

Mutual Responsibility & Redeeming the Captives:

פדיון שבויים

The Jewish Imperative

Facilitator Guide

Maimonides wrote: 'There is no greater mitzvah than the redemption of captives'. Why is this so? What precedents do we have in Jewish history- from the bible until today? What is difficult about this mitzvah?



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Info For Facilitator



Target Audience:

Middle school, High School, Teens, University students, Adults. Program is designed for a study session setting, but materials can also be used for individuals



Length Of Program:

60-90 minutes



Materials & Prep:

- Copies of source sheet for group study
- Podcasts for individual study

FRAMING THE ISSUE

July 4, 1976. The world stood in awe. The day in which the world would congratulate the United States on its bicentennial, the headlines were stolen by a tiny country in the Middle East. In a daring, unprecedented move, Israeli commando units swooped down on Entebbe, Uganda, freeing 106 Jewish captives and flying them safely back to Israel. The Jewish world swelled with pride at this incredibly daring feat, at the sight of Jewish soldiers saving their fellow people from the hands of those who wished to harm them!

Redeeming captives is not a mitzvah only recently discovered along with Entebbe or Gilad Shalit. It has deep roots in Jewish sources- with examples and stories throughout Jewish history. It is the topic of much debate in discussion, in the Talmud and in Jewish law.

What is the Jewish imperative for *Pidyon Shvuyim*? Why is it so important and why is it so complicated?

In this unit, we include two options of exploring the issue- a text study for a group setting, as well as a series of short podcasts on the topic.

LET'S EXPLORE

Learning

In a class or group setting, introduce the issue using the framing above and then provide the participants with the source sheet, dividing them into partners or small groups for study of the texts. The source sheet includes some questions for discussion.

Debate

- *Bring the group back together. Divide them into two working groups and invite them to consider our current predicament, by preparing two arguments for a debate:*

Group One:

- Formulate a compelling argument claiming we must dedicate ourselves entirely to the cause of the captives. Try to use the term *areivut* - shared responsibility - in your argument.

Group Two:

Formulate an argument that limits the degree of dedicating ourselves to this single cause. Try to argue this point, from a point of *areivut* - shared responsibility.

Bring the group back together and invite each group to present their case. While there will likely not be full agreement or a final decision, follow up by presenting the group with the following question:

- Even if one chooses to limit funding or efforts, how might one still continue to uphold the value or mutual responsibility or the harrowing words of R. Karo: 'Every moment that one delays unnecessarily the ransoming of a captive, it is as if he were to shed blood.'?

*For more in depth, individual study, share **the Pardes podcast series on Pidyon Shvuyim** which raises many of the sources, questions and debates we have discussed and delves more deeply into the sources.*

TAKE ACTION!

We are not the heads of the State of Israel who are expected now to weigh the costs of freeing terrorists or curtailing the military effort to defeat Hamas in order to return the captives home safely. And yet, what role can we play in the process? It is imperative that the issue of the captives remain in the forefront of the public eye, to ensure that the decision makers will move more swiftly in attempting to save the captives.

Here are some actions you can take with your class inspired by the learning*:

■ *Areivut* Wristbands

Design your own slogan and create *areivut* wristbands to give out to students and their families, reminding them of their mutual responsibility (there are many options on Amazon to order personalized wristbands).

■ Song Writing Contest

Create a local contest to write a song that most powerfully expresses the value of *areivut*.

■ Passover Prep

As we look ahead to spring, how might Passover be different this year if God forbid the captives are still in captivity? How will it be different if they have been freed? Perhaps a community effort can be made to create a unique Haggadah dedicated to this modern day struggle to free the captives? What prayer or ritual might be added to the Seder night to ensure that the captives are a clear focus of the evening?

*We also encourage you to look at the other units on this website with many more calls to action to help free the hostages.

CLOSING INTENTION

As we stand daily and nightly shoulder to shoulder with our people we ask ourselves: Have we succeeded in putting the value of *areivut* into action? What can we do that will return to us the clarity and pride we can feel when we know we have done all that we can on behalf of the captives?