

Temple Beth Rishon Life Cycle Events

Pidyon Haben

What is a *Pidyon Haben*?

It is the traditional ritual of the redemption of the firstborn son. In Jewish life, a firstborn son who is also the first child born to his mother is supposed to be dedicated to God (Exodus 13:1-2) and to perform religious services for the priests (*Kohanim*). To free a firstborn son from that obligation, it is necessary to redeem him through the payment of five shekels (today we use five dollars in coins).

When does the ceremony take place?

A *Pidyon Haben* must be held on the 31st day after the child's birth. If the 31st day falls on a Sabbath or Jewish festival, the ceremony is postponed until the next day. This is because it involves a monetary transaction. The 31st day was chosen because it was considered likely that once the child survived the first month, his chances for good health were assured.

Who qualifies for this ceremony?

A first born child who is a male and who was naturally delivered. A child delivered by cesarean section does not qualify because his birth was not natural. To qualify, he must leave the womb in a natural manner as prescribed in Exodus 13:1. Also, neither the firstborn nor his mother can be the child of a Kohen or a Levite.

Does this ceremony take place if this birth was preceded by a miscarriage?

If the miscarriage took place during the first 40 days of gestation, the ceremony can occur. If it occurred after 40 days and before the start of the third month of gestation, a *Pidyon Haben* is required, but the blessing recited by the father is omitted. If the miscarriage took place after the third month of pregnancy, a *Pidyon Haben* is not performed.

How do I arrange for a *Pidyon Haben* ceremony?

You should contact the temple and make an appointment with Rabbi Emert.