

Bekhorot 14 Detailed Summary

Coverage: Bekhorot 14a - 14b

Bekhorot 14 opens with a Mishnah that draws a fundamental line between two kinds of consecrated animals: an animal that already had a permanent blemish before it was consecrated, and an animal that was consecrated while fit for the altar and only later developed a permanent blemish. The first never receives full קדושת הגוף; its sanctity is essentially monetary and can be removed by redemption. The second began with full sacrificial sanctity, and even after a blemish and redemption important traces of that original sanctity remain.

The daf carefully works through the practical consequences of that distinction. It addresses firstborn status, priestly gifts, shearing and labor, milk and offspring, slaughter outside the Temple, תמורה, and whether a dead consecrated animal can still be redeemed. The Gemara repeatedly asks whether a rule follows from monetary sanctity itself or from the danger that one category may be confused with full altar sanctity.

On 14b the discussion broadens into several major principles of Kodashim: whether offspring of animals sanctified only for value may be redeemed while unblemished, Rava's rule that an unblemished male dedicated for its value acquires bodily sanctity, the prohibition against offering a blemished animal even on a private altar when private altars were permitted, and the requirement of העמדה והערכה, standing and valuation, before redemption. The daf is therefore a sustained study of how strongly sanctity remains attached to an animal when its fitness for the altar is compromised.

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

The Mishnah: whether the blemish came before or after consecration

כל הקדשים שקדם מום קבוע להקדשן ונפדו - חייבין בבכורה ובמתנות, ויוצאין לחולין ליגזז וליעבד...
וכל שקדם הקדשן את מומן... ונפדו - פטורין מן הבכורה ומן המתנות...

The Mishnah presents two parallel lists. If a permanent blemish existed before consecration, the animal was never fit to receive ordinary altar sanctity. After redemption it becomes ordinary property to a broad extent: its later offspring can be subject to firstborn sanctity, the animal is subject to the priestly gifts, and after redemption it may be shorn or used for work. Its milk and offspring are permitted after redemption, slaughtering it outside the Temple does not incur the liability associated with slaughtering a true offering outside, it does not generate temurah, and if it dies before redemption it can still be redeemed.

The second case is much stricter. If consecration came first - or the animal had only a temporary blemish and later acquired a permanent one - the animal once possessed full inherent sanctity. Redemption allows its meat to be eaten, but does not turn it into ordinary livestock in every respect. It remains exempt from firstborn status and priestly gifts; shearing and work remain forbidden; milk and certain offspring remain prohibited; temurah can apply; and if it dies before redemption it must be buried rather than redeemed.

(ד"ה כל הקדשים שקדם מום קבוע להקדשן) Tosafot

Tosafot emphasizes that the first clause is not discussing ordinary bedek-habayit property. Both halves concern animals designated toward the altar; the decisive difference is chronological - whether the permanent blemish preceded the consecration or whether consecration preceded the blemish. That chronology determines whether full bodily sanctity ever took hold.

Before redemption: monetary sanctity can still block ordinary obligations

The Gemara notices that the Mishnah says animals whose blemish preceded consecration become liable in firstborn status and priestly gifts after redemption. This implies that before redemption they are exempt. The Gemara formulates the principle that even קדושת דמים, monetary sanctity directed toward the altar, can temporarily displace ordinary firstborn and gift obligations while the animal remains consecrated.

The Gemara asks whether this category should simply be treated like property consecrated for Temple maintenance. It rejects a simplistic equation. An animal dedicated toward the altar, even only for its value, has a closer relationship to altar sanctity and therefore certain restrictions can remain because it may be confused with genuine קדושת הגוף.

Shearing, labor, offspring, and milk

The Mishnah permits shearing and labor only after redemption in the first category. Before redemption, even a value-consecrated animal may not be treated as ordinary livestock. The Gemara explains that this restriction does not necessarily prove full bodily sanctity; it can be a protective rule because altar-directed monetary sanctity resembles genuine sacrificial sanctity.

The treatment of offspring and milk sharpens the distinction. In the first category, after redemption the mother truly leaves the sacred domain and what comes from her is permitted. In the second category, where full sanctity preceded the blemish, the Torah permits eating the redeemed animal itself but does not erase every consequence of its former kedushah. The Gemara asks exactly when the offspring was conceived and born, because an offspring that emerged before redemption can carry a different status from one conceived after the mother has left consecration.

Rashi (ד"ה חייבין בבכורה)

Rashi explains that the liability in firstborn status refers to offspring born after redemption. Once the mother whose blemish preceded consecration has been redeemed, she is treated as ordinary livestock for this purpose; the earlier monetary sanctity no longer shields later offspring from bekhorah.

May the offspring be redeemed while still unblemished?

On 14b the Gemara asks about offspring born from an animal whose sanctity was only monetary: must the offspring wait for a blemish before redemption, or may it be redeemed while completely unblemished? A baraita answers that when permanently blemished animals were dedicated for altar value and gave birth, the offspring may be sold and redeemed without waiting for a blemish. The rationale is **שלא יהא טפל חמור מן העיקר** - the secondary sanctity of the offspring should not be stricter than the primary sanctity of the mother.

The formulation also supports Rava. If an ordinary unblemished male animal is directly consecrated for its monetary value toward the altar, it does not remain merely a money-value object; because it is itself fit to be offered, it acquires **קדושת הגוף**. The exception for offspring is therefore tied to the fact that their sanctity flows from a mother whose own altar sanctity was rejected by a permanent blemish.

A blemished sacrifice on a private altar

The Mishnah says one who slaughters these animals outside the Temple is exempt. Rabbi Elazar teaches a version that says “liable” and explains it as referring not to karet for slaughter outside the Temple but to a prohibition against sacrificing a blemished animal on an individual private altar during the historical period when private altars were permitted.

The Gemara tries repeatedly to use the relevant verse for some other category: a blemished firstborn, animal tithe, a blemished temurah, or blemished offspring of sacred animals. Each possibility is rejected because another verse or comparison already teaches that such blemished animals may not be offered. That leaves the verse available for Rabbi Elazar’s rule concerning a private altar.

Why an originally blemished animal does not make temurah

The Mishnah states that an animal whose permanent blemish preceded consecration does not generate temurah. The Torah says one may not exchange “good for bad or bad for good.” The Gemara reads this as defining the source animal capable of creating temurah: an animal that was “good” - fit - at the beginning of its consecrated status can generate temurah; an animal that was already “bad,” meaning permanently blemished at the beginning, cannot.

Can a dead consecrated animal be redeemed?

The final sugya turns to העמדה והערכה. Redemption of certain consecrated animals requires the animal to be stood alive before the Kohen and formally valued. If that requirement applies, a dead animal cannot be redeemed because it can no longer be stood for valuation.

Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav associates the Mishnah with Rabbi Shimon, who distinguishes between altar consecrations and bedek-habayit consecrations. Rabbi Shimon excludes some categories from standing and valuation, allowing redemption even after death, while the opposing view extends the requirement more broadly. The placement of an animal whose blemish existed from the outset becomes the key test of how far the requirement reaches.

What the daf establishes

Bekhorot 14 demonstrates that “redeemed” does not always mean “completely ordinary.” If an animal never possessed full bodily sanctity, redemption can restore ordinary status almost completely. If full sanctity attached before a blemish appeared, redemption permits eating but leaves important residual restrictions. The entire daf is built around that historical question: what kind of kedushah attached first, and how much of it can later be removed?

Glossary

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
קדושת הגוף	Kedushat haguf	Inherent bodily sanctity of an animal fit for the altar.
קדושת דמים	Kedushat damim	Sanctity attaching principally to monetary value.
מום קבוע	Mum kavua	A permanent blemish.
מום עובר	Mum over	A temporary blemish.
בכורה	Bekhorah	Firstborn sanctity.
מתנות	Matanot	The priestly gifts from an ordinary slaughtered animal.
תמורה	Temurah	Sanctity created by attempting to substitute one animal for another consecrated animal.

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
במת יחיד	Bamat yachid	A private altar used during periods when private altars were permitted.
העמדה והערכה	Ha'amadah vеха'arakhah	Standing an animal before a Kohen for formal valuation prior to redemption.
שלא יהא טפל חמור מן העיקר	Shelo yehei tafel chamur min ha'ikar	The secondary should not be treated more stringently than the primary source from which its status derives.

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