Bekhorot 34

Daf Yomi · Thursday, October 22, 2026 · י״א חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 33b (Mishnah on a firstborn seized by blood) through 35a (penalizing the heir)

Summary

Bekhorot 34 deals with a firstborn suffering from excess blood. R. Yehuda forbids letting its blood even if it will die. The Sages permit it as long as no blemish is made, and if one is made, the animal may not be slaughtered on that blemish. R. Shimon permits bloodletting even though it makes a blemish. A baraita adds R. Meir's view and R. Shimon's ruling that it may even be slaughtered on that blemish. A proposal to match these positions to the Tannaitic dispute about a barrel of terumah with doubtful impurity is rejected. Each dispute rests on its own verses: whether "any blemish shall not be in it" forbids blemishing an animal that is already blemished, and whether "the guarding of My terumah" covers terumah of doubtful status. Shmuel rules like R. Shimon of the baraita.

The next Mishnah concerns one who slits the ear of a firstborn: R. Eliezer says it may never be slaughtered, and the Sages say it may be slaughtered when another blemish appears. The Gemara contrasts R. Eliezer's ruling on one who deliberately cuts off a leprous spot, whom he allows to be purified through a later plague. Rabbah and Rav Yosef answer that the Sages penalize a person's property but not his body. Rava explains that each penalty targets exactly what the person did. Rav Pappa leaves unresolved a question about the exact wording, which matters for a groom.

The daf ends with R. Yirmeya's question whether the penalty passes to the heir of one who slit the firstborn's ear. R. Zeira resolves it from a field improved in the Sabbatical year: the penalty falls on the person, not his son. Abaye adds that one who made another's pure food impure and died does not leave his son liable, since invisible damage is not damage under Torah law and the rabbinic penalty was imposed on him alone.

Detailed Summary

1. Mishnah: a firstborn seized by blood 33b

The first lines of 33b complete the discussion of skinning sacred animals whole (summary of Bekhorot 33).

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 33b)

בכור שאחזו דם, אפי' מת אין מקיזין לו דם, דברי רבי יהודה. וחכ"א יקיז ובלבד שלא יעשה בו מום, ואם עשה בו מום הרי זה לא ישחט עליו. ר"ש אומר יקיז אע"פ שהוא עושה בו מום.

A firstborn seized by blood (Rashi: congestion): even if it will die (Rashi: without bloodletting), one may not let its blood, says R. Yehuda. The Sages say: he may let blood, provided he does not make a blemish (Rashi: he must not cut or nick the ear or lip, which would not heal). If he made a blemish, it may not be slaughtered on it (Rashi: until another blemish arises). R. Shimon says: he may let blood even though he makes a blemish (Rashi: an unintended act is permitted).

Rashi – ד"ה אין מקיזין לו את הדם

THE ISSUE. Why does R. Yehuda forbid even where no blemish results?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Even in a place where no blemish is made, since the wound can heal, he forbids it. As explained in Pesachim, a person is anxious about his property: if you allow it where no blemish is made, he will come to do it where a blemish is made.

WHY IT MATTERS. R. Yehuda's view is a protective decree.

BARAITA. A firstborn seized by blood: blood is let in a place where no blemish is made, but not in a place where a blemish is made, says R. Meir. The Sages say: even in a place where a blemish is made (Rashi: if he must let blood from that limb rather than let it die), provided it is not slaughtered on that blemish. R. Shimon says: it may even be slaughtered on that blemish. R. Yehuda says: even if it will die, blood is not let.

2. Compared to the barrel of terumah 33b

THE PARALLEL. R. Elazar taught his son, or some say R. Chiya taught his son: as is the dispute here, so is the dispute about a barrel of terumah. The Mishnah teaches: a barrel of terumah that became doubtfully impure: R. Eliezer says, if it was in an exposed place (Rashi: unguarded), he moves it to a protected place; if uncovered, he covers it. R. Yehoshua says: if it was in a protected place, he moves it to an exposed place; if covered, he uncovers it (Rashi: it is now fit neither for eating nor for burning, so he lets it become impure and usable as fuel). Rabban Gamliel says: he does nothing new with it.

THE MATCHING. R. Meir follows R. Eliezer (Rashi: preserve, don't damage), the Sages follow R. Yehoshua (Rashi: allow a blemish so it becomes fit to eat), and R. Yehuda follows Rabban Gamliel.

REJECTED. Perhaps R. Meir holds his view only here, where he acts directly (Rashi: putting a blemish on it), but there, where he merely causes impurity, he holds like R. Yehoshua. Perhaps R. Eliezer says his view only there, since Eliyahu may come and declare it pure (Rashi: that no impurity touched it), but here, where it would die if left, he holds like the Sages. The same reasoning applies in reverse to the Sages, R. Yehuda and Rabban Gamliel.

3. Each dispute rests on verses 33b–34a

ALL AGREE. R. Chiya b. Abba citing R. Yochanan: all agree that one who leavens a meal offering after another person leavened it is liable, as it says, "it shall not be baked leavened" (Vayikra 6:10). And one who castrates after another is liable, as it says, "bruised, crushed, torn or cut" (Vayikra 22:24): if one is liable for cutting, surely for tearing out! Rather, it includes tearing out after another cut (Rashi: one cut the testicles while they remained in the sac, another removed them).

THE DISPUTE. They disagree only about one who blemishes an already blemished animal (Rashi: like this firstborn seized by blood). R. Meir holds: "there shall be no blemish in it" (Vayikra 22:21) (Rashi: "any" includes even a blemished animal). The Sages hold: "it shall be unblemished to be accepted" (Rashi: only an unblemished animal fit for acceptance may not be blemished).

R. MEIR'S USE. What does R. Meir do with "unblemished to be accepted"? To exclude an animal blemished from the start. That is obvious; it is a mere palm tree! Rather, to exclude disqualified sacrifices after redemption: one might think that since they are forbidden in shearing and work, they are also forbidden to be blemished (Rashi: blemished further). The verse teaches otherwise.

THE SAGES' USE. What do the Sages do with "any blemish"? It comes to forbid causing a blemish indirectly. A baraita teaches: "a blemish shall not be in it": I know only that he may not put a blemish on it. From where that he may not put a fig cake or dough on its ear so that a dog will come and eat it? The verse says "any blemish."

Tosafot – ד"ה בעל מום מעיקרו פשיטא דיקלא בעלמא הוא

QUESTION. Why not say the verse is needed for a firstborn, which has bodily holiness and no redemption?

ANSWER. The Gemara prefers to find a need that applies to all sacrifices. It could also have said the verse is needed for our time, when one who blemishes even an unblemished animal does not violate the prohibition (Avodah Zarah 13b), but it found a need even in Temple times.

THE RULING. We rule like R. Shimon of the baraita, who permits blemishing a blemished animal. That does not contradict Avodah Zarah, where Rava forbade cutting the hooves of a sacred animal in our time because it looks like blemishing a sacred animal: blemishing a blemished animal is

permitted by Torah law but forbidden rabbinically, and here it is allowed only because of the bloodletting.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The leniency is limited to a medical need.

Tosafot – ד"ה אחד מום ואחד כל מום

OBSERVATION. Even Tannaim who do not usually expound the word "any" (Pesachim 43b) may expound it here, where there is a reason to.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The derivation does not depend on one particular method of interpretation.

THE TERUMAH VERSE. There too they dispute about verses. Rav Yehuda citing Shmuel, and so said Reish Lakish, and so said Rav Nachman citing Rabbah bar Avuha: "And I, behold, I have given you the guarding of My terumot" (Bamidbar 18:8). R. Eliezer holds the verse speaks of two terumot, pure terumah and suspended terumah, and the Torah says to guard it (Rashi: "guarding"). R. Yehoshua: "My terumah" is written (in the singular).

A CONTRADICTION. So R. Eliezer holds that the way a word is read is authoritative? But a baraita contradicts this: "when he betrayed her" (Shemot 21:8): once (the master) spread his cloak over her (Rashi: married her), the father may no longer sell her, says R. Akiva. R. Eliezer says: once he betrayed her (Rashi: by selling her as a maidservant), he may not sell her again.

RESOLUTION. Rather, they dispute this: R. Yehoshua holds you guard what is fit for you, and not what is unfit. R. Eliezer holds that this too is fit, since perhaps Eliyahu will come and declare it pure.

Tosafot – ד"ה ורמינהי בבגדו בה כו'

THE TEXT. Rashi reads the baraita as above, citing the Mekhilta, and explains (Kiddushin 18b) that R. Eliezer reads the written spelling, which suggests "betrayal."

RABBEINU TAM. Most old books reverse the names here and in Kiddushin. In Rashi's version R. Akiva is placed before R. Eliezer, his teacher; the baraita repeats the word twice; and the spelling without a *yud* actually suggests "garment" more than "betrayal." So Rabbeinu Tam reads "once he spread his cloak" as R. Eliezer's view and "once he betrayed" as R. Akiva's, and says the scribe of the Mekhilta skipped R. Eliezer's words.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The question of which Tanna follows the written form depends on this textual dispute.

4. Shmuel rules like R. Shimon 34a

THE RULING. Rav Yehuda citing Shmuel: the halacha follows R. Shimon. Rav Nachman b. Yitzchak objected: which R. Shimon? If R. Shimon of the Mishnah, has Shmuel not already taught that an unintended act is permitted? R. Chiya b. Ashi said citing Rav: the halacha follows R. Yehuda (Rashi: on unintended acts, Shabbat 22a); Rav Chanin b. Ashi said citing Shmuel: the halacha follows R. Shimon; and R. Chiya b. Avin taught it without names: Rav said like R. Yehuda, Shmuel like R. Shimon.

ANSWER. Rather, R. Shimon of the baraita (Rashi: it may be slaughtered on that blemish, since he did it not to permit it but to keep it alive, so we do not penalize him). Rav Shisha b. Rav Idi taught it explicitly: Rav Yehuda citing Shmuel: the halacha follows R. Shimon of the baraita.

Tosafot – ד"ה אילימא ר"ש דמתני' עד השתא לא אשמעינן שמואל דבר שאין מתכוין מותר

QUESTION. Does R. Shimon permit only because the act is unintended? He permits even where a blemish is certain, which is intentional, because he holds one may blemish an already blemished animal, as derived from the verses.

TOSAFOT'S EXPLANATION. There are two disputes. The baraita speaks of an animal so congested that it cannot heal without bloodletting and would die; it therefore counts as blemished, and the dispute is about blemishing a blemished animal: R. Meir forbids, the Sages permit but forbid slaughter on that blemish as a decree, R. Shimon permits slaughter too, and R. Yehuda forbids even where no blemish results. The Mishnah is a different dispute about an animal that would not die: the Sages require care so that a blemish does not result, since they hold an unintended act is forbidden, and R. Shimon permits since an unintended act is permitted. The Mishnah's wording supports this, since it does not mention a place where a blemish is made.

WHY THIS MATTERS. It explains why Shmuel's ruling on R. Shimon of the Mishnah would be redundant, while his ruling on R. Shimon of the baraita adds something.

5. Mishnah: slitting a firstborn's ear 34a

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 34a)

הצורם אוזן בבכור הרי זה לא ישחוט עולמית, דברי רבי אליעזר. וחכמים אומרים נולד בו מום אחר ישחוט עליו.

One who slits the ear of a firstborn (Rashi: a kohen) may never slaughter it, says R. Eliezer. The Sages say: if another blemish arises, he may slaughter it on that one.

CONTRADICTION. Does R. Eliezer penalize forever? A Mishnah teaches: one who had a white spot (*baheret*) that was cut off (Rashi: unintentionally) is pure. If he cut it intentionally, R. Eliezer says: when another plague arises, he is purified from it (Rashi: if he heals from the new one, he is pure from both). The Sages say: not until it spreads over his whole body, or unless the spot was less than a bean's size (Rashi: before he cut it; otherwise he is never purified).

Tosafot – ד"ה עד שתפרח בכולו

THE TEXT. All the books read "or until his spot is less than a bean," though it is absent in tractate Nega'im, as Rashi notes.

EXPLANATION. If the phrase is read, it means he cut it so that it became the size of a bean, and the remainder healed partly on its own, so that even with the cut part it would not have been a full bean's size.

WHY THIS MATTERS. It explains why the Sages allow purification in that case.

RABBAH AND RAV YOSEF. Both said: R. Eliezer penalizes his property, not his body. With property one can say he will come to do it (Rashi: he thinks, if they permit it, I gained; if not, I lose nothing, since I would have waited for a blemish anyway). With his body, can one say he will come to do it (Rashi: he would not risk staying impure forever)?

RAVA. R. Eliezer against R. Eliezer is difficult, but the Sages against the Sages is not? Rather, neither is difficult, as we explained; and the Sages are not contradictory: in each case they penalize what he did. With the firstborn, he meant to permit it through this blemish, so the Sages ruled it is not permitted by this blemish. With the spot, he meant to purify himself by this cutting, so the Sages ruled he is not purified by this cutting (Rashi: so the plague is considered still present).

Tosafot – ד"ה ומי קניס ר"א לעולם ורמינהי מי שהיתה לו

OBSERVATION. Many sources show that the rule for slitting a firstborn's ear is a penalty. By Torah law the animal is blemished and permitted, and the man is pure since he has no plague.

QUESTION. The Sifrei teaches in R. Eliezer's name that one who blemishes a firstborn and eats it violates "you shall not eat any abomination," implying a Torah prohibition.

ANSWER. The Sages here clearly treat it as a penalty, following those who apply that verse to disqualified sacrifices or meat and milk. Alternatively, the Sifrei is only an *asmakhta*, a scriptural support for a rabbinic rule.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The penalty is rabbinic, which shapes the questions that follow.

6. "He is purified" or "and he is purified"? 34b

RAV PAPPA'S QUESTION. Did we learn "he is purified" (Rashi: as soon as the new plague arises, he is pure from the first) or "and he is purified" (Rashi: only after he is purified from the new one)?

THE DIFFERENCE. A groom on whom a plague appeared: the Mishnah teaches that he is given seven days (Rashi: the kohen does not examine him, and without the kohen's ruling he is not impure), for himself, his robe and his garment; likewise on a festival, all the days of the festival. If we learned "he is purified," he is pure from the first plague, and for the second we wait the seven days of feasting. If "and he is purified," then even if the second plague is not ruled impure, he remains impure from the first. The question is left unresolved (*teiku*).

Tosafot – ד"ה מקמייתא טהר לי' לבתרייתא נטרי' ליה ז' ימי המשתה

QUESTION. But he still needs shaving and birds, and is forbidden in marital relations during his counting days.

ANSWER. This speaks of one who was only quarantined. Alternatively, even if confirmed, while impure rabbinically after cutting he may shave, bring birds and count, becoming pure by Torah law, though he cannot bring his atonement offering while still rabbinically impure.

WHY THIS MATTERS. It explains how the groom benefits from being purified from the first plague.

7. Does the penalty pass to the heir? 34b–35a

R. YIRMEYA'S QUESTION. R. Yirmeya asked R. Zeira: one who slit the ear of a firstborn and died, do we penalize his son after him (Rashi: so that he may never eat it)? Even if you say that one who sold his slave to a gentile and died, his son is penalized, since every day the slave is deprived of mitzvot; and even if you say that one who scheduled his work for the festival and died, his son is not penalized, since he did not commit a violation (Rashi: he died before the festival); what about here? Do the Sages penalize him, and he is gone, or his property, and it is here?

R. ZEIRA'S ANSWER. You learned it: a field cleared of thorns (Rashi: loose ones) in the Sabbatical year may be sown after the Sabbatical year. If it was improved (Rashi: manured by carts) or used as a pen for animals, it may not be sown after the Sabbatical year. R. Assi b. R. Chanina said: we hold that if he improved it and died, his son may sow it. So the Sages penalized him, not his son.

Tosafot – ד"ה הטיבה ומת בנו זורעה

QUESTION. If this improvement is rabbinic, how can it resolve slitting a firstborn's ear, which is a Torah prohibition? If it is Torah law, why does Gittin 44b not say the slave case is different because of the loss of mitzvot?

ANSWER. The Gemara holds that the Sabbatical year deserves more stringency than all of them, as it says in Kiddushin 20a, "how severe is even the dust of the Sabbatical year."

WHY THIS MATTERS. If the son is spared even in the Sabbatical year case, he is surely spared in the others.

ABAYE. We hold: one who made another's pure food impure and died, his son is not penalized (Rashi: to pay). Why? Damage that is not visible (Rashi: the food lies there unchanged) is not damage (Rashi: under Torah law). It is a rabbinic penalty, and the Sages penalized him, not his son.

The next Mishnah, on the gentile official who slit the ear of a firstborn, begins on 35a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 35.

The full picture in plain language

The first half of the daf asks whether one may treat a firstborn suffering from excess blood if the treatment will blemish it. The positions range from R. Yehuda, who forbids all bloodletting lest it lead to deliberate blemishing, to R. Shimon, who permits it and even allows slaughter on the resulting blemish, and Shmuel rules like R. Shimon. These are not the same as the views on a barrel of terumah of doubtful purity. Each dispute rests on its own verse: whether the ban on blemishing covers an animal already blemished, and whether terumah of doubtful status must be guarded.

The second half deals with deliberate blemishing. R. Eliezer forbids the firstborn forever, while the Sages wait for a new blemish. The contrast with a cut-off leprous spot shows that the Sages penalize the very act a person used to gain an advantage, and that R. Eliezer penalizes property, not the body. The penalty stays with the wrongdoer, as shown by the Sabbatical field and by pure food made impure: his son is not penalized.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
שאחזו דם	*she-achazo dam*	Seized by blood: congestion that may kill the animal.
מקיזין	*makizin*	Letting blood.
דבר שאין מתכוין	*davar she-eino mitkaven*	An unintended result of a permitted act.
מטיל מום בבעל מום	*matil mum be-ba'al mum*	Blemishing an animal that is already blemished.
תרומה תלויה	*terumah teluyah*	Terumah of doubtful purity, neither eaten nor burned.
מקום התורפה	*mekom ha-turpah*	An exposed, unguarded place.
הצורם	*ha-tzorem*	One who slits or nicks an animal's ear.
בהרת	*baheret*	A white leprous spot.
קנס	*kenas*	A rabbinic penalty.
היזק שאינו ניכר	*hezek she-eino nikar*	Damage that is not visible, not damage under Torah law.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.