

"All Who Are in Need..." A Place for Gilad Shalit at Your Seder...

הגדה של פסח **בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם**

In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they personally came out of Egypt. The Passover Haggadah

Each and every [Passover](#), families gather throughout the Jewish world to recapture an ancient memory of the darkness of slavery and the great light of freedom. For one family in Israel, this Passover will be a reminder that slavery is not just a memory, that captivity is not just a far away story. For the Shalit family, as long as Gilad remains a prisoner of the Hamas, the Passover story will be only half a story, a painful reminder that freedom is yet to be achieved.



[HELP](#)



Computer generated graphic simulating Gilad's handwriting used in the campaign for his release.

On June 25 2006, Hamas captured then Corporal [Gilad Shalit](#) of the Israel Defense Forces Armor Corps. For nearly three years, his family and all of Israel await his return home.

[Maimonides](#) – Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (Rambam) – defined the [redemption of captives](#) as a commandment that surpassed even feeding and clothing the poor:

One who turns their eyes away from the captive's plight betrays the verse – "Do not harden your heart nor close your hand..." (Deut 15:7) and "Do not stand idly by your brother's blood..." (Lev 19:16) There is no greater commandment than the redemption of captives. Laws on Charity 10

At the same time, Rambam, a brilliant political mind, grappled with the dilemmas raised by this moral imperative:

One does not ransom captives for more than their value because of *tikkun olam* (literally: "fixing the world"; in this context "out of concern for the general good") so that enemies will not be encouraged to take additional prisoners. Laws on Charity 12

How do we contend with tensions within the tradition in our grappling with Gilad Shalit's agonizing imprisonment?

This year – make a place for Gilad Shalit at your Seder Table. Leave an empty chair. Put an empty plate. Set an empty cup for wine.

[Five cups of wine](#) adorn our Seder table. Four of them recall four redemptive moments in the Passover story:

לְכֵן אֲמַר לְבְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲנִי יְהוָה, וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרַיִם, וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֵי תַם; וְגֵאלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה, וּבִשְׁפָטִים גְּדוּלִים. וְלִקַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם, וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהֵי הַיָּם; וִידַעְתֶּם, כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַיָּם, הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרַיִם.
[שמות ו', ו-ז](#)

I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with an out-stretched arm and with great acts of judgment, and **I will take you** for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians"
[Exodus 6:6-7](#)

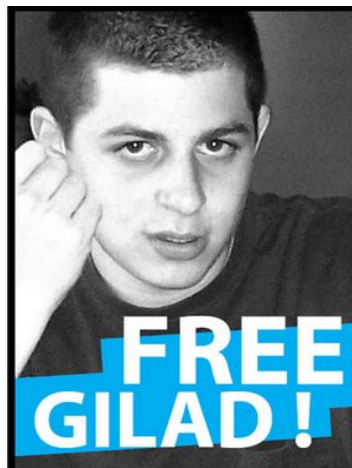


[The fifth cup](#) – [the cup of Elijah](#) – holds out the promise of [redemptions yet to come](#). This year when you open the door at your seder for Elijah – the prophet who according to Jewish folk tradition not only is the precursor of the Messiah, but is the defender of the weak, the embattled, and the persecuted – read together the words from Isaiah with the hope that Gilad Shalit and his family will soon be reunited:

וּפְדוּיֵי יְהוָה יָשׁוּבוּ וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה וּשְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם עַל-רֵאשֵׁי שָׂשׂוֹן וּשְׂמֵחָה יִשְׂגוּ וְנָסוּ יִגּוֹן וְאֲנָחָה
[ישעיהו לה, א'](#)

And the ransomed of the Lord will return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they will acquire joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
[Isaiah 35, 10](#)

We cannot be truly free until Gilad is free.



Scott Copeland
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