

a program guide:

for youth movements and religious schools

BRING ISRAEL'S SOLDIERS HOME

**ISRAEL'S CAPTIVE SOLDIERS
THE MITZVOT OF PIDYON SHEVUYIM &
TIKKUN OLAM**



american zionist movement
in cooperation with the wzo
department for zionist activities

AMERICAN ZIONIST MOVEMENT

mission statement

The mission of the American Zionist Movement is to strengthen the connection of American Jews with Israel; develop their appreciation of the centrality of Israel to Jewish life worldwide; deepen their understanding of Israeli society and the challenges it faces; encourage travel, long-term visits and Aliyah to Israel; and to facilitate dialogue, debate and collective active action to further Zionism in the United States and abroad.

member organizations

zionist membership organizations

Ameinu, American Friends of Likud, American Zionist Youth Council, AMIT, ARZA-Association of Reform Zionists of America, Baltimore Zionist District, Bnai Zion, Herut, N.A., MERCAZ-Zionist Organization of the Conservative Movement, MERETZ-USA, NA'AMAT USA, Religious Zionists of America, Russian American Jews for Israel, Zionist Organization of America, Zionist Student Movement

affiliates

B'nai B'rith International, Jewish National Fund, Friends of the Israel Scouts, Women's International Zionist Organization

zionist youth and student movements

BBYO, Betar-Tagar, B'nei Akiva, Habonim-Dror, Hamagshimim, Hashomer Hatzair, Keshet, KOACH, Magshimey Herut, Masada Maccabi, National Federation of Temple Youth, United Synagogue Youth, Union of Progressive Zionists, Yavne Olami, Young Judaea



BRING ISRAEL'S SOLDIERS HOME

israel's captive soldiers the mitzvot of pidyon shevuyim and tikkun olam

a program guide for youth movements and religious schools

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students take action by participating in a rally to free abducted israeli soldier gilad shalit

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to the teacher

This unit was developed to be easily adaptable for use by youth groups, traditional day schools and afternoon religious schools. It is geared for high school students, but can be tailored to the level of junior high school. Please select the materials which best suit your needs and teaching style.

The unit is divided into four major sections. After the introduction of background information about the soldiers and the concept of *Pidyon Shevuyim*, each section represents a major positive concept that the students should strive to master: "Empathy," "Responsibility" and "Action." Within each section, there are opportunities for hands-on student participation in the form of interviews and monologues which can be performed. Each section also encourages ethical and intellectual analysis and debate through discussions of Jewish issues such as *Pidyon Shevuyim* and *Tikkun Olam*.

Here are two alternative lesson plans consisting of three sessions of 45 minutes each, one for a youth movement and one for a religious school class. In either case, the goals of the unit remain to generate enthusiasm among your students for advocating for the cause of social justice and for the students ultimately to take action on behalf of the soldiers through letter-writing and raising public awareness (see the **Take Action!** section).

YOUTH MOVEMENT

day 1

15 minutes **Overview** of current events from **Introduction and Background Information**, pages 6-11

30 minutes **Empathy**: Performance and discussion of "I Am Just a Wife." pages 16-19

day 2

30 minutes **Responsibility**: performance and discussion of the Monologue by the IDF soldier, pages 23-24

15 minutes **Responsibility**: Discussion and singing of "Hativkah." page 33

day 3

15 minutes **Action**: Performance and discussion of the Monologue by the American Jewish high school student, pages 35-36

30 minutes Discussion of **Action** that can be taken by students and letter writing or other action-oriented activities, pages 42-45

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CLASS

day 1

25 minutes **Introduction and background Information**: overview of current events and *Pidyon Shevuyim*, pages 6-11

20 minutes Discussion of **Empathy** as it relates to *Pidyon Shevuyim*, pages 20-21

day 2

30 minutes Discussion of **Responsibility** as it relates to *Tikkun Olam*, pages 28-30

15 minutes Discussion of *Pidyon Shevuyim* as it relates to **Responsibility**, pages 31-32

day 3

15 minutes **Action**: Roleplaying with discussion to see how the family members are taking action, "I Want Proof." pages 37-41

30 minutes Discussion of **Action** that can be taken by students and letter writing or other action-oriented activities, pages 42-45

Remember that these are only suggestions and you should feel free to explore the wealth of material contained in this unit, sharing with your students whatever you think would most interest them.

SECTION ONE

introduction & background information

introduction

Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser, Eldad Regev: these names have become engraved in the Israeli national consciousness, joining the ranks of Ron Arad, Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz and Zvi Feldman, who were captured in Lebanon in the 1980's, and Guy Hever, who disappeared from the Golan Heights in 1997. While the recent War in Lebanon was about much more than these abducted soldiers, their unprovoked abduction constituted a significant factor in the instigation of the conflict. Why are the incidents surrounding Shalit, Goldwasser and Regev so unifying and electrifying in Israel?

The Israel Defense Force stands as a citizens' army, from its founding May 14, 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel until today. National military service is compulsory for Jewish and Druze men, and Jewish women, over the age of 18 (though exemptions may be made on religious, physical or psychological grounds). For this reason, soldiers

soldiers, were displayed during the parade. That same afternoon, the Sai'qa organization held a procession in Damascus, which featured an Israeli tank captured in the Sultan Ya'akub battle. There were reports that Israeli POW's were being displayed in this parade. Others suggested that there were three corpses on the tank. On July 4, 1982, the Syrians held a funeral in the Jewish cemetery in Damascus for four IDF soldiers. The coffins were provided by the Sai'qa organization, and attached to them were Hebrew documents that were left behind in Israeli tanks from the battle in Sultan Ya'akub.

Under the auspices of a prisoner exchange in 1984, these four coffins and documents were transferred to Israel. It was discovered that only one of these coffins contained an Israeli body (Captain Zohar Lifschitz). The Israeli documents attached to them actually belong to Israeli soldiers who are alive and well in Israel. In December of 1991, a team of Red Cross pathologists re-examined the bodies and confirmed the fact that three of the bodies sent by Syria were not Israelis.

There are some who speak of two other Israeli MIAs: Yossi Fink and Rahamim Alshikh. The Israeli Government has received evidence that these men are dead. Though the Israeli Government still demands the return of the remains of Fink and Alshikh from their captors, the Zionist movement has focused its campaign efforts on behalf of the other MIAs.

We look forward to the time when all the soldiers will be safely returned to their families and homes.

historical background: on pidyon shevuyim

Unfortunately, Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev are only the most recent additions to a long line of Jewish captives beginning in the Bible. Jewish tradition sheds light on what to do in a captive situation with the *mitzvah* of *Pidyon Shevuyim*, the redeeming of captives. A myriad of examples of the practice of *Pidyon Shevuyim* exist throughout Jewish history.

IN THE BIBLE

• The earliest incident concerning captives involves Abraham's heroic efforts to rescue his nephew, Lot, who was captured during a battle between the Mesopotamian and Canaanite kings:

When Abraham heard that his kinsman had been captured, he gathered up his disciplines and householders, three hundred and eighteen in number, and pursued them to Dan. (Genesis 14:14)

Later, during the First Temple period, the northern (Israelite) kingdom took 200,000 captives in a war against the southern (Judean) kingdom. The prophet Oded rebuked them as follows:

Now, then, listen to me, and send back the captives you have taken from your kinsmen, for the wrath of the LORD is upon you. (2 Chronicles 28:11)

by friends and family, Goldwasser lived in South Africa as a teenager. His wife is named Karnit and his parents are Shlomo and Mickey.

Eldad Regev, 26, from Kiryat Motzkin, is a university student who also worked for Bezeq.

GUY HEVER

On August 17, 1997, Guy Hever (born May 30, 1977), a soldier in the Israeli army disappeared. He was last seen at his army base on the southern Golan Heights. He was dressed in army fatigues and was carrying his weapon, key chain and international military identification papers. The area was searched thoroughly but no trace of him was found.

RON ARAD

Captain Rod Arad, a navigator with the Israeli Air Force, was captured on October 16, 1986, after parachuting out of his Phantom jet. He landed in the area of Sayda in southern Lebanon and was captured by members of the Islamic fundamentalist Amal militia. Captain Arad was brought to Beirut and was personally held by the then head of security of Amal, Mustafa Dirani. The leader of this militia, Nabi Berri, announced that he was holding Arad and proposed an exchange for Shiite and Lebanese detainees.

In early 1988, Dirani severed his ties with Amal for ideological differences and took Arad with him. He formed a new group that same year, called "The Resistance of the Believers." Arad was held captive under Dirani's group until the beginning of 1989. After negotiations between "The Resistance of the Believers" and the Iranians, Arad was handed over to the Iranian "Revolutionary Guards" in exchange for a large sum of money. Sources in Israel believe that Captain Ron Arad is still being held by this group and, according to an April 8, 1993 edition of the Jerusalem Report, he is now held captive somewhere in Iran.

A video featuring Ron Arad speaking for over a minute from a prison cell filmed most probably some time in the late eighties was aired for the first time on September 6, 2006. The video was bought by Israeli Channel 10 from the Lebanese Broadcasting Company.

Ron Arad was born in Israel on May 5, 1958, the son of Batya and the late Dov Arad. Ron and his wife Tami have a daughter Yuval, who was only an infant at the time of the capture. Before his capture, Ron was a student at the Technion, where he was pursuing a B.S. degree in chemical engineering. At the time of his capture, he had successfully completed his first year of studies.

ZACHARY BAUMEL, ZVI FELDMAN, YEHUDA KATZ

On the morning of June 11, 1982, in the Sultan Ya'akub area of Lebanon, a battle occurred between a Syrian Army unit and a tank force of the IDF. Upon completion of this battle, six Israeli soldiers were missing. Three of the six were ultimately found; however, Zachary Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz are still missing.

Sources in Israel claim that terrorists who were in the Sultan Ya'akub area, including the Fatah and Syrian-affiliated Sai'qa, organized a parade in the village of Ayta Al-Fawkhar on the very day these three Israeli soldiers were reported missing. There were reports that Israeli soldiers, or possibly bodies of Israeli

SECOND TEMPLE

During the wars with the Greeks, the Hasmonean kings redeemed Jewish captives by ransom (I Maccabees 3:41, 10:33). Once the Hasmonean monarchy ended, individual Jewish communities were left to fend for themselves in dealing with their brethren who fell captive during the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, Great Rebellion of 68-70, and failed Bar Kochba Rebellion.

MISHNAH AND TALMUD

The Talmud and Midrash tell numerous stories about the sages (primarily of Israel but also of Babylonia) who engaged in ransoming captives, acting as communal agents and traveling (often great distances) at the expense of charitable funds which were established expressly for this purpose. These funds were either part of the general, communal charitable fund (*Kupat Tzedakah*), or were earmarked specifically for ransoming captives (Baba Kama 117b mentions an *Arnak shel Pidyon Shevuyim*). Contributions to these funds consisted of both voluntary donations as well as requirements for individuals.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Jews were perceived as a distinctly separate group during the medieval period. As a result, Jews were often at a high risk of capture either by armies or by pirates. Christians, Muslims and pagans alike took Jewish prisoners and held them for a ransom which they knew would be forthcoming from the nearest Jewish community.

In a history of the Jews through his own time, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Daud, an 11th-century Spanish Jew, tells a tale of four sages who were taken captive by pirates and ransomed by several Mediterranean Jewish communities. While the historicity of this entire episode is highly doubtful, the details of the capture and ransom are consistent with those times. The universal acceptance of the story during medieval times as accounting for the spread of Jewish scholarship throughout Egypt, North Africa and Muslim Spain emphasizes the frequency with which similar episodes actually occurred.

THE HOLOCAUST

During the *Shoah* (Holocaust), the world Jewish community had the opportunity to secure safe passage from Germany for Jews living under Hitler's regime. There were some attempts, even by the World Zionist Organization, to pursue these opportunities. The courageous Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish businessman and diplomat, saved thousands of Hungarian Jews through such creative channels as bribery, blackmail and by issuing false protective passports.

However, tragically, for the most part no action was taken. For instance, in late 1942, as part of the "Europa Plan," the Germans quoted a price of \$2 million for the release of 1 million Jews and, later, \$200,000 for the release of 1,000 children. The children were even transported away from Auschwitz in preparation for transfer to Germany, but ultimately the required money was not raised, and eventually the children were taken back to Auschwitz and murdered.

SECTION TWO

empathy

It is very important that the student feel a sense of connection with the missing soldiers and their families in order to feel that the issue is relevant and important to him or her. One way to create such a connection is to encourage the students to imagine that they themselves are in the victims' position. This can be done through roleplaying.

Therefore, in this section, first you will find a monologue by Miriam Baumel, mother of missing soldier Zachary Baumel and a letter from Noam and Aviva Shalit to their captured son Gilad Shalit, which give students a sense of the pain of losing a family member. Next, there is a dialogue between Karnit Goldwasser, husband of captured soldier Ehud Goldwasser, and an interviewer, which allows your students to think about what it would be like if their own family member were captured. Finally, there is a study on *Pidyon Shevuyim*, the Jewish doctrine commanding us to redeem captives, which looks at empathy as it is commanded in the Bible and its applications.

monologue: miriam baumel

DIRECTIONS

One student will play the role of Miriam Baumel and read aloud the following dialogue. Then you will discuss the questions that follow.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

miriam baumel Mother of Sgt. Zachary Baumel, missing since 1982.

Shalom. My name is Miriam Baumel. I am Zachary's mother. I am here today to tell you my story. It is a story that I do not like to tell, but I must if I am ever to see my son again.

As you know, every Israeli citizen is called upon to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Every mother and father who sends a son or daughter to serve dreads the thought of their loved one falling into enemy hands. This is what has happened to my son.

Zachary has been missing since 1982. His captors have not permitted Zachary, nor myself, to speak or write to each other. Nobody knows where he is.

What has been helpful to me, though, is that Israel and Israelis are very sympathetic to the families whose relatives have died from war and terrorism. There have been many. But most of all, they empathize with the families of the missing. I have felt their deep emotion through their singular looks of horror and by the words frozen in their throats.

It has been over twenty-four years since I have seen my son. I do not know with any certainty if he is alive or dead. The countries and organizations that are illegally holding our son have inflicted a pain and anguish upon my family that we would wish upon no one.

Our government and our people have always prided themselves on being responsible for one another. So please, for my and for Israel's long-absent sons, raise your voice to bring them home.

Based on the article by Yona and Miriam Baumel, "Time for Release of Long Lost Sons," *Jerusalem Post*, September 13, 1993.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 How does the speaker make you feel? Did you identify with anything she said? If so, what? If not, why couldn't you identify with the speaker?
- 2 How would you feel if a family member of yours was going off to serve in the IDF? What dangers would they face?
- 3 How does it affect Israeli society that all Israeli citizens have to serve in the army? Do you think Americans can understand what this is like?
- 4 What are the Jewish issues that the monologue raises?

Now, have other members of the class interview "Miriam Baumel" about what she said. She must answer in character.

letter: from noam & aviva shalit to their son

DIRECTIONS

Read the following letter to the missing soldier Gilad Shalit from his parents.

Our dear, sweet Gilad,

Mom and Dad, Yoel and Hadas are very concerned for you, want to hear [from] you and are hoping you are well and feeling all right—as good as possible in your condition.

We are hoping you can read this, and we want you to know that everything possible is being done to bring you home to Mitzpeh Hila and the Galilee, as quickly as possible, to your family, your room that's waiting for you (and to help us with the B & B rooms).

Know that we're thinking of you all the time and hoping you're managing somehow and surviving these difficult moments.

We know and believe that whoever is holding you also has a family and knows what we're going through and will know to watch over you and your health.

Loving you and encouraging you,

Mom and Dad

Source: Jack Khoury / jkhouri@haaretz.co.il, *Haaretz*, June 27, 2006. www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=731586

ACTIVITY

Write your own letter to Gilad Shalit.

roleplaying: i am just a wife

DIRECTIONS

Perform the following dialogue with one student playing the part of Karnit Goldwasser and one student playing the role of the interviewer. Then discuss the questions that follow.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

karnit goldwasser Wife of Ehud Goldwasser, MIA

zvika krieger Interviewer, Newsweek

interviewer

Hostilities between Israel and Lebanon have ended, but Karnit Goldwasser isn't celebrating yet. She is the wife of kidnapped Israeli soldier Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser, whose abduction (along with fellow soldier Eldad Regev) is what sparked last month's war. The couple had been married 11 months before Ehud was shipped off for reserve duty in July, and celebrated Karnit's 30th birthday the week before his departure. Following commitments from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to personally work for the soldiers' release, Karnit arrived in the United States on Monday to help "keep Udi on the agenda." I'm here with Karnit in Los Angeles to discuss her efforts to secure Ehud's release. Karnit, were you worried when your husband was called up for reserve duty?

karnit

Everyone has to serve one month per year, so it was routine. When he heard that this time they were going to be placed in the north, we were very happy. He said it would be like a vacation, because nothing happens in the north—the action is in the south. When I heard about the soldier Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped in Gaza three weeks before, I called him right away. I was very worried because I knew that when something bad happens in the south, Hizbullah sees it as a sign to fan the flames up north. He said I shouldn't be worried, nothing was happening up there.

interviewer

When did you find out about the kidnapping?

karnit

The day he was kidnapped was supposed to be his last day of reserve duty, the day he was supposed to come home. I was preparing the house for him, starting to cook for him what he asked me to cook. He knows I was very busy with my master's thesis, so he didn't want me to work in the kitchen, but I forced him to tell me something to cook for him, so I made him meat bourekas [pastries]. I heard the news on the radio that something bad happened in the north, near Zarit, which is the base where he was stationed. I sent him a text [message], and he didn't answer. Until the moment the soldiers walked inside the house, I was sure that he was going to call me and say that he was very busy and didn't have a chance to give me a call.

They sent a soldier with a doctor to tell me the news. They usually only send them when somebody is dead. When they entered, I didn't see them, only my friends saw them, and they all started to cry, knowing that

something really bad must have happened. They told me that after the Hizbullah attack on his convoy, he was missing, they didn't know what happened to him. Six of the bodies were identified, but one was still not. When I understood that he might be dead, I went to my closet and tried to find some black clothing. My heart was telling me that he was alive and my brain was saying that he was not.

We were relieved when we found out he wasn't dead. We started to hug each other, happy to find out that he was just kidnapped. But the next day was very difficult, trying to understand what we're going to have to do, how our life is going to be.

interviewer

What did you do after you found out that your husband was kidnapped?

karnit

The first phone call I made was to the Regev family, to tell them that we are one big family now, and that we are going to bring them back. And the second was to the Shalit family, and I said the same thing to them. The next step was to learn the material. There isn't any school to teach you how to react when your husband gets kidnapped. Not just learning how Hizbullah works and who is who in Lebanon, but rather things that I need to do, how my life is going to be, these kinds of things.

interviewer

Do you feel betrayed that Israel stopped the war without achieving its original goal of securing your husband's release?

karnit

I don't feel betrayed. One of the goals was to bring my husband back. But the other reason was to bring peace to the north of Israel—because when they kidnapped my husband, they also started shelling Israel with Katyusha rockets. The war took a lot of casualties, in Israel and in Lebanon. We live in northern Israel, so while we're asking for the government to bring our precious ones back home, at the same time, we're trying to survive the rockets. During the war, we were seven miles from the border, with Katyusha rockets flying over our heads. When the war finished, I could finally put my whole energy into getting him back. The fact is that if there is a goal to the war and you don't reach the goal, you don't stop fighting. For me, the war hasn't stopped.

interviewer

What do you think about Kofi Annan's announcement last week that he will help mediate a possible prisoner exchange?

karnit

Annan chose the families of the kidnapped soldiers to be the first ones that he met with. To me, this sends the message that he thinks it's important. Most of the meeting the families did the talking, but at the end, he said that he will personally work for their release, that it will be taken care of. He said the same thing in Lebanon, which must mean that he really wants them to be back.

interviewer

How did you wind up coming to America?

karnit

I didn't plan it. I couldn't plan more than one or two days ahead. My goal since the kidnapping has been to keep this issue on the agenda, to meet with as many people as I can. When I meet with people, I just ask them to help me, I don't specify how. When the Los Angeles philanthropist Marvin Markowitz came to visit me in Israel, he offered to bring me to Los Angeles and help me. And now I will be traveling to Chicago, Washington, New York, Houston, Miami, but I have no plan. I'm just going to keep asking people for help. I'm sure that someone here knows someone who knows someone who can speak to Hizbullah and ask them to send us a sign of life. I hope to be in New York in October for the annual U.N. General Assembly meeting. I just know that I should be there, to help in any way to raise awareness among world leaders, to remind them about Udi.

interviewer

What is the Israeli government doing to retrieve your husband and the other kidnapped soldier?

karnit

I don't know exactly what they are doing. I know they are doing everything in their power to get them back, but there are lots of other things they are dealing with, so I can't just sit back and leave everything to them.

interviewer

Have you made any attempts to communicate with your husband?

karnit

The day after the kidnapping, the Red Cross visited our house, and there is a form that they give the families to fill out in these situations. On one side you write your address and on the other side you write a message to the kidnapped person. We wrote, "We love you very much and we are hoping for the best." The message is sitting on the desk of the Red Cross office in Beirut. They have been calling Hizbullah every day to take the letter and they refuse to come, they are not willing to come to take it.

On Israeli TV a few weeks ago they showed a Hizbullah fighter who had been captured by the Israelis but was wounded so they took him to the hospital in Nahariya—the same city in which we were staying. They knew the soldier has a wife, so they put him on television and they let him inform his wife that he is OK. It is very sad to me to know that we are doing whatever a human being needs to do, and they don't.

interviewer

Has this experience changed your opinion towards Israel's policy of not negotiating for the return of kidnapped soldiers?

karnit

I am just a wife, and I will do and give anything to bring my husband back. To talk about Israeli policy is not my place.

Based on a Special to *Newsweek*, Web Exclusive, by Zvika Kriegel. Sept 7, 2006, 5:32 p.m. ET. www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14721644/site/newsweek/

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1 How do you think it must have felt for Karnit to be living in the North during the war? If you were in her position, would you have stayed in the North or would you have tried to go somewhere else? What are some problems associated with leaving your home and your community?

2 What do you think of Israel's policy of not negotiating with terrorists for the return of kidnapped soldiers? Do you think your opinion would change if it was one of your loved ones who were kidnapped?

3 What is a philanthropist? What Jewish issues are involved in being a philanthropist? Why do you think Marvin Markowitz offered to bring Karnit to America? If you were a philanthropist, which causes would you choose to support?

4 If you were Karnit and were traveling all around the United States, what would you say about your kidnapped husband to everyone you met? Which sort of people specifically would you seek out to speak with?

Now, have other members of the class interview them about what they have said. They must answer in character.

pidyon shevuyim: the command to redeem captives

The great medieval scholar Maimonides wrote rules for the redemption of captives in his compilation of Jewish law call the *Mishneh Torah*. The laws pertaining to ransoming captives are codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) in a chapter all by themselves.

There is no greater *mitzvah* than *Pidyon Shevuyim*. *Pidyon Shevuyim* even takes precedence over supporting the poor or clothing them. This is because a captive faces all the problems of hunger, thirst and lack of clothing as well as mortal danger. Anybody who ignores the need to redeem captives is ignoring such important commandments as these:

“Do not harden your heart or shut your hand against your needy kinsman.” Deuteronomy 15:7

“Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.” Leviticus 19:16

“You shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight.” Leviticus 25:53

“You shall surely open your hand to him.” Deuteronomy 15:8

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Leviticus 19:18

“Rescue those who are drawn to death.” Proverbs 24:11

Now read the following passage from Talmud Bava Batra 3b which demonstrates the strength of the obligation to *Pidyon Shevuyim*:

Inhabitants of a town who have raised funds to build a synagogue but who see that performing another *mitzvah* requires the money they have collected, should donate the money toward that *mitzvah*. If they purchased stones and beams (for building the synagogue), they should not sell them in order to perform another *mitzvah*—except *Pidyon Shevuyim*. Even if they have brought the stones (to the building site), and laid their foundation, and if they have carved the beams and prepared everything for the building, they may sell all the materials for *Pidyon Shevuyim*. But if they have completed the building, they need not sell the synagogue, but must raise more money (for *Pidyon Shevuyim*) from the community.

In response to this statement, the Tosafot (rabbinic commentators) said that even a *Sefer Torah* can be sold for the purpose of *Pidyon Shevuyim*!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 What is the relationship between *Pidyon Shevuyim* and *Tzedakah* (righteousness) or *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of lovingkindness)?
- 2 What are some examples of things you can do to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Pidyon Shevuyim*?
- 3 How might your involvement in this *mitzvah* make your life more meaningful?
- 4 Why is *Pidyon Shevuyim* a religious duty of such great importance?
- 5 How should the *mitzvah* of *Pidyon Shevuyim* be applied to the missing Israeli soldiers?
- 6 How can you reconcile the idea of ransoming a captive soldier with the Israeli Government's policy of not negotiating with terrorists? What do you think about the policy of not negotiating with terrorists?

SECTION THREE

responsibility

Now that the students have a sense of empathy for the soldiers and their families, the next step is for them to feel an awareness of responsibility to take action. This section explores three areas within the realm of responsibility. First, it considers the IDF and its duty to defend and protect its members and all citizens of Israel. The monologue by an IDF soldier establishes the fears and frustrations when these responsibilities are not met, as when the soldiers were captured. The dialogue between two co-hosts and Karnit Goldwasser, wife of missing soldier Ehud Goldwasser, raises the complexities of decision-making even within the premise of the responsibility to act in the best interest of Israel and her citizens, for instance when it comes to concepts such as “land for peace” or whether to go to war. Second, this section discusses the concept of *Tikkun Olam* and the responsibility of the individual to make a difference in the world. More specifically, we look at *Pidyon Shevuyim*, the responsibility of ransoming captives. Finally, this section examines the Israeli National Anthem and the responsibility involved in being a Zionist.

monologue: idf soldier

DIRECTIONS

One student will play the role of an IDF soldier and read aloud the following dialogue. Then you will discuss the questions that follow.

All of us in the Israel Defense Forces live our lives with a fear of the horrible reality of war. We try to be brave and not allow it to interfere with our operations. But the feeling is there.

One particular fear is that of falling into the hands of one of the Arab countries or terrorist organizations, who are not known for their gentle treatment of prisoners. I shudder at the thought of one of my friends or me being forced to live in that nightmare.

There are eight Israeli soldiers who are missing in action. I don't know them personally, but I feel totally frustrated that I am not able to help them. This feeling of powerlessness is so painful.

One of the fundamental tenets of Israeli military life is that if, G-d forbid, you are taken prisoner, your unit will do all that is humanly possible to rescue you—often at the cost of human life.

I can't help but wonder: "What are the MIAs thinking? Do they believe that we let them down, that we have not done everything possible to secure their release?"

I cannot help but feel guilty.

I am going to make sure that as many people as possible will know the names of Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser, Eldad Regev, Guy Hever, Ron Arad, Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman.

Israel will not forget its MIAs and abducted soldiers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1 How does the speaker make you feel? Did you identify with anything he or she said? If so, what? If not, why couldn't you identify with the speaker?

2 Why do you think this soldier says he feels "guilty"? Would you feel the same way in his position?

3 Answer the soldier's questions, "What are the abducted soldiers thinking? Do they believe that we let them down, that we have not done everything possible to secure their release?"

4 What are the Jewish issues that the monologue raises?

Now, have other members of the class interview the "IDF soldier" about what he or she said. The student must answer in character.