Was Resh Lakish the Gladiator an Ascetic or a Hedonist? How the Bavli Conveys Meaning
Zvi Septimus, ‘Real’ Talmud Blog 10/16/2012

Source #1 Mishnah Gittin 4:9

If one sells both himself and his sons to non-Jews: We do not redeem him. However, we do redeem his sons after the death of their father...because of tikun olam (the better ordering of society).

Source #2 Yerushalmi Gittin 4:9

a) [The case of] the Mishnah is one where he sold himself and repeated [selling himself] a second time. However, if he [only] sold himself once, then we do redeem him.
b) And if he sold himself to Lydians, even [if only] once, then we do not redeem him.
c) [There is] a story about a certain person who sold himself to Lydians; the situation was presented to Rabbi Abahu; [Rabbi Abahu] said, “What shall I do? He did it for his livelihood.”

Source #3 Bavli Gittin 46b-47a

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3
Part 1

1 a) Rav Asi said: [The Mishnah speaks of a case where] he sold [himself] again and again (lit. and repeated two and three [times]).

1 b) Certain members of bei mikhsei, who borrowed money from non-Jews, and did not have [any money] with which to pay them [back]; they came and captured him; they came before Rav Huna.

1 c) [Rav Huna] said to them: What can I do for you? [I cannot redeem you] because [the Mishnah] states: “If one sells himself and his sons to non-Jews, we do not redeem him.”

1 d) Rabbi Abba said to [Rav Huna]: But you, our rabbi, have taught us [that the Mishnah speaks of a case] where he sold himself again and again.

1 e) [Rav Huna said to Rabbi Abba]: These [members of bei mikhsei] regularly do this (i.e. sell themselves and then demand to be redeemed).

Part 2

2 a) A certain man sold himself to Lydians; he came before Rabbi Ami [and] said to him: Redeem me.

2 b) Rabbi Ami said to him: The Mishnah states: “If one sells himself and his sons to non-Jews, we do not redeem him. However, we do redeem his sons.” [And this is] because of kilikula (degradation?). And it should certainly be so [that we should redeem the father] in this case because [his] death is involved.

2 c) The Rabbis said to Rabbi Ami: This [man] is an apostate; because they saw [the man] eating neveilot and tereifot (meat that is not kosher).

2 d) [Rabbi Ami] said to [The Rabbis]: Perhaps [lit. “say”] he was eating it for enjoyment (rather than for spite).

2 e) [The Rabbis] said to [Rabbi Ami]: But there were times that there were [both] permitted and forbidden [meats] in front of him and he left the permitted [meat] and ate the forbidden [meat.]

2 f) [Rabbi Ami] said to [the man who sold himself to Lydians]: Go. They are not letting me redeem you.

Part 3 – Section 1

3 a 1) Reish Lakish sold himself to Lydians (cannibals according to traditional commentators; gladiators according to scholars). He took a bag and a stone with him. He said, “It is known (i.e. there is a tradition) that, on the last day (before being eaten; or before the gladiatorial show), anything [the captive] asks of [the Lydians], [the Lydians] do for [the captive], in order that [the captives] blood be sweet (or, according to others: that the captive exonerate the Lydians for shedding his blood).
3 a 2) On the last day, [the Lydians] said to [Reish Lakish]: What is good for you? (i.e. What is you last request?)

3 a 3) [Reish Lakish] said to the Lydians: I will tie you all up and sit you all down and will hit each of you with a bag and a half.

3 a 4) When he struck once [with the] bag, his sole departed, he gnashed his teeth.

3 a 5) [Reish Lakish] said to the [Lydian]: Are you laughing at me? I still have for you half a bag remaining.

3 a 6) [Reish Lakish] killed them all.

Part 3 – Section 2

3 b 1) [Reish Lakish] was sitting, eating, and drinking.

3 b 2) His daughter said to him: Do you not want something to sit on?

3 b 3) [Reish Lakish] said to his daughter: My stomach is my pillow.

Part 3 – Section 3

3 c 1) When [Reish Lakish] died, he left a kav (volume measure, equal to around 2.5 liters) of morika (saffron/safflower).

3 c 2) He quoted a [Biblical] verse about himself: “…and they leave their wealth to others.” (Psalms 49:11)

Source #4 - Yerushalmi Terumot 8:3 and Avodah Zarah 2:3 (regarding drinking wine left uncovered)

When someone would ask Rabbi Yonatan [about drinking wine left uncovered] he would say to him, “Am I a guarantor for your life?”

Rabbi Shimon the son of Lakish said: If you sold yourself to Lydians, you sold yourself for much money. With this (i.e. drinking uncovered wine), you sold yourself for little money.

Source #5- Gittin 14a

a) Mar Zutra said: The rabbis established these three things as law without [supplying] reasoning.

b) One, is this: [if one person says to another “you have 100 manah of mine; give it to so-and-so”: If all three are standing there, then the transfer is effective.]…
c) Rav said to Rav Aha Bardela: You have a kav of morika of mine. Give it to so-and-so. I’m saying it in front of him so I will not retract.

d) [Rav’s statement] implies that if [Rav] wanted to retract, then he could!

e) This is what [Rav] is saying: These things (e.g. transferring a debt in the presence of all three parties) cannot be retracted.

f) But Rav already said this one time! As Rav Huna said in the name of Rav: [if one person says to another] “you have 100 manah of mine; give it to so-and-so”: If all three are standing there, then the transfer is effective.

g) If [Rav had only said] that [case of a transfer of 100 manah], I would have thought [that a transfer to a third party in the presence of all three parties is effective] only when the gift is large; but [in the case of] a small gift [there would be] no need for the presence of the third party. [Rav therefore specified to Rav Aha Bardela that he could not retract] in order to teach us this point.

Source # 6 - Minor Tractate Slaves: 2:3

לא ימכור את עземו ליקח ולכסות או מצしょう, אבל מוכר הוהו את עземו
להחיות את נפשו

[An eved ivri] may not sell himself to buy clothing or mattresses; however, he may sell himself to sustain his life.