Bekhorot 26

Daf Yomi · Wednesday, October 14, 2026 · ג׳ חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 25b (the challenge from the plucked wool) through 27a (the benefit of choosing a kohen)

Summary

Bekhorot 26 continues a discussion that began with the Mishnah on 25a, about hair that fell from a blemished firstborn. A firstborn may not be shorn, and even a blemished one is forbidden to shear until it is slaughtered. If hair fell out and the owner set it aside in a window, Akavya ben Mahalalel permits it once the animal is slaughtered, and the Sages forbid it; R. Yosi says the dispute concerns an animal that died. Reish Lakish had said that the dispute applies only where an expert confirmed the blemish; without an expert, all forbid the hair. The daf opens with a baraita that seems to contradict him, and the Gemara answers that any firstborn not yet released by an expert counts as "unblemished."

The Gemara asks whether this is a Tannaitic dispute and analyzes a three-way baraita among the first Tanna, R. Yehuda and R. Yosi. It first suggests that the difference concerns an expert's release, but Rava shows that all require it and that there are three positions on whether the dispute concerns slaughter or death. Rav Nachman rules like R. Yehuda, since our Mishnah follows him anonymously, and Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak proves the point from the Mishnah on loose wool. R. Yannai asks about wool that came off an unblemished burnt offering, and the Gemara defines loose wool that "is not visible with the fleece." With this the chapter *Haloke'ach Behemah* ends.

The fourth chapter, *Ad Kamah*, begins with how long an Israelite must care for a firstborn before giving it to a kohen: thirty days for a small animal, fifty for a large one, and three months according to R. Yosi. If a kohen asks for it earlier, the owner should not give it to him, unless it is blemished and the kohen wants to eat it, or, when the Temple stands, unblemished and he wants to offer it. A firstborn must be eaten within its first year. The Gemara derives the waiting periods from "so shall you do," explaining why the Torah left the extra period to the Sages. It explains the early-gift rule by the prohibition of kohanim helping at threshing floors and slaughterhouses to obtain gifts, which "corrupts the covenant of the Levi." The Sages did not penalize the owners, lest they separate from exempt produce. The daf ends with the "benefit" an owner may receive for choosing which kohen gets his gifts.

Detailed Summary

1. Background: hair of a blemished firstborn 25a–25b

A firstborn animal is holy, and one may not shear it or work it (גיזה ועבודה), even after it develops a blemish, until it is slaughtered. Its wool is also forbidden. A blemish permits slaughter only once an expert (*mumcheh*) has examined it and confirmed it is permanent.

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.

Hair of a blemished firstborn that fell out, which he placed in a window and afterward slaughtered the animal: Akavya ben Mahalalel permits it and the Sages forbid it, according to R. Yehuda. R. Yosi said to him: Akavya did not permit in this case, but where the hair fell, he placed it in a window, and then the animal died; there Akavya permits and the Sages forbid. Loose wool hanging on a firstborn: what is visible with the fleece is permitted (when the slaughtered animal is shorn); what is not visible with the fleece is forbidden.

REISH LAKISH (25B). R. Assi citing Reish Lakish: the dispute applies where an expert permitted the animal (confirmed the blemish). One view forbids lest the owner delay slaughtering it (to collect more wool); the other does not decree. But where no expert permitted it, all forbid.

On 25b the Gemara challenged this from a baraita, and R. Chiya bar Abba and R. Assi explained a related dispute about blemished animals mixed with others. The daf continues with a further challenge.

2. "Unblemished" means not released by an expert 25b–26a

CHALLENGE. A baraita: one who plucks wool from an unblemished firstborn, even if it later developed a blemish and he slaughtered it, the wool is forbidden. The reason is that it was unblemished; a blemished one would be permitted, even though no expert released it (against Reish Lakish).

ANSWER. It was taught: wherever an expert did not release it, it is called "unblemished." (Rashi: "although it developed a blemish" means: even if an expert later saw it and declared it permanent.)

Tosafot – ד"ה התולש צמר מבכור תם

CLARIFICATION. As the conclusion of the sugya explains, "plucks" is not precise; the same applies to wool that fell out. The baraita says "plucks" because of its latter clause, which says "plucks" to show the extent of Akavya's leniency.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The baraita's wording reflects its structure, not a distinction between plucked and fallen wool.

3. A three-way baraita: who requires an expert? 26a

THE BARAITA. One who plucks wool from an unblemished firstborn, even if it developed a blemish and he slaughtered it, it is forbidden. A blemished firstborn from which he plucked and which then died: Akavya permits, the Sages forbid. R. Yehuda said: Akavya did not permit this, but hair of a blemished firstborn that fell, he placed in a window, and then slaughtered it; there Akavya permits and the Sages forbid. R. Yosi said: my father Chalafta agrees in this case that it is permitted, but the Sages said clearly that he should place it in a window, perhaps there is hope; if he slaughtered it, all permit; if it died, Akavya permits and the Sages forbid.

Rashi – ד"ה שמא יש תקוה · ד"ה אמר רבי יוסי מודה אבא

THE ISSUE. Who is "father," and what is the "hope"?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. R. Yosi's father, named Chalafta, was one of the Sages who disagreed with Akavya, yet he agrees that if the animal was slaughtered, the hair is permitted. The Sages said clearly to put fallen hair of a blemished firstborn in a window, perhaps it will become permitted for benefit: if it is slaughtered, all permit it.

WHY IT MATTERS. The "hope" of slaughter is why the hair is kept rather than discarded.

Tosafot – ד"ה בכור בעל מום שתלש ממנו

OBSERVATION. Here the baraita does not say "he placed it in a window," because one who plucks is wicked and means to benefit immediately. With fallen hair, it says he placed it in a window.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The detail of the window marks the owner's good faith in waiting.

SUGGESTION. R. Yosi is the same as the first Tanna (both say the dispute concerns death)! Rather, the difference must be an expert's release: the first Tanna holds that only if an expert permitted it, and R. Yosi says even without an expert.

Tosafot – ד"ה דתנא קמא סבר אי התירו אין אי לא לא

QUESTION. Rashi explains that, since we answered above that "unblemished" means not released by an expert, the latter clause, which calls it "blemished," speaks without an expert's release. But that answer was given only to fit Reish Lakish with everyone. Now that we say there is a Tannaitic dispute, it is more reasonable to read the first Tanna literally.

ANSWER. The Gemara now reasons that R. Yosi's "perhaps there is hope" implies the expert had not yet released it, so R. Yosi permits even without an expert.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot locate the dispute in R. Yosi's own words rather than in the reinterpretation of "unblemished."

RAVA. No: all agree that an expert's release is required, and there are three views. The first Tanna holds they disagree about death, and the same applies to slaughter; they mention death to show the extent of Akavya's leniency. R. Yehuda holds that with death all forbid, and they disagree about slaughter. R. Yosi comes to say that with slaughter all permit, and they disagree about death.

RAV NACHMAN'S RULING. The halacha follows R. Yehuda, since the chosen Mishnah (*Bechirta*, an early name for tractate Eduyot) follows him: hair of a blemished firstborn that fell, he placed it in a window and afterward slaughtered it: Akavya permits and the Sages forbid.

RAV NACHMAN BAR YITZCHAK. Our Mishnah also implies this: "loose wool: what is visible with the fleece is permitted, what is not visible is forbidden." Whose view? If R. Yosi, regarding what? If slaughter, both Akavya and the Sages permit everything. If death, the Sages forbid everything, and Akavya would hold the opposite: visible wool forbidden (since the death forbids it) and invisible wool permitted (since it was effectively plucked earlier). Rather, it must be R. Yehuda. If death, all forbid. So it must be slaughter, and since Akavya would permit everything, it must be the Sages. This shows that they disagree about slaughter.

Rashi – ד"ה ושמע מינה בשחטו פליגי

THE ISSUE. What follows from this?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Since the Mishnah cannot be explained any other way, it follows that they disagree about slaughter; and since the Mishnah states R. Yehuda's view anonymously, the halacha follows him.

WHY IT MATTERS. An anonymous Mishnah is a strong signal of the accepted ruling.

4. R. Yannai: wool from a burnt offering 26a–26b

QUESTION. R. Yannai asked: one who plucks wool from an unblemished burnt offering, what is the law? Is there anyone who permits plucking? (Rashi: for the Sages it is certainly wicked.) Rather: wool that came off an unblemished burnt offering, what is the law?

Sin and guilt offerings need not be asked about: since they come for atonement, the owner will not delay them. The firstborn and tithe animal, since they do not come for atonement, he would delay. The question is the burnt offering: since it is not primarily for atonement, he would delay it; or perhaps, since it also atones for neglect of positive commandments, he will not delay it.

ATTEMPTED PROOF. "One who plucks wool from an unblemished firstborn … is forbidden": the reason is that he plucked; if it fell, it is permitted, and all the more a burnt offering, which he would not delay!

REJECTION. Even if it fell, it is forbidden; the baraita says "plucks" to show the extent of Akavya's leniency, that with a blemished animal he permits even plucked wool. But our Mishnah says "fell"! It says "fell" to show the extent of the Sages' strictness, and the baraita says "plucks" to show the extent of Akavya's leniency.

Tosafot – ד"ה התולש צמר מעולה תמימה

QUESTION. Some texts of Rashi set the case where the burnt offering was blemished, then redeemed and slaughtered, so that it resembles a firstborn, though the wool was plucked while it was unblemished. But wool requires its own "standing and valuation" for redemption, and redeeming the animal does not help the wool (Chullin 135a).

ANSWER. The question follows Reish Lakish's view, and the case can be explained accordingly.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot test how the question could arise in practice, given the rules of redeeming consecrated property.

5. Loose wool "not visible with the fleece" 26b

DEFINITION. What is wool not visible with the fleece? R. Elazar citing Reish Lakish: whatever has its root turned toward its head (Rashi: folded in the middle, with both ends showing). Rav Natan bar Oshaya: whatever does not get pressed down with the fleece (Rashi: it sticks up rather than lying flat).

QUESTION. Why does Reish Lakish not say as Rav Natan bar Oshaya? R. Ila'a: Reish Lakish holds that no fleece is without loose hairs (Rashi: some always stick up; if those were forbidden, no fleece would be permitted).

With this the chapter *Ha-loke'ach Behemah* ends (הדרן עלך הלוקח בהמה).

6. A new chapter: how long must an Israelite care for a firstborn? 26b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 26b)

עד כמה ישראל חייבין ליטפל בבכור? בדקה שלשים יום ובגסה חמשים יום. ר' יוסי אומר בדקה שלשה חדשים. אמר לו הכהן בתוך הזמן תנהו לי, הרי זה לא יתננו לו. ואם בעל מום הוא ואמר לו תנהו לי שאוכלנו, מותר. ובשעת המקדש, אם היה תמים, אמר לו תן ואקרבנו, מותר. הבכור נאכל שנה בשנה בין תם בין בעל מום, שנאמר לפני ה' אלהיך תאכלנו שנה בשנה. נולד לו מום בתוך שנתו רשאי לקיימו כל שנים עשר חדש, לאחר י"ב חדש אינו רשאי לקיימו אלא ל' יום.

How long must an Israelite care for a firstborn (Rashi: before giving it to the kohen)? A small animal thirty days, a large animal fifty days. R. Yosi says: a small animal three months. If the kohen said within this time, "give it to me," he should not give it to him. But if it is blemished and he said, "give it to me so that I may eat it," it is permitted; and when the Temple stands, if it was unblemished and he said, "give it to me so that I may offer it," it is permitted. The firstborn is eaten "year by year," unblemished (Rashi: when the Temple stands) or blemished (Rashi: nowadays), as it says, "before Hashem your God you shall eat it, year by year" (Devarim 15:20). If it developed a blemish within its year, he may keep it the full twelve months; after twelve months, he may keep it only thirty days.

7. The source of the waiting periods 26b

RAV KAHANA. The verse says, "the firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me; so shall you do with your flock" (Shemot 22:28–29), and "your full produce and your juice you shall not delay ... so shall you do with your ox." Rashi: just as a son's redemption is after thirty days, so a flock firstborn; and just as first fruits are brought fifty days after Pesach (with the Shavuot loaves), so a cattle firstborn.

QUESTION. Reverse it! It is more reasonable to pair the earlier with the earlier and the later with the later (Rashi: produce is first in the first verse, ox first in the second). On the contrary: pair what is adjacent with what is adjacent ("your sons" is next to "your ox").

RAVA. Rather, the verse says "you shall do": the Torah added another "doing" for your ox. **QUESTION.** Then say sixty days! **ANSWER.** The Torah handed it only to the Sages.

Rashi – ד"ה לא מסרך הכתוב אלא לחכמים

THE ISSUE. Why may the Sages set the length?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Since the Torah did not reveal the measure of the extra "doing," it certainly left it to the Sages to explain the reason, and one follows them.

WHY IT MATTERS. The fifty days rest on the Sages' interpretation of an open-ended verse.

BARAITA. So also: "the firstborn of your sons ... so shall you do with your flock"; one might think also your ox; the verse says "you shall do": it added another "doing" for your ox, and handed it only to the Sages. From here they said: thirty days for small cattle, fifty for large; R. Yosi says three months for small, because its care is great. It was taught: because its teeth are thin (Rashi: it cannot eat grass and would die without its mother).

Tosafot – ד"ה מלאתך ודמעך לא תאחר כן תעשה לשורך

QUESTION. The fifty days run from the *omer* on Pesach, when grain ripens, to Shavuot, when the two loaves permit new grain in the Temple. But that is on the fiftieth day, not after fifty, unlike "after thirty" for sons.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot note that the analogy to first fruits does not match the "after" pattern of the firstborn son exactly.

8. Why not give it to the kohen early? 26b

RAV SHESHET. Because he would look like a kohen who helps at the threshing floor.

Rashi – ד"ה שנראה ככהן המסייע בבית הגרנות

THE ISSUE. Why is taking it early like helping at a threshing floor?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Nowadays an unblemished firstborn is of no use until it develops a blemish. The Israelite must care for it fifty days. If the kohen says within that time "give it to me and I will feed it," although he gains nothing yet, it is as if he hires himself to spare the owner the trouble, on condition that the owner give it to him and not to another kohen. That resembles a kohen who helps at the threshing and winnowing so as to receive the gifts. But if it is blemished and he wants to eat it, it is of use to him, and it does not look like helping.

WHY IT MATTERS. The concern is the appearance of kohanim earning their gifts by labor, which turns a gift into a wage.

BARAITA. Kohanim, Levites and poor people who help at the shepherds' (Rashi: kohanim, for firstborns), the threshing floors (Rashi: all of them, for terumah, first tithe and poor tithe) or the slaughterhouses (Rashi: kohanim, for the foreleg, cheeks and maw) may not be given terumah and tithes as their wage. If they do, they have profaned them, and of them it says, "you have corrupted the covenant of the Levi" (Malachi 2:8), and it says, "and you shall not profane the holy things of the Children of Israel, and you shall not die" (Bamidbar 18:32). Why "and it says"? Lest you say there is no death penalty, hear: "and you shall not die."

Tosafot – ד"ה וכי תימא מיתה לא תלמוד לומר וכו'

CLARIFICATION. This is not literal: the offense is not listed in Sanhedrin 83a among those punishable by death at the hands of Heaven. It is close to a sin that carries death.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The verse expresses the gravity of the offense rather than a formal penalty.

A PENALTY CONSIDERED. The Sages wanted to penalize them (Rashi: the householders) by requiring them to separate terumah again from their own. Why did they not? Lest they come to separate from exempt produce for obligated produce.

Rashi – ד"ה מן הפטור על החיוב

THE ISSUE. How would the penalty lead to an error?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The owner might have two *se'ah*: one fully untithed, and one from which the terumah given to the helping kohen was already separated. If told to separate again as a penalty, he would think the second is fully untithed and separate from it for the first, though by Torah law it is exempt; the second separation is only a penalty.

WHY IT MATTERS. A rabbinic penalty must not cause people to misunderstand the Torah law of terumah.

Tosafot – ד"ה דלמא אתי לאפרושי מן הפטור על החיוב כו'

QUESTION. In many places the Sages require a second separation of terumah without this concern.

ANSWER. There, the first terumah is with the kohen, and the owner knows the second is rabbinic; even if he already gave it, the kohen does not return it. Here, he thinks he gave it as payment for the kohen's help, and the kohen keeps it, so he may not realize the second is only a penalty.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The risk of confusion depends on how the first separation was perceived.

9. The owner's "benefit" 26b–27a

BARAITA (CONTINUED). And in all of them there is טובת הנאה, "benefit," for the owners. How so? An Israelite who separated terumah from his pile, and another Israelite found him and said, "here is a *sela*; give it to my daughter's son, a kohen": it is permitted. If he was a kohen (offering a *sela* for it to be given to another kohen), it is forbidden.

Rashi – ד"ה טובת הנאה

THE ISSUE. Why may an Israelite pay, but not a kohen?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The owner's right to choose the recipient is a small value. If a kohen gave a *sela* so that it would go to another kohen, his relative, it is forbidden: since the terumah is fit for him, he looks like a kohen helping to get gifts.

WHY IT MATTERS. The owner may sell his right to choose, but only to someone who does not appear to be buying the gift for himself.

QUESTION. Why does the Tanna not mention the priestly gifts (the foreleg, cheeks and maw, or a firstborn)? **ANSWER.** Terumah has intrinsic sanctity; since it can never be redeemed, no one will err. These gifts have only monetary sanctity, and one might err and think their sanctity is transferred to the four *zuz*, and come to treat them as ordinary.

Rashi – ד"ה תיתחל קדושתייהו אארבעה זוזי · ד"ה דקדושת דמים נינהו

THE ISSUE. How could the grandfather's payment cause an error?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. A kohen may sell firstborn meat or the foreleg, cheeks and maw to an Israelite, who need not eat them roasted with mustard as the kohen does. So the kohen might mistakenly think that since they can be sold, their sanctity was transferred to the four *zuz* his grandfather paid, and treat them as ordinary, not eating them in the manner described in Chullin 132b. That is why the Tanna mentions only terumah.

WHY IT MATTERS. The permission is limited to terumah, where no such confusion can arise.

Tosafot – ד"ה ואתי למינהג בהו מנהג דחולין

CLARIFICATION. Priestly gifts must be eaten "for greatness," the way kings eat, roasted with mustard (Zevachim 28a), and this applies to the foreleg, cheeks and maw. No such requirement is found for terumah; perhaps "greatness" applies only to meat.

WHY THIS MATTERS. It explains what "treating them as ordinary" would mean in practice.

The Gemara's next topic, Rava's ruling that terumah from outside the Land is exempt from the helping rule, begins on 27a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 27.

The full picture in plain language

The daf first resolves a dispute about hair from a blemished firstborn. Reish Lakish's view that only an expert's release makes the dispute possible is defended by reading "unblemished" as "not yet released by an expert." Rava then shows that the Tannaim all require that release and differ only on whether the dispute concerns slaughter or death; Rav Nachman rules like R. Yehuda, that it concerns slaughter, and the Mishnah on loose wool confirms this. R. Yannai's question about a burnt offering and the definition of loose wool close the chapter.

The new chapter sets the owner's duty to care for a firstborn before giving it to a kohen: thirty or fifty days, derived from a verse whose open-ended "doing" the Torah left to the Sages. A kohen may not take it early, since that would look like earning his gifts by labor, the offense of kohanim who help at threshing floors, which the prophet calls corrupting the covenant of the Levi. The Sages refrained from penalizing owners to avoid confusing the law of terumah, and allowed owners to accept a payment for choosing the recipient of their terumah, but not of gifts whose sanctity is only monetary.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
בכור	*bekhor*	The firstborn male animal, holy and given to a kohen.
בעל מום	*ba'al mum*	A blemished animal; a blemished firstborn may be slaughtered and eaten.
תם	*tam*	Unblemished; here, also any firstborn not yet released by an expert.
מומחה	*mumcheh*	An expert who examines a blemish and permits slaughter.
גיזה ועבודה	*gizah va-avodah*	Shearing and work, forbidden with a firstborn.
שהייה	*shehiyah*	Delaying slaughter; the concern behind forbidding fallen hair.
צמר המדולדל	*tzemer ha-meduldal*	Loose wool hanging from a firstborn.
בחירתא	*Bechirta*	"The chosen": an early name for tractate Eduyot.
ליטפל	*litapel*	To care for the firstborn before giving it to the kohen.
דקה, גסה	*dakah, gasah*	Small cattle (sheep, goats) and large cattle.
שנה בשנה	*shanah be-shanah*	"Year by year": the firstborn must be eaten within its year.
כהן המסייע בבית הגרנות	*kohen ha-mesaye'a be-veit ha-granot*	A kohen who helps at the threshing floor to receive gifts.
ברית הלוי	*berit ha-Levi*	The covenant of the Levi, "corrupted" by kohanim who earn their gifts.
מן הפטור על החיוב	*min ha-patur al ha-chiyuv*	Separating from exempt produce for obligated produce; invalid.
טובת הנאה	*tovat hana'ah*	The owner's small benefit: the right to choose which kohen receives the gift.
קדושת הגוף, קדושת דמים	*kedushat ha-guf, kedushat damim*	Intrinsic sanctity, versus sanctity of value that can pass to money.
זרוע, לחיים, קיבה	*zero'a, lechayayim, keivah*	The foreleg, cheeks and maw, priestly gifts from slaughtered animals.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.