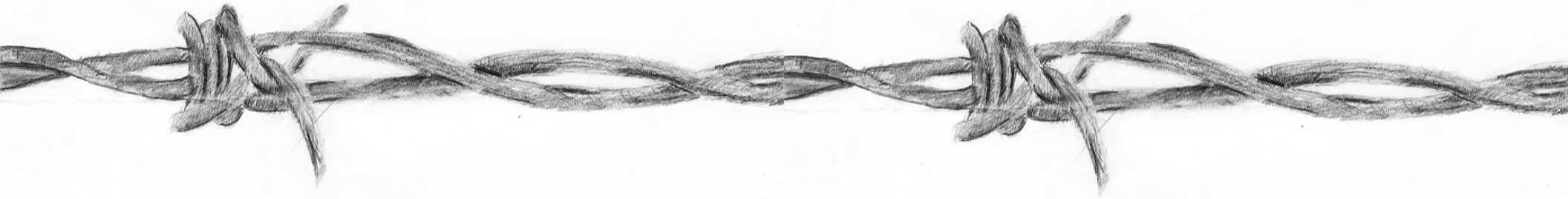


RADIX



CAPTIVITY

WINTER EDITION

Editor's Note

Dear McGill,

I am speaking to you from inside your own mind, a prisoner of your perception. The very ink of the text is bound to the page, sliding off (perhaps because of some coffee spill if you are like me) only at the expense of their meaning. I trust that I will not have to explain to you further how prevalent "Captivity," the theme of this issue, is in our day to day lives. We live in a society that sets freedom above all things-freedom of ideas, expression, movement etc...yet, like it or not, we are all programmed to walk from prison to prison. This issue asks a very simple question: What is your prison? I would ask you, reader, to reserve your judgment about what a prison is, and whether or not it is always bad, until you read the pages before you. As the author David Foster Wallace once noted, "blind certainty...amounts to an imprisonment so total that the prisoner doesn't even know he is locked up." I hope it is with that sentiment that you proceed; that every window into another's captivity, provides a little light in your own.

Until Next Issue,

Joshua Twersky

Erin Schwabe-Fry

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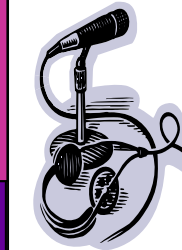
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If you would like to become a Yellow Door volunteer, call 514-845-2600 ext. 0



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Artwork:
Andrea Bailer (Page 12)
Anonymous (Cover)

The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We offer: weekly study circles, free Islamic educational materials, Ramadan services, lectures/conferences, library (Shatner building, room 430)

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Fri. 7:30 am



Radix publishes ads for groups and events with a spiritual or social-justice theme—for FREE!



Become a Walking Captive!

Reverend Neil Whitehouse

How do you know you are captive unless you have a sense of freedom? This is not simply an intellectual exercise. Captivity and freedom of the body and spirit are of equal importance, and there is a place to prove this to yourself every Wednesday afternoon, from 12h30 to 16h00, in the Break Out room of the Shatner Building, by walking a labyrinth.

The origins of the labyrinth are uncertain, but they do go back to at least 1500 BCE (Before the Common Era,) and are found in more than one ancient culture. It seems that people discovered walking through a complex, repetitive, but singular path could alter your state of mind. The body-mind relationship allows the walker to travel within themselves and, some might say, to other realms. It stimulates the right hemisphere of the brain—a gateway to our neglected intuitive wisdom.

You do not have to walk the labyrinth. It is an open space with freedom to cross over the lines of the path. You can crawl, dance, hop-whatever. Children tend to run the labyrinth, and I love speeding up on the longest curves. You are free to choose when and how you move, but you are captive to the complex pattern laid out on the canvas sheet that fills the room. That is the paradox of the labyrinth. You are only free to surrender to the restraints of the path: Your arrival is prolonged by a path that is much longer than it appeared. It plays with you in a 'to and fro', clockwise, anticlockwise motion, arriving at the centre only to return you to the outer limits.

Without effort, you will find that the structure of the labyrinth resembles life itself. Freedom and captivity go together. Will you arrive? Or are you lost? After arriving, achieving your goal, your mountain top, there is the descent—the journey out. The apparent freedom of achievement is never permanent: new journeys await you.

If this sounds ethereal to you, be warned it is very much grounded in reality. Your feet are on ground. Your body is your place of discovery, not belief or spirituality. I invite you to come, explore, and make use of this supremely flexible and profound tool of captivity.

Do You Want to Write for Radix?

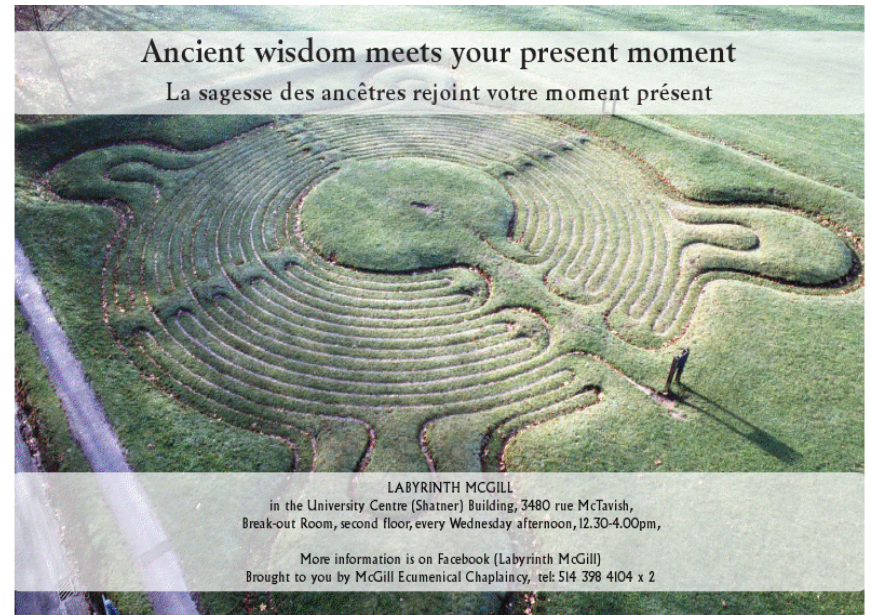
Spring Theme:

Does God Have a Facebook?

What happens at the intersection of Faith and Media?

Radix.Chaplaincy@mail.mcgill.ca

(A Place for your Thoughts)



Reflections on Captivity

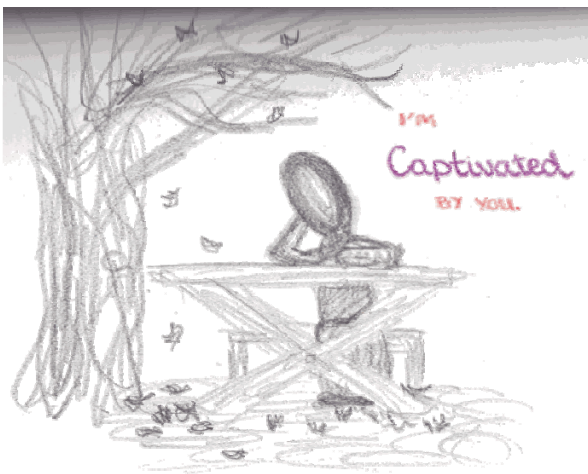
Ayse Bursali

When I think of captivity and how this relates to my life, or anyone's life in general, I think of all the ways we are prevented from doing EXACTLY what we want. This is a very naive point of view and I do know that. The first thing that always comes to my mind is money, or rather material culture. Sadly, we are bound by the material and the material world. If I want to travel the world, what stops me is the problem of money, isn't it?

But do we even know what we want to do, or are we just following the trend of culture? What we want is shaped, highly, by the culture and the society around us. We aren't even aware in daily life that we are captives of the culture or the society, not usually. We are limited, and we just feel free (and in so many other ways other than culture, too).

Thinking about all the other possibilities, or doubting the way we live, is not difficult when you're studying anthropology. After all, that is what anthropology does, or strives to do, in a way. You realize how you're the "captive" of your own norms by looking at peoples that are not abiding by your norms. There are many stories of anthropologists and ethnographers "going wild" and joining the communities they live in. When I think about it now, I feel like it would be very difficult for me not to lose perspective and cross that boundary. It seems impossible that after much consideration, one would not decide that another society has "figured it out," and ours has not. But it's also always difficult to break the chains that hold us where we are.

Ayse Bursali, U2, Arts



Psychological Captivity

Rabbi Ben Vago

Rabbi of the Hillel House

We live in free society where a lot of opportunity is afforded us. We have the ability to choose who we want to be and what we want to do with our lives. Most of us do not have to worry that a secret government agency will take one of us captive for having controversial ideas or promoting thoughts that might seem contrarian. Still, are we totally free? Are there elements of society or even of ourselves that have hold us captive? Have you ever felt as if you took a thought too far and needed a friend to balance out your ideas? Are we sometimes blind to who we truly are? Can we be held captive by our own complacency?

The Talmud, one of the most expansive Jewish texts that deal with law and ethics, states: "Because 'a prisoner cannot free themselves from prison.'" This dictum teaches that we need others to free us from the shackles of our own captivity. At times, we need friends and community to point out our flaws and to show us where we can do better as individuals. It is important to be open to critique offered by those that are close by, because it is sometimes hard to notice ones own flaws. People don't often realize how trapped they are in their own self image. It is for this reason that we can often not redeem ourselves, and must rely on the good will of others.

There are many articles that have been written or will be written dealing with the Jewish approach to redeeming a person who has been captured. There is much legal literature that goes back over one thousand years that deals with this issue. Unfortunately, these concerns are real and relevant as we witnessed a major deal that released over 1000 prisoners in exchange for the liberation of Gilad Shalit- an Israeli prisoner who was kidnapped on June 5th 2006 and held captive until October 18th 2011.

Sanhedrin 95a



Untitled

Nathan Gibbard

Director of the Newman Centre

Captivity. Captive. Captivated. The word and idea of captivity conjures up many images. I innately balk at the idea of captivity-of being bound, held in a grey cell, with a too high shaft of light taunting me; being held by another against my will. But, truly, how many times does that happen, I am held captive by another against my will? How many more times do I hold myself captive: to a thought, an ideology, an idol.

The idea, sometimes with a germ of the good, holds a mind captive, chaining it with the force of will: the idea trumps (thumps?) the person. That is the stuff that idols are made of, and all idols are made by humans. It is the root against idol worship at the heart of the Abrahamic traditions; for an idol is your own creation beckoning and supporting our own dream that we can control G-d, we can control the Other.

There is another element that falls within the boundaries of captivity: to be captivated. A sunrise captivates me in the majesty of the explosion of colours-ever new, never repeated. The pale moon captivates me, in her waxing and waning, and in the light that always points beyond to another light. Everyone I meet captivates me-if I let them; if I am not too bound up with my own self-absorption. They captivate me because they call me, demanding a response, yet forever resisting the mould I try to make of them. That is, unless I would rather have them be an idol of stone, slowly suffocating in untouched and untouchable marble.

And I am captivated by the one whom I love. He knows me far greater than I know myself. He is my brother, who never complains of picking me up again and again from off the floor, and back into the presence of our Father. Yet, whenever I turn away from Him, believing the image (the idol?) sufficient in its properties to account for Him, he slips away. He speaks without a word. He says: I am not your captive, but I would have you captivated by me, as I am captivated by you.

That is my G-d, the one whom utterly captivates me in a captivity of boundless freedom.

Poems on Captivity

Ethan Yang

The Drone Bee

The drone bee finds his life a joke.
Diurnally he flits from flower to flower, fertilizing them, then feverishly flies back to the comb, storing the excessive food.
Sometimes the rain postpones the banal,
Sometimes the comb requires a build—but that's only sometimes.
And he knows that he life flees in two weeks.
So on the 13th day he visits the queen and asks for a change.
He simply wanted to not just flit but soar.
He simply desired to not just repair but to create.
He simply asked for a life and not a bore,
a chance to see the world on day 15.
The queen nods, pats him on the head, and ostracizes him,
replacing him with another drone.

Untitled

Sometimes I wish I were a virus,
Not some powerful protein
Whose induced fit leaves no solace
When the said substrate no longer exists.
At least, I think with some pride,
I can destroy the iconic Twin,
I can invade with just a gist,

Hunger

The things that hunger does
The pang and the sudden fuzz...
Must we oblige to its demand?
Must I work my mouth and hand
Just to satiate this so called hunger?
No--hunger is but the bell,
The messenger of the body's cells.
Informing us of a low-fuel state,
Seeing death as the delay-able fate.
Thus you could ignore the warning,
The acidic environment now burning,

Hunger, hunger, just send a missive,
No need at all to be so aggressive.
I mean--why fight so hard for life
When one success yields but another
strife?

Inheritance: A Restless Skeleton

Shriya H.

Does your voice give rise to symphony, cacophony,
something human and in-between?

There must be staples in my stapes,
pinning the tiny thing
away from that delicate membrane.

Maybe I reduce your voice in this way
through instinct and now:

No sound courses through the spiral shell there.

There must be a code,
a rhythm,
a poem written
into the marrow of my femurs
the kicking, the running, the tearful stamping –
all of it:
prophecy and pattern and DNA
woven into bone;
carved into stone.

Patti said you ran as a girl,
but I could have told her you never stopped.
Did you know that when you ran from your home,
your feet traversing seas -

did you know I would follow
in the sentiment of those footfalls,
indelible despite the waves,
the lesson that I always knew:
home is where you run to.

Is running deaf better than running blind?

My daughter may know, or she may take her turn
to ask me questions without answers
and leave me speechless with her speeches,
voiceless with her voice.

The Gilad Schalit Question

Joshua Twersky

Editor

The dust settled, a collective sigh of relief floating in the atmosphere, the space it held inside our lungs now replaced with another more phantom anxiety, and I find myself still thinking about Gilad Schalit. A quick background: Gilad Schalit is a former Israeli soldier who was captured on the 25, June 2006 by Hamas militants near the Gaza border. On the 18th of October, 2011, after over 5 years of captivity, Schalit was released. The cost for the release of this one IDF soldier was 1,027 Palestinian prisoners (many of which were being held for multiple life sentences for acts of terrorism.) Israel has long held the policy of “no soldier left behind.” You may have heard this phrase used before, usually a banal platitude in a movie, just before the American soldiers go back over enemy lines to redeem their captured comrade. I don't mean to suggest that this attitude does not exist in other cultures, but it is usually more sentiment than policy. For Israel, the Schalit swap is not the first of its kind. Indeed, over the last 30 years, Israel has released roughly 7,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the freedom of 19 Israelis, and the bodies of 8 others. Though an estimated 70-80% of Israelis supported the Schalit deal according to Jerusalem Post polling, the policy of “no soldier left behind” is hardly a unanimous one. In the weeks leading up to the swap many Israeli citizens (particularly those who had lost friends and family in terror attacks, the perpetrators of which were now being released) spoke out against it. For this reason I wish not to assess the policy's objective moral merits or absurdities. Instead I would like to focus on a more specific rationale (perhaps imperfectly so) for the policy-The Torah.

The law of *Pidyon Shvuyim* (Ransoming Captives) is discussed at length in Jewish law. The medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides wrote that “there is no *mitzvah* (commandment) as great as ransoming captives, because the captive is hungry, thirsty, unclothed and in danger of his life” (The Laws of Gifts for the Poor, 8.10). Similarly, The Code of Jewish Law states that “every second that ransoming a captive is delayed when it is possible to save them, is akin to the spilling of blood” (The *Shulchan Aruch*, Yoreh Deah 252.3). It seems clear that this value is deeply important in the Jewish tradition. Yet there is another dimension to this directive that becomes highly relevant in the Schalit scenario. Also in the Talmud, it states: “Captives are not ransomed for more than their value, in order to “set the world aright.” They asked in the Beit Midrash (house of learning), is this “setting the world aright” because it (high ransoms) will cause pressure on the community, or perhaps because it will cause more kidnappings?” (Talmud, Gittin 45). This concept is reflected in the Code

of Jewish Law as well which states that: “captives are not redeemed for more than their value in order ‘to set the world aright,’ so that enemies do not throw themselves into kidnapping” (Yoreh Deah 252.4). This idea does not require much explaining outside of what had already transpired in the period following the Schalit deal. In fact, it was only a short time after the trade that Sheik Awadh al-Qarni, a prominent Saudi Cleric, offered \$100,000 for anyone who would capture an Israeli soldier to be ransomed (this figure was later increased to \$1,000,000.) This does not even address the counterintuitive nature of an action, rooted in the protection of life, that puts many more lives in danger (perhaps an arguable claim, though I will assert here that the threat, at least, is plausible.) There is a more lenient opinion offered that the immediate threat to the life of the prisoner waives any limits on ransom.

There are those who would say that Israeli policy is a separate entity from Jewish law and the discrepancy here can be comfortably ignored. Yet for a policy that seems deeply intertwined with the Jewish tenet of *Pidyon Shvuyin*, it seems necessary to be honest with ourselves about our changing values. For most orthodox Jews, this is not a concession they are prepared to make. The notion that the law molds to our values and not the other way around is deeply antithetical to the orthodox position which maintains the absolute integrity of the law. It is a difference that may very well be lying in the rift between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism. A close examination of the relevant legal material seems to indicate that the Schalit swap could not have fallen under the Jewish rationale of *Pidyon Shvuyin* (there are many more recent Rabbinical authorities who seem in agreement with this view.) So we are left then to find an alternative explanation for this diversion from Jewish principle. There is of course a practical dimension; by guaranteeing the freedom of its soldiers no matter the cost, the Israeli government makes a strong statement of support and investment in their conscription army. That isn't it though. That may be why the government did it, but it is not why 80% of the Israeli population agreed. The answer lies in that moment at around 3:00 AM on October the 18th in my McGill Ghetto apartment, my dark room illuminated only by the face of Gilad Shalit on my computer screen, truly alive for the first time in 5 years. At that moment, with absolute silence and clarity and perspective, you could feel the cognitive dissonance of a nation; the falling away of all doubt; our mental freedom concurrent with his physical release. Before going to bed I grabbed my prayer book which, I admit, had been collecting dust on my shelf. I turned to the blessing one is meant to give someone who has just recovered from serious illness: *Berich Rachmana Malka De'alma, Di yehavach lan, veloh yehavach le'efrab, Blessed is the Merciful King of the Universe who has given you to us, and has not given you to the dust.*

Idopathic Sciatica

Shriya H.

Part 1

This f

a l

l

s

from subtle soft mucosa,

a mantle for my lip

your

skin, smooth, sliding across my hip

innominate bones

together lock

into skeletal constructions

to mock

and parody

me.

Part 2

I stretch the width of my palm across that

well-travelled ischial space

I know the anatomy of all these hills and valleys here

where my fingers stray,

and l i n g e r

to enter flesh I like to call my own.

I can see against the backdrop of eyelids:

bone, locked and grey,

untouched and unexplored,

like hard rock beneath soft mountainside.

Part 3

“I'd like to see it – two of your own fingers”

Your soft lips flutter,

round and whispering,

(butterfly wings)

into spaces in my yielding thighs.

But my smile is shy, coy,

plastic and steel,

all feminine appeal

and prosthetic charm:

Part 4

I set off metal detectors.