



One of 14 children being "redeemed" by visiting Kohen Jack Goldfarb in mass *Pidyun Haben* ceremony in Bombay.

Shalom Bombay

by Jack Goldfarb

Bombay — The 2000 year-old Jewish community of Bombay has just witnessed an event unique in its history - a mass *Pidyun Haben* (Redemption of First-born sons) with 14 children being redeemed by a visiting Kohen from New York.

With no Kohen of its own for the past five years, the 5000-member Bombay *Bene Israel* community eagerly accepted the offer of Jack Goldfarb, a frequent visitor to India, to assist in relieving the backlog of "unredeemed" first-born males. The *Pidyun Haben* ceremony is traditionally performed by a priestly Kohen 30 days after the birth of a first-born son. The child is "returned" to its parents by a symbolic payment of

silver coins.

Setting a record for numbers, the 14 children, ranging in age from 7 months to 17 years, many travelling from villages over a hundred miles away, assembled in Bombay's main Magen Chassidim synagogue to celebrate the occasion.

Goldfarb, a New York based travel writer who writes frequently on India and its people, has been given the title of "Honorary Kohen" by the Bombay community.

Following the service, Goldfarb and his wife, Simone, went to Calcutta, where they often work as volunteer helpers at the Catholic children's shelter of Mother Teresa.