Bekhorot 25

Daf Yomi · Tuesday, October 13, 2026 · ב׳ חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 25a (Mishnah on the fallen hair of a blemished firstborn) through 25b (R. Chiya bar Abba and R. Assi)

Summary

Bekhorot 25 presents a Mishnah about hair that fell from a blemished firstborn and was put aside in a window. According to R. Yehuda, if the animal was then slaughtered, Akavya ben Mahalalel permits the hair and the Sages forbid it. R. Yose says the dispute is only where the animal afterward died; if it was slaughtered, all permit it. Loose wool on a firstborn is permitted if it looks like part of the fleece when shorn, and forbidden if it stands out. The Gemara explains R. Yose's reading, and Reish Lakish limits the dispute to an animal that an expert had already declared blemished: the Sages decree lest the owner delay slaughter to collect more wool.

Rav Sheshet challenges this from a ruling about blemished animals mixed with others, where R. Yose says the animal is examined. Rav Nachman explains it as the fleece of a blemished firstborn mixed with ordinary fleeces, which would show that R. Yose permits even without an expert. Rava rejects this. When Ravin reported the discussion in the Land of Israel, R. Yirmeya called the Babylonians foolish and cited R. Yochanan's two explanations: R. Chiya bar Abba ties the dispute to R. Meir and the Sages on a lost grave, and R. Assi ties it to Rabbi and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel on a grave found in a field. The Gemara explains why each Amora rejects the other's analogy.

Detailed Summary

1. Mishnah: fallen hair of a firstborn 25a–25b

The preceding lines of 25a complete the discussion of plucking hair to show a blemish (summary of Bekhorot 24).

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 25a–25b)

שער בכור בעל מום שנשר, והניחו בחלון, ואחר כך שחטו, עקביא בן מהללאל מתיר, וחכמים אוסרין, דברי ר' יהודה. אמר לו ר' יוסי: לא בזה התיר עקביא בן מהללאל, אלא שער בעל מום שנשר והניחו בחלון ואחר כך מת, בזה עקביא בן מהללאל מתיר וחכמים אוסרין. צמר המדולדל בבכור, את שנראה עם הגיזה מותר, ואת שאינו נראה עם הגיזה אסור.

The hair of a blemished firstborn that fell out, which he placed in a window, and afterward he slaughtered the animal: Akavya ben Mahalalel permits it (Rashi: for benefit, to the kohen), and the Sages forbid it (Rashi: if wool that falls while the animal is alive were permitted, he might delay slaughtering it so it keeps shedding, and come to shear and work it); these are the words of R. Yehuda. R. Yose said to him: Akavya ben Mahalalel did not permit in this case, but rather the hair of a blemished animal that fell out, which he placed in a window, and afterward it died (Rashi: it was not slaughtered); in that case Akavya ben Mahalalel permits and the Sages forbid. Loose wool on a firstborn (Rashi: detached from the skin but tangled in the rest of the wool): what looks like part of the fleece is permitted, and what does not look like part of the fleece is forbidden.

Tosafot – ד"ה שער בכור בעל מום שנשר כו'

CLARIFICATION. This whole sugya shows that the fleece of disqualified sacrifices is permitted by Torah law, and the Sages who forbid it do so only by decree, lest he delay slaughter. The exposition "you may slaughter, but not shear" (6b) means only that one may not shear.

QUESTION. Rabbi finds this difficult: in Chullin (36b), a verse was needed to permit the blood of disqualified sacrifices, since one might think that because they are forbidden for shearing and work, their blood needs burial. How could one think so, if even the fleece itself is permitted? Tosafot discusses this at length.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The ban on fallen wool is rabbinic, which shapes the dispute that follows.

Rashi – ד"ה את שנראה עם הגיזה

THE ISSUE. When is loose wool part of the fleece?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. When he slaughters and then shears the animal, if the loose wool is level with the rest of the fleece, so that it is not noticeable that it separated, it is permitted like the rest. If it sticks out so that everyone can see it is separate, it is like wool that fell out before slaughter. This anonymous ruling follows the Sages who disagree with Akavya.

WHY IT MATTERS. The ruling depends on appearance, to avoid the impression of permitting fallen wool.

2. R. Yose's version 25b

THE DIFFICULTY. This implies that R. Yehuda's Sages forbid it when slaughtered. Now, if it died, Akavya permits; is it necessary to say so if it was slaughtered (Rashi: when it was slaughtered, the attached wool is permitted, so surely the wool in the window is too)?

THE ANSWER. Rather, R. Yose means: Akavya did not permit in this case while the Sages forbid; where it was slaughtered, all permit. They disagree where it died.

3. Reish Lakish: an expert's ruling 25b

THE DISPUTE. R. Assi said in the name of Reish Lakish: the dispute is where an expert permitted it. One master holds we decree lest he come to delay slaughter, and the other holds we do not decree. But where an expert did not permit it, all agree it is forbidden.

Rashi – ד"ה בשהתירו מומחה

THE ISSUE. Why would an expert's ruling matter?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The expert permitted the firstborn before the wool fell. The Sages hold that if the wool were permitted, he might delay slaughtering so that more wool falls, and come to shear and work it; so it is forbidden even after an expert permitted it. Akavya holds that once an expert permitted it, he will not delay.

WHY IT MATTERS. The dispute is about the risk of delay, not about the wool's holiness.

Rashi – ד"ה דברי הכל אסור

THE ISSUE. Why does Akavya agree when no expert permitted it?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Then it is like an unblemished animal, where Akavya agrees. If the wool were permitted, the owner would delay so as not to offer it, knowing that sooner or later a blemish would release it from the altar. Moreover, before the hair fell, there was no aspect of permission on it at all.

WHY IT MATTERS. Akavya's leniency depends on the expert's prior ruling.

4. Rav Sheshet's challenge 25b

THE RULING. Rav Sheshet objected: blemished animals forbid in any amount (Rashi: if one is mixed among a thousand unblemished animals, all are forbidden for the altar), and R. Yose says it is examined. We discussed this: what does "it is examined" mean? If that it is blemished, let him take it out! This implies the first Tanna says no? (Rashi: if he recognizes it, what doubt is there?)

RAV NACHMAN. Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha: here we deal with the fleece of a blemished firstborn mixed with ordinary fleeces. The first Tanna is R. Yehuda, who says that when slaughtered, the Sages forbid; and R. Yose follows his own view that when slaughtered, the Sages permit.

Rashi – ד"ה יבוקר

THE ISSUE. What would the examination accomplish?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. If it has a permanent blemish, he slaughters it, and everything is permitted. R. Yehuda holds slaughter does not help.

WHY IT MATTERS. On this reading, R. Yose would permit the fleece without a prior ruling by an expert.

THE INFERENCE. It teaches "it is examined." Does that not mean whether the blemish is permanent or passing, even though an expert did not permit it? Rava said: no; "it is examined" means if an expert permitted it, yes, and if not, no.

5. The Babylonians and the Land of Israel 25b

R. YIRMEYA. When Ravin went up, he reported this discussion before R. Yirmeya. R. Yirmeya said: foolish Babylonians! Because they live in a dark land, they say dark teachings. Have they not heard what R. Chiya bar Abba said in the name of R. Yochanan: the dispute is where he examined and did not find it (Rashi: the dispute of the first Tanna and R. Yose concerns live blemished animals mixed with others, and the blemished one was not found).

R. MEIR AND THE SAGES. They disagree in the dispute of R. Meir and the Sages, as we learned: R. Meir would say, anything presumed impure remains impure until the impurity becomes known. The Sages say he digs until he reaches rock or virgin soil.

Rashi – ד"ה חופר

THE ISSUE. What does digging accomplish?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. He searches until he reaches rock, since below that no grave was made, as rock is hard, or until he finds hard soil that was never worked.

WHY IT MATTERS. The Sages accept a thorough search even if the grave is not found.

R. ASSI. R. Assi said in the name of R. Yochanan: the dispute is where he examined and found it, and they disagree in the dispute of Rabbi and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. As it was taught: a field in which a grave was lost, one who enters it is impure. If a grave was found in it, one who enters is pure, for I say the grave that was lost is the grave that was found; these are the words of Rabbi. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: the whole field must be examined.

Rashi – ד"ה בשבדק ומצא

THE ISSUE. How does R. Assi's analogy fit the case?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. He found a blemished animal. The first Tanna forbids them all, worrying that this may be a different blemished animal, so all the others need examination. R. Yose holds that the first examination suffices, and once he found this one, there is no doubt. The first Tanna follows Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, and R. Yose follows Rabbi.

WHY IT MATTERS. Each analogy places R. Yose with a different Tanna.

6. Why each rejects the other 25b

R. ASSI. Why does R. Assi not explain like R. Chiya bar Abba? He can tell you: regarding impurity, granted, say a raven came and took it, or a mouse came and took it. But here, a blemished animal, where would it go (Rashi: so even the Sages would forbid, and R. Yose would not permit in such a case)?

R. CHIYA BAR ABBA. And the other? Say it was a passing blemish that healed.

THE OTHER DIRECTION. Why does R. Chiya bar Abba not explain like R. Assi? He can tell you: granted, a field is a place where people are buried, so just as this grave was dug there, another person may be buried there. But consecrated animals, once they have been examined and stand ready, is it their way to develop blemishes? And the other? Since they butt each other, blemishes are common among them.

A challenge from a baraita about wool plucked from an unblemished firstborn begins on 25b and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 26.

The full picture in plain language

Wool that falls from a blemished firstborn before it is slaughtered raises a practical worry. If the owner could keep that wool, he might postpone slaughtering the animal to collect more, and end up shearing or working a consecrated animal. Akavya ben Mahalalel permits the fallen wool, while the Sages forbid it as a precaution, and R. Yose and R. Yehuda disagree about whether the case is one where the animal was slaughtered or died. Reish Lakish adds that the dispute applies only after an expert has confirmed the blemish.

The second half of the daf tests that limit against another ruling of R. Yose about a blemished animal mixed into a group. The Babylonian analysis is rejected in the Land of Israel, where R. Yochanan's students compare the case to a lost grave in a field: do we rely on a search that came up empty, or on finding one grave and assuming it is the lost one? Each Amora explains why the other's comparison does not fit animals.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
שער שנשר	*se'ar she-nashar*	Hair that fell out while the animal was alive.
צמר המדולדל	*tzemer ha-meduldal*	Loose wool still tangled in the fleece.
מומחה	*mumcheh*	An expert who confirms a permanent blemish.
אתי לשהוייה	*ati le-shehuyei*	He may come to delay slaughtering it.
יבוקר	*yevukar*	It is examined.
שדה שאבד בה קבר	*sadeh she-avad bah kever*	A field in which a grave was lost.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.