



# tidbits <sup>✓</sup> for pidyon haben

**Klal Govoah**  
In Memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz z"l

## The Mitzvah of Pidyon Haben

There is a *mitzvas asef d'orayso* for a father to redeem a firstborn son. He must give five silver coins (or the equivalent) to a Kohen to accomplish this. Common practice is to use five US (real) silver dollars which contain 100 grams of silver. A celebratory meal accompanies the performance of the mitzvah.

## When is the Pidyon?

The child is not redeemed until he is thirty days old; at that point the pidyon should take place immediately. Some say the child is considered to be thirty days old from 29.5 days and 45 minutes (approximately) from the birth. Others say that the *pidyon haben* should be performed on the 31st day from the time of the birth. Common practice is to perform the *pidyon* on the 31st day, typically in the afternoon, which is primarily to facilitate a larger attendance. Scheduling the *pidyon* for the afternoon also satisfies both opinions above. The *seudah* may take place on the night of the 32nd day, however the actual pidyon should take place before shekia on the 31st day. On a fast day when the *seudah* cannot be held, some say that the *pidyon* nevertheless takes place on the day of the fast and the *seudah* takes place that night. Others say the *pidyon* is pushed off to the 32nd night to take place together with the *seudah*. When the 31st day falls on Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov the *pidyon* should take place in the morning, ideally while ensuring the child is 29.5 days old as well. A *pidyon* is not done on Shabbos or Yom Tov, rather it takes place the following day according to Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l; others say the *pidyon* should be performed sooner and takes place on Motzaei Shabbos or Motzaei Yom Tov. According to many the same applies for Tisha B'av as well. A *pidyon* may be performed during Chol Hamoed.

## Who is a Firstborn

A bechor, in regards to *pidyon*, is the first baby of his mother. If the mother previously had a pregnancy which ended in a miscarriage, a Rav must be consulted. A *pidyon* is only performed if the baby was delivered naturally ("*peter rechem*"), thus if the birth was via cesarean section there is no *pidyon haben*. It is questionable if a *pidyon* is performed on an ill child with a life-threatening condition. According to many poskim a child conceived using IVF or other intervention requires a *pidyon*. A baby who is in an incubator is not re-

deemed until he is discharged from the incubator. In some circumstances there is an additional thirty day waiting period following discharge.

There is no *pidyon haben* if either the child's father or mother is a Kohen or Levi.

## The Ceremony

The *pidyon* takes place during the meal, after washing and eating bread. Common custom is to dress the child nicely and place him on a silver tray. The women who are present decorate the baby with their jewelry. Small bags with sugar and garlic are also placed on the tray. The father brings the child to the Kohen and places the baby on the table before him. The father begins by declaring to the Kohen that he has a bechor whom he wishes to redeem. The Kohen responds by asking the father which he would rather have, his son or five coins? The father responds that he wishes to redeem his son. The father holds the coins in his right hand and makes a berachah on the mitzvah of *pidyon haben* as well as a berachah of *she-hecheyanu* and transfers the coins to the kohen. The Kohen accepts the coins and circles them around the baby's head and announces that the coins are in place of the child. The Kohen places his hand over the baby's head and blesses him. The Kohen hands the child to the father and then takes a cup of wine and recites the berachah of *hagafen*. Sefardim add a berachah on *besamim*. This concludes the *pidyon*; the meal continues.

While it seems we are giving the father a choice, in truth it is not so and the Kohen too has no authority to give this choice. Rather, the Bach explains that we are emphasizing the point that the money is not just being passed in a ceremonious manner but rather a legitimate transaction is about to take place and the money will not be returned. Others say that we want to emphasize the joy of the occasion in that the father accomplishes the redemption of his son.

## Other Info

Tachanun is not recited at a minyan which is held at the time and place of the ceremony.

During the Nine Days, meat may be served at a *pidyon haben*. Additionally, the parents may wear

shabbos clothing.

It is stated that partaking in a *seudah* of a *pidyon haben* gives one the merit as if he fasted 84 fast days. Small bags with garlic and sugar cubes are commonly distributed to the attendees as a means to extend participation in the meal. These items, when later used as cooking ingredients, create more foods considered to be from the *seudah* and allow more people to receive the blessings which come along with the participation. Some say that the sugar is symbolic of the sweetness of Torah and mitzvos, while the garlic is a *segulah* for fertility.

**For Tidbits on Childbirth, Shalom Zachor, Bris and please see the dedicated publications on these topics.**

This space was left blank because...

“When you have nothing to say, say nothing.”

-Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz z"l

Sign up for weekly Tidbits at [klalgovoah.org](http://klalgovoah.org)!

Ira Zlotowitz | 917.597.2197  
[iraz@gpacency.com](mailto:iraz@gpacency.com)

Ahron Dicker | 732.581.5830  
[adicker@klalgovoah.org](mailto:adicker@klalgovoah.org)

**GPARENCY**  
Find your next acquisition at [gpacency.com](http://gpacency.com)