Bekhorot 59

Daf Yomi · Monday, November 16, 2026 · ו׳ כסלו תשפ״ז · Covers 59a (Rava: the tenth is holy by itself) through 60a (Rav Huna bar Sechora's explanation)

Summary

Bekhorot 59 is built on two principles of Rava about animal tithe. The first is that the tenth animal is holy by itself, even if it never left the pen and was never called "tenth." The Gemara rejects several proofs before finding a baraita in which the tenth is tithe though it remained in the pen. That baraita says the ninth, which was called "tenth," is eaten only once blemished, while another baraita calls it ordinary. Rav Sheshet attributes the first to R. Shimon ben Yehuda, who holds that the ninth is not holy unless the name "tenth" was removed from the real tenth, and the Gemara examines his reasoning from the eleventh.

The second principle is that a proper count exempts. Animals counted while enough remained in the pen to complete ten are exempt, even if the tenth never came out. Rava derives this from "that passes," not "that has already passed," and a baraita supports him. Rava then applies the rule to fourteen lambs leaving a pen with two openings, showing that even a doubtful proper count exempts, and rules that an owner of fifteen lambs may not pick out ten to tithe and declare the rest exempt. A baraita about nineteen lambs seems to contradict him, and Rav Huna bar Sechora resolves it before Rava at a festival lecture, earning praise for his mother.

Detailed Summary

1. The tenth is holy by itself 59a

The preceding lines of 59a complete Abba Elazar ben Gomel's teaching that tithe may be taken by estimate (summary of Bekhorot 58).

RAVA. Rava said: the tenth is holy by itself.

Rashi – ד"ה קדוש מאליו

THE ISSUE. What does "by itself" mean?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. If he counted nine and the tenth remained in the pen, then even though it did not go out and he did not count it, it is holy by itself.

WHY IT MATTERS. The tenth's holiness does not depend on the act of counting it.

FIRST PROOF. Where does Rava learn this? If from what was taught: I have only where he called it "tenth"; whence where he did not call it "tenth"? The verse says "the tenth shall be holy," in any case. But perhaps that is where he did not call it "tenth" but called it "holy."

SECOND PROOF. Rather from what was taught: if he called the ninth "tenth," and the tenth went out and he said nothing, the ninth is eaten in its blemish and the tenth is tithe. But perhaps it is different there, since the tenth was identified, or he pointed at it.

Rashi – ד"ה דאיברר ליה עשירי

THE ISSUE. Why does that baraita not prove Rava's point?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Since it went out after nine, it was identified on its own as the tenth, so it is like other tithe even though he gave it no name. Alternatively, he pointed at it with his finger as it went out, though he said nothing. But where it remained in the pen and was given no name, we have not yet learned that it is holy.

WHY IT MATTERS. Leaving the pen as tenth may itself be a form of designation.

THIRD PROOF. Rather from what was taught: if he called the ninth "tenth" and the tenth died in the pen, the ninth is eaten in its blemish and all are exempt. Why are all exempt? Is it not because the tenth became holy? But perhaps they were exempted by a proper count, for Rava said a proper count exempts.

Rashi – ד"ה במנין הראוי

THE ISSUE. What is a "proper count"?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. When nine went out through the opening, the count was fit for tithing, since the tenth was still alive and fit to go out after them and exempt them. Since it was fit to go out, it is as though it went out and exempted the count. But the tenth itself was not holy until it went out.

WHY IT MATTERS. Rava's second principle could explain the baraita without his first.

FOURTH PROOF. Rather from what was taught: if he called the ninth "tenth," and the tenth remained in the pen, the ninth is eaten in its blemish and the tenth is tithe (Rashi: so even though it did not go out, it is holy by itself in the pen).

2. R. Shimon ben Yehuda on the ninth 59a–59b

THE CONTRADICTION. But it was taught that the ninth is ordinary! A Tanna recited before Rav Sheshet: whose view is this? R. Shimon ben Yehuda's, as it was taught: R. Shimon ben Yehuda says in the name of R. Shimon, the ninth too is not holy unless the name "tenth" was removed from the tenth, and logic dictates this.

Rashi – ד"ה אף התשיעי

THE ISSUE. What does R. Shimon ben Yehuda mean?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. Just as when he calls the eleventh "tenth," it is not holy unless the name of tithe was removed from the real tenth, for example by calling the tenth "ninth," so too the ninth, if called "tenth," is eaten only once blemished only if the name was removed from the tenth.

WHY IT MATTERS. Without that removal, the ninth remains ordinary, which explains the second baraita.

THE LOGIC. If the eleventh, which creates holiness to be offered, is holy only if the name "tenth" was removed from the tenth, then the ninth, which does not create holiness to be offered, surely is holy only if the name was removed; otherwise, not.

THE REBUTTAL. That is exactly the point. The eleventh, which creates holiness to be offered, requires that the name "tenth" be removed. But the ninth, which does not create holiness to be offered, should be holy even without removal.

Rashi – ד"ה היא הנותנת

THE ISSUE. How does the same comparison point the other way?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The eleventh's holiness is severe, since it is offered, so it is reasonable to require removal before that severe holiness takes effect. The ninth's holiness is light: it is not offered, only eaten once blemished. Such light holiness can take effect easily, even if the name was not removed from the tenth.

WHY IT MATTERS. The severity of the resulting holiness determines how easily it takes effect.

ANOTHER DISTINCTION. Alternatively, for the eleventh, after which the tenth has already been identified, removal is required; but for the ninth, before the tenth has been identified, it is holy even without removal. This is a refutation.

3. A proper count exempts 59b

THE SOURCE. Rava said: a proper count exempts. Where does he learn this? If from what we learned: "if one of those already counted jumped back among them, all are exempt," the counted ones themselves were exempted, were they not, by a proper count?

Rashi – ד"ה מנין הראוי פוטר

THE ISSUE. What is the case?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. He had ten lambs, brought them into the pen, and counted nine or eight; then one of those left in the pen died, or went out another opening, so the tenth was never sanctified. Those already counted are exempt, since when he counted them, the ones in the pen were fit to go out and complete the ten.

WHY IT MATTERS. The exemption depends on the possibility of a tenth, not on its actual separation.

REJECTED. Perhaps he had tithed them. You cannot say that, since it teaches separately "from those already tithed into them." But perhaps "tithed" means the tithe animal itself, as is precise from its saying "they graze."

FROM THE VERSE. Rather, Rava said: the verse says "that passes" (Vayikra 27:32), not one that has already passed. What is "already passed"? If where he tithed them, must that be said? Rather, it must be those exempted by a proper count. Learn from this.

A BARAITA. A baraita supports Rava: if he had ten lambs, brought them into the pen, counted five, and one of them died: if one of the counted died, he counts and completes them. If one of the uncounted died, the counted ones are exempt (Rashi: since they were a proper count), and the uncounted combine with another threshing floor.

4. Two openings 59b

SIX AND FOUR. Rava said: if he had fourteen lambs, brought them into a pen, six went out through this opening and four through that, and four remained: if those four went out through the opening of the six, he takes one from them and the rest combine with another threshing floor. If not, the six are exempt, and the two groups of four combine with another threshing floor.

Rashi – ד"ה והשאר

THE ISSUE. Why do the other four not become exempt?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The four that went out the other opening cannot be exempted by a proper count, since when they went out only four remained in the pen, and four cannot combine with four to make a group subject to tithe.

WHY IT MATTERS. A count is "proper" only if enough animals remain to complete ten.

FOUR AND SIX. If four went out through this opening, six through that, and four remained: if those four went out through the opening of the six, he takes one from them and the rest are exempt. If not, the four and the six are exempt, and the four combine with another threshing floor.

FOUR AND FOUR. If four went out here, four there, and six remained: if those six went out through one of the openings, he takes one and the rest are exempt. If not, both groups of four are exempt, and the six combine with another threshing floor.

WHAT IS NEW? What does this teach? That a proper count exempts. But Rava already said that once! One might have said we apply it to a certain proper count, but not to a doubtful one that fits here and fits there; it teaches us otherwise.

Rashi – ד"ה אבל ספק מנין הראוי

THE ISSUE. What makes the count doubtful?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. When four went out each opening, it is unknown through which opening the remaining six would go. One might say that in such a doubt we do not apply the proper count to both groups and exempt them all.

WHY IT MATTERS. Rava extends the principle even to a count that could complete either group.

5. Fifteen and nineteen lambs 59b–60a

RAVA'S RULING. Rava said: if he had fifteen lambs, he may not say, I will choose ten, bring them into the pen, take one, and the rest are exempt. Rather, he brings them all into the pen, brings out ten, takes one, and the rest combine with another threshing floor. A baraita teaches the same.

Rashi – ד"ה לא יאמר אברור עשרה

THE ISSUE. What is wrong with choosing ten?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. He would choose the lean ones and claim the rest are exempt because only five remain, which are not subject to tithe.

WHY IT MATTERS. The owner may not shape the count to his advantage.

NINETEEN. But it was taught: nineteen lambs, he may not say, I will choose ten and take one, and the rest are exempt; rather he brings them into the pen, brings out ten, takes one, and the rest are exempt!

RAV HUNA BAR SECHORA. Rav Huna bar Sechora explained it before Rava at the festival lecture (Rashi: on the Shabbat before the festival, when its laws are taught): we deal with a pen with two openings, where nine went out through this opening and nine through that, and the remaining one fits here and there.

Rashi – ד"ה דהאיך חד

THE ISSUE. How does one animal exempt eighteen?

RASHI'S EXPLANATION. The one left at the end makes a proper count for both groups and exempts them all. It is itself holy, whether it went out or remained, since the tenth is holy by itself.

WHY IT MATTERS. The answer combines both of Rava's principles.

OTHER ANSWERS. Let him answer that he counted nine and, at ten, called it "one" from the start! He holds the tenth is holy by itself. Let him answer that at the threshing floor he counted them in pairs! He holds that the tenth is holy by the count of animals.

PRAISE. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: fortunate is the mother of Rav Huna bar Sechora, who answered him at the festival lecture in line with his own teaching.

The next Mishnah, on two animals that went out at once, begins on 60a and is covered in the summary of Bekhorot 60.

The full picture in plain language

Animal tithe depends on the count, but Rava shows that the count works in two ways beyond the obvious. The animal that is truly tenth becomes holy on its own, even if it stays in the pen and no one names it. And animals that pass through the gate while enough remain to complete a group of ten are exempt, even if the tenth never comes out. These two ideas explain many cases where the counting goes wrong: an animal dies, the wrong one is called tenth, or the animals leave through two openings.

The daf also guards against manipulation. An owner may not pick out ten lean animals to tithe and declare the rest exempt as too few. When a baraita seems to allow that for nineteen lambs, Rav Huna bar Sechora shows how it fits Rava's own principles, with one animal completing the count for two groups at once.

Glossary

Hebrew	Transliteration	Meaning in this sugya
עשירי מאליו קדוש	*asiri me-elav kadosh*	The tenth is holy by itself.
מנין הראוי	*minyan ha-ra'ui*	A proper count, with enough left to complete ten.
נעקר שם עשירי	*ne'ekar shem asiri*	The name "tenth" was removed from the real tenth.
דיר	*dir*	The pen from which animals are counted.
מצטרפין לגורן אחר	*mitztarfin le-goren acher*	They combine with the next tithing date.
ריגלא	*rigla*	The public lecture before a festival.

Sources: Gemara with relevant Rashi and Tosafot.