

# Bekhorot 16 Detailed Summary

Coverage: Bekhorot 16a - 16b

Bekhorot 16 completes the discussion of offspring and substitutes of redeemed consecrated animals and then begins a new Mishnah about צאן ברזל, livestock placed with a Jewish recipient under a fixed-value arrangement with a non-Jew. The opening sugya asks what happens when a substitute (תמורה) is created from an animal after redemption. Although the original animal may now be eaten, the substitute inherits enough of the earlier sanctity to become trapped: it cannot be offered, yet it is too sacred to be redeemed in the normal way. The Gemara compares this case with the substitutes of a firstborn and animal tithe and derives the special rule from verses concerning prohibited animals and the traditional laws of the five sin offerings that must die.

The daf then turns from sacrificial sanctity to ownership. The Mishnah rules that the offspring of צאן ברזל received from a non-Jew can be exempt from firstborn sanctity because the non-Jew retains a legally meaningful claim. The Gemara tests whether the arrangement means the animals legally remain the non-Jew's property, compares the issue with the prohibition of interest in a parallel Jewish transaction, and ultimately reframes the rule: the decisive point is not ordinary title but the non-Jew's enforceable lien. If failure to pay allows the non-Jew to seize the animal or its offspring, יד עובד כוכבים - באמצע - a non-Jewish interest is still present - and bekhorah does not attach.

The final section measures how far that residual interest extends into later generations. Rav Huna and Rav Yehuda disagree over whether the exemption continues only to the immediate offspring or one generation further, while Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel can extend the exemption for many generations so long as the non-Jew's financial responsibility continues. The Mishnah also introduces an animal born with the appearance of a different species, preparing the next daf's discussion of resemblance, lineage, and how much of the mother's species must remain visible for firstborn sanctity to apply.

**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 full discussion.**

## Detailed Summary

### A substitute created after redemption

The daf opens in the middle of the baraita contrasting animals whose consecration preceded their blemish with animals blemished before consecration. The Gemara notices that the baraita speaks as though a blemished offspring can sometimes be redeemed and dedicated for the same type of offering. Rav Huna, however, had ruled more strictly regarding certain offspring, so the Gemara asks whether the baraita refutes him. Rav Huna answers that the formulation is parallel wording rather than a precise implication: just because the earlier clause said that unblemished animals may be redeemed does not mean that every blemished animal in the later clause actually has an ordinary redemption route.

The baraita then says that slaughtering such an animal outside the Temple can be exempt. Rav Huna has a version in which liability is possible when the blemish is only a subtle eye defect (דוקין שבעיין) and the case follows Rabbi Akiva's rule that certain altar-invalid offerings, once placed on the altar, are not removed. The key principle is that liability for outside slaughter depends on whether the animal still has a meaningful relationship to the inner sacrificial service.

### Why the post-redemption temurah must die

Rav Nachman in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha rules that a temurah made even after redemption takes effect, but that substitute must die. It cannot be offered because its sanctity comes through a rejected or displaced sacred status; it cannot simply be eaten, and it cannot be redeemed because its own sanctity is not strong in the normal way to transfer onto money. It is therefore left with no permitted route.

Rav Amram challenges this from תמורת בכור ומעשר. A substitute of a firstborn animal or animal tithe is not offered, but when it develops a blemish the owner may eat it. Abaye answers that each substitute follows the legal identity of its source. A temurah of bekhor or maaser remains called by that very category, and the source category itself is eaten by its owner when blemished. A temurah of ordinary consecrated animals, by contrast, belongs to a category that normally becomes permitted only through redemption. Since this substitute cannot effectively be redeemed, it cannot become ordinary food.

#### ד"ה ותמורה שלאחר פדינונו מתה) Tosafot

Tosafot distinguishes the temurah from offspring conceived and born after redemption. Offspring receive their sanctity through the mother, and after redemption that maternal sanctity has largely fallen away. Temurah, however, is an independently Torah-created transfer of sanctity. Once Scripture teaches that temurah can take hold even in this unusual setting, it remains effective even though the resulting animal cannot be offered.

## The scriptural support and the five dying sin offerings

A baraita supports Rav Nachman by deriving the rule from the Torah's language concerning an animal that chews its cud yet is called impure. The Gemara asks whether that verse is already needed for the traditional category of the five sin offerings that must die. The answer distinguishes the verses about chewing the cud and splitting the hoof, and then asks a deeper question: if the death of the five sin offerings is already a halakhah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, what does the verse add?

The Gemara explains that both the tradition and the verse do work. The oral tradition determines the severe result - death rather than grazing until a blemish - while the verse can establish an actual Torah prohibition against eating such an animal if someone violated the prescribed procedure. Alternatively, the verses form a comparison: just as the relevant sin-offering category ends in death, so too the temurah of redeemed disqualified consecrated animals.

## The Mishnah of tzon barzel

הַמִּקְבֵּל צֶאֱן בַרְזֵל מִן הָעוֹבֵד כּוֹכְבִּים... וְלֹדוּתֵיהֶן פְּטוּרִין, וְלֹדֵי וְלֹדוּתֵיהֶן חֲצִיּוֹן.

A צאן ברזל arrangement fixes the value owed to the non-Jew. The Jewish recipient bears the obligation to repay that fixed amount even if the animals decline or die, while the parties share in later production according to their arrangement. The Mishnah rules that the immediate offspring can be exempt from firstborn sanctity, but later generations can become obligated. If the offspring themselves are formally substituted for the mothers as security, the non-Jew's claim reaches one generation further. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says that even ten generations can remain exempt while the non-Jew's financial responsibility continues.

## Ownership, interest, and a creditor's lien

The Gemara initially asks whether the Mishnah proves that because the non-Jew has not yet received his money, the livestock remain legally in the non-Jew's possession. That seems to conflict with the parallel rule that a Jew may not accept צאן ברזל from another Jew because the return can function as interest - a rule that seems to treat the livestock as belonging to the recipient, whose gain is then being shared with the lender.

Abaye attempts to distinguish cases according to who bears accidental loss and depreciation, but Rava objects that such a case would no longer deserve the name צאן ברזל. Rava therefore explains that the firstborn exemption is not based on saying the non-Jew is the ordinary owner. Rather, the non-Jew can collect the debt from the animal and, if the animal is unavailable, from its offspring. That enforceable collateral right is sufficient to say עוֹבֵד כּוֹכְבִּים באמצע. Any meaningful non-Jewish proprietary interest blocks the exclusive Jewish ownership needed for bechorah.

**Rashi (ד"ה והכא גבי בכורה)**

Rashi emphasizes that the exemption here is not because the animals are simply “owned” by the non-Jew. The decisive factor is that they stand as security for his claim. That lien gives him enough of a hand in the property to prevent firstborn sanctity.

**How many generations remain exempt?**

Rav Huna reads the Mishnah narrowly: the offspring are exempt, but their offspring are liable unless the owner specifically places the new generation in place of the original mothers. Rav Yehuda extends the exemption one generation farther, understanding the non-Jew’s collection right as naturally reaching the descendants that replace the original livestock. The Gemara challenges Rav Yehuda from the Mishnah’s language and answers that the Mishnah highlights the substituted case to teach that even there the exemption does not continue forever.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel’s statement that even ten generations are exempt is then used to test how the Tanna Kamma counted generations. The underlying question throughout is how far a creditor’s residual claim travels into replacement property. Firstborn law here becomes a precise test of economic control: a remote future animal is exempt only while the original non-Jewish financial interest can still realistically attach to it.

**Resemblance to another species**

The Mishnah closes with a sheep that gives birth to an offspring shaped like a goat, or a goat that gives birth to one shaped like a sheep. Ordinarily such a birth is exempt from firstborn sanctity because the newborn does not sufficiently resemble the mother’s species. If, however, the offspring retains some identifying signs of the mother’s species (מקצת סימנין), the Mishnah can recognize it as sufficiently connected to the maternal species. The next daf analyzes exactly how lineage, appearance, and ancestral resemblance interact.

**Glossary**

| Hebrew term    | Transliteration     | Meaning in this sugya                                                                 |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| תמורה          | Temurah             | A substitute animal that acquires sanctity when exchanged for a consecrated animal.   |
| פסולי המוקדשין | Pesulei hamukdashin | Consecrated animals disqualified from the altar, often because of a blemish.          |
| דוקין שבעין    | Dukin sheba’ayin    | A subtle eye blemish relevant to whether an offering still has altar standing.        |
| צאן ברזל       | Tzon barzel         | A fixed-value livestock investment in which repayment of the principal is guaranteed. |

A legally meaningful non-Jewish interest remains in the property.

| Hebrew term             | Transliteration                | Meaning in this sugya                              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| יד עובד כוכבים<br>באמצע | Yad oveid kokhavim<br>ba'emtza |                                                    |
| משכון                   | Mashkon                        | Collateral securing a debt.                        |
| בכורה                   | Bekhorah                       | Firstborn sanctity.                                |
| מקצת סימנין             | Miktzat simanim                | Partial identifying signs of the mother's species. |

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