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## From the Editors

**O**n 25 June 2006, 19-year old Gilad Shalit, a corporal in the Israeli Defense Forces, was kidnapped close to the Israeli border with Gaza by members of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Two weeks later, on 12 July, Master Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser and First Sergeant Eldad Regev were kidnapped by members of the Lebanon-based terrorist group Hezbollah. Despite the fact that these men are soldiers, they were not taken as prisoners of war – they were abducted in an unprovoked attack during a period of relative calm.

The initial reaction throughout the Jewish world was one of shock and disbelief. While Jewish communities gathered together in moments of prayer and solidarity, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert took decisive action. He launched a (perhaps poorly executed) attack against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and against Hamas cells in Gaza. Unfortunately, in the midst of the grisly images of war, the stories of the abducted soldiers were too often lost. In the end, Israeli forces withdrew without freeing Shalit, Goldwasser, and Regev.

Over a year later, what has been done? The three soldiers remain in terrorist captivity. It is believed that they are still alive, but the International Red Cross has not been allowed access to ascertain that they are in good health and are being treated humanely. The United Nations – predictably – has done nothing but condemn Hamas and Hezbollah with empty words.

In Judaism, it is believed that to save one person is to save an entire world; the value of a single human life is incalculable. The IDF, traditionally known for its strict adherence to this philosophy, launched a military rescue attempt in 1994 to save another kidnapped Israeli soldier, Corporal Nachshon Wachsmann, who had been kidnapped by Hamas. However, when Prime

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Minister Olmert attacked southern Lebanon and sent troops into Gaza in 2006, the invasion was not solely an extraction attempt. Since the summer conflict, the Israeli government has not taken any direct action to bring the three soldiers home. Meanwhile, their wives, parents, friends, and families live in a nightmare, constantly fearing for their loved ones.

As for the American Jewish community — what have *we* done, aside from praying, watching the news, and displaying informational flyers about the soldiers on our synagogue bulletin boards? What more *can* we do? Thankfully, student organizations at high schools and universities around the world stepped up to the plate and recently initiated World Solidarity Day, which took place on 30 October 2007. The wife of Ehud Goldwasser, Karnit, spoke via teleconference to hundreds of students about the plight of her husband and his fellow soldiers. Students passed out flyers, collected signatures on a petition that was to be sent to the UN, and organized rallies to raise awareness. Here at Penn, activists collected 232 signatures, but unfortunately many students passed by the petition without even giving it a second glance.

During the 1960s and 1970s, American Jews rallied en masse to save their brethren trapped in the Soviet Union. Where is American Jewry today? Where are the Jews on Penn's campus today? It is disheartening to see the number of students who are seemingly oblivious or apathetic to the problems of the world beyond Locust Walk. Three young men are being held against their will, likely in heinous conditions, apart from their families, by hostile terrorist groups, and we at Penn's campus couldn't even gather more than a couple hundred signatures in protest? Kudos to those who organized World Solidarity Day on Penn's campus, to those who signed the petition, and to those who keep these soldiers in their hearts — but where is everyone else?

In his essay, *Hip Hop B'ivrit? That's Amazing!*, Teddy Fischer illustrates that while Israelis may at times feel powerless against the violence and corruption plaguing their country, they are anything but apathetic. They cannot afford to be. Unfortunately, many American Jews *can* afford to be apathetic. However,

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the American Jewish community is a powerful one, and has the potential to be even greater. The Israeli government must be told that we in America care about the fate of the kidnapped soldiers, and that we demand action. Penn's students should take a greater part in this effort.

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