

WHO HAS THE OBLIGATION TO REDEEM A FIRSTBORN

BO

KORACH

OBLIGATION TO REDEEM ADULT BECHOR / SAYING על OR ל IN BRACHOS ON
A MITZVAH / BAVLI VS. YERUSHALMI / SHEHECHIYANU

לע"נ זאב ארי' ע"ה בן יבלחט"א שניאור זלמן גליק

In Hilchos Pidyan Haben, it says in Shulchan Aruch: “If the father sinned, and did not redeem his son, the son is obligated to redeem himself when he grows up.”¹

The מקור, the source, for this is in Maseches Kidushin where the Gemara discusses the mitzvos a father has to do for his son, and brings a Braisa: “A father is obligated with regards to his son... to redeem him.” The Gemara asks what the makor is, and answers that it is from the passuk, “כל בכור בניך תפדה,”² (you should all redeem of your firstborns). The Gemara continues with the halachah, “In a case where the father did not redeem his son, he is obligated to redeem himself, as it says (in parshas Korach) “פדה תפדה” (you will surely redeem).³⁴

The Talmud Yerushalmi⁵ also brings this din, but brings as a makor the passuk “וכל בכור אדם תפדה”⁶ (you should redeem every human firstborn), and the Korban Ha’eda explains that the Gemara learns this from the extra word “adam”.

We need to understand, why is the same din brought in two places with a different makor?

2 In order to understand this we first need to explain two possible ways to understand the chiyuv of a father to redeem his son:

1. The son really needs to redeem himself, but since he is



1. *Yoreh Deah*, 305:15.
2. *Shemos* 34:20.
3. *Bamidbar* 18:15.
4. *Kidushin* 29a.
5. *Kidushin* 1:5.
6. *Shemos* 13:13.

too young, his father does it for him, similar to the din of a shliach.

2. The chiyuv is indeed on the father, as is implied from the passuk, “You should all redeem your firstborn sons.”

The difference would be if indeed the father didn’t redeem his son when he was young. According to the first way, the father would no longer have a chiyuv to redeem his son, since the son is already able to redeem himself. However, according to the second way, the father would still have a chiyuv, since the chiyuv was always his.

The Rivash⁷ holds like the first svara: the chiyuv is on the son. With this, he explains the halachah in the Rambam, that if the father redeems his son, he makes the brachah “Al pidyon haben,” that Hashem commanded us *regarding* pidyon haben, but if the son does it, he makes the brachah “Lifdos es haben,” that Hashem commanded us *to* redeem the son.”

The Rashba⁸ holds like the second svara, that it is specifically a mitzvah for the father to redeem his son, and seemingly, so does the Sefer Hachinuch⁹. The Minchas Chinuch¹⁰ brings a proof for this, from the fact that the Gemara brought above counts the mitzvah in a list of mitzvos that the father does for his son, such as marrying him off, which apply also – and mainly – when the son is older, and from this it would seem that also pidyon haben would apply when the son grows up. As stated previously this is a support for the svara that it is specifically a mitzvah for the father.



7. *Tshuvos Harivash no. 131.*

8. *Tshuvos Harashba vol. 2 no. 321.*

9. *Mitzvah no. 392.*

10. *Mitzvah 2, para. 4.*

3 We can say that this is the difference between the Yerushalmi and the Bavli. According to the Yerushalmi, which brings both dinim, (that the father is obligated to redeem his son, and that the son is obligated to once he grows up,) from the same passuk, the main passuk of pidyon haben, “**וְכָל בְּכוֹר אָדָם תְּפֹדֶה**” we can see that it is one chiyuv, on the son. However, since as a child he is unable to redeem himself, his father has to do it for him.

According to the Bavli, on the other hand, the halachah that a son needs to redeem himself (if he wasn't redeemed by his father) is from parshas Korach where the Torah talks about the gifts one is obligated to give to the Kohanim, not from the above passuk (which is in parshas Bo) where the main chiyuv of pidyon haben is. We see, therefore, that the main mitzvah is for a father to redeem his firstborn, and if he doesn't, there is a separate halachah that the son needs to redeem himself.

We can now understand the story told in Maseches Pesachim, “R' Simlai went to a pidyon haben. They asked him, “While it is obvious that the father makes the main brachah, what is the din regarding shehechyanu; does the son make it, the father or the Kohen?”” The Gemara discusses this, and arrives at the conclusion that “The father makes both brachos.”

There are two questions on this:

Why does the Gemara bring the first part, “It is obvious that the father makes the main brachah?”

Why does the Gemara answer, “The father makes both brachos,” the question was only on one brachah, it should have said, “Does the father make the brachah of shehechyanu?”

However, based on the above explanation in the Bavli, that the main chiyuv is on the father, and the only reason the son needs to redeem

himself if his father doesn't is because of what is due to the Kohanim, we can answer these two questions. The lashon of "פשיטא," it's obvious, shows that the father always makes the brachah, even if the son redeems himself. Therefore the question arises if the father should make the brachah of shehechyanu, as it is his mitzvah. A shliach does not make a brachah when doing a mitzvah for someone else, even if he is doing it for his meshaleiach. This is also why the Gemara says that the father makes both brachos, since he says both of them for the same reason, that it is his mitzvah.

4 As mentioned in the Bar Mitzvah Maamer, it says in the passuk, "מגיד דבריו ליעקב חוקיו ומשפטיו לישראל,"¹¹ (He tells His words to Yaakov, His rules and laws to Yisrael). The Midrash¹² says on this, that everything that Hashem tells us to do, He does Himself, which would include the mitzvah of pidyon haben. By Hashem, redeeming His son means redeeming us, the B'nei Yisrael, from galus, as Hashem says "בני בכורי ישראל," (that Yisrael is My firstborn son).

The chiddush of the Bavli is that the redemption is a mitzvah of the father. In our terms, the geula can happen according to our, the son's, means or understanding, according to how we can understand the geula. However, based on the Bavli, that it is a chiyuv on the father, the geula would have to happen on Hashem's terms, in a way that is much higher than any way we can imagine, higher than any limitations, may we be zocheh to this pidyon, very speedily!

11. *Tehillim*, 147:19.

12. *Shmos Rabbah* 30:9.

STUDY AID

1. The halachah that a son must redeem himself if his father didn't.
2. The two sources, according to the Talmud Bavli and the Yerushalmi, and the question of what the difference is.
3. The two ways of understanding the chiyuv of the father, whether it is his chiyuv or he is merely a shliach for his son.
4. The practical difference, if the father can, or must, still redeem his son once he grows up.
5. How this is the difference between the Bavli and Yerushalmi (and how this explains the story in Maseches Pesachim).
6. The inner meaning of pidyon haben, and how the geula has to be higher than all limitations.

Source:

על פי ליקוטי שיחות חלק יא פרשת בא שיחה ב'