

Bekhorot 10 Detailed Summary

Coverage: Bekhorot 10a - 10b

Bekhorot 10 begins with a technical but important question in the laws of ritual impurity: when does a prohibited animal or substance still count as halachic “food” for טומאת אוכלין? The Gemara examines Rabbi Shimon’s requirement that food be something that can be fed to others, the role of deliberate designation for eating, and whether an item’s very prohibition can itself give it the significance of food. Cases involving non-kosher species, unusual markets, and slaughter performed only for practice are used to test the rule.

The daf then returns to the core laws of פטר חמור. The central dispute is whether Rabbi Shimon, who is more permissive about benefit from the firstborn donkey while it is alive, also permits benefit after עריפה. The Gemara distinguishes between benefit from the animal’s body and benefit from its monetary value, compares the donkey’s neck-breaking to the law of עגלה ערופה, and explains the economic consequence of refusing to redeem: the owner caused the Kohen to lose the redemption lamb and therefore loses the donkey’s value as well.

The final section moves from prohibition to redemption itself. The Gemara analyzes kiddushin performed with a firstborn donkey, asks when redemption may be performed, and records the dispute over the minimum value of the redemption lamb. The repeated word תפדה teaches that one may redeem immediately rather than waiting thirty days, while Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda requires a minimum shekel and the Sages permit a lamb of any value. The daf therefore moves from defining “food” to defining “benefit” and finally to defining the minimum act that legally removes firstborn sanctity.

The detailed summary begins on the next page and follows the daf in sequence, explaining the questions, answers, proofs, distinctions, and conclusions needed to understand the sugya as a whole.

Detailed Summary

When a prohibited item is still considered food

The opening sugya asks whether an item that a Jew may not eat can nevertheless be treated as food for the laws of impurity. Rabbi Shimon derives from the Torah's language **מַכֵּל הָאוֹכֵל אֲשֶׁר יֹאכֵל** that “food” means something that is capable of being fed to someone. This does not require that the owner himself be permitted to eat it; the question is whether the object remains part of a meaningful food economy.

The Gemara tests that definition with meat cooked in milk. According to the cited view of Rabbi Shimon, the mixture is prohibited for eating but permitted for benefit. Since it can be given to another person, it can still qualify as food. The discussion also notes that the meat and milk were independently edible before the prohibition was created, which provides another basis for their food-status.

Does prohibition itself create food-status?

The Sages consider the principle **אִיסוּרוֹ חִישּׁוֹבוֹ** - perhaps the very fact that an object is legally prohibited gives it enough halachic significance to count as food without an explicit decision to eat it. The Gemara pushes hard against a broad version of that rule. Mishnayot involving carcasses, non-kosher species, and fats show that some objects still require **מַחֲשָׁבָה**, an affirmative designation for eating, before they can receive food impurity.

Rava therefore limits the claim. Prohibition does not automatically replace designation in every case. Whether a substance counts as food depends on the species, the normal behavior of people in that location, and whether there is a realistic class of consumers. This is why the Gemara can distinguish between foods in villages and foods in markets, where the number and variety of possible consumers are greater.

Partial signs of purity and unusual animals

Rabbi Shimon treats the camel, hare, hyrax, and pig differently from completely unfamiliar non-kosher species because each possesses at least one Torah sign associated with kosher animals. Those partial **סימני טהרה** do not make the animals kosher, but they can make their flesh more recognizable as a food-type object. The daf uses this distinction to show that dietary prohibition and the technical category of “food” are not identical concepts.

Slaughter performed only for practice

The Gemara next analyzes an animal slaughtered merely so that the slaughterer can practice. Nimos taught that one who slaughters a raven **בוֹ לְהַתְלַמֵּד** produces blood that can render other food susceptible to impurity. Rabbi Eliezer says more broadly that blood produced by slaughter always has that effect. The Gemara asks whether their disagreement is really about **אִיסוּרוֹ חִישּׁוֹבוֹ**: does the prohibition of the animal itself provide the necessary food-intent, or must there still be an independent decision to use the flesh as food?

Rashi (ד"ה להתלמד בו)

Rashi's explanation keeps the case focused on intent: the slaughterer is cutting in the manner of shechitah, but his purpose is instruction rather than eating. That allows the Gemara to separate the legal effect of the act of slaughter from the separate requirement that the flesh be regarded as food.

Benefit after arifah

The daf then returns to the dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon over benefit from an unredeemed firstborn donkey. A baraita says that if the owner refuses to redeem it, he performs עריפה, buries the animal, and according to Rabbi Yehuda it is prohibited for benefit, while Rabbi Shimon appears to permit it. The Gemara asks whether Rabbi Shimon's leniency really extends beyond the animal's lifetime.

One approach limits the dispute to the living donkey. Another distinguishes between הנאת דמיו, benefit from the donkey's monetary value, and הנאת גופו, direct use of its body for work or shearing. Rav Nachman in the name of Rabba bar Avuha concludes that even Rabbi Shimon agrees that after arifah the donkey is prohibited, using the verbal and conceptual relationship to עגלה ערופה. The daf preserves another tradition, however, in which Rabbi Yochanan or Rabbi Elazar understands the dispute as continuing even after arifah.

The owner caused the Kohen a loss

Levi formulates the underlying logic of arifah in economic terms: הוא הפסיד ממונו של כהן, לפיכך יופסד ממונו. By refusing to redeem the donkey, the owner denied the Kohen the lamb he should have received. The Torah therefore leaves the owner with the loss represented by the dead donkey. The Gemara shows that this language can be fitted to the different positions about benefit, but the conceptual point remains that redemption is not merely ritual - it also creates a concrete priestly entitlement.

Kiddushin with a firstborn donkey

A related teaching states that one who betroths a woman with a firstborn donkey does not effect kiddushin. That seems difficult under both major views. According to Rabbi Shimon the donkey's value should be usable; according to Rabbi Yehuda the owner may still possess the "in-between" value, the difference between the donkey's market value and the relatively inexpensive lamb that can redeem it.

Rabba bar Avuha explains the case according to Rabbi Yehuda where the donkey is worth only a shekel and the applicable redemption requirement consumes that entire value. There is therefore no remaining usable value with which kiddushin could take effect. The case demonstrates how the Gemara converts an abstract prohibition into a precise property calculation.

When redemption may be performed

The repeated Torah language of תפדה teaches that a firstborn donkey may be redeemed immediately. Unlike פדיון הבן, one does not need to wait thirty days before performing the mitzvah. The same textual discussion leads into the question of how much the redemption lamb must be worth.

Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda requires at least one shekel, deriving a monetary floor from the verse concerning sacred valuations. The Sages reject that universal use of the verse and hold that the Torah deliberately made the donkey’s redemption easier. Their position leads directly into the next daf’s practical conclusion that even a very inexpensive lamb can effect redemption.

What the daf establishes

Bekhorot 10 repeatedly separates categories that appear similar at first glance. A forbidden object can still be “food”; an act that looks like slaughter can be performed only for practice; a living donkey and a donkey after arifah can have different benefit-status; and the validity of kiddushin depends not on the animal’s gross value but on the value legally available to the owner. The daf’s common method is to identify the exact stage and exact legal relationship before deciding which prohibition or property right applies.

Glossary

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
טומאת אוכלין	Tumat ochlin	Ritual impurity applying to items halachically classified as food.
מחשבה	Machshavah	Designation of an object for eating.
איסורו חישובו	Isuro chishuvo	The proposed rule that an item’s prohibition itself gives it food significance.
עריפה	Arifah	Breaking the neck of an unredeemed firstborn donkey.
הנאת דמיו	Hana'at damav	Benefit from an item’s monetary value.
הנאת גופו	Hana'at gufo	Direct physical benefit from the object itself.
תפדה	Tifdeh	“You shall redeem,” used to derive timing and redemption rules.

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