

Bekhorot 6

Detailed Summary

Coverage: Bekhorot 6a - 7a

From the requirement of recognizable maternal characteristics through the source for permitted milk and Rabbi Shimon's threshold of resemblance.

לעילוי נשמת הרב נחמיה בן הרב יוסף הכהן זי"צ'יק זצ"ל

A clear guide to the central sugyot, the Gemara's proofs and distinctions, and the key Rashi and Tosafot ideas needed to follow the flow.

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Detailed Summary

The central idea

Bekhorot 6 asks a deceptively simple question: when an animal is born looking unlike its mother, how much resemblance is enough for the Torah to treat it as the mother's species? From there the Gemara develops the broader rule that what emerges from a non-kosher source is non-kosher, tests Rabbi Shimon's stricter position, and then confronts the special case of milk.

How much resemblance is enough?

The discussion continues the Mishnah's rule that a kosher mother can produce an offspring whose outward form resembles a non-kosher species. For the firstborn obligation, the Sages do not require perfect identity. It is enough that the newborn display some of the identifying characteristics of its mother - מקצת סימנין.

The Gemara tests what counts as a meaningful sign. Horns, split hooves, and other physical markers are examined because the Torah's firstborn law depends not merely on biological origin but on whether the newborn can still be halachically recognized as belonging to the mother's species.

Rashi integrated

Rashi reads the issue as one of recognizable species identity. The child need not be an exact visual copy of the mother, but the remaining features must be enough to keep it within the Torah's category rather than making the resemblance merely accidental.

Rabbi Shimon raises the threshold

Rabbi Shimon is stricter. He requires the head and the majority of the body - ראשו ורובו - to resemble the mother before the firstborn law applies. The Gemara will later ask whether this same threshold governs permission to eat the offspring or whether it is unique to the laws of firstborn sanctity.

The rule: what comes from the non-kosher is non-kosher

The Mishnah's memorable formulation - הַיּוֹצֵא מִן הַטְּמֵא טְמֵא וְהַיּוֹצֵא מִן הַטְּהוֹר טְהוֹר - is first treated as a practical rule, but the Gemara now asks for its Torah source. The discussion turns to the camel, the classic animal that possesses one kosher sign but not the other.

The Torah repeats the word גמל. According to Rabbi Shimon, that repetition is not stylistic. One occurrence addresses the ordinary camel; the second closes a possible loophole by teaching that even a camel-like offspring born from a kosher animal can remain prohibited when it lacks the level of resemblance Rabbi Shimon requires.

Why every extra word matters

The sugya briefly touches the larger system of Torah interpretation. Shimon HaAmsoni had expounded every occurrence of the apparently extra word אֵל until he reached the command to fear Hashem and refused to add another object of fear. Rabbi Akiva ultimately expounded the word to include Torah scholars.

The point for our sugya is methodological. When the Torah repeats an animal name or adds a seemingly unnecessary word, the Gemara assumes the language may define the precise boundary of a prohibition.

Tosafot integrated

Tosafot emphasizes that the doubled wording is needed because maternal origin alone might otherwise have been enough. The verse creates a second axis - the form of the offspring - and Rabbi Shimon uses that axis more strictly than the Sages.

The milk problem

The rule that a substance emerging from a non-kosher animal is prohibited seems to create an obvious question. Milk is produced by an animal's body. Why is milk from a kosher animal permitted at all? The Gemara treats this as a genuine chidush, a Torah novelty, because milk appears to be formed from bodily material that would ordinarily raise concerns.

Several possible proofs are suggested. Verses speak positively of goats' milk, of cheese carried by David, and of Eretz Yisrael as a land flowing with milk and honey. The Gemara examines whether each verse proves permission to eat the milk or merely describes possession, commerce, or abundance.

The accumulating verses show that the Torah itself assumes the permissibility of milk from kosher animals. This is therefore not an exception inferred by common sense; it is a permission grounded in Scripture.

Rashi integrated

Rashi explains why milk needs a source even though the mother is kosher. Milk is a secretion formed inside the body, and the sugya is testing whether it should be treated like ordinary food from a kosher source or like a bodily product that requires special authorization.

A category is built from source, form, and Torah text

By this point the daf has three separate tools in play: the identity of the mother, the visible form of the offspring, and an explicit verse that may override what we would otherwise infer. None can simply be substituted for another.

Does Rabbi Shimon require head and majority for eating too?

The Gemara returns to the unresolved question. Rabbi Shimon clearly demands ראשו ורובו for firstborn status. Is the same standard necessary before an unusual offspring of a kosher mother may be eaten?

Baraitot are brought from both directions. At first their wording can be read either as discussing firstborn sanctity or as discussing dietary law. The Gemara therefore insists on a source that states Rabbi Shimon's position in the relevant context rather than relying on inference from a neighboring rule.

The resolution is that Rabbi Shimon applies his stricter resemblance threshold to eating as well. For him, origin in a kosher mother does not by itself settle the matter if the newborn's form has moved too far from the maternal species.

Why this matters

The dispute is not about whether biology matters. Everyone begins with the mother. The dispute is about how much legal weight appearance carries once the offspring looks like a different species. The Sages allow a broader range of variation; Rabbi Shimon requires the newborn's head and majority to preserve recognizable continuity with the mother.

The conceptual map

Mother's species establishes the starting identity. **Physical resemblance** determines whether that identity is still recognizable. **Scriptural wording** decides how much resemblance the law demands in each area.

The full picture in plain language

The daf builds one coherent system out of several difficult edge cases. Species identity begins with the mother but can depend on recognizable form; Rabbi Shimon sets a higher threshold than the Sages. The same sensitivity to origin explains why bodily products of non-kosher animals are generally prohibited, while milk from a kosher animal requires its own scriptural basis.

Glossary

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
מקצת סימנין	Miktzat simanim	Some recognizable characteristics of the mother; sufficient according to the Sages in the firstborn discussion.
ראשו ורובו	Rosho verubo	The head and majority of the body; Rabbi Shimon's stricter resemblance threshold.
היוצא מן הטמא טמא	Hayotzei min hatamei tamei	What emerges from a non-kosher source is non-kosher.
היוצא מן הטהור טהור	Hayotzei min hatahor tahor	What emerges from a kosher source is kosher, subject to the sugya's qualifications.
גמל	Gamal	Camel; its repeated appearance in the verses becomes a source for Rabbi Shimon.
את	Et	A normally untranslated Torah particle whose extra appearances can support derashot.
חידוש	Chidush	A legal novelty that cannot simply be derived from ordinary category rules.
חלב	Chalav	Milk; the sugya asks why milk from a kosher animal is permitted.

Glossary

Hebrew term	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
סימנים	Simanim	Physical identifying signs used to classify an animal halachically.
בכורה	Bekhorah	Firstborn sanctity and its associated obligations.
יוצא	Yotzei	A substance or offspring that emerges from another organism.
רבי שמעון	Rabbi Shimon	The Tanna who requires a stronger resemblance between offspring and mother.

Acknowledgment and contact

We greatly appreciate [AlHaTorah Bekhorot](#).
The Rashi and Tosafot insights are integrated in English so the document reads as one continuous summary. The words of the Mishnah are reproduced in Hebrew when the covered range contains a Mishnah.

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