Bekhorot 39

Daf Yomi · Tuesday, October 27, 2026 · ט״ז חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 39a (Mishnah on the nose and lip) through 40a (the cubits of Shushan HaBirah)

Summary

Bekhorot 39 continues the list of blemishes. A nose or lip that is pierced, nicked or split is a blemish, though a hole in the inner septum is hidden and does not count. Of the gums, the outer ones are a blemish if nicked or scraped and the inner ones only if uprooted. R. Chanina b. Antigonus disregards the molars entirely. A baraita shows three views: R. Yehoshua b. Kefutzai holds that inner gums disqualify an animal from the altar but do not permit its slaughter.

Rav Achdevoi b. Ami asks whether a missing internal organ counts as a defect for the altar. Two baraitot on an animal with one kidney are reconciled in several ways. Along the way the Gemara concludes that an animal must be whole until its blood is received, and that a Pesach lamb that turns two years old between slaughter and sprinkling is invalid: "hours disqualify." A Tannaitic dispute about crushed or cut reproductive organs turns out to concern which blemishes are visible, not internal loss.

The next Mishnah lists blemishes of the sheath, the female organ in other sacrifices, and the tail. A nick in the sheath is a blemish, but a removed sheath can regrow, as happened with a lamb whose sheath a wolf tore off. The Mishnah's "finger" is defined as a quarter of an ordinary person's handbreadth. The Gemara applies this to the threads of *tzitzit*, to the two measuring rods kept at Shushan HaBirah, which were slightly larger than Moshe's cubit, and finally to the Mishnah's tail.

Detailed Summary

1. Mishnah: the nose and the lip 39a

The first lines of 39a complete the questions about feeding an animal with tearing eyes and Pinchas's question to Shmuel (summary of Bekhorot 38).

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 39a)

חוטמו שניקב ושנפגם ושנסדק, שפמו שניקבה שנפגמה שנסדקה.

Its nose that was pierced, nicked or split; its lip that was pierced, nicked or split.

THE NOSE. A baraita: if the nostrils were pierced into each other from the outside (Rashi: the hole shows on the outer walls), it is a blemish; from the inside (Rashi: the septum between them), it is not (Rashi: it is hidden).

THE LIP. Rav Pappa: the outer row of its lip (Rashi: its edge, not its broad part).

2. Mishnah: the gums 39a

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 39a)

חוטין החיצונות שנפגמו ושנגממו, הפנימים שנעקרו. רבי חנינא בן אנטיגנוס אומר אין בודקין מן התיומת ולפנים ואף לא את התיומת.

Outer gums that were nicked or scraped; inner gums that were uprooted. R. Chanina b. Antigonus says: one does not examine from the "twins" inward (Rashi: the large molars that look like two), nor the twins themselves (Rashi: even if the gums opposite them are uprooted, it is not a blemish).

THE BARAITA. What is the twin? From the twin inward, and the twin itself is like the inner area. R. Yehoshua b. Kefutzai says: one slaughters only on the outer gums. R. Chanina b. Antigonus says: one pays no attention to the twin at all. The Gemara asks what this means, since R. Yehoshua b. Kefutzai seems to say the same as the first Tanna.

THE BARAITA COMPLETED. It is missing something and teaches: what are the inner gums? From the twin inward, and the twin itself is like the inner area. When? If they were nicked or scraped; but if uprooted, one slaughters on them. R. Yehoshua b. Kefutzai: one slaughters only on the outer gums; inner gums that were uprooted do not permit slaughter, but they do disqualify (Rashi: from the altar, so he waits for another blemish). R. Chanina b. Antigonus: one pays no attention to the twin at all, and it does not even disqualify.

3. Is there an internal missing limb? 39a–39b

RAV ACHDEVOI'S QUESTION. Is there a "missing limb" internally or not? For what? If for a first-born, "lame or blind" is written (Rashi: visible blemishes only). If for sacrifices, "blind or broken" is written. We do not ask about slaughtering or redeeming; we ask about disqualifying. "It shall be unblemished to be accepted" (Vayikra 22:21): unblemished, yes; lacking, no? Or "shall be" comes to include, "there shall be no blemish in it": just as a blemish is external, so is a lack external?

THE KIDNEYS. Come and hear: "and the two kidneys" (Vayikra 3:4): not one with one kidney and not one with three. Another baraita: "he shall remove it" includes one with one kidney. They assumed that all agree no animal is created with one kidney, so it is certainly lacking: do they disagree whether an internal lack counts?

R. CHIYA B. YOSEF. All agree that an animal can be created with one, and that an internal lack counts. One baraita speaks of one created with two that lost one; the other, one created with one from the start. But it is taught parallel to three, which is from the start; so one too is from the start. Rather, they disagree whether an animal can be created with one.

R. YOCHANAN. All agree that no animal is created with one, and that an internal lack counts. One baraita speaks of a kidney lost before slaughter, the other after slaughter.

AFTER SLAUGHTER. Is it permitted after slaughter but before receiving the blood? R. Zeira citing Rav: one who slits the ear of the bull (Rashi: the anointed kohen, after slaughter) and then received its blood, it is invalid, as it says, "and he shall take of the blood of the bull" (Vayikra 16:14), the bull as it was (Rashi: whole at reception). Rather: before receiving or after receiving.

> **Tosafot – ד"ה והאמר רבי זירא אמר רב הצורם**
>
> **THE TEXT.** In Zevachim 25b this is cited as a baraita: "as it was taught, one who slits."
>
> **WHY THIS MATTERS.** The ruling carries the weight of a Tannaitic source.

AFTER RECEIVING. Is it permitted after receiving but before sprinkling? A baraita says: "an unblemished male lamb in its first year shall it be for you" (Shemot 12:5): unblemished and a yearling at slaughter. From where at receiving, carrying and sprinkling? "Shall be": all its stages unblemished and a yearling. Translate it as referring to the yearling (Rashi: only "yearling" applies to every stage; wholeness is needed only through receiving).

SUPPORT. This is reasonable, as a baraita says: R. Yehoshua says, in all the sacrifices of the Torah where an olive's bulk of meat or an olive's bulk of fat remains, he sprinkles the blood (Rashi: there is no greater lack, yet the blood is sprinkled). Learn from it.

HOURS DISQUALIFY. Can something be a yearling at slaughter and two years old at receiving and carrying? Rava: this teaches that hours disqualify sacrifices (Rashi: a lamb born last year on the fourteenth of Nisan at the eighth hour must be slaughtered before the ninth hour this year).

4. Crushed, bruised, torn, cut 39b

A TANNAITIC DISPUTE. Is this like Tannaim? "Bruised, crushed, torn, cut" (Vayikra 22:24): all in the testicles, says R. Yehuda. In the testicles and not the organ (Rashi: surely the organ is more visible)? Say: also in the testicles. R. Eliezer b. Yaakov: all in the organ. R. Yose: bruised and crushed also in the testicles; torn and cut in the organ, not in the testicles. Is the dispute whether an internal lack counts?

REJECTED. What does R. Yose hold? If an internal lack counts, then even torn and cut; if not, then not even bruised and crushed. Rather they disagree about visible blemishes. R. Yehuda: bruised and crushed are blemishes since they shrink; torn and cut are blemishes since they hang (Rashi: visibly). R. Eliezer b. Yaakov: bruised and crushed are not blemishes, since even naturally they sometimes shrink; torn and cut are not, since even naturally they sometimes hang. R. Yose: bruised and crushed are blemishes since they are gone; torn and cut are not, since they are still there.

Tosafot – ד"ה כולן בגיד ולא בביצים

CLARIFICATION. The end of the verse, "and in your land you shall not do so," applies to the testicles anywhere castration occurs, even through drinking a potion (Shabbat 110b). Only regarding a blemish do they disagree, since it is not considered visible.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The dispute concerns blemishes, not the prohibition of castration.

5. Mishnah: the sheath and the tail 39b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 39b)

נפגם הזובן, העריה של נקבה במוקדשין, נפגם הזנב מן העצם אבל לא מן הפרק, או שראש זנב מפצל, נקלפה העור והבשר והעצם נשאר, או שיש בשר מחוליא לחוליא מלא אצבע.

If the sheath was nicked (Rashi: the casing of the organ); the female organ in consecrated animals (Rashi: in other sacrifices that may be female, such as peace offerings); the tail nicked at the bone, but not at the joint (Rashi: a slight nick between joints heals); or the tip of the tail is split; the skin and flesh peeled off and the bone remained; or there is a finger's breadth of flesh between one vertebra and the next.

Tosafot – ד"ה או שראש הזנב מפצל את העצם

THE MEANING. Rashi explains that the skin and flesh peeled off, exposing the bone, as in "he peeled" (Bereshit 30). But then the Mishnah would say "peeled." Rather, the bone is split in two, as with split horns (Chullin 59b); the Tosefta reads "the tip of the tail split into two bones."

WHY THIS MATTERS. Each clause of the Mishnah describes a separate blemish.

THE SHEATH. R. Elazar: nicked, not removed (Rashi: if removed, it regrows); the sac, not the organ itself (Rashi: the organ heals). A baraita teaches the same, and R. Yose b. HaMeshulam said: there was a lamb whose sheath a wolf took, and it returned to its former state.

6. The finger and the cubits 39b–40a

THE FINGER. It was taught: the finger they mentioned is one of four in a handbreadth of an ordinary person (Rashi: the thumb, since fingers are not equal). For which law? Rabbah: for *tzitzit*. A baraita: how many threads does one put in? Beit Shammai say four, Beit Hillel three. How far must it hang? Beit Shammai say four, Beit Hillel three; and Beit Hillel's three are one of four in a handbreadth of an ordinary person.

Tosafot – ד"ה כמה · ד"ה כמה חוטין הוא נותן ב"ש אומרים ארבעה

THE THREADS. The question is whether four threads means in total or four of each color, and whether before or after doubling. We rule like Beit Shammai (Menachot 41b), and the Sifrei says explicitly: four threads of *tekhelet* and four of white, over four fingerbreadths. Menachot reports that Rav Yirmeya of Difti used eight threads, doubled to sixteen, while Mar son of Ravina did as we do; Tosafot suggest Mar read Beit Shammai's "four of each" as counted after doubling.

THE LENGTH. Rashi explains it as how far the tzitzit is set in from the edge of the garment. Tosafot find this difficult, since that distance is a thumb joint; rather it is the length of the braided part, so that the braided third is four fingerbreadths and the hanging part eight.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The Mishnah's "finger" sets practical measures for tzitzit.

THE CUBITS. Rav Huna, son of R. Yehoshua: for the two cubits. The Mishnah teaches: there were two cubits in Shushan HaBirah (Rashi: a chamber over the eastern gate), one at the northeast corner and one at the southeast corner. The northeast one was half a finger longer than Moshe's, and the southeast one half a finger longer than that, so it was a full finger longer than Moshe's.

WHY TWO SIZES? When craftsmen were hired, they were contracted by the smaller cubit and returned the work by the larger one, so that they would not come to misuse Temple property (Rashi: one cannot measure exactly, so they gave extra). Why two? One for gold and silver work, and one for building.

Rashi – ד"ה שלא יבואו לידי מעילה

THE ISSUE. Why measure the work by the larger cubit?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. So that they would not benefit from Temple property. Had they worked by the same measure they were contracted with, they might give slightly less, since it is impossible to be exact. So they returned the work by the larger one.

WHY IT MATTERS. The extra margin protected the workers from unknowingly taking sacred funds.

THE TAIL. Rav Nachman b. Yitzchak, or some say Rav Huna b. Natan: for the Mishnah we learned, that there is flesh between one vertebra and the next a finger's breadth.

The next Mishnah, on an animal with no testicles or only one, begins on 40a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 40.

The full picture in plain language

The list of blemishes moves from the eye to the nose, lips and mouth. The guiding test remains whether a defect is visible: a hole between the nostrils on the inside does not count, and damage to inner gums counts only if they are uprooted. R. Yehoshua b. Kefutzai treats such hidden damage as disqualifying for the altar but not permitting slaughter, and R. Chanina b. Antigonus ignores the molars altogether. The question of a missing internal organ shows that an animal must be whole until its blood is received. It also shows that a sacrifice's age is measured in hours.

The Mishnah on the sheath and tail adds more visible defects, while a sheath that regrows, as in the wolf story, is not a blemish. The Mishnah's "finger," a quarter of an ordinary person's handbreadth, links this list to the threads of tzitzit and to the Temple's measuring rods. Craftsmen were paid by the smaller cubit and measured by the larger, so they would never take sacred property by mistake.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
חוטין	*chutin*	The gums.
תיומת	*te'umet*	The "twin": the large molars that look like two.
מחוסר אבר מבפנים	*mechusar ever mi-bifnim*	Missing an internal organ.
שעות פוסלות	*sha'ot poslot*	Hours disqualify: a sacrifice's age is exact to the hour.
זובן	*zovan*	The sheath of the male organ.
חוליא	*chulya*	A vertebra of the tail.
שושן הבירה	*Shushan ha-Birah*	The chamber over the eastern gate where the cubits were kept.
מעילה	*me'ilah*	Misuse of sacred property.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.