

**The Spotlight Effect:**

**Embracing the Challenges**

**and Opportunities of Being a Role Model**

*Celebrating the Pidyon Ha’Ben ceremony—Redemption of the Firstborn—of our very own Brian.*

**Pidyon Ha’Ben – Redemption of the Firstborn**

**By Rabbi Shraga Simmons, Aish.com**

*Explaining the Jewish ceremony of “buying” a baby boy for five silver coins.*

*Pidyon Ha’Ben, the “redemption of the firstborn son,” takes place when a baby is at least 31 days old, and involves “buying him back from a Kohen.” (see Numbers 18:15)*

*In actual practice, there are various exemptions which mean that many families do not require a Pidyon Ha’Ben.*

*The background for this mitzvah is somewhat complex, but here goes:*

*Originally, God intended for the first-born of each Jewish family to be a Kohen – i.e. that family’s representative to the Holy Temple. (Exodus 13:1-2, Exodus 24:5 with Rashi)*

*But then came the incident of the Golden Calf. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai and smashed the tablets, he issued everyone an ultimatum: “Make your choice – either God or the idol” (Exodus 32:26). Only the tribe of Levi came to the side of God. At that point, God decreed that each family’s first-born would forfeit their “Kohen” status – and henceforth all the Kohanim would come from the tribe of Levi. (Numbers 3:11-12)*

*Which brings us to the mitzvah of Pidyon Ha’Ben. Since the first-born child is technically a “Kohen” whose potential cannot be actualized, he has to be replaced (so to speak) by a Kohen from the tribe of Levi. This is accomplished by the father of the baby offering the Kohen a redemptive value of five silver coins for the boy.*

*A deeper reason we perform this mitzvah is to remind us of the Exodus from Egypt, when God killed the Egyptian firstborn, yet spared the Jewish firstborn. Also, since a person loves his firstborn so much, it is a fitting time to re-acknowledge the fact that everything we own in fact belongs to God. (Numbers 3:13)*

**Shemos (Exodus) 4:22**

“*And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: Israel is My firstborn son.’”*

This verse highlights the unique bond between God and the Jewish people, designating them as His “firstborn” with a special role and responsibility among nations.

**Shemos (Exodus) 19:6**

“*And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests (kohanim) and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

The Jewish people are called to be spiritual guides, serving as a moral and spiritual example to the world, much like Kohanim (priests) within the nation.

**Discussion Questions:**

***Role Models in Your Life***

1. Who is someone you consider a role model in your life?

2. What specific qualities or actions make them stand out, and how have they influenced your decisions or values?

***Your Role as a Model***

3. When have you had an opportunity to positively influence someone else’s life, whether as a mentor, sibling, friend, or coworker?

4. How did that make you feel, and did it change the way you acted or thought about yourself?

5. What did you learn from that experience?

***Legacy and Vulnerability***

6. Imagine someone years from now talking about how you were a role model to them. What would you hope they say about your actions, values, or impact on their life?

7. Do you think a role model should share their struggles and challenges openly, or is it more important to project confidence and stability?