analysis of women, and subject matters such as marriage, divorce, and promiscuity, she shows the connotation, and often consequence of *halakhah* on women's lives. The reason to integrate her analysis alongside the passages from the tractate *Yebamoth* is, and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The reader may find it contradictory that Rabbi Eliezer is of the same opinion as Rabbi Judah; it is an inconsistency noted as well in a footnote.

³⁸ b. *Yebamoth* 61b.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ One of the goals outlined by Biale in the forward of *Women and Jewish Law*. xii.

⁴¹ Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: The Essential Texts, Their History, & Their Relevance for Today* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 190.

as Biale articulates, looking at sexual relations outside of marriage is, and to quote Biale, “complicated.”⁴² Wishing to further illustrate these *complications*, Biale ends her discussion on the definition of *zonah* by highlighting that disputes on who is a *zonah*, on issues of promiscuity, are imbedded in *halakhic* and rabbinic discussions on sex, specifically sex outside of marriage.⁴³ While at the same time Biale emphasizes this sentiment, she earnestly acknowledges, “sex outside of marriage was is [sic] a complicated, perhaps intractable historical problem...[however] not a new phenomenon.”⁴⁴ Biale’s quotation, her examination of rabbinic discussions and their implications for the lives of women illustrate the significance in studying the rabbis’ views of prostitution obtained from various interpretations of biblical passages.

1.2 *Znh* in the Bible and Talmud

In the Bible, *znh* can have a metaphorical connotation; in the Talmud, specifically in the tractate *Abadah Zarah*, which literally means: “strange worship,” “and is the common term in Rabbinical Literature for idolatry,” the rabbis also illustrate how *znh* can figuratively mean: “to be unfaithful in a relationship with God.”⁴⁵ In the context of discussing that “one should not join them in building a basilica, a scaffold, a stadium, or a platform,” harlotry is debated in the tractate *Abodah Zarah*.⁴⁶ The subject of harlotry gets introduced into the conversation through a discussion on Rabbi Eliezer’s arrest of *Minuth* [heresy with special reference to Christianity], and a conversation he has with one of

⁴² Ibid., 192.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ b *Abodah Zarah* (introduction).

⁴⁶ m. *Abodah Zarah* I: VII.

his disciples.⁴⁷ After being acquitted, Rabbi Eliezer went back home to one of his disciples, who told him of an encounter he had with a man on the street.⁴⁸ The disciple informed Rabbi Eliezer that the man quoted Deuteronomy XXIII: 19: “You shall not bring the fee of a whore or the pay of a dog into the house of the LORD your God in fulfillment of any vow, for both are abhorrent to the LORD your God” (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh):

לא - תְּבִיא אֶתְנָנוּ זָנוֹה וּמְחִיר כָּלֵב, בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
לְכָל-גַּדֵּר : כִּי תֹּעֲבָת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, סְג-שְׁנִים⁴⁹

Rabbi Eliezer’s disciple continued to convey to him this encounter by stating that, after he gave no reply to the man, the man then quoted Micah I:7⁵⁰; the quotation is: “*All her sculptured images shall be smashed, and all her harlot’s wealth be burned and I will make a waste heap of all her idols, for they were amassed from fees for harlotry, and they shall become harlots’ fees again*” (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh), or in Hebrew:

וְכָל-פְּסִילָה יַכְתּוּ, וְכָל-אֲחִנָּנִית יִשְׁרְפּוּ בְּאַשׁ, וְכָל-עַצְבִּים,
אֲשִׁים שְׁמָמָה : כִּי מְאַחֲנוּ זָנוֹה, קְבָצָה, וְעַד-אֶתְנָנוּ זָנוֹה, יִשְׁוּבוּ⁵¹

As they continued their conversation, he disclosed how these passages provide evidence as to why he was arrested for apostasy; he was arrested because, as outlined in a footnote to this discussion, the quoted biblical passages translate to seeking intimacy with a foreign ruling power.⁵²

⁴⁷ b. Abodah Zarah 16b.

⁴⁸ b. Abodah Zarah. 16b.

⁴⁹ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

⁵⁰ b. Abodah Zarah 17a.

⁵¹ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

⁵² b. Abodah Zarah 17b

As we can see from this example, the connection drawn between the harlot and ‘intimacy’⁵³ with a foreign power outlines how *znh* can have a figurative interpretation in the Bible. Not only is it evident that *znh* can have this metaphorical meaning in the Bible, but scholars also frequently discuss *znh*⁵⁴ metaphorically as well. Through examination of the titles of select scholars, it is clear that *znh* can take on this figurative connotation; these titles include: Karin Adams’ “Metaphor and Dissonance: a Reinterpretation of Hosea 4:13-14 (2008), Phyllis Bird’s, “To play the Harlot: an Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor”(1989), and Brad E. Kelle’s, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (2005). If space permitted it would be advantageous to discuss all these scholars’ commentary on the metaphorical attribute of *znh*, however that discussion is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I have selected Julie Galambush’s analysis on the metaphor’ of *znh*, as she does an adequate job of emphasizing key points disseminated by many of these other scholars. In her work titled, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife* (JBE), Galambush offers a pertinent discussion relating to the biblical passages that speak to the figurative definition of *znh*, and the interpretation/implication cited in the Tractate Abodah Zarah. With regard to the disciple of Rabbi Eliezer discussing apostasy, citing various biblical passages to explain such offense, Galambush offers some clarification. She states: “The biblical metaphor of apostasy as sexual infidelity cannot be understood apart from Israel’s

⁵³ The exact phrasing in a footnote on b. Abodah Zarah 17a, with regards to the apostasy because of non-Yahwist religious behaviour. This is conferred to the reader through the reference to Proverb V:8 cited in the b. Abodah Zarah 17a of: “*Remove thy way far from her-and come not nigh to the door of her house*” - which and to quote this tractate “refers to the ruling power” (b. Abodah Zarah 17a).

⁵⁴ Although the reader will probably note, scholars who produce scholarship on this subject matter are a scarce, and thus their analyses are a commodity.

theological stance of being bound in an exclusive relationship with Yahweh.⁵⁵ She explains, certain biblical extra-prophetic texts in the Bible use terminology associated with sexuality to figuratively highlight the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites.⁵⁶ The figurative appropriation of *znh* not only emphasizes the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites in the Bible, but also serves a further purpose of showing the intrinsic link between sexual morality and the vocabulary of biblical Hebrew; this is a link that Louis M. Epstein discusses in *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* as well. As Epstein articulates, in the Bible “all words denoting sexual sin also denote other kinds of sin.”⁵⁷ Through discerning that *zonah* also means the “faithless one,” just as unfaithfulness (*zenut*) and wantonness (*nebalah*) are also used to describe idolatry, and a disgusting act, respectively, deeper analysis is obtained on views, not only on prostitution, but on general views on sex and sexuality.⁵⁸

Examining the figurative appropriation of *znh* reveals views on sex and sexuality. When we analyze the incidences when *znh* infers a woman of a distinct social standing, usually outside the confines of patriarchal protection and control, we obtain further insight on rabbinic views on sex and sexuality. Two women in particular in the Bible that highlight women outside the confines of patriarchal control are Rahab in Joshua and Dinah in Genesis XXXIV. The meaning of *znh* is particularly contestable⁵⁹ in Genesis XXXIV. One begins to see how contentious Dinah’s narrative is by reading the passage below:

⁵⁵ Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem In the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 32.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁷ Louis M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co, 1948), 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ This narrative is contestable for many reasons: firstly was Dinah raped? Secondly was she a prostitute, and thirdly if she is not a prostitute why do her brothers call her one?

Now Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, chief of the country, saw her, and took her and lay with her by force...Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah; but since his sons were in the field with his cattle, Jacob kept silent until they came home... The men were distressed and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter – a thing not to be done (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh).

After finding out what has transpired to their sister, Dinah's brothers and father receive a message from Shechem's father Hamor, asking for Shechem to wed Dinah (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKH). They respond by demanding that Shechem and the males around him become circumcised; to which he, and the other men comply (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh). Three days after the circumcision, two of Dinah's brothers slaughtered the men, and looted their property (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh). When they returned to Jacob, he lamented over their actions, to which they answered, "Should our sister be treated like a whore? (JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh). Find below Genesis XXXIV: 31 in Hebrew:

וַיֹּאמֶר : הַכֹּזֶבֶת יִצְשָׁחָת אָתָּה- אַחֲתָנוּ .⁶⁰

Genesis XXXIV has sparked a lot of debate not only amongst contemporary scholars, but also amongst the rabbis in the Talmud as well. While there is a lot of discussion on Genesis XXXIV, most of the references to this passage in the Talmud are in response to Dinah's brothers' actions, and not surrounding Dinah herself. Therefore, discussing how Dinah is interpreted in the Talmud is fairly arbitrary, which means analysis of who Dinah was, and what transpired between her and Shechem is more obtainable through contemporary scholarship, in which scholars⁶¹ regard Genesis XXXIV

⁶⁰ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

⁶¹ Including Claus Westermann (1986), Meir Sternberg (1987), and Stephen A. Geller(1990) are among some of the few that hold this view.

as the rape of Dinah by Shechem. While many hold this interpretation, others however, such as Riegner in VHH, iterate that, *תִּתְּנַשֵּׁךְ*⁶² means to “humble,”⁶³ or “humiliate.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, according to Tikva, Frymer-Kensky *תִּתְּנַשֵּׁךְ* refers to social status, and/or intra-family relationships.⁶⁵ Therefore, and with Frymer-Kensky and other scholars’ definitions in mind, Dinah’s narrative can be interpreted in a new light to fit within the context of *znh* meaning a woman of certain social standing, falling outside of patriarchal protection, and/or control. This is at least how biblical scholar Rieger interprets Dinah’s narrative; “by going outside the clan boundary to visit friends, Dinah removed herself from patriarchal protection thus making herself vulnerable to the sexual advances of any male.”⁶⁶ According to Riegner, “she crossed a line;” whether Riegner is referring to a territorial line or a symbolic one is dubious, but either way, this action by Dinah translates to her becoming an “independent woman,” supposedly receptive to any male advance.⁶⁷ Because she is now seen as a ‘promiscuous’ woman, her brothers equate her to a *zonah*. Therefore, with Dinah’s narrative, one may demarcate *znh* as, and quoted by Riegner to mean, “women who dwell outside the protective perimeter of family and clan beyond the territorial limit of patriarchal control.”⁶⁸

Similarly to how Dinah can be interpreted as an ‘independent woman,’ possibly rendering her a *znh*, one also sees similar interpretations surrounding Rahab in Joshua.

⁶² This is in reference to ‘lay with her by force,’ or ‘rape’ translation.

⁶³ This is the English version provided by the JPS English-Hebrew TaNaKh (1917 edition).

⁶⁴ This is the translation offered by Lyn M. Bechtel in “What if Dinah is not Raped? (Genesis 34), *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Vol. 19. Issue 16, (1994), 19-36, 25.

⁶⁵ Tikva, Frymer-Kensky, “Virginity in the Bible,” in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Victor Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 79-96, 87.

⁶⁶ Riegner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: the Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH*. 197.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 197.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

One could infer that Rahab is an ‘independent woman,’ through reading her narrative below:

Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim, saying, ‘Go, reconnoiter the region of Jericho.’ So they set out, and they came to the house of a harlot named Rahab and lodged there (Josh II: 1JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh); in Hebrew:

וַיַּלְחַד יְהוָשָׁעַ -בֶּן- נֹנוֹן מִן- הַשְׁתִּים שְׁנִים -אֲנָשִׁים מִרְגָּלִים , חֶרֶשׁ
לֹא מֵרָא רָא אֶת- הָאָרֶץ , וְאֶת- יְרִיחֹו ; וַיַּלְכֵל וַיַּבְאֵל בַּיִת- אֲשֶׁר
זֹנָה , וַיַּשְׁמַה רַחֲבָב—וַיַּשְׁמַה⁶⁹

Even though the text states that Rahab is a harlot, it is still very obscure as to what her supposed ‘harlotry’ entails. In examining the Tractate Megillah, one sees how the rabbis have apprehensions as to who exactly Rahab is as well.

In the Tractate Megillah, under discussion of the lack of difference between “a great high place and a small one save in the matter of the Paschal Lamb Offering,” Rahab, amidst discussion of seven prophetesses, is briefly mentioned.⁷⁰ The rabbis turn from discussion of seven prophetesses to the eight prophets who were descended from “Rahab the harlot.”⁷¹ They state how “we must suppose that she [Rahab] became a proselyte and Joshua married her.”⁷² Reading this passage it appears that Rahab was a prostitute in the more contemporary understanding. After all, as their discussion continues, the rabbis consider the four women of unsurpassable beauty.⁷³ Of these four, this is the description given of them: “Rahab inspired lust by her name; Jael by her voice; Abigail by her

⁶⁹ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

⁷⁰ b. Megillah 14b.

⁷¹ b. Megillah 14b.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ b. Megillah 15a.

memory; Michal daughter of Saul by her appearance.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, as Rabbi Isaac divulges, “Whoever says, ‘Rahab, Rahab,’ at once has an issue;⁷⁵ to which Rabbi Nahman responds: “I say Rahab, Rahab, and nothing happens to me!”⁷⁶ To this epigrammatic response, Rabbi Isaac retaliates with: “I was speaking of one who knows her and is intimate with her.”⁷⁷ She is clearly a woman of prominence, but also one, as Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Nahman’s discussion illustrates, of ambiguity. However, the one thing that is apparent in their discussion is that they view Rahab as a prostitute that would fit with the definition of prostitute held today, illustrated in Rabbi Isaac’s description of the lust she causes, and further reiterated in his discussion of when one had been *intimate* with her.

While the rabbis’ discussion about Rahab seems to render her a ‘traditional’ prostitute, or harlot, some contemporary scholars are not satisfied with such an interpretation; for some, Rahab was an ‘innkeeper.’ For Riegner, she sees that just as easily as Rahab could be interpreted to be a prostitute, so could she be seen as an innkeeper.⁷⁸ After all, unlike other narratives that contain the phrasing אָזֶב אֲלֵיכָן, meaning “come to her,” which usually signifies a sexual transaction has occurred, no such rhetoric is prevalent in Rahab’s narration.⁷⁹ Therefore, Riegner concludes that Rahab was not a prostitute.

After articulating the ambiguity surrounding whether Rahab is a prostitute or an innkeeper because of the absence of the phrasing אָזֶב אֲלֵיכָן (come to her) the next fitting

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ R. Isaac in b. Megillah 15a.

⁷⁶ R. Nahman in b. Megillah 15a.

⁷⁷ R. Isaac in b. Megillah 15a.

⁷⁸ Riegner. *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: The Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH.* 199.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

narrative to examine appears to be one in which this phrasing is present. Since ‘come to her’ is customarily used to reveal a sexual encounter that involves a transaction of some monetary element, it would appear as though Genesis XXXVIII, or the story of Judah and Tamar is an irrefutable example of prostitution. Alas, even in examining what transpires between Tamar and Judah, many scholars simply describe Tamar as merely ‘playing the harlot.’ One such scholar who describes Tamar in this fashion is Phyllis Bird, and her article, “To Play the Harlot”: An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor.” Therefore, although Tamar is called a prostitute⁸⁰ it should be noted that even this narrative has a lot of ambivalence as well.

The ambivalence surrounding if Tamar is a prostitute or not is attributed to many factors in the narrative; one of these is the relationship between Tamar and Judah⁸¹ before their sexual encounter and certain obligations because of the rules surrounding Levirate marriage.⁸² The ambivalence in the narrative is illustrated through reading about the encounter of Judah and Tamar cited below:

When Judah saw her, he took her for a harlot; for she had covered her face. So he turned aside to her by the road and said, “Here, let me sleep with you” -for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. “What,” she asked, “will you pay for sleeping with me?” He replied, “I will send a kid from my flock.” But she said, “You must leave a pledge until you have sent it.” And he said, “What pledge shall I give you?” She replied, “Your seal and cord, and the staff which you carry.” So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. Then she went on

⁸⁰ She is actually called both a *zonah* (secular prostitute) and a *qedesh* (cultic prostitute).

⁸¹ Judah is Tamar’s father-in-law. Tamar was married to Er, Judah’s first-born. However, Er died, and Onan, even though was customary to marry his brother’s widow, (if he himself was unmarried), he refuses, and dies as well. Judah sends Tamar away to her father’s house. She remains there and does not see Judah again, until after the death of his wife, and their encounter in Timnah (Genesis XXXVIII: 1-12, JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh).

⁸² “In biblical times, if a married man died but had not left heirs, his wife was obliged to marry her deceased husband’s brother, and the first child of this union was considered to be her late first husband’s progeny (Danya Ruttenberg, *The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009, 270)).

her way. She took off her veil and again put on her widow's garb. Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to redeem the pledge from the woman; but he could not find her; moreover, the townspeople said: There has been no prostitute here." ...About three months later, Judah was told, Your daughter-in-law- Tamar has played the harlot; in fact, she is with child by harlotry." "Bring her out," said Judah, "and let her be burned." As she was being brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I am with child by the man to whom this belong." And she added, "Examine these: whose seal and cord and staff are these?" Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again (Genesis XXXVIII: 15-26 JPS Hebrew-English TaNaKh).

Below are the excerpts of the passage in Hebrew that reveal the phrasing 'come to her,' and the classification of Tamar as a prostitute by Adullamite:

וַיַּרְאֵה יְהוָה , וַיַּחֲשַׁבְתָּה לֹזֶןֶה : כִּי כְּפָתָה , פָּנִית .
 וְנִטְאַלְיָה אֶל - הַדָּרֶן , וַיֹּאמֶר קָבָה - אֵת אֶבְוָא דָאַלִּי , כִּי לֹא יִתְעַ, ⁸³
 כִּי הוּא הוּא ; וַיֹּאמֶר , מַה - תַּתְּנוּ לִי , כִּי תְּבֹא , אֵלֵי .

וַיִּשְׁאַל אֹת - אָנָשֵׁי מִקְמָה , לֹאמֶר , אֵיה קָדְשָׁה הַוָּא בְּעִינֵיכֶם,
 עַל - הַדָּרֶן ; וַיֹּאמְרוּ , לֹא - תְּהַדֵּד בְּזֹה קָדְשָׁה .

וַיִּשְׁבַּ , אֶל - יְהוָה , וַיֹּאמֶר , לֹא מִצְאָתִיךְ ; וְגַם אָנָשֵׁי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ
 אָמְרוּ , לֹא - קָרְיתָה בְּזֹה קָדְשָׁה . ⁸⁴

Clearly, Tamar's story involves devoting quite a bit of space just to articulate all the different components going on, including: her 'disguise' as a prostitute, Tamar being referred to as both a sacred prostitute and a 'secular' one, and Judah's sentence, and then pardon at the end. All these factors make one ponder exactly how to view the entire narrative, and as well, how to view Tamar, especially in light of how Tamar is portrayed in the Talmud.

⁸³ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org> (Genesis XXXVIII: 15-16)

⁸⁴ The Hebrew version is taken from the 1917 edition of the JPS Hebrew-English Bible (copyright 2005). Accessed Online: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org> (Genesis XXXVIII: 20-21).

In the Tractate Megillah, in the discussion of Rahab, Tamar is mentioned in a compelling way. Amidst discussing the positive repercussions if a woman is modest, Tamar is seen thus:

It confirms what was said by Rabbi Samuel b. Nahmani in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: Every bride who is modest in the house of her father-in-law is rewarded by having kings and prophets among her descendants. How do we prove this? From Tamar, as it is written. *And Judah saw her and thought her to be a harlot; for she had covered her face.* Now because she had covered her face did he think her to be a harlot? Rather, what it means is that because she had covered her face in the house of her father-in-law and he did not know her, she was rewarded by having among her descendants kings and prophets; kings from David, and prophets.⁸⁵

This passage highlights that Tamar was regarded in a somewhat positive light, although somewhat dubious if the rabbis regard her as a prostitute. After all, when they discuss her supposed harlotry, it is with the connotation that in covering her face she demonstrated an appropriate level of modesty in the house of her father-in-law. Given that terminology for ‘common,’ or ‘secular’ and ‘cultic’ prostitute is found in Genesis XXXVIII, the rabbis appear to disregard Tamar as a harlot. Scholars highlight the irony in Genesis XXXVIII, specifically the irony in Tamar being viewed as a ‘harlot.’ Irony is an important motif many scholars allude to, choosing to highlight different ironic aspects of the text. For example, Edwin Good’s *Irony in the Old Testament* focuses on the *irony* in the simultaneous usage of ‘cultic’ and ‘secular’ prostitute in the narrative, while Carolyn J. Sharp’s *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible* (IMHB), in a contrasting feminist perspective, highlights the irony and empowerment prevalent in the character Tamar. Compared to Sharp, Good’s analysis centers on the irony that *zonah* and *qedesh*⁸⁶ are

⁸⁵ b. Megillah 10b.

⁸⁶ Refers to a cultic prostitute

found uttered in the same story, in reference to the same individual.⁸⁷ Thus, Good finds it ironic that when Judah approaches Tamar and then later sentences her to death, he calls her a *zonah*; yet, when he sends out his friend to inquire about his rendez-vous with the ‘harlot,’ his friend asks if the townsfolk have seen a *qedesh*.⁸⁸ According to Good, this speaks to the delicacy of the situation (at least according to Judah, enacted through his friend), as “Judah is not about to inform strangers that he runs around after ordinary prostitutes.”⁸⁹ Yet, in trying to save face, Good notes the irony in that, had Judah’s friend asked them if they had seen a *zonah* and not a *qedesh*, they might have recalled Tamar.⁹⁰ While Good’s analysis of the story of Judah and Tamar highlights what he perceives as the irony of their story, it does have its limitations; specifically that he focuses solely on the irony of Judah’s actions, and the actions of his friend, while subsequently ignoring the key figure Tamar. Therefore, it becomes imperative to not only analyze the story of Tamar and Judah from a biblical literary critique, but also from a feminist one.

A feminist analysis of the story of Judah and Tamar is found in Sharp’s work in IMHB. Beginning with comparison of Sharp’s and Good’s titles, Sharp’s IMHB offers an amenable foil to Good’s analysis of the story of Judah and Tamar. While their titles are quite similar, their analysis and perceived irony of Genesis XXXVIII however, are quite different. In contrast to Good, Sharp describes how Tamar ironically uses the seal Judah gave her as payment to guarantee her safety, but also, through the act of prostitution, ironically obtains what she wished to acquire all along.⁹¹ According to Sharp, prior to her

⁸⁷ Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 108.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Carolyn J. Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 91.

sexual encounter with Judah, (and somewhat because of his treatment of her after Er's passing), she is a woman of very low social standing.⁹² Yet, she lowers her standing even more, dressing as a prostitute to trick Judah, obtain what she wants from him, and then remove herself from being sexually available to him.⁹³ Arguably, Tamar is able to do all of this simply by 'playing the harlot.' It is significant to use the precise phrasing to 'play' or 'playing the harlot' to describe Tamar, because that is, after all, how Judah's friend described her in Genesis, and also, and as significantly, it is the designation of Tamar's actions by other scholars such as Johanna van Wikj Bos and Melissa Jackson. In her article, "Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology" Jackson describes Tamar as a "trickster."⁹⁴ Similarly, in her article "Out of the Shadows," Bos also describes Tamar as a trickster as a way to challenge any negative stigma attached to Tamar for being called a prostitute.⁹⁵ More specifically, Bos argues that Tamar is not a prostitute; that she only 'tricked' Judah by 'playing' one.⁹⁶ In this manner, and speaking back to Jackson, "if ever a fool was, he was Judah in Genesis 38."⁹⁷ Through analyzing the irony found in Genesis XXXVIII, focusing not only on Judah, and his friend, like Good does, but by highlighting Tamar, Bos, Jackson and Sharp all emphasize the very ambiguous and quite dubious nature of Tamar as the 'harlot.'

⁹² Ibid., 92.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Melissa Jackson, "Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 26, issue 4. (June 2002), 29-46.

⁹⁵ Johanna van Wikj Bos, "Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3." *Semeia*. (January 1989), 38-67.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Jackson, "Lot's Daughters and Tamar as Tricksters and the Patriarchal Narratives as Feminist Theology," 40.

To summarize, the excerpts from the Bible and the Talmud reveal that prostitution is not prohibited. Of course, there are clear stipulations and views towards it, but unless it involves a priest, prostitution is permitted. It is clear, that unless explicitly outlined as forbidden, as in the specific cases from Leviticus XVIII, as well as Leviticus XIX, prostitution is “not a criminal, sexual or religious offense.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, and as analysis of prostitution in the Talmud illustrates, while prostitutes are viewed unfavorably, evident in the language of ‘she will be despised by all,’ prostitution, again, if not forbidden under laws in Leviticus, was viewed as something individuals could possibly chose as a job. Pursuing prostitution as a way to make a living was not disputed; in fact, and as illustrated in the Bible and the Talmud, there is not a common definition of what it means to be a *zonah*, nor one overarching view of prostitution presenting the life of a prostitute in a disparaging light. While I am emphasizing that the Bible does not prohibit individuals from choosing a life of prostitution, in no way do I want to infer that the Bible presents an appropriate designation of prostitution, or the life of a prostitute. As discussion throughout this chapter has revealed, prostitution is always discussed by outside parties (always men), and never includes the voice of the prostitute. The prostitute is generally an outsider, a secondary marginalized character on the periphery who appears to not warrant a voice in the conversation. Thus, the interpretation of the prostitutes’ actions, the life of the prostitute is discussed through an external lens. Stressing that the Bible emphasizes choice, and that it, along with the Talmud presents a lot of discussion that is no longer explicit in Israel, may appear as though prostitution in Israel is completely divergent from prostitution in the Bible.

⁹⁸ Riegner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: The Adventures of the Hebrew Stem ZNH*. 172.

Unfortunately, and as is prevalent in discussion of prostitution in Israel today, these two key attributes: emphasis on choice, and a myriad of discussion, are not prevalent when analyzing the discourse of prostitution in modern Israel. This discourse has become problematically reduced to one narrative, which paints all prostitutes in Israel as victims of human trafficking. As victims, their lives are belittled and their sense of agency completely negated. Not only is the motif of discussing prostitution, or the prostitute without bearing in mind the actual voice of the prostitute prevalent in the Bible and the Talmud, but also, and regrettably, what we see in Israel today. Prostitutes are still always being talked about, never allowed to be part of this conversation, belittled as human beings. They are no longer viewed as human beings, only as victims and prostitutes; in other words, each prostitute is not seen as an individual, but is seen and always depicted as a *zonah*. The dire, and problematic reality is that not only has *zonah* prevailed throughout approximately three thousand years, the motif of the silent *zonah* has been just as palpable in Israel today.

Chapter 2: From debatable ‘definitions’ of who is a *zonah* to debatable
‘definitions’ of who is a *victim*

When we look at the historical stages of prostitution in Israel we can see how there are not only debatable definitions of *zonah*, but, and more significantly, how there are also debatable designations of who is a victim that further illustrates how problematic homogenized discussion of prostitution is in Israel. Ram A. Cnann’s article, “Notes on Prostitution in Israel,” illustrates this issue, through demonstrating how prostitution in Israel has been ever changing since the first Zionist migration to Israel in the late nineteenth century up until the twenty-first century.⁹⁹ In the nineteenth century, up until the declaration of the State, most of the prostitutes were Arabs, with very few Jewish prostitutes.¹⁰⁰ Those who were Jewish were often condemned and subsequently excommunicated by the Old Yishuv.¹⁰¹ This picture of prostitution however, especially from the 1990s, to the early twenty-first century did not remain. While for almost a century, Jewish prostitution, and prostitution in general in Israel was a minor affair, during the 1990s, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, greater immigration to Israel and more stability on its borders, prostitution began to become a noticeable social ‘problem.’ Even prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, beginning in the 1970s, prostitution in Israel became a much larger and greater phenomenon. From 1975, until approximately 2000, the number of brothels and individuals practicing prostitution rose immensely. From prior to the 1970s in which there were approximately twelve hundred to five thousand prostitutes in Israel of a population of about three million, to where there were

⁹⁹ Ram A. Cnaan, “Notes on Prostitution in Israel,” *Sociological Inquiry*. Volume 52. Issue 2 (March 1982), 114-121, 114.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

an estimated seven hundred brothels in Israel with two hundred and fifty in operation in Tel Aviv alone, it is conspicuous that prostitution, or at least prostitution in these more ‘secular’ centers was growing.¹⁰² Clearly, prostitution in Israel has not been a static phenomenon; but has been shaped by its history and the various historical responses to it throughout the decades. The various historical stages and responses to prostitution in Israel have changed over the years, similarly, the various responses by Jewish communities to this ever-changing phenomenon have changed and varied over time as well.

Before delving into some of the responses of the Jewish communities, I want to emphasize that because my paper is only specifically examining Judaism, I am only focusing on Jewish male responses and actions towards prostitution. I am not examining any other clientele or male views, as that is beyond the scope of this paper. As well, it should be noted that the examples I am providing are limited, and speak to two very specific ends of the spectrum; one being the response by some Orthodox Jewish men who visit prostitutes, and the other being the Haredim who condemn them. I have chosen to emphasize the Orthodox Jewish men who visit prostitutes and the Haredim’s views of prostitutes, as they present Jewish male responses to prostitution in Israel at the opposite ends of the spectrum. As well, there is specific data collected on these communities’ responses; data which is collected by Donna Rosenthal, and articulated in her chapter “Hookers and Hash in the Holy Land,” in *The Israelis*. In this chapter, she demonstrates how prostitutes note that some of their clientele are religiously observant men who travel to Tel Aviv and Haifa during the time in which they must, due to religious laws of purity,

¹⁰² Cnaan, “Notes on Prostitution in Israel.” 115. ; Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 371.

sexually/physically abstain from their wives.¹⁰³ According to Rosenthal, approximately twenty per cent, or one out of five of their “faithful customers” are Orthodox Jewish men.¹⁰⁴ Prostitutes identify these men through “their black kippas and other traditional garb.”¹⁰⁵ Rosenthal continues to say that these men are described by prostitutes as: “pious men, faithful to religious laws of purity [that] must abstain from sex with their wives on days they are ‘unclean’.”¹⁰⁶ It is evident that select Jewish Orthodox men visit prostitutes; other very traditional and religious oriented Jewish men however, have condemned the existence of brothels and prostitution in Israel.¹⁰⁷ While Rosenthal provides a discussion of some Jewish men who visit prostitutes in Israel, she also notes that most of the Haredim condemn prostitution, viewing it as: “impure, a sacrilege,” and driving by brothels shouting: “You are going to burn!”¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately in 2000,¹⁰⁹ quite a few brothels and sex shops were decimated in a plethora of arsenal attacks, tragically bringing to fruition the Haredim’s prognostication.¹¹⁰ Analyzing the specific responses by Jewish Orthodox men and the Haredim highlights differing views towards prostitution and speaks to sentiments previously outlined with regards to prostitution in the Bible and Talmud. With that being said, however, one finds that with regards to the overarching and dominant narrative on prostitution propagated in and outside Israel, no such discussion is prevalent. Instead, one sees the reduction of all prostitutes to victims of

¹⁰³ Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land*. 371.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ The man responsible for these attacks was not affiliated with any specific religious denomination.

¹¹⁰ Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land*. 372.

human trafficking. Not only are all prostitutes cast as victims, but also, this is actually conveyed as a positive step towards the discourse of prostitution in Israel.

The ‘positive’ reduction of all prostitutes as victims of human trafficking is found in an interview in *Al-Monitor*, in which Knesset member of the HaTenua party, and chairman of the Subcommittee on Trafficking in Women and Prostitution, David Tsur, articulates that law-enforcement has been able to take a harsher stance on the sex trade industry in Israel because prostitutes are no longer seen as part of the *problem*, but now as *victims*.¹¹¹ Tsur describes that this new mentality enables these *victims* to come forward and testify, and/or file complaints without risk of being reprimanded.¹¹² However, what this new mentality also does is reinforce the intrinsic link between human trafficking and prostitution, as this narrative propagates that all prostitutes are now *victims*. To suggest that in some, if not the majority of cases, this link between prostitution and human trafficking in Israel is not present would be problematic; after all, the statistics and surveys done show a significant number of women who have been drugged and/or kidnapped from their country of origin for the purposes of prostitution in Israel. For example, in Rebecca Hughes’ article, “The Myth of ‘Consensual Prostitution’” she states: “the overwhelming majority (consistently around 90%) of prostituted persons tells us that they are not in the sex trade of their own will.”¹¹³ Furthermore, ranked by the United States Department as the third lowest level in 2001, it was apparent that Israel needed to implement policies to prevent this epidemic from developing even further.¹¹⁴ After all, for many years, both prostitution and human trafficking were not considered

¹¹¹ Maazal Mualem, “How Israel Stopped the Sale of Women.” *Al-Monitor* (11 September 2013).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Rebecca Hughes, “The Myth of Consensual Prostitution,” *The Times of Israel* (May 2013).

¹¹⁴ Lee Vered, “Human Trafficking in Israel Has Been Beaten. Let’s Now Tackle Prostitution.” *Haaretz* (Mar. 2014).

criminal acts under Israeli law. This changed after 2001, however, under Israeli law, Section 203A of the penal code, anyone selling or buying a human being received sixteen years¹¹⁵ in prison; and a decade later, an anti-prostitution bill was proposed that would make soliciting a prostitute illegal.¹¹⁶ Over the last few decades Israel has seen an increase in prostitution and human trafficking, and thus implemented harsher policy to try to combat it. While it is wrong to suggest that human trafficking and prostitution are not linked, especially if one is to accept Hughes' assertion that ninety percent of prostitutes are victims of the trade of human trafficking, it is extremely problematic to homogenize all prostitutes as trafficked victims. Even if one is to place confidence in her statistic, it still, nonetheless, does not make it acceptable to amalgamate the other ten per cent of prostitutes with this majority.

The deplorable result of treating all prostitutes and their situations as equivalent to one another is further emphasized through delving into the definition of human trafficking, and outlining the affinity of human trafficking in Israel to other nations. According to Rochelle Gershuni in "Trafficking for the Persons for the Purpose of Prostitution: the Israeli Experience," and Sergey Shlyk's "Criminal Sex Trade: System Aspects and Tendencies," Israel is hardly unique with regards to women being sold into the sex industry.¹¹⁷ However, what I want to stress that is being conveyed as 'unique' in Israel, is that prostitution is internationally commented on as being fundamentally linked

¹¹⁵ In "Trafficking in Women for Prostitution in Israel," Gad J. Bensinger highlights that, unfortunately, because of plea bargains, the average sentence is actually two years (286).

¹¹⁶ Vered, "Human Trafficking in Israel Has Been Beaten. Let's Now Tackle Prostitution."

¹¹⁷ Rochelle Gershuni, "Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Prostitution: the Israeli Experience," *Mediterranean Quarterly*. Volume 15, Issue 4, 133-146, 133. ; Sergey Shlyk, "Criminal Sex Trade: System Aspects and Tendencies," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*. Vol. 31, Issue 2, 2007, 245-268, 260.

with human trafficking.¹¹⁸ Yet, and examining the definition, or specifically where the heinousness of ‘trafficking’ comes from, provided by Gershuni, one not only sees how overtly detrimental it is to discuss prostitution in Israel solely in these terms, but also how, through discussing this phenomenon in this light, mirrors the detriment done to a human being who has been trafficked. This sentiment becomes apparent through analysis of the definition below of:

trafficking is a modern form of slavery that uses people as objects, passing them from hand to hand like commodities and disposing of them when no longer needed. The heinousness of this practice lies in its violation of the essence of the human personality, in its taking away or severely limiting human choice.¹¹⁹

When one reduces analysis and discussion of prostitution in Israel to the narrative that all prostitutes are victims of human trafficking, then the very definition of human trafficking, as described by Gershuni, becomes translated to those individuals’ lives; they lose their essence, they become another voiceless victim. Unfortunately, what is further shown is that in general, prostitution has been reduced to a one-dimensional portrayal of prostitutes as victims of human trafficking.

As this chapter has articulated, the portrayal of prostitutes as victims of human trafficking in Israel is explicitly harmful, as it removes any sort of agency the individual who chooses to become a prostitute has. What this consequently does is remove those women from the discussion because they do not fit within the ‘victim model,’ removing

¹¹⁸ An example of this incongruity is seen with Canadian Member of Parliament, Joy Smith, chairwoman of the Standing Committee on Health who described prostitution in Israel as being a “shameless denigration and exploitation of human beings” (Ruth, Egash, “Canada MP Urges MK’s to back Anti-prostitution Bill,” *Jerusalem Post* (March 2012). Yet, with regards to prostitution in Canada, she was quoted as saying, “I know some women want to be prostitutes and that is how they want to earn their living” (Norma Greenway, “Tories Sidestep Prostitution Law” *The Windsor Star* [Windsor, Ont.] (23 July 2007): A.1.

¹¹⁹ Gershuni, “Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Prostitution: the Israeli Experience.” 133.

their voice and leaving them unheard. Women who do not fit the victim construct remain voiceless in the discussion of prostitution in Israel today; in actuality and what is quite disparaging is that all prostitutes are being talked about and are not actually the ones who are able to be vocal in the discussions, which is a similar motif seen in the Talmudic passages on prostitution as well. Furthermore, the same characteristics/attitudes towards the subject matter is located both in contemporary Israel and in the Bible and Talmud. After examining the Bible, the Talmud and discourse on prostitution in Israel today, and being unable to trace the voice of the prostitute and subsequently humanize the individual, the only way to obtain this voice is to purposely seek it out.

Chapter 3: Beginning to *Cut* loose simplistic and problematic views of the prostitute

Finding a way to bring the voices of the prostitutes to the forefront in order to emphasize their humanity, and negate overarching discourses of prostitutes as victims of human trafficking is imperative. Interjecting their voices into the discussion, however, is somewhat problematic. Because of external factors, I was unable to obtain the voices of the prostitutes through interviewing them in Israel. Nonetheless, utilizing Cyberspace, incorporating interviews prostitutes have conducted, begins to make their voices heard. Through personal memoirs, one written in the early twentieth century, and one recently published in the twenty-first century, the voices of these marginalized individuals are also brought out of the periphery. Despite Ruth Rosen's statement that "due to the lack of authentic memoirs written by prostitutes, the attempt to answer these questions [of who they were/are] has remained a formidable task," it is a venture that is imperative to undertake when discussing prostitution in general, and prostitution in Israel specifically.¹²⁰

The article, "Hell du Jour: Meet Israel's Daylight Prostitutes" in the *Haaretz* helps illuminate the voices of the prostitutes. Throughout this article, the reader is exposed to a handful of women commenting on their lives as Jewish prostitutes in Israel. The picture of these women's lives is not necessarily one of elation or prosperity, but neither is it the typecast picture of prostitution, which is often propagated in, and outside of Israel. Throughout this article, these women¹²¹ are humanized; they are mothers who, to

¹²⁰ Ruth Rosen, "Introduction," in *The Maimie Papers: Letters from an Ex-Prostitute*, ed. Ruth Rosen, Sue Davidson (New York: The Feminist Press, 1977, xiii-xliv, xiii.

¹²¹ The names of the women throughout the article have been changed to protect their identities.

paraphrase ‘Rona,’ work as prostitutes during the day in order to provide for their children.¹²² Sharing this sentiment with the reporter, she informs him quite emphatically that, “I do five or six johns, maybe seven. For me it’s not a lot. I don’t know, maybe it’s a lot for you...I choose what I do and I choose the clients.”¹²³ While it is clear that ‘Rona’ does not view her situation as ideal, she nonetheless still stresses the autonomy she has being a prostitute; a sense of autonomy that often gets ignored in the general narrative on prostitution. The themes prevalent in Rona’s life: enduring hardship and choosing to turn to prostitution are prevalent amongst the other women interviewed in the article. For example, just like Rona, ‘Chen’ describes how her financial worries were so extreme that she turned to prostitution in order to survive.¹²⁴ For Aline, under the subheading of ‘loss of faith,’ she describes how her dependency on alcohol created hardships that led to her working as a prostitute for eight years.¹²⁵ Although their interviews, the trajectory of their lives that resulted in them turning to prostitution is generally quite somber, their accounts do not resemble the trope of the woman trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. Reading their stories shatters the homogenized view of prostitutes in Israel as all victims of human trafficking. As we can see, most of these women are mothers, who are prostitutes during the day in order to provide for their family. The prostitutes interviewed in “Hell du Jour” challenge the assumption that all prostitutes in Israel are victims of human trafficking.

However, there are unfortunately prostitutes in Israel who are so against their own accord. For example, in an article, “ ‘My Experience is Not Unique’ Says Jewish Former

¹²² Lee Vered, “Hell du Jour: Meet Israel’s Daylight Prostitutes,” *Haaretz* (Oct. 2012).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Prostitute,’ ‘Sarah’ recounts her dismal story of being forced into prostitution. In her early twenties, ‘Sarah’ discussed how:

she was molested as a child, kicked out of Hebrew school. She was vulnerable to the words of an older man who became her pimp and ended up beating her. She became a prostitute, against her will, she later realized and grew isolated from her family and friends.¹²⁶

Reading this brief snippet of ‘Sarah’s life paints her as victim. While she was victimized and forced into prostitution, she is still nonetheless not the typecast ‘victim’ that is being propagated in and outside Israel. Furthermore, through reading her personal narrative, she no longer becomes just another victim, just another convenient person to fit into the ‘victim’ construct.

Another individual whose story is divergent from the ‘victim’ construct is Angelique Sabag Gautiller. Reading interviews she has done with the press, reveal how she sees herself as a “pioneer.”¹²⁷ Although many would not consider her as such, given that she was convicted in July 2011 of “conspiring to cause a person to leave the country in order to work in prostitution,” and is the first convicted female pimp, she hardly describes her time as a prostitute as a period of victimization.¹²⁸ Instead, she describes how being burglarized, left with nothing, being in a state of desolation she became a prostitute at a motel.¹²⁹ Speaking of her life as a prostitute, although she does not glorify it in any manner, her tone is quite assertive, challenging that she was not, and is not a ‘victim.’ Angelique, as well as the various individuals included in this discussion reveal a wide spectrum of responses, situations and choices. Yes, there are those who are victims,

¹²⁶ Steve Lipman, “‘My Experience is Not Unique,’ Says Jewish Former Prostitute,” *The Jewish Week* (2014).

¹²⁷ Tal Miller, “Exporting Israeli Prostitutes,” *Tablet* (Dec. 2012).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

and yes, there are common motifs of desperation and depression; however, the passages and sentiments do not present all these women as victims of human trafficking, nor that their agency has been completely removed; similar sentiments which are deducible from reading the memoirs of two ex-prostitutes: Leah Vincent and Maimie Pinzer.

Throughout her personal memoir, *Cut Me Loose: Sin and Salvation After My Ultra-Orthodox Girlhood* (CML), Vincent discusses her life of growing up in a Yeshivish home, the rules of girls not being able to talk to boys, yearning to learn Gemara and other various examples throughout her childhood and adolescence of obstacles she faced in her ultra-orthodox home. In particular, some of the narratives that are exceptionally compelling include her discussion of how “there is little room for the single in Yeshivish life,” later recounting how, “Girls who left Yeshivish life always became sluts and whores.”¹³⁰ Thus, with that quotation in mind, she finds her choice inevitable; she becomes a prostitute.¹³¹ As a prostitute she describes her life as:

My life was a mess, I realized, turning over and hiding my face under my arm.... I was a crazy, broken slut, weighted down by a history that tormented me in my nightmares. The life I was trying to craft was doomed to failure.¹³²

She proceeds to describe how physically and mentally painful her sexual encounters were and how deeply they affected her. Not only did they affect her, but they also affected the way her family saw her. From having limited communication with the children, to being asked not to touch the family’s dishes, throughout the book it is quite apparent that before, and as a prostitute, she was ostracized.

¹³⁰ Leah Vincent, *Cut Me Loose: Sin and Salvation After My Ultra-Orthodox Girlhood* (United States: Nan A. Talese, 2014), 72, 171.

¹³¹ Ibid., 171.

¹³² Ibid.

Seeing how Vincent was ostracized, delving into her life as a prostitute one obtains one image of the life of a prostitute; another depiction is obtained from reading the “Maimie Letters.” The “Maimie Letters” is a collection of letters written by a former prostitute, Maimie Pinzer, to Fanny Quincy Howe. In these letters, Maimie documents her broken Jewish family, her despair growing up and her decision to turn towards prostitution in the early twentieth century.¹³³ Throughout these letters, she documents the ‘interesting’ sensation she experienced, as through prostitution she was able to protect herself, something that her family was unable to do.¹³⁴ As well as feeling unprotected, Maimie also conveyed to Howe how she had also felt unloved by her family.¹³⁵ She thus reveals that her ‘untraditional’ Jewish-American family, led to her turning to prostitution. While Maimie discusses how she believes her unconventional family life led to her somewhat unanticipated life as a prostitute, in reading her memoirs she also makes it quite apparent that many women near her, Jewish or not, “supplement[ed] their meager wages or survived seasonal unemployment through sporadic involvement in prostitution.”¹³⁶ Yet, and unlike Maimie’s narrative, these women’s involvement in prostitution, their voice has been undocumented and subsequently lost.

Finding the various lost voices of prostitutes, inserting them into the discussion in and outside of Israel greatly alters the discourse. The narratives of these women’s lives showcase that for the most part they are not victims of trafficking, and if they have been victimized, in presenting their distinct narrative, they regain their sense of humanity and

¹³³ Rosen, “Introduction,” in *The Maimie Papers: Letters from an Ex-Prostitute*. xiv.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., xix.

¹³⁶ Ibid., xxvi.

voice. These voices are unfortunately not easy to locate; they are often on the periphery, and if divergent from the grand narrative of a victim living a disparaging life, then they remain unheard. Therefore, bringing these voices to the forefront, challenging generalized and simplistic narratives of the life of a prostitute in Israel shows the necessity of making the voice of the prostitute heard. In making these voices heard, my hope is, and to paraphrase a sentiment proposed by Campbell in, “Wives’ Tales: Reflecting on Research in Bountiful,” that this discussion has provided a snippet of ‘credence to women’s varied experiences,’ specifically the varied experiences of prostitutes.¹³⁷

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¹³⁷ Campbell, “Wives’ Tales: Reflecting on Research in Bountiful.”123.

In lieu of a conclusion...

Campbell's article "Wives' Tales: Reflecting on Research in Bountiful" describes the importance of incorporating women's narratives, not only as a means to incorporate their voices into discussion on polygamy, but also as a means to challenge underling biases that dictate the research on it; research, which often, because of certain expectations, can erroneously, and sometimes inadvertently, propagate a static and monolithic problematic view of the lives of these women.¹³⁸ Although Campbell's insights and analysis are on polygamy, her sentiments and discussion are applicable to analysis of prostitution, biases that influence this discourse, and the dire need to incorporate the voice of the prostitute into this examination

Utilizing the specific case study of Jewish prostitution, I highlighted the need to be mindful of morality biases that can dictate the course of research, emphasizing the need to negate these biases by making various voices of prostitutes heard. Taking into consideration how underlying biases shape the projection of certain subjects, illustrated by the image of prostitution in Israel, further reveals how imperative it is to insert these voices into the discourse. The discussion on prostitution in Israel paints all prostitutes as victims of human trafficking, removing their agency and presenting the prostitutes' lives as full of desolation and denigration. Although discussion in the Talmud and discourse in Israel are divergent, consistent themes remain: step in for women, act on behalf of them because these women cannot think and act for themselves. This over generalized, all encompassing discourse is unacceptable as there are not only a myriad of different

¹³⁸ Ibid., 140.

accounts of prostitutes, reflected in inserting their voices, but also various responses to this phenomenon in Israel by Jewish communities as well.

The views on prostitution by the Jewish communities reflect how many of the opinions on prostitution in Israel today are based on Rabbinic Judaism, which is centered on discussion of the Talmud and the Bible. Highlighting the importance of this religious lineage reveals how essential it is to study prostitution in the Bible and the Talmud to understand contemporary prostitution in Israel. Analyzing biblical and Talmudic passages demonstrates a plethora of discussion and debate on prostitution. Throughout the debate on prostitution in the Talmud, it is apparent that while the Bible and the Talmud are not against an individual choosing a life of prostitution, the *zonah* is still not held in high regard.

The term for prostitute, *zonah* is not only found in the Bible and the Talmud, but is also still present in Israel today. Not only does the term for prostitute connect discussion of prostitution in the Bible and the Talmud to contemporary discussion of prostitution in Israel, but also consistent characteristics that have ‘defined’ the prostitute for approximately three thousand years. In the Bible and in contemporary Israel, the prostitute is generally marginalized and is a foreigner. Furthermore, and very problematically, in the Bible and Talmud, and in Israel today, the prostitute is always the one being discussed, always the one whose life is being commented on. While the prostitute’s life is being analyzed by outside parties, the voice of the prostitute has remained silent and unheard for three thousand years.

Without providing the voice of the prostitute, analysis of prostitution, and in this case, Jewish prostitution is superficial. With that being said however, bringing the voice

of the prostitute out of the periphery is not without its challenges. The silencing of the voices of prostitutes is very effective, specifically if the voice of the prostitute does not resemble the prominent narrative propagated in Israel that all prostitutes are victims of human trafficking. Even when the prostitute has been victimized, without inserting that individual's specific narrative, then he or she becomes lost in the general discourse. Therefore, through utilizing Cyberspace, articles containing interviews conducted by prostitutes in Israel, and through the personal memoirs of two ex-prostitutes, I began to insert them into a discussion that they have not been privy to. When we examine prostitution, when we highlight problematic discourse that no longer views prostitutes as individuals but as only prostitutes, and as only victims of human trafficking, we see how that shapes general and specific attitudes towards it, towards the legalization of prostitution. On the opposite end of the spectrum, when prostitution is discussed as taboo, it is just as problematic. When we acknowledge that prostitution is a phenomenon that will endure we see that it can no longer be discussed in such limited terms. Thus, in lieu of a conclusion, one must ponder the question of: cannot there be a different framework to discuss this phenomenon; the answer to which I see, is having prostitution be viewed as a possible choice.

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