Bekhorot 45

Daf Yomi · Monday, November 2, 2026 · כ״ב חשון תשפ״ז · Covers 44b (Mishnah on legs and feet) through 46a (end of chapter)

Summary

Bekhorot 45 completes the chapter *Mumin Elu* on the blemishes of a kohen. Its first Mishnah, which begins on the last line of 44b, lists defects of the legs, feet and fingers. Most are derived from the extra word "or" in "*or* a broken leg … *or* a broken hand." Webbed fingers are fit if the web is shallow or has been cut. An extra finger, once removed, disqualifies only if it contained bone. Tannaim dispute a man with six fingers on each hand and foot (R. Yehuda permits him) and an ambidextrous man (Rebbi disqualifies him).

The extra finger leads to a long excursus on the impurity of a corpse's limbs. Does a sixth finger count as a "limb" that imparts impurity in a tent, and does it count toward the 125 limbs that make up "the majority" of a body? The Gemara records conflicting baraitot, R. Yochanan's complaint that the Sages ruled "like prophets" without giving reasons, and two explanations of the middle ruling. It defines "majority of structure" and "majority of number," and then cites the grim report of R. Yishmael's students, who counted 252 bones in a woman's body. That leads to Tannaitic teachings about the extra "hinges, doors and key" of a woman's body, and Rav's and Abaye's conclusion that these do not count as limbs.

On 45b the Gemara explains the six-fingered man by a verse about a Philistine warrior, records R. Tarfon's blessing to such a man and R. Yosi's wry reinterpretation, and grounds the left-handed kohen's disqualification. A second Mishnah lists features that disqualify a kohen but not an animal, including skin color, height, deafness, insanity and drunkenness. The Gemara defines the color terms, adds Reish Lakish's advice on marriage between people of extreme heights or complexions, and explains why drunkenness is listed among the lesser disqualifications. A final Mishnah reverses the list, naming features that disqualify an animal but not a kohen, and adds two kohanim who are disqualified until they undertake to change: one married in violation of priestly law, and one who defiles himself for the dead. The vow that restores the first leads to a discussion of public vows, ending with Amemar's ruling, and the chapter closes on 46a.

Detailed Summary

1. Mishnah: legs, feet and fingers 44b–45a

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 44b–45a)

מקיש בקרסוליו ובארכבותיו, ובעל הפיקים, העיקל. איזהו העיקל? כל שהוא מקיף פרסותיו ואין ארכבותיו נוקשות זו לזו. פיקה יוצא מגודלו, עקיבו יוצא לאחוריו, פרסותיו רחבות כשל אווז. אצבעותיו מורכבות זו על זו, או קלוטות, למעלה עד הפרק כשר, למטה מן הפרק וחתכה כשר. היתה בה יתרת וחתכה, אם יש בה עצם פסול ואם לאו כשר. יתר בידיו וברגליו שש ושש עשרים וארבע, ר' יהודה מכשיר וחכמים פוסלין. השולט בשתי ידיו, רבי פוסל וחכמים מכשירין.

Disqualified: one whose ankles or knees knock together as he walks (Rashi: bowed legs, in one direction or the other); the *ba'al ha-pikim*; the *ikel*, who, when he brings his soles together, cannot make his knees touch; one with a knob protruding from his big toe; one whose heel protrudes behind; one with feet as wide as a goose's. Fingers that overlap, or are webbed: if the webbing reaches only to the (middle) joint, he is fit; if beyond the joint toward the nail, and he cut it, he is fit. An extra finger that he cut off: if it had bone he is unfit (Rashi: he now lacks a limb); if not, he is fit (it was a mere growth). Six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot, twenty-four in all: R. Yehuda declares him fit and the Sages unfit. One equally skilled with both hands: Rebbi disqualifies, and the Sages declare him fit.

2. "*Or* a broken leg," "*or* a broken hand" 45a

BARAITA. "A broken leg" (Vayikra 21:19): I know only a broken leg. From where do we include the *kishan* (Rashi: whose ankles knock), the *ikel* and the *kilban* (Rashi: the knob on the big toe)? The verse says "*or* a broken leg." It was taught further: the *ba'al ha-kifin* and the *shufnar*. R. Chiya bar Abba citing R. Yochanan: the first has many "cushions" (*kesatot*), and the *shufnar* has none at all.

Tosafot – ד"ה בעל הפיקין שיש לו כסתות הרבה

QUESTION. What are these "cushions"? Rashi identifies a part of the foot that is very large.

ANSWER. The *Arukh* explains that his foot is high-arched, with much flesh at the front and at the heel and a dome-like middle. The word *kesatot* supports this, since it implies flesh rather than bone, as in Bereishit Rabbah, which says a person has "cushions" of flesh that an animal lacks.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The disqualification concerns abnormal padding of the foot, too much or none, not a deformed bone.

"HEEL PROTRUDES BEHIND." R. Elazar: his shin stands in the middle of his foot (Rashi: half the foot extends forward and half behind). **"FEET AS WIDE AS A GOOSE'S."** Rav Pappa: do not say this applies only when the toes are joined and not separated; once the foot is joined like a goose's, even if the toes are separate, he is unfit.

HANDS. A baraita: "a broken hand": I know only a broken hand. Overlapping fingers, or fingers webbed beyond the joint, and he cut them? But you said he is fit! Rather: and he did not cut them; from where? The verse says "*or* a broken hand." Rashi: what the baraita calls "above" the joint is what the Mishnah calls "below" it, toward the nail.

3. The extra finger and the impurity of a corpse 45a

Background: a corpse's impurity passes not only by touching or carrying it but also by *ohel* (אהל), sharing a roof with it. Flesh of at least an olive's bulk, or a complete limb (a bone with its flesh), imparts impurity in a tent. Bare bones impart it only in larger quantities, such as the majority of the skeleton.

THE MISHNAH'S RULING. "An extra finger he cut off: if it has bone, he is unfit." Rabbah bar bar Chana citing R. Yochanan: that is when it is counted on the hand (Rashi: it stands in line with the other fingers, so it counts as a limb).

FIRST BARAITA. An extra finger with bone but no nail imparts impurity by touching and carrying, imparts impurity in a tent, and counts toward the 125. R. Yochanan: when it is counted on the hand.

Rashi – ד"ה ועולה למנין קכ"ה · ד"ה מטמא במגע ובמשא ובאהל

THE ISSUE. Under what circumstances is this ruling significant?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The case is a finger with some flesh, but less than an olive's bulk. With an olive's bulk of flesh it would defile in a tent regardless; with no flesh at all, a bone, even a full limb, does not defile in a tent by itself. A *limb*, however, defiles even with less than an olive's bulk of flesh (Niddah 43b), so everything depends on whether the extra finger counts as a limb. Without flesh it can count toward the 125 limbs, the majority of a body's 248, which together defile in a tent. It counts only if it stands in line with the other fingers, since it has no nail.

WHY IT MATTERS. The status of the kohen's extra finger is tied to a broader question: when is an anomalous body part a "limb"?

SECOND BARAITA. Rav Chisda: our great teacher (Rashi: Rav), may God be his help, said: an extra finger with bone but no nail defiles by touching and carrying but not in a tent. R. Yochanan: when it is not counted on the hand (Rashi: two deficiencies, no nail and not in line; with a nail it would defile even if not in line).

R. YOCHANAN'S COMPLAINT. עשו דבריהם כדברי נביאות: "They made their words like the words of prophets." Either way: if it is a limb, it should defile in a tent too; if it is not, it should not defile by touching and carrying either!

Tosafot – ד"ה עשו דבריהם דברי נביאות מה נפשך כו'

QUESTION. Is "words of prophets" praise or criticism? Rashi: prophets need not give reasons, and these Sages gave none.

ANSWER. Here the expression is not praise, since the Gemara follows it with an objection. In Bava Batra 12a, however, the same phrase is used of authority and importance, citing the teaching that prophecy was taken from prophets but not from the Sages.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Context determines the tone: here R. Yochanan is protesting a ruling that seems internally inconsistent.

FIRST EXPLANATION. Rav Huna bar Manoach citing Rav Acha son of Rav Ika: the touching-and-carrying impurity is because of a barley-grain-sized bone, which one has touched (a bone that small imparts impurity by touch and carrying, but not in a tent).

SECOND EXPLANATION. Rav Pappa: it is a rabbinic decree, treating an uncounted finger like a counted one. **QUESTION.** If so, it should defile in a tent too! **ANSWER.** The Sages made a distinction (היכירא), so that terumah and consecrated food would not be burned on its account. (The partial decree shows that the impurity is only rabbinic.)

4. "Majority of structure" and "majority of number" 45a

THE MISHNAH IN OHOLOT. רוב בנינו ורוב מנינו של מת אע"פ שאין בו רובע טמאין: "The majority of a corpse's structure, or of the number of its bones, defiles (in a tent) even if it is less than a quarter-*kav*." A baraita: what is the majority of its structure? The two shins and one thigh, since they make up most of the height of a tall person. The majority of its number: 125.

Rashi – ד"ה הואיל ורוב גובהו בגדול

THE ISSUE. Why do two shins and one thigh count as "most" of a body?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. In a person of normal proportions (not a dwarf), they make up most of the height of the body excluding the head, which is not counted in the "structure" for this purpose. Rashi notes an alternative reading, "most of its structure *in height*," as in the Tosefta.

WHY IT MATTERS. "Structure" is measured by the frame, not by weight or count.

QUESTION. Ravina to Rava: did the Tanna come to teach us arithmetic? (Rashi: since a body has 248 limbs, a majority is obviously 125.) **ANSWER.** He teaches what a baraita says: a body lacking limbs, with only 200, or with extra limbs, 281, in all cases 125 is the count. Follow the majority of people.

Rashi – ד״ה כולן עולין למנין קכ״ה

THE ISSUE. What exactly does the baraita teach?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Extra limbs count as limbs and add to the 125; and the standard is fixed. For the person with 281, 125 is not truly a majority of his own body, yet it suffices; for the person with 200, 101 would be his majority, yet only 125 counts.

WHY IT MATTERS. The law sets a fixed measure based on the typical body, not on each individual.

5. R. Yishmael's students: 252, and the extra limbs of a woman 45a

THE REPORT. R. Yehuda citing Shmuel: R. Yishmael's students once boiled the body of a woman, a harlot sentenced by the king to burning; they examined it and found 252 bones. R. Yishmael told them: perhaps you examined a woman, for the Torah added to her two hinges and two doors.

BARAITA. R. Elazar: as a house has hinges (צירים), so does a woman, as it says, "she crouched and gave birth, for her hinges turned upon her" (Shmuel I 4:19). R. Yehoshua: as a house has doors, so does a woman: "for it did not close the doors of my womb" (Iyov 3:10). R. Akiva: as a house has a key, so does a woman: "and He opened her womb" (Bereishit 30:22).

QUESTION. According to R. Akiva, the students should have found 253 (Rashi). **ANSWER.** Since the "key" is small, perhaps it dissolved in the boiling.

RAV. None of these extra parts defile in a tent, as it says, "This is the law: a *person* who dies in a tent" (Bamidbar 19:14): a part common to all people. Rashi: each of a woman's extra parts, with some flesh on it, is not a "limb" that defiles by itself.

ABAYE'S CHALLENGE. Does a man have no "hinges"? It says, "hinges seized me like a woman in labor" (Yeshayahu 21:3), and "my hinges turned upon me" (Daniel 10:16). **ANSWER.** Those are hinges of flesh. This is reasonable, for otherwise how would one ever reach 248, neither in a man nor in a woman? Rashi: without bone, they are not limbs.

6. Six fingers: a warrior's verse and R. Tarfon 45b

SOURCE OF THE DISPUTE. R. Yitzchak: both R. Yehuda and the Sages expounded one verse: "there was another war … and there was a man of stature, with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number" (Shmuel II 21:20). One master holds the verse speaks to his discredit; the other, to his praise.

RABBAH. Why does the verse say both "six and six" and "twenty-four in number"? Both are needed. With "six and six" alone, one might say six on one hand and six on one foot (Rashi: only one of each). With "twenty-four" alone, one might say five on one side and seven on the other. "Number" teaches that the extra fingers are counted on the hand, standing in line.

THE INCIDENT. R. Yehuda: a man with twenty-four fingers and toes came before R. Tarfon, who said to him: "May there be more like you in Israel." R. Yosi responded: is there proof from there? This is what he said: "May the *mamzerim* and *netinim* in Israel be as few as you."

Rashi – ד"ה כמותך יתמעטו ממזרי ונתיני מישראל

THE ISSUE. How does R. Yosi turn the blessing around?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. May all *mamzerim* in Israel be like you: marked by a visible sign that they come from disqualified seed, so that people will not marry into them.

WHY IT MATTERS. R. Yosi denies that R. Tarfon's words were praise, so the incident cannot prove that six fingers are not a defect.

7. Left-handed and ambidextrous 45b

BARAITA. A left-handed person, whether in hand or foot, is unfit. One equally skilled with both hands: Rebbi disqualifies and the Sages declare fit. One master holds that weakness began in the right hand; the other, that strength began in the left.

Rashi – ד"ה איטר ברגל

THE ISSUE. Why should left-handedness disqualify, and what is a "left-footed" person?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. A left-footed person steps off with his left foot first, unlike most people. Left-handedness disqualifies because the service requires the right hand: "he shall dip his finger," and wherever "finger" and "kohen" appear, it means the right hand (Zevachim 24a). Likewise the service is performed standing, and standing is normally based on the right foot.

WHY IT MATTERS. It explains the ambidextrous dispute: is his right hand weakened (disqualifying), or his left strengthened (fit)?

8. Mishnah: disqualified in a person, fit in an animal 45b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 45b)

הכושי, הגיחור, והלבקן, והקפח, והנגנס, והחרש, והשוטה, והשיכור, ובעלי נגעים טהורים, פסולין באדם וכשרים בבהמה. רשב"ג אומר שוטה מן הבהמה אינה מן המובחר. רבי אלעזר אומר אף בעלי הדלדולין פסולין באדם וכשרין בבהמה.

The *kushi*, the *gichor*, the *lavkan*, the *kipe'ach* and the dwarf (all defined in the Gemara), the deaf, the insane, the drunk, and one with pure skin afflictions (Rashi: such as *sapachat*; impure ones need not be listed, since such a person may not even enter the Temple courtyard): these are unfit in a person and fit in an animal. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: an insane animal is not choice. R. Elazar says: those with hanging growths of flesh are also unfit in a person and fit in an animal.

COLORS. The Gemara first suggests: *kushi*, black; *gichor*, white; *lavkan*, red. **CHALLENGE.** But a man once called out, "Who wants *lukiyani*?", and they turned out to be white (Rashi: white lambs), so *lavkan* must mean white. **CONCLUSION.** *Kushi* is black; *gichor* is red, as people say "red *gichya*"; *lavkan* is white.

KIPE'ACH. Rav Zevid taught: tall. **CHALLENGE.** R. Abahu taught that God takes pride in tall people: "I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of cedars" (Amos 2:9). **ANSWER.** Rav Pappa: באריכא שמיטה סניא; he is tall and gangly. Rashi: tall and thin, so he cannot bear his own height and stoops.

REISH LAKISH'S ADVICE. A tall man should not marry a tall woman, lest a "mast" be born to them; a dwarf should not marry a dwarf woman, lest a "finger" be born; a very fair man should not marry a very fair woman, lest a *bohek* be born (Rashi: extremely white); a very dark man should not marry a very dark woman, lest a *tafu'ach* be born (Rashi: as black as a pot).

THE DRUNK. But a drunk kohen desecrates the service (Vayikra 10:9–10). He should be counted with the blemishes that desecrate the service, not here! **ANSWER.** The Mishnah speaks of a man drunk on other intoxicants, not wine, and it does not follow R. Yehuda. A baraita: one who ate Ke'ila figs, or drank milk or honey, and entered the Sanctuary is liable.

Rashi – ד"ה בהדי מומין

THE ISSUE. Why is listing the drunk here a problem?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. This Mishnah lists conditions that disqualify a kohen only because he "does not resemble the seed of Aharon," which, as taught at the start of the chapter, do not invalidate the service. A drunk kohen's service is invalid, so he belongs with the true blemishes. R. Yehuda treats other intoxicants like wine (Keritot 13b): Ke'ila figs grow there and intoxicate like wine, and "honey" refers to a fermented mixture of water and honey. Our Mishnah, which lists the drunk among the lesser cases, therefore speaks of other intoxicants and does not follow R. Yehuda.

WHY IT MATTERS. The structure of the chapter, with its distinction between levels of disqualification, is used to pin down which kind of "drunk" the Mishnah means.

Tosafot – ד"ה ובשאר דברים המשכרים ודלא כר' יהודה

QUESTION. A baraita (Zevachim 14b) lists a "drunk" among those whose service of receiving, carrying and sprinkling the blood is invalid. Why "drunk" and not "one who drank wine"?

ANSWER. R. Chaim Kohen explains that it refers to other intoxicants and follows R. Yehuda, who holds that they too invalidate the service, just as our Gemara interprets the "drunk" here as one drunk on other intoxicants.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The same wording, "drunk," marks the case of other intoxicants in both places; the two sources differ only on whether that case invalidates the service.

9. Mishnah: fit in a person, unfit in an animal 45b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 45b)

אלו כשרין באדם ופסולין בבהמה: אותו ואת בנו, טריפה, ויוצא דופן, ושנעבדה בהן עבירה, ושהמית את האדם. והנושא נשים בעבירה פסול עד שידירנה הנאה, והמטמא למתים פסול עד שיקבל עליו שלא יהא מטמא למתים.

These are fit in a person but unfit in an animal: "it and its offspring" (Rashi: an animal may not be offered on the same day as its mother; it is "lacking time"), a *tereifah*, one born by caesarean section, one with which a sin was committed, and one that killed a person. A kohen who married women forbidden to him (Rashi: a divorcee or a *chalutzah*) is unfit until he vows to derive no benefit from her; one who defiles himself for the dead is unfit until he undertakes not to do so.

QUESTION. "It and its offspring" in a person, what does that mean? If Aharon and his sons serving on the same day, the parallel would be a male goat and its son; but a baraita teaches that "it and its offspring" applies to females, not males. If a mother and her child, the parallel would be a kohen's daughter and her son, but a woman does not perform the service! **ANSWER.** It does mean Aharon and his sons, parallel to a male goat and its son. In the West (Eretz Yisrael) they said in the name of R. Yosi bar Avin: this shows the Mishnah follows Chananya, who in a baraita says the law applies to males and females.

THE VOW. It was taught: he vows and may serve; he then goes and divorces her (Rashi: he may serve from the moment he vows, even before the divorce). **CONCERN.** Perhaps he will go to a sage and have the vow annulled? **ANSWER.** This follows the view that one must specify the vow.

Rashi – ד"ה צריך לפרט

THE ISSUE. How does "specifying the vow" prevent its annulment?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. One who asks to be released from a vow must state what he vowed about. When the sage hears that the vow was made because the woman is forbidden to him, he will not annul it.

WHY IT MATTERS. The safeguard is the sage himself, who will refuse to undo a vow that protects a prohibition.

FURTHER QUESTIONS. That works for the view that one must specify; for the view that one need not, we make him vow in public. That works for the view that a public vow cannot be annulled; for the view that it can, we make him vow "on the understanding of the public" (על דעת רבים), which cannot be annulled.

AMEMAR'S RULING. The halacha is: even according to the view that a public vow can be annulled, a vow made "on the understanding of the public" cannot. That applies to an optional matter; for a matter of a mitzvah, it can be annulled. So it was with a children's teacher whom

Rav Acha made vow (Rashi: never to teach again), because he was negligent with the children (Rashi: he struck them harshly, with grave results), and Ravina reinstated him because no other teacher as precise as he could be found.

Tosafot – ד"ה אבל לדבר מצוה יש לו הפרה

QUESTION. Why may a vow "on the understanding of the public" be annulled for a mitzvah?

ANSWER. Rabbeinu Tam: because presumably the public is pleased. He adds that "on the understanding of the public" means one who names particular people, even in their absence; "on the understanding of the public" without specification is meaningless; and a vow on the understanding of one individual can be annulled by a sage even if he named him.

WHY THIS MATTERS. The unannullable vow rests on the public's presumed consent, which is why a mitzvah, which the public certainly favors, overrides it.

DEFILING FOR THE DEAD. Why is a mere undertaking enough here, while there we require a vow? **ANSWER.** There, his desire overpowers him (Rashi: with forbidden women his inclination is stronger, so a vow is required).

With this the chapter *Mumin Elu* ends (הדרן עלך מומין אלו). The next chapter, *Yesh Bekhor*, on the firstborn son's inheritance and his redemption by a kohen, begins on the same amud and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 46.

The full picture in plain language

The chapter's final daf completes the head-to-toe catalogue with legs, feet and hands. Most of these defects come from the extra "or" in "or a broken leg" and "or a broken hand," and the Mishnah carefully limits the rules for webbed and extra fingers. The extra finger's bone raises a question from a different area of law: whether an anomalous body part counts as a "limb" for corpse impurity. The Gemara presents rulings that seem inconsistent, explains them as a tiny-bone law or a rabbinic decree, and moves to the "majority" standards and the "extra limbs" of a woman, which Rav and Abaye conclude are not limbs.

The two final Mishnayot are mirror images. One lists features that disqualify a kohen but not an animal, mostly appearance and fitness, where the Gemara defines color terms, height and drunkenness; the drunk is listed here only because he is drunk on intoxicants other than wine. The other lists features that disqualify an animal but not a kohen, and adds two kohanim who may serve once they commit to change. The vow required of the first prompts a step-by-step defense against annulment, ending with Amemar's rule that a vow "on the understanding of the public" stands, except for a mitzvah.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
מקיש	*makish (kishan)*	One whose ankles or knees knock together as he walks.
עיקל	*ikel*	Bow-legged: when his soles touch, his knees do not.
כסתות	*kesatot*	"Cushions" of flesh on the foot; too many or none at all disqualifies.
קלוטות	*kelutot*	Webbed (fingers or toes); fit if the web is short or has been cut.
יתרת	*yeteret*	An extra finger. Once removed it disqualifies only if it had bone.
נספרת על גב היד	*nisperet al gav ha-yad*	"Counted on the hand": an extra finger standing in line with the others, and so treated as a limb.
אהל	*ohel*	Impurity by being under one roof with a corpse or part of one.
רוב בנינו, רוב מנינו	*rov binyano, rov minyano*	The majority of a corpse's frame, or of the number of its limbs (125), which defile in a tent.
דברי נביאות	*divrei nevi'ut*	"Words of prophets": rulings given without reasons; R. Yochanan's complaint here.
צירים	*tzirim*	"Hinges": body parts described in verses; per Abaye, fleshy, not counted as limbs.
איטר	*itter*	Left-handed (or left-footed); unfit, since the service requires the right side.
שולט בשתי ידיו	*sholet bi-shtei yadav*	Ambidextrous; disputed by Rebbi and the Sages.
כושי, גיחור, לבקן	*kushi, gichor, lavkan*	Very dark, ruddy, and very pale complexions.
קפח	*kipe'ach*	Tall and gangly, stooping under his own height.
ממזר, נתין	*mamzer, natin*	Categories of people whom Israelites may not marry.
אותו ואת בנו	*oto ve-et beno*	The prohibition of slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day.
צריך לפרט	*tzarikh lifrot*	One seeking release from a vow must state its content to the sage.
על דעת רבים	*al da'at rabbim*	A vow made "on the understanding of the public," which cannot be annulled except for a mitzvah.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.