Pidyon Shvuyim / פִּדְיוֹן שְׁבוּיִים redeeming the captive, freeing those that are imprisoned by others or by circumstances such a race, gender, orientation or social conventions far beyond their control or power alone to change.

Maimonides writes: “The redeeming of captives takes precedence over supporting the poor or clothing them. There is no greater mitzvah than redeeming captives for the problems of the captive include being hungry, thirsty, unclothed, and they are in danger of their lives too.

Ignoring the need to redeem captives, turning a blind eye and saying that’s not my problem because those are not my people violates the core teachings of Torah and quite frankly is an affront to the Judaism we preach and practice in this proudly and purposefully Reform congregation.

Verse after verse, mitzvah after mitzvah the Torah implores us, demands of us as Jews:

- “Do not harden your heart or shut your hand against your needy fellow” (Devarim 15:7)
- “Do not stand idly by while your neighbor’s blood is shed” (Vayikra 19:16).
- “You must surely open your hand to him or her” (Devarim 15:8)
- “...Love your neighbor as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18);
- “Rescue those who are drawn to death” (Proverbs 24:11)

The Shulchan Aruch adds: “Every moment that one delays in freeing captives, in cases where it is possible to expedite their freedom, is considered to be tantamount to murder.” (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 252:3) and the Talmud puts the point on it precisely, “Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.” (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)