

Redemptive Rebate

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Dayan Yehoshua Grunwald

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https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BAM81_005_Korach_Re fund_Please_Can_a_Kohen_Return_the_Pidyon_Haben_Money.mp3

Its redemption [shall be performed] from the age of one month, according to the valuation, five shekels of silver...

Bemidbar 18:16

The mitzvah of *pidyon haben* requires a kohein to redeem the firstborn son of a *yisrael* for five silver shekels. Is the kohein permitted—or obligated—to return the money given him by the father?

The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 305:8) writes that a kohein should not return *pidyon haben* money routinely because this will cause many people to use him for *pidyon haben*, and other kohanim will lose out. R' Yaakov Emden (cited in Pis'chei Teshuvah Y.D. 305:12) argues that today a kohein *must* return the money, because the lineage of kohanim may be tainted.

The Chasam Sofer (Y.D. 291) disagrees with Rav Emden and does not require that the money be returned. The Chazon Ish (Shevi'is 5:12) explains that due to *chazakah*, kohanim today are considered authentic. The proof of this is that a *bracha* is recited by kohanim when reciting *birkas kohanim* and performing *pidyon haben*.

A second reason the kohein should not return the money (even if he is permitted to do so) comes from the Mahari Bruna (122), who writes that the kohanim receive *matnos kehunah* as an honor, and returning the money would signify a lack of *chashivus* for the kohein. (For the same reason, he says the kohein should sit when receiving the money.)

A third reason, from R' Moshe Sternbuch, is that it is a great *segulah* for the child if the kohein retains the money, so even if the kohein wishes to return it, the father may be well advised to decline the offer.