Bekhorot 38

Daf Yomi · Monday, October 26, 2026 · ט״ו חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 38a (Mishnah on blemishes of the eye) through 39a (Pinchas's question to Shmuel)

Summary

Bekhorot 38 lists blemishes of the eye. An eyelid that is pierced, nicked or split is a blemish, as are several growths and defects in the eye itself. A white line that crosses the ring and enters the black is a blemish, but black entering the white is not, since there are no blemishes in the white. The Gemara reconciles two baraitot on a film that is sunken or floating: for a black film, sunken is a blemish; for a white film, floating is a blemish. It reports R. Shimon b. Yose Lakunya's ruling that a *chilazon* in the eye is a permanent blemish, the same as the *nachash* mentioned by the Sages, and explains why his ruling about his own animal was accepted. The Mishnah follows R. Yose, who learns from a verse that the white of the eye is not called "eye."

The next Mishnah addresses white spots and tearing eyes, which are blemishes only when permanent. White spots must last eighty days, and R. Chanina b. Antigonus requires three examinations within that time. Tearing is tested by feeding the animal moist and then dry fodder from rain-watered fields. The Gemara attributes the Mishnah to R. Yehuda, fills in its wording, and defines the seasons of moist and dry fodder. The Sages of the Land of Israel raise a chain of unresolved questions about how the treatment must be given. The daf ends with Shmuel's surprise at a question from his brother Pinchas: if the treatment fails, is the blemish permanent from the start or only from then on?

Detailed Summary

1. Mishnah: blemishes of the eye 38a

The preceding lines of 38a complete the discussion of the drill and the sela in the skull (summary of Bekhorot 37).

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 38a)

הריס של עין שניקב, שנפגם, שנסדק. הרי בעינו דק, תבלול, חלזון, נחש, עצב. איזהו תבלול, לבן הפוסק בסירא ונכנס בשחור. שחור נכנס בלבן אינו מום.

An eyelid that was pierced, nicked or split; if there is in its eye a film, a *teballul*, a *chilazon*, a *nachash* or an *enav* (Rashi: growths and diseases of the eye). What is a teballul? White that cuts through the ring (Rashi: the circle around the black, the pupil from which sight comes) and enters the black. Black entering the white is not a blemish (Rashi: the white is not the eye proper, but its fat).

THE EYELID. What is the *ris*? Rav Pappa: the outer row of the eye (Rashi: the lid that covers the eye).

THE FILM. A baraita: a film that is sunken is a blemish; floating, it is not. Another baraita teaches the reverse. One speaks of the black and one of the white? But there are no blemishes in the white! Rather, one speaks of a white film and one of a black film. Rabbah bar bar Chana said: Yoshiyah of Usha told me, a black film that is sunken is a blemish, floating is not; a white film that is sunken is not a blemish, floating is a blemish. A mnemonic: *barka* (Rashi: a white, floating growth, which is a blemish).

Tosafot – ד"ה וסימניך ברקא

QUESTION. This implies *barka* is a permanent blemish, but Gittin 69a lists remedies for it, and Shabbat 78a speaks of applying salve to it.

ANSWER. Those remedies apply before it becomes established. Alternatively, a blemish that does not heal on its own counts, even if a full cure could remove it; the feeding test below for tearing eyes is an examination, not a true cure.

WHY THIS MATTERS. A blemish can be permanent even if medicine might remove it.

2. Chilazon and nachash 38b

THE QUESTION. They asked: is *chilazon* the same as *nachash*, or are they two different blemishes?

THE STORY. Come and hear: Rabbah bar bar Chana said: R. Yochanan b. Elazar told me, there was an old man in our neighborhood (Rashi: a kohen), R. Shimon b. Yose Lakunya, and I never passed before him (Rashi: he was the leader of the generation). Once I passed before him, and he said: sit, my son, sit. This chilazon (Rashi: in the eye of his own firstborn) is a permanent blemish on which to slaughter, and this is the nachash the Sages spoke of.

HIS OWN ANIMAL. Although they said that a person may not examine blemishes for himself, he may teach the law to students, and the students rule for him. But R. Abba citing Rav Huna said: a Torah scholar who teaches a new law and comes to apply it: if he said it before the case arose, we listen to him; if not, we do not (Rashi: here, who would accept his word that it is permanent?). He too had taught it beforehand.

Tosafot – ד"ה אם קודם מעשה אמרה שומעין לו

RABBEINU TAM. We apply this only where he needs that very ruling, as here and in Yevamot 76a and 98a, and Kiddushin 70b.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Suspicion arises only when the ruling serves the scholar's own interest.

3. Teballul: is there a blemish in the white? 38b

WHOSE VIEW? The Mishnah follows R. Yose. A baraita: white entering the black, or black entering the white, is a blemish, says R. Meir. R. Yose says: white entering the black is a blemish; black entering the white is not, since there are no blemishes in the white.

THE REASONS. Rav said: what is R. Yose's reason? It says, "their eye bulges from fat" (Tehillim 73:7): the fat of the eye is called "their eye," but it is not called "eye" without qualification (Rashi: the fat is in the white). And R. Meir? What does "teballul" mean? Something that confuses the eyes (Rashi: it crosses the ring and mixes black and white, whichever direction it goes).

Tosafot – ד"ה יצא מחלב עיניהם

EXPLANATION. According to the exposition, the white of the eye is called "fat," as Rashi explains: the wicked go astray from the abundance of fat in their eyes. The plain meaning of the verse is that the eye bulges outward from the fat within it.

WHY THIS MATTERS. R. Yose's proof uses the verse's wording, not its plain sense.

4. Mishnah: white spots and tearing eyes 38b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 38b)

חורוור והמים הקבועין. איזהו חורוור הקבוע, כל ששהה שמונים יום. ר' חנניא בן אנטיגנוס אמר בודקין אותו ג' פעמים בתוך שמונים יום. ואלו הן מים הקבועין, אכל לח ויבש של גשמים, לח ויבש של שלחים, או אכל היבש ואח"כ הלח, אינו מום עד שיאכל הלח ואח"כ היבש.

White spots and tearing that are permanent (Rashi: "permanent" refers to both). What is a permanent white spot? One that lasted eighty days. R. Chanina b. Antigonus says: it is examined three times within the eighty days (Rashi: otherwise, though present on the eightieth day, it may have gone and returned). What is permanent tearing? If it ate moist and dry fodder of rain-watered fields, or moist and dry of irrigated fields, or ate the dry and then the moist, it is not a blemish until it eats the moist and then the dry (Rashi: that is the proper treatment; if it does not heal, it is a blemish).

Rashi – ד"ה אכל לח ויבש של גשמים

THE ISSUE. What is this feeding?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. They feed it straw and fodder as a remedy: moist fodder grown in Nisan and dry fodder grown in Tishrei, from a field watered by rain alone. Feeding dry and then moist is not the way of the cure, so even if it does not heal, that proves nothing; only moist followed by dry is the cure, and if it does not heal, it is a blemish.

WHY IT MATTERS. The test gives the animal a genuine chance to heal before the tearing is declared permanent.

WHOSE VIEW? The Mishnah follows R. Yehuda. A baraita: a white spot is permanent after forty days, and tearing after eighty days, says R. Meir. R. Yehuda says: a white spot, eighty days. And what is permanent tearing? If it ate moist and dry of irrigated fields, or ate dry and then moist, it is not a blemish until it eats dry after moist, and that for three months.

THE WORDING. But our Mishnah taught both, rain-watered and irrigated! It is missing something and teaches this: if it ate moist and dry of rain-watered fields, it is a blemish (Rashi: if not healed); of irrigated fields, it is not; and even with rain-watered fodder, if it ate dry and then moist, it is not a blemish until it eats dry after moist, for three months.

THE SEASONS. Is that so? Rav Idi b. Avin said in the name of Rav Yitzchak b. Ashian: Adar and Nisan are moist, Elul and Tishrei dry (four months, not three). Say: Adar and half of Nisan moist, Elul and half of Tishrei dry.

5. How the treatment is given 38b–39a

THE SEASON. They asked: moist in the moist season and dry in the dry season (Rashi: so it is not slaughtered until the summer passes), or both in the moist season? Come and hear Rav Idi's statement: Adar and Nisan moist, Elul and Tishrei dry. Perhaps it means Elul and Tishrei produce, which I feed it in Adar and Nisan.

THE AMOUNT. How much is it fed (Rashi: each day)? R. Yochanan in the name of R. Pinchas b. Aruba: the size of a dried fig. Rava: in the West they asked: a dried fig's worth at the first meal, or at every meal? If at the first meal, before eating or after? Before eating certainly helps, like medicine; what of after? Before drinking or after? Before drinking certainly helps, like barley; what of after? Tied or loose? Loose certainly helps (Rashi: it is at ease); what of tied? Alone or with a companion? With a companion certainly helps; what of alone? In the city or in the field? In the field certainly helps; what of the city? Rav Ashi asked: if you say in the field, what of a garden near the city? These remain unresolved (*teiku*).

THREE EXAMINATIONS. R. Chanina b. Antigonus says: Rav Nachman b. Yitzchak said, provided they are divided in thirds.

Tosafot – ד"ה שיהו משולשין

TWO READINGS. Rashi explains: three equal parts, about every twenty-six and a half days. Tosafot explain: at the beginning, the middle and the end of the eighty days, as Yevamot 80a implies, where "beginning and end" settles that there was no recovery in between.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The timing of the checks determines whether the condition is shown to be permanent.

PINCHAS'S QUESTION. Pinchas, the brother of Mar Shmuel, asked Shmuel: if it ate and was not healed, is it a blemish retroactively, or only from then on? What is the difference? Misuse of its redemption money (Rashi: in other sacrifices with tearing eyes that were redeemed before the examination period ended, and the redemption money was used). If retroactively a blemish, the redemption took effect and the money is sacred, so there is misuse. If only from then on, there is no misuse. Shmuel applied to him the verse, "the lame took the prey" (Yeshayahu 33:23) (Rashi: as unlikely as the lame taking spoil: you are not considered sharp, yet you asked a question I cannot answer).

The next Mishnah, on blemishes of the nose and lip, begins on 39a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 39.

The full picture in plain language

The eye is a central place for blemishes, since it is visible and essential. Defects of the lid and growths in the eye count. Within the eye, R. Yose, whom the Mishnah follows, recognizes blemishes only in the dark part, since the white is fat rather than "eye." Whether a film counts

depends on its color and whether it sits on the surface or within. The story of R. Shimon b. Yose Lakunya shows that a Sage may benefit from his own ruling only if he taught it before the case arose.

White spots and tearing are blemishes only if permanent, and the Sages defined tests: eighty days of observation, checked three times for white spots, and a season of moist and then dry fodder for tearing. The many unresolved questions about the feeding show how carefully the test was meant to give the animal a real chance to heal. Pinchas's question about whether a failed test reveals a blemish from the start was difficult enough that even Shmuel could not answer it.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
ריס	*ris*	The eyelid.
דק	*dak*	A film over the eye.
תבלול	*teballul*	A line crossing the ring between white and black.
סירא	*sira*	The ring around the black of the eye.
חלזון	*chilazon*	An eye disease, identified with the nachash.
חוורוור	*chavarvar*	White spots in the eye.
מים הקבועין	*mayim ha-keve'in*	Permanent tearing of the eye.
לח ויבש	*lach ve-yavesh*	Moist and dry fodder, the test for tearing.
בית השלחין	*beit ha-shelachin*	An irrigated field.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.