

Bekhorot 15 Detailed Summary

Coverage: Bekhorot 15a - 15b

Bekhorot 15 continues the Mishnah's comparison between animals whose blemish existed before consecration and animals whose consecration came first. The opening discussion clarifies the dispute over העמדה והערכה - whether redemption requires the consecrated animal to be alive and physically stood for valuation - and why the Mishnah can be attributed to Rabbi Shimon or, according to another reading, also to his opponents.

The daf then develops the Torah's special status for פסולי המוקדשין, formerly consecrated animals that became blemished and were redeemed. Scripture compares them to the deer and gazelle: like ordinary wild animals, they are exempt from firstborn sanctity and priestly gifts, yet unlike fully ordinary animals they retain restrictions reflecting their past sanctity. The Gemara works through fat, milk, shearing, labor, the prohibition of אֹתוֹ וְאֶת בְּנוֹ, and whether sacred animals may be redeemed for uses such as feeding dogs.

The second half focuses on offspring. If a mother was consecrated before becoming blemished and was later redeemed, what happens to a fetus conceived before redemption but born afterward? The Gemara distinguishes offspring whose sanctity formed while the mother was still sacred from later offspring, explores whether they can be independently designated for another offering, and concludes with a broad baraita contrasting the two categories of blemished consecrated animals. That baraita serves as a practical summary of the entire sugya: one category is essentially like chullin after redemption, while the other remains like hekdes in every respect except that its meat may be eaten.

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

Finishing the debate over standing and valuation

The daf begins by challenging Rav's statement that the Mishnah follows Rabbi Shimon. If even Rabbi Shimon's opponents agree that an animal blemished before consecration can be redeemed without standing and valuation, why attribute the rule specifically to Rabbi Shimon? The Gemara answers that Rav's attribution is driven by the later clause of the Mishnah, which says that animals consecrated before becoming blemished must be buried if they die.

According to the reading Rav adopts, that burial requirement reflects the impossibility of העמדה והערכה after death. The Gemara considers an alternative: perhaps burial is required simply because sacred animals may not be redeemed when their only resulting use would be feeding dogs. The response notes that if this were the reason, the Mishnah could have used the case of an animal that became a tereifah while still alive. Because it specifically speaks of death, standing and valuation is the more natural explanation.

ד"ה דקתני בסיפא (Rashi)

Rashi explains that the Mishnah's statement "if they die, they must be buried" is the clue: animals whose consecration preceded their blemish remain within the standing-and-valuation system. A dead animal cannot satisfy that procedure, so redemption is unavailable.

Redeemed sacred animals are compared to deer and gazelle

The Torah permits eating a blemished consecrated animal after redemption and compares it to צבי ואיל, a deer and a gazelle. The Gemara mines that comparison carefully. Just as deer and gazelle are not subject to firstborn sanctity, redeemed disqualified consecrated animals are exempt from bechorah. Just as deer and gazelle are exempt from the priestly gifts of foreleg, jaw, and maw, these redeemed animals are also exempt.

The comparison cannot simply be extended without limits. Deer and gazelle have other characteristics that clearly cannot all be transferred to redeemed sacred animals. The Torah therefore uses restrictive words and additional verses to decide which similarities are intended and which are not.

ד"ה מה צבי ואיל פטורין מן הבכורה ומן המתנות (Tosafot)

Tosafot asks how many laws can legitimately be extracted from the comparison to deer and gazelle, since similar comparisons are used elsewhere for additional rules. Their question highlights the Gemara's hermeneutic discipline: a comparison is powerful, but each extension must be justified against the available verses and limiting terms.

Milk, forbidden fat, and אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בְּנוֹ

The Gemara asks whether the deer-and-gazelle comparison might permit the milk or forbidden fat of redeemed consecrated animals. A limiting term blocks that conclusion. Rava explains that the Torah's wording concerning "blood" points to the status of prohibited fat as well: just as the blood remains subject to its severe prohibition, the forbidden fat remains prohibited. Redemption does not turn every component of the animal into ordinary permitted material.

Rav Pappa raises the law of אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בְּנוֹ, the prohibition against slaughtering a mother and its offspring on the same day. If deer and gazelle are the model, perhaps this prohibition should not apply. The Gemara ultimately assigns the limiting word to this issue and derives the continuing prohibition of fat independently, showing again that the analogy is selective rather than absolute.

Shearing, labor, milk, and feeding dogs

The Mishnah teaches that an animal whose consecration preceded its blemish does not emerge after redemption for ordinary shearing and labor. A baraita derives this from the Torah's special wording: תִּזְבַּח - slaughter, but not shearing; בָּשָׂר - meat, not milk; וְאָכְלָתָּ - eating for people, not redemption merely in order to feed dogs.

An alternate formulation on 15b derives some of these restrictions differently, but the practical structure is the same: redemption permits the animal to be slaughtered and eaten, yet does not grant unrestricted economic use. The former sanctity still controls what may be done with the living animal and with products that are not the redeemed meat itself.

Offspring conceived before redemption and born afterward

The Mishnah says that the offspring and milk of animals whose consecration preceded their blemish remain prohibited after redemption. The Gemara asks what type of offspring is meant. If conception and birth both occurred after redemption, the offspring should be ordinary, comparable to the offspring of deer and gazelle. If the offspring was already born before redemption, it can itself acquire sacred status. The difficult case is therefore a fetus conceived while the mother was still consecrated but born only after she was redeemed.

A baraita derives the sanctity of offspring and substitutes from the Torah's wording "male" and "female," including offspring and temurah even when the parent or source animal is blemished. This shows that fetal status can be shaped by the mother's sanctity before redemption even when birth occurs later.

רש"י אלא דאיעבר לפני פדיון ואיתיליד לאחר פדיון

Rashi identifies the Mishnah's difficult case precisely: conception took place before the mother was redeemed, but birth occurred afterward. The offspring is therefore not simply a new ordinary animal, yet it is also not straightforwardly an independent sacrifice; the remaining sugya determines what can be done with it.

What should be done with those offspring?

The Gemara asks what practical future awaits such offspring. For offspring already born before the mother's redemption, there is a dispute whether they are themselves fully sanctified for offering or must be left to graze until they develop a blemish. For offspring still in utero near the mother's redemption, one proposal is to designate them explicitly for the same type of offering as the mother so that an independent sanctity takes effect before the mother's redemption.

Rabbi Levi explains that the Sages imposed restrictions because otherwise owners might deliberately maintain large herds of פסולי המוקדשין for their offspring. The decree pushes the owner toward prompt redemption rather than turning formerly sacred animals into a breeding strategy.

Rashi (ד"ה וטעמא מאי)

Rashi explains the concern as a safeguard against raising herds from disqualified consecrated animals. If offspring could always be turned into a convenient benefit, an owner might delay redemption and create repeated opportunities for prohibited shearing, labor, or other misuse.

Can the fetus be designated for any sacrifice?

The Gemara tests whether an owner may designate the fetus for any offering he chooses or only for the same category as the mother. The verses concerning a firstborn and other sacred animals restrict the ability to impose a new, unrelated sanctity where an existing sacred identity already controls. The practical question is not whether the animal can be made sacred - its connection to the mother already does that work - but whether the owner may redirect that sanctity.

The concluding baraita: two categories side by side

A long baraita at the end of the daf summarizes the contrast. Where a permanent blemish preceded consecration, redemption leaves the animal essentially like ordinary livestock. It becomes liable in firstborn status and gifts; shearing and work do not incur lashes; it does not make temurah; after redemption there is no me'ilah; its offspring are ordinary; unblemished offspring can be redeemed; and they may be designated for an offering. The baraita summarizes: הרי הן כחולין לכל דבריהם - they are like ordinary animals in all respects, with only the requirement to realize their value for the sacred purpose.

Where consecration preceded the permanent blemish, the mirror image applies. The animal is exempt from firstborn status and gifts; shearing or working it remains punishable; temurah applies; its pre-redemption offspring are sacred; those offspring cannot be redeemed while unblemished; and they cannot simply be redirected to any offering. The summary is equally forceful: הרי הן כהקדש לכל דבריהם, ואין לך בהן אלא - they remain like consecrated property in all respects, except that redemption grants permission to eat the meat.

What the daf establishes

Bekhorot 15 turns the abstract distinction of the previous daf into a practical legal map. Redemption can either dissolve a weak, monetary sanctity almost completely or merely permit consumption while leaving a powerful residue of earlier bodily sanctity. The decisive fact remains the sequence: did the animal become permanently blemished before sacred status attached, or did sacred status attach while the animal was still fit for the altar?

Glossary

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
פסולי המוקדשין	Pesulei hamukdashin	Consecrated animals disqualified from sacrifice by a blemish and subject to redemption.
צבי ואיל	Tzvi va'ayal	Deer and gazelle, used by the Torah as the comparison model for redeemed disqualified consecrated animals.
בכורה	Bekhorah	Firstborn sanctity.
מתנות	Matanot	Foreleg, jaw, and maw given to a Kohen from ordinary slaughter.
אותו ואת בנו	Oto ve'et beno	The prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day.
גיזה ועבודה	Gizah va'avodah	Shearing and using the animal for labor.
העמדה והערכה	Ha'amadah vеха'arakhah	Standing and formal valuation required for redemption in certain categories.
מעילה	Me'ilah	Prohibited personal benefit from consecrated property.
מצות עילוי	Mitzvat ilui	The requirement to realize or elevate the animal's monetary value for the sacred purpose.
רעייה	Re'iyah	Leaving a sacred animal to graze until it develops a blemish permitting redemption.

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