# Bekhorot 31

Daf Yomi · Monday, October 19, 2026 · ח׳ חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 31a (examining one's own firstborns) through 32a (blending the price into the bones)

## Summary

Bekhorot 31 completes the chapter *Ad Kamah* with a baraita on whose blemishes an expert may rule on. A person may examine all firstborns except his own, may examine his own sacrifices and animal tithe, and may decide questions about his own pure food. The Gemara explains that the baraita speaks of a single expert, and that in each permitted case he has no reason to lie: he could have dissolved the consecration of his sacrifices, could have blemished his whole flock before tithing it, and may eat impure ordinary food in his own days of impurity anyway.

The fifth chapter, *Kol Pesulei ha-Mukdashin*, opens with a Mishnah: disqualified consecrated animals, whose profit goes to the Temple, are sold, slaughtered and weighed in the market like ordinary meat. A firstborn and animal tithe, whose profit goes to their owners, are not, though one may weigh firstborn meat against a portion of ordinary meat. The Gemara explains that the Temple benefits when the animal is first redeemed, since the buyer will pay more if he may sell the meat in the market.

The Gemara then asks how animal tithe may be sold at all, given a baraita that it may not be sold alive or slaughtered. Rav Sheshet answered that the Mishnah speaks of orphans' tithe, which the Sages allowed to prevent a loss. When his attendant repeated this without crediting him, Rav Sheshet was upset, since a scholar whose teaching is quoted in his name has lips that move in the grave. Abaye and Rava interpret the baraita about orphans differently. Rava proves from a verse that the Torah forbids selling tithe only while it is alive. The daf ends with Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak's support for Rava, and a question about blending the meat's price into the bones.

# Detailed Summary

## 1. Examining one's own firstborns 31a

The first lines of 31a complete the baraitot on the chaver who backslides and the chaver who became a tax collector (summary of Bekhorot 30). The Gemara now returns to the examination of firstborns.

**BARAITA.** A person may examine all firstborns except his own (Rashi: a kohen may not examine a blemish on his own firstborns and release them). He may examine his own sacrifices and his own tithe, and he may be asked about his own pure food.

**QUESTION.** What case is this? If one expert, is a single person trusted (Rashi: a Mishnah on 36b requires three people of the synagogue)? If three (Rashi: with the owner one of them), are they suspected? The Mishnah says that if a woman refused or performed *chalitzah* before him, he may marry her, because it was a court (Rashi: three were present).

**ANSWER.** In fact it is one, as Rav Chisda said citing R. Yochanan: with a single expert. Here too it speaks of a single expert.

**HIS OWN SACRIFICES.** Because if he wanted, he could have them annulled (Rashi: he could ask a Sage to annul the consecration as a mistake; a firstborn is holy from the womb and cannot be annulled).

**HIS OWN TITHE.** Because if he wanted, he could have put a blemish on his whole flock (Rashi: before tithing, when they are not yet holy; tithe takes effect even on blemished animals).

**HIS OWN PURE FOOD.** Because it is fit for him in his days of impurity (Rashi: he would lose nothing by declaring it impure; this speaks of ordinary food, since impure terumah is not fit for him even then).

**Tosafot – ד"ה דהא חזו ליה בימי טומאתו**

**QUESTION.** What about impure terumah, which is not fit for him? Is he then not trusted? And the same for every other question of permitted and forbidden. Eruvin 63a says explicitly that a young scholar may rule for himself.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** Tosafot question whether the Gemara's reason limits a scholar's ruling for himself, given the general rule that he may decide his own questions.

With this the chapter *Ad Kamah* ends (הדרן עלך עד כמה ישראל חייבין).

## 2. A new chapter: selling disqualified sacrifices 31a

**MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 31a)**

כל פסולי המוקדשין הנאתן להקדש, נמכרין באיטליז ונשחטין באיטליז ונשקלין בליטרא, חוץ מן הבכור והמעשר שהנייתן לבעלים. פסולי המוקדשין הנייתן להקדש, ושוקלין מנה כנגד מנה בבכור.

All disqualified consecrated animals (Rashi: sacrifices that became blemished): their profit goes to the Temple, so they are sold in the market, slaughtered in the market and weighed by the *litra* (Rashi: as butchers sell ordinary meat), except for the firstborn and the tithe, whose profit goes to their owners. Disqualified consecrated animals: their profit goes to the Temple. And one may weigh portion against portion with a firstborn.

**Rashi – ד"ה ושוקלין מנה כנגד מנה בבכור · ד"ה הנאתן לבעלים**

**THE ISSUE.** Why may a firstborn and tithe not be sold in the market, and what is the last clause?

**RASHI'S EXPLANATION.** The profit of a firstborn goes to the kohen, who may sell its meat to anyone, since it is eaten by all; the profit of tithe goes to its Israelite owner. For the sake of private gain we do not degrade sacred things by treating them like ordinary meat. So they are sold at home, even if fewer buyers come, and are not weighed by the litra but estimated, and if he loses, so be it. "Portion against portion": if he has a piece of ordinary meat already weighed by the litra, he may weigh firstborn meat against it.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** The Temple's gain justifies market methods for other sacrifices, but private gain does not.

**Tosafot – ד"ה מתני' חוץ מן הבכור והמעשר שהנאתן לבעלים**

**OBSERVATION.** Although the Mishnah gives the reason that the profit is the owners', the rule must be Torah law, as Temurah 8a and Sanhedrin 112b show: they derive that firstborn and tithe are excluded from "your animals" because they are not eaten like your animals, citing this Mishnah. Perhaps it comes from a verse that one may not treat with disrespect something whose profit is not the Temple's.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** The restriction is rooted in the Torah, not only in a rabbinic concern.

## 3. How does the Temple profit? 31b

**QUESTION.** When does the Temple profit? If after redemption, the profit is the owner's. If before redemption, can it be slaughtered (Rashi: and then sold as ordinary)? It requires standing and valuation (Rashi: a consecrated animal can only be redeemed alive). This works for the view that altar sacrifices were not included in standing and valuation, but not for the view that they were.

**ANSWER.** In fact after redemption, and "the profit goes to the Temple" refers to the original redemption. Since the Sages permit him to sell, slaughter and weigh it in the market, he will pay more to redeem it at the start.

## 4. May animal tithe be sold? 31b

**QUESTION.** Granted that a firstborn may not be sold in the market but may be sold at home. But may tithe be sold even at home? A baraita says: of the firstborn it says "you shall not redeem" (Bamidbar 18:17), but it is sold; of the tithe it says "it shall not be redeemed" (Vayikra 27:33), and it is not sold, neither alive nor slaughtered, neither unblemished nor blemished.

**RAV SHESHET.** This question troubled Rav Sheshet in the evening, and he answered it in the morning from a baraita: we are dealing with orphans' animal tithe, and the Sages touched it (Rashi: permitted it) to prevent a loss (Rashi: they cannot eat it all, and it would rot).

**Rashi – ד"ה ושנייה בקדמותא מברייתא**

**THE ISSUE.** What does Rav Sheshet's answer mean?

**RASHI'S EXPLANATION.** He resolved it at dawn from a baraita, which the Gemara will quote below: our Mishnah speaks of orphans' animal tithe.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** The answer rests on a source, which the Gemara will identify shortly.

**Tosafot – ד"ה במעשר בהמה של יתומים כו'**

**OBSERVATION.** Even according to Rava, who permits an adult's tithe by blending (below), Rav Sheshet had to set the Mishnah in orphans' tithe. He understood the Mishnah as permitting sale without blending, like disqualified sacrifices in the market.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** Only orphans may sell outright; blending would not explain the Mishnah.

**QUOTING IN HIS NAME.** R. Idi, Rav Sheshet's attendant, heard it from him and said it in the study hall without crediting him. Rav Sheshet heard and was upset, saying: "Whoever stung me, let a scorpion sting him" (Rashi: a ban). Why did it matter to him? Rav Yehuda citing Rav: what is meant by "I will dwell in Your tent in both worlds" (Tehillim 61:5)? Can a person dwell in two worlds? Rather, David said: Master of the world, may a teaching be said in my name in this world. For R. Yochanan said citing R. Shimon b. Yochai: any Torah scholar whose teaching is said in his name in this world, his lips move in the grave. R. Yitzchak b. Zeiri: the verse is "and your palate is like good wine… making the lips of sleepers move" (Shir HaShirim 7:10), like a heap of grapes that seeps once a person touches it.

**Rashi – ד"ה כומר ענבים · ד"ה דובבות**

**THE ISSUE.** What is the image?

**RASHI'S EXPLANATION.** "Move": his lips move, and it is a pleasure for him, since he resembles one alive. A heap of grapes is collected in one vessel for seven or eight days so that they press and ripen.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** Quoting a scholar by name gives him a kind of life after death.

## 5. Orphans' tithe and blending 31b

**THE BARAITA.** What is the baraita? Orphans' animal tithe may be sold; and animal tithe that was slaughtered, he blends it into its hide, fat, sinews and horns.

**Rashi – ד"ה מבליעו בחלבו**

**THE ISSUE.** What is blending?

**RASHI'S EXPLANATION.** He may not sell the meat, but he sells the fat, hide and sinews at the price of the whole animal and gives the meat as a gift.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** This is the method the rest of the sugya discusses.

**Tosafot – ד"ה מבליעו בחלבו**

**INFERENCE.** Even according to the view below (32b) that one may not count a gentile in a first-born's group, its fat at least is permitted to him, as it is considered like the hide, since it is forbidden to Jews. Perhaps the fat of the sinew, which is not forbidden by Torah law, is forbidden. But the halacha follows R. Akiva, who permits even the meat to a gentile, as explained below.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** Fat may be sold to a gentile, which is what makes blending possible.

**ABAYE.** What does the baraita mean? Abaye: orphans' tithe may be sold by blending. That implies an adult may not even blend. How is this different from the baraita: one who buys a lulav from his fellow in the Sabbatical year gives him the etrog as a gift, since he may not buy it in the Sabbatical year; and if he would not give it as a gift, Rav Huna said he blends the price of the etrog into the lulav? There it is not evident; here it is evident (Rashi: everyone knows a hide is not sold for so much).

**RAVA.** If so, why mention animal tithe twice? Rather, Rava: orphans' tithe is sold in the normal way, and an adult's tithe that was slaughtered is blended into its hide, fat, sinews and horns.

**Tosafot – ד"ה אם כן מעשר בהמה מעשר בהמה תרי זימני ל"ל**

**QUESTION.** In several places the Gemara objects to a repeated phrase like this (Bava Metzia 2a, Nedarim 4b, Sanhedrin 3a and 8a, Moed Katan 22b, Bava Batra 104a). But in many others it does not object, saying "it is explaining" (Chullin 16b, 98a and 113a, Bava Kamma 98b, Gittin 42b).

**ANSWER.** In the places where the Gemara asks why it is said twice, it is not as reasonable to say that the second phrase is explaining the first as in the places where it does not ask.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** Whether repetition is a problem depends on whether the second phrase can be read as an explanation.

## 6. Rava's proof: not sold while alive 31b–32a

**THE VERSE.** Rava: from where do I say this? It says: "Then it and its substitute shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed" (Vayikra 27:33). When does one make a substitute? While it is alive. When is it not redeemed (Rashi: sold)? While it is alive. Then after slaughter it may be redeemed. And the Sages (who forbade selling it slaughtered)? They decreed after slaughter on account of before slaughter.

**WHICH PARTS.** Something that is valued while alive (Rashi: the meat, which is the whole value of the animal), the Sages decreed after slaughter on account of before slaughter. Something that is not valued while alive (Rashi: the hide and sinews), the Sages did not decree; and for orphans, the Sages left it at Torah law.

**Rashi – ד"ה והיה הוא ותמורתו**

**THE ISSUE.** How does the verse limit the prohibition?

**RASHI'S EXPLANATION.** This is written about animal tithe, and from "it shall not be redeemed" we learn that it is not sold. So the verse forbids selling only in a way parallel to making a substitute, which is only while it is alive.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** Selling slaughtered tithe is a rabbinic prohibition, which is why orphans may sell it outright.

**RAV SHMUEL B. RAV YITZCHAK.** He too holds like Rava: from where that orphans' animal tithe is sold in the normal way? It says, "But with all your desire you may slaughter and eat meat" (Devarim 12:15). What has no blessing (Rashi: no benefit) while alive, but only after slaughter? Animal tithe (Rashi: it may not be sold alive; the "blessing" after slaughter is a sale).

**Tosafot – ד"ה ואף רב שמואל בר רב יצחק סבר לה להא דרבא**

**CLARIFICATION.** He agrees with Rava's conclusion from a different verse, not from Rava's reasoning.

**WHY THIS MATTERS.** Two separate sources support the same law.

**THE BONES.** They asked: may he blend it into the bones? R. Chiya and R. Shimon b. Rebbi: one said he may, one said he may not. They do not disagree: one speaks of a small animal (Rashi: its bones are worthless), one of a large animal (Rashi: its bones are used for carpenters' and builders' tool handles). Or both speak of a large animal, and each followed his own region (Rashi: in one place tools were made from bones, in the other not).

The baraita's derivation that tithe may not be sold, from "it shall not be redeemed," is analyzed next on 32a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 32.

# The full picture in plain language

The chapter *Ad Kamah* closes with the logic of self-interest: an expert may not release his own firstborn, but may rule on his own sacrifices, tithe and purity questions, since in each case he could have reached the same result legitimately and has no reason to lie.

The new chapter deals with how disqualified sacrifices are sold. When the Temple benefits, the Sages allow market methods so that the animal is redeemed at a higher price. When only the owner benefits, as with a firstborn or tithe, sacred meat is not treated like ordinary meat. Animal tithe is further restricted: the Torah forbids selling it alive, and the Sages extended this to after slaughter. For orphans, they left it at Torah law; for others, Rava permits selling the hide and fat at the full price and giving the meat as a gift. Along the way, Rav Sheshet's reaction to being quoted without credit teaches the value of saying a teaching in the name of its author.

# Glossary

| Hebrew | Transliteration | Meaning in this sugya |
|---|---|---|
| יחיד מומחה | *yachid mumcheh* | A single expert authorized to rule on blemishes. |
| פסולי המוקדשין | *pesulei ha-mukdashin* | Sacrifices disqualified by a blemish and redeemed. |
| איטליז | *itliz* | The meat market, where prices are higher. |
| ליטרא | *litra* | A unit of weight used by butchers. |
| העמדה והערכה | *ha'amadah ve-ha'arakhah* | Standing and valuation: redemption of a live consecrated animal. |
| מעשר בהמה | *ma'aser behemah* | Animal tithe, every tenth animal of the flock. |
| השבת אבידה | *hashavat avedah* | Preventing loss; the reason for the orphans' leniency. |
| הבלעה | *hav'la'ah* | Blending the price of the meat into the hide and fat. |
| דובבות | *dovevot* | "Moving": the lips of a scholar quoted by name. |

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.