Bekhorot 44

Daf Yomi · Sunday, November 1, 2026 · כ״א חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 44a through 44b (before the Mishnah on legs and feet)

Summary

Bekhorot 44 continues the catalogue of a kohen's disqualifying features, moving from the eyes to the proportions of the body and then to internal and genital conditions. It begins by defining the Mishnah's "both eyes high," "both eyes low" and "sees the room and the attic at once." The Gemara rejects a reading based on where the eyes look and settles on where the eyes are set. The source is the extra word בעינו, "in his eye." A baraita derives total and partial blindness and permanent eye defects from "a blind *man*," and Rava explains why the Torah needed four separate eye terms, each covering a different kind of defect: no sight, reduced sight, confused sight and abnormal placement.

The Gemara then defines further eye terms: *senei shemesh* (who cannot face the sun), *zagdan* (mismatched eyes, which Rav Huna demonstrated in a way that offended Rav Yehuda), *tziran* (round or watering eyes), and three eyelash conditions, reconciling one of them with the Mishnah's ruling that lost eyelashes are only a matter of appearance. A new Mishnah lists disproportions: eyes, body, nose, ears and lips. Here the Gemara records Rav's claim that Moshe was ten *amot* tall and his answer to Rav Shimi bar Chiya, who objected that this would make Moshe "blemished." The Gemara also identifies the obscure *tzimach*, rules that a hornless goat or a horned ewe is fit for the altar, and distinguishes horns and hooves uprooted from those merely cut.

The next Mishnah lists conditions of the torso and body: hanging breasts, a swollen belly, a protruding navel, epilepsy, an attacking "spirit," and enlarged organs. The swollen belly prompts a discussion of health and modesty: one may relieve oneself in public rather than risk harm, as illustrated by stories of Shmuel and Mar bar Rav Ashi, with related teachings by Reish Lakish, R. Yehoshua ben Levi, Rav Pappa and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. The daf closes with the Mishnah defining the Torah's *meru'ach eshekh*, and the Gemara shows how each of four Tannaim derives his definition from the precise wording of the verse.

Detailed Summary

1. Where the eyes are set 44a

The Mishnah on 43b listed, among a kohen's disqualifications: "both eyes high, both eyes low, one eye high and one low, one who sees the room and the attic at once." (The daf's first line completes R. Yosi's baraita on the *charum*, covered in the summary of Bekhorot 43.)

QUESTION. What does "both eyes high" mean? If it means both eyes look upward, both look downward, and one looks up while the other looks down, then the last case is identical to "sees the room and the attic at once"; why list it twice?

ANSWER. Rather, "high" and "low" describe where the eyes are set: both set high (Rashi: at forehead level, unlike other people), both set low, or one high and one low. And "sees the room and the attic" is where the eyes are set normally, yet one looks up while the other looks down (Rashi: the room is below, the attic above).

SOURCE. A baraita: בעינו, "in his eye" (Vayikra 21:20), includes everything in his eye. From here the Sages listed: both eyes low, both high, one high and one low, one who sees the room and the attic at once, or one who speaks with his fellow and someone else says "he is looking at me" (a squint).

Rashi – ד"ה בעינו

THE ISSUE. Why is "in his eye" a source for anything?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The verse says "*tevalul* in his eye." It could simply have said *dak* and *tevalul*, and we would know that these occur only in the eye. The superfluous "in his eye" includes every eye defect.

WHY IT MATTERS. A short, seemingly redundant phrase becomes the source for a whole category of placement defects.

2. Rava: four eye terms for four kinds of defect 44a

BARAITA. עור, "blind" (Vayikra 21:18): blind in both eyes or in one. A *chavarvar* (a white spot on the eye) and permanent "water" (fluid in the eye), from where? The verse says עור איש, "a blind *man*" (Rashi: the extra word "man" includes them).

RAVA'S QUESTION. Why did the Torah write "a blind man," *dak*, *tevalul* and "in his eye"? **ANSWER.** All are needed:

Had it written only "blind," one would say that applies when the eyes are absent entirely (Rashi: removed), but not with a white spot or fluid, where the eyes are present; so it wrote "man." Had it written only "man," one would say that applies where he sees nothing at all, but not where vision is reduced (Rashi: he sees partially); so it wrote *dak* (Rashi: a film that reduces sight without removing it). Had it written only *dak*, one would say that applies because it reduces vision, but not a "confusing" defect (Rashi: a white line that crosses into the black

but does not reduce sight); so it wrote *tevalul*. Had it written only *tevalul*, one would say that applies because it confuses, but not mere abnormality (Rashi: eyes set high or low, or looking up and down at once); so it wrote "in his eye."

RAVA'S RULE. הלכך כל מחמת כהיותא אתיא מאיש: "Therefore: anything due to dimness (not seeing) comes from 'man'; reduced sight from *dak*; confused sight from *tevalul*; abnormality from 'in his eye.'"

3. More eye terms: *senei shemesh*, *zagdan*, *tziran*, eyelashes 44a

SENEI SHEMESH. For the Mishnah's *sechei shemesh*, Rav Yosef taught *senei shemesh* (Rashi: one who "hates" the sun and cannot look toward where it shines).

ZAGDAN. Rav Huna demonstrated: חד מדידן וחד מדידהו, "one of ours and one of theirs," and Rav Yehuda took offense.

Tosafot – ד"ה מחוי רב הונא חד מדידהו

QUESTION. Rashi explains that Rav Huna meant "one eye like those of the person sitting opposite me and one eye like mine," and that Rav Yehuda, who sat opposite, had unusual eyes. But Rashi does not say in what way they were unusual.

ANSWER. Rabbeinu Tam explains that Rav Yehuda was tall (Niddah 24b) and Rav Huna short (Ta'anit). Rav Huna's eyes were therefore small, though not noticeably so compared with ordinary people, while Rav Yehuda's were large. Rav Huna meant one large eye and one small, which is why Rav Yehuda took offense. Such a mismatch does not invalidate the service unless the eye is as large as a calf's or as small as a goose's (as the next Mishnah teaches), but it still makes a kohen "not resembling the seed of Aharon."

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot turn an anecdote into a definition: *zagdan* means mismatched eyes, a lower-level disqualification than the disproportion in the next Mishnah.

CHALLENGE. A baraita: *shakhbana*, one whose eyebrows lie down (Rashi: long and lying over his eyes); *zagdom*, one eye black and one white. **ANSWER.** It was taught: any pair not matching each other is called *zagdom*. So a mismatch of size also qualifies.

TZIRAN. His eyes are *terutot*, *tzirniyot*, tearing, dripping, streaming. Rashi: *terutot* are round, *tzirniyot* rounder still; tearing is a little, dripping more, streaming more than that.

Tosafot – ד"ה עיניו תרוטות

QUESTION. If each term is a more severe form of the previous one, why list the severe forms? Once the milder form disqualifies, the stronger one certainly does. The same applies to "tearing, dripping, streaming."

ANSWER. Perhaps all were listed to teach that they disqualify not as blemishes but only because he does not resemble the seed of Aharon.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The redundant list itself signals the level of disqualification: these men are not blemished, so their service, if performed, is valid.

EYELASHES. A baraita lists the *zavir*, the *lufin* and the *tamir*: *zavir*, whose eyes are מזור (the Gemara does not elaborate); *lufin*, whose lashes are very many; *tamir*, whose lashes are entirely gone.

QUESTION. These are taught among true blemishes; but our Mishnah says one whose eyelashes fell out is unfit only "because of appearance"! **ANSWER.** No difficulty: here (the baraita) no remnants of the roots remain; there (the Mishnah) remnants remain. Rashi: where the roots remain, it is not a blemish but only a matter of appearance.

4. Mishnah: disproportion of eyes, body, nose, ears and lips 44a

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 44a)

עיניו גדולות כשל עגל או קטנות כשל אווז, גופו גדול מאבריו או קטן מאבריו, חוטמו גדול מאבריו או קטן מאיבריו, הצומם והצומע. איזהו צומע? כל שאזניו קטנות. והצומם, כל שאזניו דומות לספוג. שפתו העליונה עודפת על התחתונה, התחתונה עודפת על העליונה, הרי זה מום. ושנשרו שיניו פסול מפני מראית העין.

Eyes as large as a calf's or as small as a goose's; a body large or small relative to his limbs (Rashi: hands, legs, shins); a nose large or small relative to his limbs; the *tzome'a* and the *tzomem*: the *tzome'a* has small ears, the *tzomem* has ears like a sponge (Rashi: shriveled and closed). An upper lip extending beyond the lower, or the lower beyond the upper: this is a blemish. One whose teeth fell out is unfit because of appearance.

5. Was Moshe ten *amot* tall? 44a

RAV'S STATEMENT. Moshe Rabbeinu was ten *amot* tall, as it says, "he spread the tent over the Mishkan" (Shemot 40:19). Who spread it? Moshe. And it is written, "ten *amot* is the length of a board" (Shemot 26:16): the Mishkan's walls were ten *amot* high, and Moshe spread the covering over them himself.

RAV SHIMI BAR CHIYA'S OBJECTION. If so, you have made Moshe Rabbeinu blemished, for we learned: "a body large relative to his limbs." **RAV'S REPLY.** "Shimi! I meant the *amah* of the boards."

Rashi – ד"ה באמה של קרש קאמינא · ד"ה בעל מום

THE ISSUE. Why would ten *amot* make Moshe blemished, and how does Rav's reply help?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Shimi assumed Rav meant ten of Moshe's own *amot* (forearm lengths), but any normal person is about three of his own *amot* tall, so ten would mean his body was out of proportion to his arms. Rav meant ten *amot* by the standard of the boards, which were not measured by Moshe's forearm. Rashi adds that the statement on 40a about an *amah* exceeding "Moshe's" by half a finger does not mean Moshe's actual forearm, which was far longer than the sacred standard *amah* he established.

WHY IT MATTERS. The objection is a sharp application of the Mishnah's proportion rule, and Rashi resolves a possible contradiction with an earlier daf.

6. Nose, ears, the *tzimach*, and horns 44a

THE NOSE. "His nose is large...": a baraita says, by the width of a little finger. Rashi: if it exceeds normal proportion by that much it is a blemish, measured against the noses of people of similar height.

THE TZIMACH. A baraita adds the *tzimach* to the *tzimem* and *tzime'a*. The Sages did not know what a *tzimach* is, until they heard an Arab merchant calling "who wants a *tzimach*?", and it turned out to be a kid whose ears hung down (Rashi: ears so long that they bend downward).

NOT BLEMISHES IN ANIMALS. Rav Chisda: a goat without horns and a ewe with horns are fit for the altar. A baraita agrees: some things are like blemishes but are not blemishes, and an animal with them is slaughtered in the Temple but not outside: a goat without horns, a ewe with horns, the *tzimach*, the *tzimem* and the *tzome'a*. Rashi: our Mishnah lists the ear conditions for a kohen because he "does not resemble the seed of Aharon," a category that has no parallel for animals.

HORNS AND HOOVES REMOVED. Rav Chisda (the printed text adds "said Amemar"): if the horns were removed together with their cores, the animal is disqualified but may not be redeemed on that account; if the hooves were removed with their cores, it is disqualified and may be redeemed.

Rashi – ד"ה ואין נפדין עליהם · ד"ה זכרותן

THE ISSUE. What is the "core," and what is the difference between "disqualified" and "redeemed"?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The core of the horn is the bone inside it; the core of the hoof is the bone inside the hoof, the sole of the foot. "Not redeemed" means that a consecrated animal (other than a firstborn) cannot be redeemed for this, since it is not a full blemish, only a disqualification from the altar.

WHY IT MATTERS. The ruling introduces a middle status: unfit for the altar, yet not blemished enough to release the animal's sanctity through redemption.

CHALLENGE. A baraita: if horns and hooves were removed with their cores, they are disqualified and may be redeemed! **ANSWER.** No difficulty: the baraita speaks of horns uprooted entirely (Rashi: roots and all, leaving a visible hole in the head); Rav Chisda speaks of horns cut off (Rashi: cut from above, with the roots remaining).

FURTHER CHALLENGE. Does a cut horn disqualify at all? A red heifer whose horns and hooves are black: יגוד, "let him cut them" (and it remains valid). **ANSWER.** Ze'iri explained: that is cutting above the core. Rashi: the horn's tip, two or three fingers beyond where the core reaches; if the black does not reach the core, one cuts it off, but cutting deeper disqualifies it.

7. Mishnah: the torso and the body 44b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 44b)

דדין שוכבין כשל אשה, כריסו צבה, טיבורו יוצא, נכפה אפילו אחת לימים, רוח קצרה באה עליו, המאושבן ובעל גבר.

Breasts hanging like a woman's (Rashi: large); a swollen belly; a protruding navel; an epileptic, even if he is seized only once in a long while (Rashi: at fixed intervals); one who is attacked by a "short spirit" (Rashi: a demonic spirit); the *me'ushban* and the *ba'al gever* (Rashi: one with enlarged testicles, and one with an enlarged organ).

8. A swollen belly: health before modesty 44b

TEACHING. R. Abba son of R. Chiya bar Abba: one may relieve oneself in public, but one should not drink water in public. A baraita says the same, adding an incident: a man needed to relieve himself and did not, and his belly became swollen.

Tosafot – ד"ה ואין שותין מים בפני רבים

QUESTION. Rashi explains that a Torah scholar should be modest in eating and drinking. But Pesachim 86b describes a sage drinking a cup in two sips without turning his face away, as is proper for a "bride," which implies people do drink in public.

ANSWER. There, it was during a meal. The tractate Derekh Eretz rules that in public one turns his face aside to drink water. The Gemara specifies water because only a thirsty person drinks water, while other drinks are taken together. Rabbeinu Tam explains the teaching this way: even those who are so modest that they do not drink water in public should not be "modest" about relieving themselves, lest they wait and endanger themselves.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The ruling is not a license for immodesty; it sets a limit on modesty where health is at stake.

SHMUEL. Shmuel needed to relieve himself on the Shabbat before a festival (Rashi: when the sage lectured to large crowds on the festival's laws), and the people held up a cloak around him. His father came and said: "I will give you four hundred *zuz*; go and do it again (Rashi: publicly teach that one may not wait). You can have a cloak held up; someone who cannot will endanger himself."

MAR BAR RAV ASHI. He needed to relieve himself and did so where he was (the text reads אגודא גמלא); they told him, "your mother-in-law is coming." He replied, "even in her ear" (Rashi: I would sooner do so even in her ear than wait, all the more so in front of her).

QUESTION. In the baraita's incident, perhaps the swelling came from swallowing a leech? **ANSWER.** It was where his urine came out only in drips (Rashi: which proves the cause was retention).

ANATOMY. A baraita: a man has two ducts, one for urine and one for semen, separated only by the thickness of a garlic peel. If, while he is holding back, they perforate into each other, he becomes sterile.

REISH LAKISH. "There shall not be a barren male or female among you or among your animals" (Devarim 7:14): when will there be no barren among you? When you are like your animals (Rashi: not overly modest in relieving yourself).

R. YEHOSHUA BEN LEVI. "Not barren" of disciples; "or barren female": your prayer will not be barren before God. When? When you make yourself like an animal.

Tosafot – ד"ה שלא תהא תפלתך עקורה לפני המקום בזמן שאתה משים עצמך כבהמה

QUESTION. Rashi limits this to prayer for children, and reads "like an animal" as not delaying.

ANSWER. It seems to refer to all prayer, as the Gemara says elsewhere (Chullin 89a) that the world endures only through one who makes himself like an animal, as it says, "man and beast You save, Hashem," and through one who makes himself as though he does not exist.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot read R. Yehoshua ben Levi's teaching as a statement about humility, not only about health.

RAV PAPPA. One should not relieve himself onto earthenware or onto hard ground, because Rav said that the slopes of Bavel drain into Ein Eitam (Rashi: the spring where the Kohen Gadol immersed on Yom Kippur). Abaye: a woman should not stand directly facing a child while relieving herself (Rashi: it is brazen); to the side, there is no concern.

RABBAN SHIMON BEN GAMLIEL. Holding back solid waste leads to *hidrokan* (Rashi: an intestinal illness); holding back urine leads to *yerakon* (jaundice). Reish Lakish adds a list of excesses and their effects: excess blood, boils (Rashi: one who never lets blood); excess semen, *tzara'at*; excess waste, *hidrokan*; excess urine, *yerakon*.

9. The remaining terms of the Mishnah 44b

A "SHORT SPIRIT." What is it? A baraita: a *ben nefalim* spirit comes upon him (Rashi: madness caused by a demon).

ME'USHBAN AND BA'AL GEVER. A baraita: the *me'ushban* concerns the testicles and the *ba'al gever* the organ. Another baraita uses the terms *kayan* and *garvetan* for the same two conditions. How large? Rav Yehuda indicated: down to the knee. A baraita: R. Eliezer ben Yaakov says, down to the knee, unfit; above the knee, fit. Some say: down to the knee, fit; below the knee, unfit.

10. The *meru'ach eshekh*: four readings of one phrase 44b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 44b)

אין לו ביצים או אין לו אלא ביצה אחת, הרי זה מרוח אשך האמור בתורה. רבי ישמעאל אומר כל שנימוחו אשכיו. ר״ע אומר כל שרוח באשכיו. רבי חנינא בן אנטיגנוס אומר כל שמראיו חשוכין.

One who has no testicles, or only one: this is the *meru'ach eshekh* mentioned in the Torah (Vayikra 21:20). R. Yishmael says: one whose testicles are crushed. R. Akiva says: one whose testicles have "wind" (Rashi: are swollen). R. Chanina ben Antigonus says: one whose complexion is dark (Rashi: black like a Kushite; he does not read the phrase as referring to the testicles at all).

The Gemara explains what textual difficulty moved each Tanna away from the first Tanna's view:

R. YISHMAEL. If the verse meant one with no testicles, it should have said "lacking a testicle." So he reads *meru'ach* as *nimrechu*, "crushed."

R. AKIVA. If it meant "crushed," it should have said *memro'ach*. So he reads *meru'ach* as containing *ru'ach*, "wind": swollen testicles. Rashi: the initial *mem* of *meru'ach* is a grammatical prefix, leaving the root "wind."

R. CHANINA BEN ANTIGONUS. If it meant "wind," it should have said *ru'ach eshekh*. So he reads it as שמראיו חשוכין, "whose appearance is dark," for he holds גורעין ומוסיפין ודורשין, "we subtract and add letters and expound."

Rashi – ד״ה גורעין ומוסיפין

THE ISSUE. How does מרוח אשך become "dark appearance"?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Remove the *chet* from מרוח and the *alef* from אשך; then put the *chet* in place of the *alef* in the second word and the *alef* in place of the *chet* in the first, yielding מרואו חשך, "his appearance is dark."

WHY IT MATTERS. It shows the hermeneutic method that lets R. Chanina ben Antigonus read the phrase in an entirely different way.

QUESTION. But that is the *kushi*, already listed in the Mishnah (45b)! **ANSWER.** R. Chanina ben Antigonus does not list the *kushi* separately; for him, this verse is the source of that disqualification.

The next Mishnah, on defects of the legs and feet, begins in the last line of 44b and continues on 45a; it is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 45.

The full picture in plain language

The daf works systematically through the kohen's body. For the eyes, the Gemara first fixes the meaning of the Mishnah's terms by asking about placement rather than gaze, and then Rava maps four phrases in the Torah onto four kinds of eye defect: absent sight, reduced sight, confused sight and abnormal placement. Several further terms are defined, and two Tosafot show that some listed conditions disqualify only because the kohen "does not resemble the seed of Aharon," not as true blemishes. An eyelash case reconciles a baraita with the Mishnah by asking whether the roots remain.

The disproportion Mishnah leads to the story of Moshe's height, the identification of the *tzimach*, and a set of rulings about animals: conditions that disqualify a kohen are not necessarily blemishes in an animal, and horns or hooves removed may disqualify the animal without making it redeemable, depending on whether they were cut or uprooted.

The swollen belly becomes the occasion for a practical lesson: health overrides excessive modesty. Several sages reinforced it in public, and the sages tied it to verses about barrenness and prayer. The daf ends with four Tannaim each reading *meru'ach eshekh* differently, every reading prompted by a precise question about why the verse did not use other wording.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
בעינו	*be-eino*	"In his eye": an extra word that includes all abnormal placements of the eyes.
עור	*iver*	Blind, in both eyes or one.
חורוור	*chavarvar*	A white spot on the eye; included through the extra word "man."
דק	*dak*	A film on the eye that reduces sight without removing it.
תבלול	*tevalul*	A white line crossing into the dark of the eye, which "confuses" the eye without reducing sight.
כהיותא	*kehayuta*	Dimness; failure to see. Rava derives such defects from "a blind man."
זגדן	*zagdan*	One with mismatched eyes (e.g., one large, one small).
צירן	*tziran*	One with round or watering eyes.
גרדומי	*gardumei*	Remnants (here, of the eyelash roots). If they remain, losing the lashes is only a matter of appearance.
צומע, צומם	*tzome'a, tzomem*	One with small ears, and one with shriveled, sponge-like ears.

צימח	*tzimach*	One whose ears hang down; identified from an Arab merchant's word.
אמה	*amah*	A cubit (forearm length). Rav says Moshe was ten *amot* by the standard cubit of the boards, not by his own forearm.
זכרות	*zakhrut*	Here, the bony core inside a horn or hoof.
נפדין	*nifdin*	Redeemed: a consecrated animal with a full blemish can be redeemed and its sanctity transferred to money.
פרה אדומה	*parah adumah*	The red heifer; if its horns are black, the black tips may be cut off.
נכפה	*nikhpeh*	An epileptic, disqualified even if seizures are rare.
הדרוקן, ירקון	*hidrokan, yerakon*	Illnesses attributed to retaining waste: an intestinal disease, and jaundice.
עין עיטם	*Ein Eitam*	The spring that supplied the Kohen Gadol's Yom Kippur immersion.
מרוח אשך	*meru'ach eshekh*	A kohen's blemish (Vayikra 21:20), defined in four different ways by four Tannaim.
גורעין ומוסיפין	*gor'in u-mosifin*	"Subtracting and adding" letters to expound a verse; R. Chanina ben Antigonus's method.
כושי	*kushi*	One of very dark complexion; listed in the Mishnah on 45b.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.