

THEN WE WERE SLAVES, NOW WE ARE FREE

A PASSOVER DISCUSSION ON MODERN DAY SLAVERY



SOME FACTS ABOUT MODERN DAY SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING:

- Trafficking is the recruitment and transportation of persons within or across boundaries by force, fraud, or deception for purposes of exploitation¹.
- Trafficked people are commonly enslaved in sweatshops, restaurants, on farms, in manufacturing, prostitution and as private domestic workers².
- There are 27 million slaves in the world today, and 600,000- 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders each year, 17,500 of whom are brought into the United States.³

THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN DAY SLAVERY

1. Enticement

The trafficking process usually begins when recruiters in poor, undeveloped areas promise people decent jobs with good working conditions.

2. Fraud

Upon arrival, victims find themselves in degrading jobs with deplorable conditions.

3. Enslavement

Their passports are confiscated, they are threatened with deportation, abuse, and/or death if they contact the police, and thus they become enslaved.

4. Captivity

Victims remain silent due to physical coercion, language barriers, and fear of law enforcement.

5. Labor violations

Wages are either withheld completely, or paid at levels far below what was promised.

6. Physical and emotional abuse

Working conditions are often extremely dangerous and oppressive.

7. Mistreatment of children

Child victims are forced to work long hours, and almost never attend school

8. Gender discrimination

Women are especially vulnerable due to their lower socio-economic status and lack of education

9. Erosion of the legal system

Slavery and trafficking are violations of both international and federal law

10. Deprivation of human dignity

Trafficking in persons is the ultimate human rights violation, as it deprives victims of all their essential individual freedoms.

¹ Adapted from the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000

² The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, www.castla.org,

³ U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2003

RELEVANT JEWISH TEXTS:

- “Do not put a stumbling block in front of the blind”- Leviticus 19:14
- “All Israel is responsible for one another”- Sanhedrin, 27, 72
- “So God created the human in God’s own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”- Genesis 1:27
- “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) – Rabbi Akiba says this is the great principle of the Torah. Ben Azzai says, “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created Adam, in the likeness of God He made him” (Genesis 5:1) is an even greater principle” - Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9:4
- The Lord freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and wonders”- Deut. 26:8

RELEVANT SECULAR TEXTS:

- “We the people of the United Nations...determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”- United Nations Charter
- “We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” – United States Declaration of Independence
- “Declaring that effective action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, requires a comprehensive international approach in the countries of origin, transit and destination that includes measures to prevent such trafficking, to punish the traffickers and to protect the victims of such trafficking, including by protecting their internationally recognized human rights”- UN Supplementary Trafficking Protocol, 2003

SURVIVOR NARRATIVES:

United States: Mya, from Malaysia, was offered a well paying job as a housekeeper in America so she could send money home to her impoverished family. But upon arriving to Los Angeles, the Malaysian family with whom she was placed took her passport, and threatened to deport her if she contacted the police. She received no pay, was never able to leave the house unsupervised, and was beaten. One day, neighbors noticed her signs of physical abuse, and asked Mya what had happened. While at first she didn’t tell them, after a few weeks she slipped a note into their mailbox that said “Help me”. Through hand gestures and broken English, she told them her story, and the neighbors contacted CAST, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking. With arrangements made in secrecy, Mya slipped out of the house while the family was asleep, and the neighbors drove her to the local CAST facilities, where she received shelter and legal counseling.

India: Shadir, a boy of 15 years, was offered a job that included good clothes and an education; he accepted. Instead of being given a job, Shadir was sold to a slave trader who took him to a remote village in India to produce hand-woven carpets. He was frequently beaten, worked 12 to 14 hours a day and was poorly fed. Luckily, an NGO working to combat slavery rescued him. Now he warns fellow village children about the risks of becoming a child slave.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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