

Redeeming the Firstborn

Exodus: 4:22

וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the Lord, "My firstborn son is Israel."

Numbers: 18:15

כָּל פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לְכָל בֶּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה בְּאָדָם וּבְבְהֵמָה יְהִי לָךְ אָךְ | פְּדֹה תִפְדֶּה אֶת בְּכוֹר
 הָאָדָם

Every first issue of the womb of any creature, which they present to the Lord, whether of man or beast, shall be yours. However, you shall redeem the firstborn of man

Maimonides: Positive Commandment # 80

The 80th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to redeem a first-born male and to give the redemption value to a *kohen*.

The source of this commandment is G-d's statement, "Give Me the first-born of your sons." The explanation of this "giving" is that we must redeem him as if the *kohen* already owns him. We acquire the child from the *kohen* by giving him five *selah*.

The source of this commandment is G-d's statement, "You must redeem a first-born male child."

This *mitzvah* is called *pidyon haben*. Women are not obligated in this *mitzvah*; it is the child's *mitzvah* which the father must fulfill, as explained in *Kiddushin*.

The details of this *mitzvah* are explained in tractate *B'choros*.

Levites are exempt from this *mitzvah*.