

A PARASHA THOUGHT

"The Chessed You Almost Missed"

There is a *mashal*, or parable, about a person, Chaim, who was framed for a crime he didn't commit. He was sentenced to life in a high security prison. He quickly had to learn how to fend for himself around the most dangerous criminals. His family was devastated and worked tirelessly to prove his innocence. Finally, after many months of what felt like forever, they were able to

come up with enough evidence and the judge ruled that he would be released from prison at the end of that week.

His family was excited, and they prepared a big feast and decided to pick him up in a fancy limousine! Chaim was thrilled; he thought this day would never come! He ran out of the prison building and, before he knew it, he was home enjoying a big celebration with his whole family!

RABBI BINYAMIN KANOWITZ
ALUMNI CONTRIBUTOR

A few weeks later when Chaim was retelling his story and thanking his family for their hard work in getting him released, it occurred to him that he overlooked the fact that he was picked up in a limousine, as he was so focused on the

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →

LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL

WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

Although redeeming captives is considered one of the greatest *mitzvos*, *halacha* sometimes requires us to refrain from doing so. Based on the Mishnah (*Gittin* 45a), the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 252) rules that, for the benefit of society, one may not pay more than a captive's market value. The Gemara asks what societal benefit this restriction serves; is it to protect the community from the financial burden of paying excessive ransom sums or, alternatively, is it to prevent us from encouraging would-be captors to take extreme measures to take captives because it is so lucrative?

The difference between these two rationales will be if some wealthy person wants to take the financial burden upon himself entirely to free a captive. Here there is no burden on society but, still, he is giving incentive to captors to take additional victims for profit. Either way, according to Tosofos, a person would not be restricted from redeeming himself at any cost because of self-preservation. There is an argument between the Rambam and Tosofos whether this permit for self-preservation would extend to one's wife as well.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →

CINCINNATI
Community
KOLLEL

You + Torah = the Kollel



KOLLEL ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

Your Learning | Your Support

WE DID IT!

\$375,000+ RAISED | 580+ DONORS

Sponsorship & feedback:
parasha@cincykollel.org

Sponsored in honor of and in thanks to
all the donors to our annual
campaign this week!

Cincinnati Torah
is distributed weekly
to local shuls
and the community
e-mail list.



LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL

CONTINUED

It is unclear if the Gemara resolves its question; the *Shulchan Aruch* codifies the reason as not to encourage the captors, taking the stricter position. Nonetheless, he still allows the redemption of a Torah scholar or even a student who shows potential at any cost. In contrast, the Sha"ch cites the Ba"ch that says that common practice is to allow one to redeem relatives or anyone if one is so inclined.

Famously and tragically, the Mahara"m (Rabbi Meir ben Baruch 1220 – 1293) was taken captive in the year 1286 by Emperor Rudolph I and held for a ransom of 23,000 talents of silver. The Mahara"m ruled that the ransom should not be paid. His disciple, the Rosh, ignored his ruling and held that, because the Mahara"m was the leading Rabbinic leader of his generation, no ransom was too high. The Mahara"m, however, passed away in captivity in the year 1293, before the full sum could be raised. 🕯

A PARASHA THOUGHT

CONTINUED

actual release from prison.

In the beginning of *parshas Massei* (33:4), when the *passuk* speaks about the journey of *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, Rashi says that when *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, Hashem "arranged" that the Egyptians were busy mourning their sons who died during the last plague. Since the Egyptians were preoccupied, this gave *Bnei Yisrael* an easier escape. This is the first time the Torah mentions this great act of kindness from

Hashem. The question is, why didn't the Torah mention this earlier in *parshas Bo* when *Bnei Yisrael* actually left Egypt?

The *sefer Shemuah Yaffeh* explains that just like Chaim was so focused and excited to get out of the prison that he didn't even realize that he was getting into a limousine, so too when *Bnei Yisrael* were leaving Egypt they didn't realize the *chessed* (kindness) that Hashem was doing for them by keeping the Egyptians busy. Oftentimes, while focused on

the "big thing" we tend to overlook the "smaller" *chassadim* that Hashem, or even our friends and family, are doing for us. The Torah is teaching us to recognize the small *chassadim* as well!

Good Shabbos! 🕯



TRACING OUR MINHAGIM

RABBI YEHUDAH LEVI

The Talmud teaches that specific elements of mourning should be observed during the week in which *Tisha b'Av* falls out. Early *halachic* authorities extended these observances to the nine days preceding *Tisha b'Av*, and some restrictions are commonly observed within the entire three-week period leading up to *Tisha b'Av*. One such custom is to refrain from trimming the hair or beard during these three weeks. The exact origin of applying this limitation to the three weeks is unclear as it is not mentioned in Talmudic, Geonic, or even early Rishonic literature. The earliest explicit source to prohibit shaving during this time appears to be the late 14th century *Sefer Minhagim*, by the Austrian scholar Rabbi Isaac Tirna. Codified into law by Rama, who describes such abstinence as being customary, not taking a haircut during the three weeks is a primarily Ashkenazic custom, although *Kaf Hachaim* records that the Arizal was stringent as well. The rationale for such practice is based on the midrash referring to the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and *Tisha b'Av* as "*bein Hamitzarim*," or "between the straits," because of the various calamities that befell the Jewish people during this period. This teaches us it is a somber time of year and it is in this spirit that we observe the traditions that we do. 🕯