Bekhorot 47

Daf Yomi · Wednesday, November 4, 2026 · כ"ד חשון תשפ"ז · Covers 47a (the convert's children) through 47b (end of the Gemara on the Mishnah)

Summary

Bekhorot 47 continues the chapter *Yesh Bekhor*. Its first question is about a man who had children while he was a gentile and then converted. R. Yochanan says his first son born afterward is not a firstborn for inheritance, since he already had "the first of his strength." Reish Lakish says he is, for "a convert is like a newborn child." The two follow the same reasoning on whether such a convert has fulfilled the commandment to have children, and the Gemara explains why both disputes had to be stated. A Mishnah and a baraita are brought against R. Yochanan; the Mishnah is reinterpreted, and the baraita is assigned to R. Yosi HaGelili.

Rav Adda bar Ahavah rules that the son of a Levite woman is exempt from the five *sela'im*, though lineage follows the father. Rav Pappa limits this to a child fathered by a gentile; Mar son of Rav Yosef, citing Rava, applies it even to an Israelite father, since the Torah made redemption depend on "the opening of the womb." The Mishnah about a woman whose baby was mixed up with a "kohenet" or Levite woman's tests both views. A story about Rabbah testing Rav Pappa shows why a kohen's daughter differs from a Levite woman: relations with a gentile disqualify her, while a Levite woman keeps her sanctity.

Rav Chisda and Rabbah bar Rav Huna dispute whether the son of a kohen, disqualified as a *chalal*, must redeem himself when his father died within thirty days of his birth. The Gemara then explains the Mishnah's child of uncertain paternity, who seems to lose even an ordinary share of the inheritance, and why the brothers cannot help each other with powers of attorney. A final Mishnah lists miscarriages that do not "open the womb," so that the next son is a firstborn for both purposes. A child born by caesarean section and the son after him are firstborns for neither, while R. Shimon gives the first the inheritance and the second the redemption. The Gemara traces this to two principles: whether a caesarean is a "birth," and whether one who is a firstborn in only one sense counts as a firstborn.

Detailed Summary

1. A convert who had children before converting 47a

Background: on 46a the Mishnah taught that inheritance follows the father ("the first of his strength") and redemption follows the mother ("opening the womb"). The daf's first line closes the discussion of the forehead and "recognition" (summary of Bekhorot 46). The Gemara now asks about a father whose earlier children were born before he converted.

THE DISPUTE. If he had sons while a gentile and then converted, R. Yochanan says he has no firstborn for inheritance, since he already had "the first of his strength." Reish Lakish says he does: גר שנתגייר כקטן שנולד דמי, "a convert is like a newborn child," and his earlier children no longer count as his.

THEIR CONSISTENCY. They follow their reasoning elsewhere. If a man had children as a gentile and converted, R. Yochanan says he has fulfilled the commandment of *peru u-revu* (having children), for "He did not create it for emptiness; He formed it to be inhabited" (Yeshayahu 45:18): his children add to the world's settlement. Reish Lakish says he has not, for a convert is like a newborn.

BOTH NEEDED. Had only the first dispute been stated, one might think Reish Lakish rules for the convert only there, since as gentiles they are not subject to the law of inheritance; but regarding children he would agree with R. Yochanan, since "to be inhabited" applies and the man has populated the world. Had only the second been stated, one might think R. Yochanan rules so only there, but on inheritance he would agree with Reish Lakish.

Tosafot – ד"ה דבהיותו עובד כוכבים לאו בני נחלה נינהו

QUESTION. Rashi explains that gentiles do not inherit their gentile father after converting. But Kiddushin 17b implies that a gentile does inherit his father by Torah law.

ANSWER. "Not subject to inheritance" here means not subject to the law of the firstborn's double portion.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Reish Lakish's distinction is narrower than it first seems: gentiles inherit, but the firstborn's double portion is an Israelite law that never applied to them.

CHALLENGE FROM THE MISHNAH. We learned (46a): a man who had no sons married a woman who had already given birth, as a maidservant or a gentile; "once she came into Israel she gave birth," the son is a firstborn for inheritance but not for the kohen. Gave birth from whom? If from an Israelite who had no sons, why mention a convert or a maidservant? Even a born Israelite woman who had children before would be the same (Rashi: inheritance follows the father). Rather, it must be from a convert who had children and converted with her, and it teaches he has a firstborn for inheritance, against R. Yochanan.

ANSWER. No; it is from an Israelite who had no sons, and the point needed is that the son is not a firstborn for the kohen, to reject R. Yosi HaGelili, who says "opening the womb in Israel" requires that the womb be opened within Israel.

CHALLENGE FROM A BARAITA. If he had sons as a gentile and converted, he has a firstborn for inheritance. **ANSWER.** Ravina (or Rav Acha): that is certainly R. Yosi HaGelili, who says "opening the womb in Israel," and he derives the father's law from the mother's.

Rashi – ד"ה מינה דידה

THE ISSUE. How does R. Yosi HaGelili's rule about the mother apply to the father?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. For R. Yosi HaGelili, her earlier children, born outside Israel, do not count, and this son is the one "opening the womb in Israel." By the same token, the father's earlier children do not count either, and this son is "the first of his strength."

WHY IT MATTERS. The baraita need not be a refutation of R. Yochanan; it reflects a Tanna whose view on the mother carries over to the father.

2. The son of a Levite woman 47a

RAV ADDA BAR AHAVAH. לוייה שילדה בנה פטור מה' סלעים: "A Levite woman who gave birth: her son is exempt from the five *sela'im*." Fathered by whom? If by a kohen or a Levite, why specify a Levite woman? Even an Israelite woman's son would be exempt (Rashi: kohanim and Levites are exempt, 3b). Rather, by an Israelite. But "by their families, by their fathers' house" (Bamidbar 1:2): lineage follows the father!

RAV PAPPA. It means fathered by a gentile. And do not say this follows only the view that a gentile does not taint the child; even according to the view that he does, the child is called "a disqualified Levite" and is exempt.

Rashi – ד"ה אלא אפילו למ"ד מזהמין · ד"ה דאיעבר מעובד כוכבים

THE ISSUE. Why would a gentile father make the child a Levite?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. A gentile has no lineage in relation to Israel, so the child belongs to his Israelite mother's line rather than his gentile father's, and is exempt. Even according to the view that he is assigned to the gentile father ("tainted," Yevamot 45a), he is exempt, since he still carries the name "Levite," albeit disqualified.

WHY IT MATTERS. On Rav Pappa's reading, Rav Adda bar Ahavah's ruling is about lineage, not about the womb.

Tosafot – ד"ה ולא תימא אליבא דמ"ד אין מזהמין כו'

CLARIFICATION. "One who says we taint" is the view that assigns the child to the gentile, so called because gentiles carry the "taint" mentioned in Shabbat 146a. The view that a gentile's child by an Israelite woman is fit assigns him to the gentile, whereas the view that he is a *mamzer* assigns him to the Israelite mother, which is why *mamzer* status can apply. Tosafot note that Rashi had it the other way round, and cite Yevamot 17a for their reading.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot correct which view "taints"; the practical point, that the child is exempt either way, is the same.

MAR SON OF RAV YOSEF CITING RAVA. It really means fathered by an Israelite, and this case is different, for the verse says "opening the womb": the Torah made redemption depend on the womb (Rashi: for the five *sela'im* we follow the mother).

Tosafot – ד"ה מר בריה דרב יוסף משמיה דרבא [אמר] לעולם מישראל

RULING. The halacha follows Mar son of Rav Yosef, as ruled in Chullin 132a. On that basis, the son of a Levite woman or a kohen's daughter married to an Israelite is exempt from the five *sela'im* today.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot connect the sugya to practice: the mother's tribe can exempt her son from *pidyon ha-ben*.

3. The Mishnah's "kohenet": Rabbah tests Rav Pappa 47a

THE MISHNAH. "A woman who gave birth together with a kohenet, or a Levite woman": the son is a firstborn for the kohen. This implies that the sons of the kohenet and the Levite woman are exempt. Fathered by whom? If by a kohen and a Levite, why specify these women? Even an Israelite woman's son would be exempt.

BY A GENTILE? Would a kohenet be exempt? Rav Pappa said: Rabbah tested us (Rashi: posed halachic questions to examine us): a kohenet impregnated by a gentile, what is the law? I said to him: is this not Rav Adda bar Ahavah's ruling that a Levite woman's son is exempt? He replied: how can you compare? A Levite woman retains her sanctity, as a baraita teaches: a Levite woman who was captured or had illicit relations is given tithe and may eat it. But a kohenet, once a gentile has relations with her, becomes a *zarah*, a non-priestly woman.

Tosafot – ד"ה אלא כהנת כיון דאיבעילה [ליה] הויא לה זרה

CLARIFICATION. She loses even a Levite's sanctity and becomes worse than a Levite woman. A captured Levite woman married to a kohen is disqualified from terumah but keeps her sanctity for the five *sela'im*. A kohenet's sanctity comes from her own body, so when she is profaned it lapses completely.

WHY THIS MATTERS. It explains Rabbah's distinction: the Levite woman's status survives relations with a gentile, the kohenet's does not.

RESOLUTION. This works for Mar son of Rav Yosef, who says the Levite woman's child was fathered by an Israelite: he reads the Mishnah the same way. But how does Rav Pappa read it? **ANSWER.** It really means fathered by a kohen, and the woman is an Israelite; she is called a "kohenet" because her son is a kohen.

4. The *chalal* whose father died 47b

Background: a *chalal* is the son of a kohen from a marriage forbidden to kohanim. He is not a kohen, so as a firstborn he must be redeemed like an Israelite (Rashi). Redemption becomes due when the baby is thirty days old.

THE DISPUTE. A kohen died and left a firstborn son who is a *chalal*. Rav Chisda: the son must redeem himself. Rabbah bar Rav Huna: he need not. If the father died after thirty days, all agree the son need not, since the father acquired his redemption (Rashi: the father, a kohen, would have owed it to himself, and he bequeaths that right with his estate). They disagree where the father died within thirty days. Rav Chisda: he must, since the father never acquired it. Rabbah bar Rav Huna: he need not, for he can tell the kohen, "I come with the power of a man (my father, a kohen) with whom you could not have litigated."

CHALLENGE. We learned: a woman who converted while pregnant: the son is a firstborn for the kohen. Why? Let him say, "I come with the power of a man with whom you could not have litigated" (since a gentile father owed nothing). **ANSWER.** A gentile is different, since he has no lineage (Rashi: the son does not come by his power at all; a convert is like a newborn).

REISH LAKISH. R. Shimon of Yasiniya citing Reish Lakish: if the kohen died within thirty days, the *chalal* must redeem himself, since the father did not acquire the redemption; after thirty days he need not.

Tosafot – ד"ה הבן חייב לפדות את עצמו

QUESTION. How can the son be obligated to redeem himself when no one else was obligated to redeem him? In Kiddushin 29a we derive from "*tifdeh tifdeh*" that a woman, whom others are not commanded to redeem, need not redeem herself; the same should apply to this son (and to the Mishnah's convert's son).

ANSWER. The cases differ. Redemption never applies to a woman through any father. This son, had he an Israelite father, would have had to be redeemed by him, so he is the kind of person to whom the obligation applies.

WHY THIS MATTERS. Tosafot define who can owe his own redemption: someone in the category of those redeemed, even if no actual father was obligated.

5. The child of uncertain paternity and powers of attorney 47b

QUESTION. The Mishnah: a woman who remarried within three months and the child may be the first or second husband's. "He is not a firstborn for inheritance," implying he takes an ordinary share. But why? He goes to these heirs and they push him away (claiming he is the other man's son), and he goes to those and they push him away.

R. YIRMEYAH. The ruling concerns the next son: "He is a firstborn for the kohen, and the one after him is not a firstborn for inheritance."

Rashi – ד"ה והכי קאמר בכור לכהן · ד"ה לא נצרכא

THE ISSUE. What does R. Yirmeyah's reading say about each son?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The doubtful son himself takes nothing, since each family's sons tell him "you are not our brother." He is in any case the one who opened his mother's womb, so he must redeem himself. And the next son born of the second husband is not a firstborn for inheritance, since his brothers can tell him: perhaps the doubtful son is our father's son, and you are not the firstborn.

WHY IT MATTERS. The Mishnah's "not a firstborn for inheritance" shifts from the doubtful child to his younger half-brother.

QUESTION. Let them write powers of attorney to each other! (Rashi: each authorizes the other, and one claims the double portion: if I am the firstborn, give it to me; if he is, give it to me on his behalf.) And if you say the Mishnah speaks of a case without such a power, we explain it below as speaking even with one (per Shmuel). **CONCLUSION.** This supports R. Yannai: if they were identified and later mixed up, they may write powers of attorney to each other; if they were never identified and then mixed up, they may not.

Rashi – ד"ה כותבין הרשאה זה לזה

THE ISSUE. Why should earlier identification matter?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. If two babies were once known and then mixed up, each once had a right to his father's estate, and a power of attorney can transfer that right. If they were never known, neither ever held a right, so there is nothing to transfer. Our Mishnah is a case that was never known, since it was never established who the firstborn was.

WHY IT MATTERS. A power of attorney can transfer only a right that once existed; it cannot create one out of doubt.

6. Mishnah: firstborn for both, and for neither 47b

MISHNAH (BEKHOROT 47b)

אי זהו בכור לנחלה ולכהן? המפלת שפיר מלא מים, מלא דם, מלא גנינין, המפלת כמין דגים וחגבים שקצים ורמשים, והמפלת ליום ארבעים, הבא אחריהם בכור לנחלה ולכהן. יוצא דופן והבא אחריו, שניהן אינן בכור לא לנחלה ולא לכהן. ר״ש אומר הראשון לנחלה והשני לחמש סלעים.

Who is a firstborn for both inheritance and the kohen? One who comes after the miscarriage of a sac full of water, of blood, or of colored matter (Rashi: *guanin*, colors); of a form like fish, locusts, creeping things or crawling things; or a miscarriage on the fortieth day (Rashi: until the forty-first day it is mere fluid, as the fetus is formed only after forty days). The one born after these is a firstborn for both. A child born by caesarean section and the one after him: neither is a firstborn for inheritance or for the kohen. R. Shimon says: the first for inheritance, and the second for the five *sela'im*.

THE SAGES' REASONS. The first (caesarean) child is not a firstborn for inheritance, since we require "and they bore him" (Devarim 21:15; Rashi: through birth); nor for the five *sela'im*, since we require "opening the womb." The second is not a firstborn for inheritance, since we require "the first of his strength" and the first child preceded him; nor for the five *sela'im*, for they hold that בכור לדבר אחד לא הוי בכור, "a firstborn in one respect is not a firstborn."

Rashi – ד״ה בכור לדבר אחד

THE ISSUE. What is a firstborn "in one respect"?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The second son is first to open the womb, but he is not the first child, since a son preceded him. In the Sages' view, being first in only one respect does not make him a firstborn.

WHY IT MATTERS. The Sages require the redemption firstborn to be first in both senses; R. Shimon disagrees.

R. SHIMON'S REASONS. The first is a firstborn for inheritance, since R. Shimon holds that "she shall bear" (Vayikra 12:5) includes a caesarean, so it is a genuine birth (Rashi: the mother observes the days of impurity and purity, Niddah 40a, and the same applies to "and they bore him"). The second is a firstborn for the five *sela'im*, for he holds that "a firstborn in one respect is a firstborn."

Tosafot – ד״ה בכור לדבר אחד הוי בכור

QUESTION. By this reasoning the caesarean child himself should be a firstborn for the five *sela'im*, since he is first in one respect. Indeed, on 19a R. Tarfon is uncertain, regarding animals, about a caesarean and the one after it, precisely because "a firstborn in one respect" is in doubt.

ANSWER. R. Shimon's reasoning differs from R. Tarfon's. Although the second child is more clearly a firstborn for R. Shimon than for R. Tarfon, the caesarean child is weaker, being excluded by "opening the womb."

WHY THIS MATTERS. "First in one respect" counts only for a child who actually opened the womb; the caesarean child never did.

The next Mishnah, about twins and a father who must redeem two sons, begins on 48a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 48.

The full picture in plain language

The daf tests the chapter's principle, that inheritance follows the father and redemption the mother, at its edges. A convert's earlier children divide R. Yochanan, who counts them as real children, from Reish Lakish, for whom conversion is a new birth; the Mishnah and a baraita are reconciled with R. Yochanan by shifting their focus to the mother. The Levite woman's son shows how far "the womb" governs redemption: Rav Pappa limits the exemption to a gentile father, while Mar son of Rav Yosef, followed in practice, applies it even with an Israelite father, and Rabbah's test shows why a kohen's daughter loses that status when a gentile is involved.

Two cases then probe who pays and who collects. A *chalal* may owe his own redemption depending on whether his kohen father lived thirty days. A child of uncertain paternity gets nothing, his younger brother loses the firstborn's share, and powers of attorney cannot help, since no right was ever established. The final Mishnah sorts miscarriages that do and do not open the womb, and sets the Sages against R. Shimon on a caesarean birth, a dispute the Gemara traces to two principles: whether a caesarean is a birth, and whether a firstborn in one respect is a firstborn.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
גר שנתגייר כקטן שנולד	*ger she-nitgayer ke-katan she-nolad*	"A convert is like a newborn": Reish Lakish's reason why a convert's earlier children do not count.
פריה ורביה	*peru u-revu*	The commandment to have children.
לשבת יצרה	*la-shevet yetzarah*	"He formed it to be inhabited" (Yeshayahu 45:18): R. Yochanan's source that a convert's prior children count.
ראשית אונו	*reishit ono*	"The first of his strength": the father-based criterion for the firstborn's inheritance.
פטר רחם	*peter rechem*	"Opening the womb": the mother-based criterion for redemption.

לויה	*leviyah*	A Levite woman; her son is exempt from the five *sela'im*.
כהנת	*kohenet*	A kohen's daughter; or, in Rav Pappa's reading of the Mishnah, a woman whose son is a kohen.
זרה	*zarah*	A woman without priestly status; a kohen's daughter becomes one after relations with a gentile.
מזהמין את הולד	*mezahamin et ha-vlad*	"Tainting the child": the view on a gentile father's lineage over a child of an Israelite mother.
חלל	*chalal*	A kohen's son from a marriage forbidden to kohanim; not a kohen, and subject to redemption.
זכה בפדיונו	*zakhah be-fidyono*	"Acquired his redemption": a kohen father whose son reached thirty days holds the redemption money's right.
אתינא מכח גברא	*atina mi-ko'ach gavra*	"I come with the power of a man (you could not sue)": a defense based on the father's position.
הרשאה	*harsha'ah*	A power of attorney, allowing one heir to claim another's share.
הוכרו ולבסוף נתערבו	*hukeru u-le-vasof nit'arvu*	Babies who were identified and later mixed up; only they can transfer rights by power of attorney.
שפיר	*shafir*	A fetal sac. Filled only with water, blood or colored matter, it does not open the womb.
ליום ארבעים	*le-yom arba'im*	Within forty days of conception, before the fetus is considered formed.
יוצא דופן	*yotzei dofen*	A child born by caesarean section.
וילדו לו	*ve-yaldu lo*	"And they bore him" (Devarim 21:15): the inheritance passage's requirement of an actual birth.
בכור לדבר אחד	*bekhor le-davar echad*	A firstborn in one respect only; the Sages say he is not a firstborn, R. Shimon says he is.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.