

דף יומי • בכורות • דף ד'

Daf Yomi • The Full Daf • Elucidated Talmud • Navy & Gold Edition • with Rashi

THE SUGYA

We begin the daf with a deep dive into the wording of our Mishnah, where the Gemara is bothered by a basic kasha: How could the Mishnah say that the Kohanim and Levi'im themselves exempted the firstborn donkeys of the Yisraelim in the midbar? The Torah explicitly tells us that it was the animals of the Levi'im that exchanged and exempted the animals of the Yisraelim, while the Levi'im themselves only exchanged the firstborn sons! To resolve this, the Gemara brings a beautiful shakla v'tarya between Abaye and Rava, who offer different ways to read the Mishnah's laining and establish the source for why Kohanim and Levi'im are exempt from redeeming their own firstborn sons and donkeys.

As the sugya develops, we explore the mechanics of these exemptions. The Gemara raises several powerful kashas on both Abaye and Rava, questioning whether these exemptions should only apply to those specific Levi'im who were actually counted and active in the midbar exchange. Through this, we clarify the halachic status of a female Levite's son, the status of Aharon HaKohen who was excluded from the census, and how we know these exemptions apply for all generations. Finally, the Gemara pivots to analyze the source for using a lamb to redeem firstborn donkeys in the midbar, comparing it to the silver used for redeeming firstborn sons.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

עמוד א' DAF 4A

GEMARA

גמ'

The **Gemara** begins by analyzing the wording of our Mishnah:

QUESTION

אינהו פטרי?!

Did **they**, the Kohanim and Levi'im themselves, **exempt** the firstborn donkeys of the Yisraelim in the midbar?

EXPLANATION

אדם — אדם פטר, בהמה — בהמה פטרה,

With regard to **man**, the Levi'im as **man exempted** the firstborn of the Yisraelim; but with regard to **animal**, the **animal** of the Levi'im **exempted** the firstborn donkeys of the Yisraelim,

PROOF

דכתיב: "קח את הלויים תחת בכור בכני ישראל ואת בהמת הלויים תחת בהמתם!"

as it is written in the Torah: "Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the animals of the Levites in place of their animals"! So how can the Mishnah say that the Levi'im themselves exempted the donkeys?

ANSWER

אמר אביי, הכי קאמר:

Abaye said, the Mishnah is not talking about how they exempted the Yisraelim, but rather **this is what it is saying**:

EXPLANATION

כהנים ולויים פטורין בהמתם מקל וחומר —

The **Kohanim and Levi'im** are **exempt** from the obligation of redeeming **their animals**, meaning their own firstborn donkeys, and this is derived **from an a fortiori inference**:

PROOF

אם הפקיעה בהמתם של לויים בהמה של ישראל במדבר, דין הוא שתפקיע את של עצמן.

If the **animals of the Levites**, meaning their sheep, **exempted the animals of the Israelites in the wilderness** from their firstborn status, **it is logical that they should exempt their own** firstborn donkeys from this status.

OBJECTION

אמר ליה רבא: והא "פטרו" אינהו קתני!

Rava said to him: How can you say the kal v'chomer is about their animals? **But doesn't** the Mishnah **teach** that "they", meaning the Levi'im themselves, **exempted** the firstborns? The language refers to the people, not their animals!

OBJECTION

ועוד, אם איתא, אפילו מבכור בהמה טהורה נפטרו!

And furthermore, if it is so that their animals are exempt because of this kal v'chomer, then **even from the firstborn of a kosher animal they should be exempt**, since their kosher animals also exempted those of the Yisraelim!

OBJECTION

אלמה תנו: לא נפטרו מבכור בהמה טהורה, אלא מפדיון הבן ופטר חמור?

Why then did we learn in a Mishnah later on: The Kohanim and Levi'im were **not exempted from the firstborn of a kosher animal**, but only from the redemption of the son and the firstborn of a donkey?

ANSWER

אלא אמר רבא, הכי קאמר:

Rather, Rava said, **this is what** the Mishnah is saying:

EXPLANATION

כהנים ולויים פטרו הן עצמן מקל וחומר,

The **Kohanim and Levi'im** **exempted themselves** from the redemption of their own firstborn sons **from an a fortiori inference**:

PROOF

אם הפקיעה קדושתן של לויים קדושת של ישראל במדבר, לא יפקיע את של עצמן?

If the sanctity of the Levites exempted the sanctity of the Israelites' firstborns in the wilderness, should it not exempt their own firstborn sons?

QUESTION

אֲשֶׁכַּח אָדָם, בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה מִנֶּלֶךְ?

The Gemara asks: **We have found** a source for the exemption of **man**, meaning the Levi'im's own firstborn sons; but **from where do we know** that their **non-kosher animal**, the donkey, is also exempt?

ANSWER

אָמַר קָרָא: "אַךְ פֹּדֶה תִּפְדֶּה אֶת בְּכוֹר הָאָדָם וְאֶת בְּכוֹר הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּמֵאָה תִּפְדֶּה",

The verse states: "But you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of the non-kosher animal you shall redeem."

EXPLANATION

כָּל שֶׁיִּשְׁנוּ בְּכוֹר אָדָם — יִשְׁנוּ בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה, וְכָל שֶׁאֵינּוּ בְּכוֹר אָדָם — אֵינּוּ בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה.

This juxtaposition teaches: **Anyone who is subject to the firstborn of man is subject to the firstborn of a non-kosher animal, and anyone who is not subject to the firstborn of man is not subject to the firstborn of a non-kosher animal.** Since Levi'im are exempt from redeeming their sons, they are exempt from redeeming their donkeys.

OBJECTION

אָמַר לִיָּה רַב סַפְרָא לְאַבְיִי: לְדִידָךְ דְּאִמְרַת בְּהֵמָתָם,

Rav Safra said to Abaye: According to your view, where you say that the exemption of their donkeys is derived from the kal v'chomer of their animals,

OBJECTION

בֶּן לְוִי דִּהְוָה לִיָּה שֶׁה דְּאִפְקַע — לִיפְקַע, דְּלֹא הָוָה לִיָּה שֶׁה דְּלִיפְקַע — לֹא לִיפְקַע!

then a **Levi who had a sheep that exempted** a Yisrael's donkey in the midbar, **let his own donkey be exempted**; but one **who did not have a sheep that exempted** a Yisrael's donkey, **let him not be exempted**! Why are all Levi'im exempt?

OBJECTION

בֵּין לְדִידָךְ, בֵּין לְרַבָּא,

Furthermore, **both according to you and according to Rava**, who agree that the exemption is based on the exchange in the midbar,

OBJECTION

בֶּן חֹדֶשׁ דְּאִפְקַע — לִיפְקַע, פָּחוֹת מִבֶּן חֹדֶשׁ דְּלֹא אִפְקַע — לֹא לִיפְקַע!

a Levi who was **a month old** in the midbar, **who exempted** a Yisrael, **let him be exempted**; but one who was **less than a month old**, **who did not exempt** a Yisrael, **let him not be exempted**!

OBJECTION

לְוִיָּה לֹא תִיפְקַע?

And also, a son born to a **female Levite**, should he **not be exempted** from redemption, since women were not counted to exempt the Yisraelim?

OBJECTION

אַלמָה אָמַר רַב אֲדָא בַר אֲהָבָה: לְוִיָּה שִׁילָדָה — בְּנָה פֶטוּר מִחֲמֵשׁ סְלָעִים?

Why then did Rav Adda bar Ahava say: A female Levite who gave birth, her son is exempt from the five sela'im of redemption?

ANSWER

הָא לָא מְשִׁיא, כְּדָמַר בְּרִיָּה דְרַב יוֹסֵף מִשְׁמִיָּה דְרַבָּא, דְּאָמַר:

The Gemara answers: **This last point is not difficult**, as Mar the son of Rav Yosef said in the name of Rava, who said:

EXPLANATION

”פֶּטֶר רַחֵם” בְּפֶטֶר רַחֵם תִּלְה רַחֲמָנָא.

The Torah uses the term “**firstborn of the womb**”, which means the Merciful One made it dependent on the womb of the mother. Since she is a Levi, the child is exempt.

OBJECTION

וְאַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹא הָיָה בְּאוֹתוֹ מִנִּין — לָא לִיפְקֹעַ!

Rav Safra continues his challenge: **And Aaron, who was not in that count** of the Levi'im, let him not be exempted!

PROOF

דְּתַנִּינָא: לָמָּה נִקּוּד עַל ”אַהֲרֹן” שֶׁבְּחֹמֶשׁ הַפְּקוּדִים — שְׁלֹא הָיָה בְּאוֹתוֹ מִנִּין.

As it is taught in a Braisa: Why are there dots over the name “Aaron” in the Book of Numbers? To teach that he was not in that count of the Levi'im who exchanged the Yisraelim.

ANSWER

אָמַר קָרָא: ”הַלְוִיִּים”, הוֹקְשׁוּ כָּל הַלְוִיִּים זֶה לָזֶה.

The verse states: “The Levites”, which teaches that all the Levites are compared to one another. Therefore, even those who were not in the count are exempt.

QUESTION

כֹּהֲנִים מִנָּלּוּ?

The Gemara asks: **From where do we know** that the Kohanim are also exempt?

ANSWER

כְּדֶרְבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי:

It is in accordance with the teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:

EXPLANATION

בְּעֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה מְקוֹמוֹת נִקְרְאוּ כֹהֲנִים ”לְוִיִּים”, וְזֶה אֶחָד מֵהֶן: ”וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּים בְּנֵי צְדוֹק”.

In twenty-four places in Tanach the Kohanim are called "Levites", and this is one of them: "But the Kohanim, the Levites, the sons of Tzadok." Therefore, they are included in the exemption of the Levi'im.

עמוד ב' DAF 4B

QUESTION

ולדורות מנלן?

The Gemara asks: **And for generations, from where do we** derive that the Kohanim and Levi'im are exempt from the firstborn obligation?

ANSWER

אמר קרא: "והיו לי הלויים", "והיו" — בהווייתן יהו.

The verse states: "And the Levi'im shall be Mine." The word "and they shall be" teaches that **in their current state of being they shall** remain, meaning their exemption continues for all generations.

QUESTION

וממאי דבשה?

The Gemara asks: **And from where** do we know **that** the redemption of the firstborn donkeys in the wilderness was done specifically **with a lamb**?

ANSWER

אמר רב חסדא: נאמר כסף לדורות, ונאמר שה לדורות.

Rav Chisda said: "Silver" is mentioned for future generations regarding the redemption of a firstborn son, and "lamb" is mentioned for future generations regarding the redemption of a firstborn donkey.

EXPLANATION

מה כסף האמור לדורות — בו פדו לדורות, בו פדו לאותה שעה,

We compare them: **Just as silver which is mentioned for future generations, with it they redeemed for future generations, and with it they redeemed at that time** in the wilderness for the surplus firstborn,

EXPLANATION

אף שה האמור לדורות — בו פדו לדורות, בו פדו באותה שעה.

so too, the lamb which is mentioned for future generations, with it they redeemed for future generations, and with it they redeemed at that time in the wilderness.

OBJECTION

מה לקסף — שכן פודין בו הקדשות ומעשר שני!

The Gemara challenges this comparison: **What** is unique **about silver**? Indeed, **we redeem with it consecrated items and Second Tithe**, which is not the case with a lamb! Therefore, we cannot learn the rule of a lamb from silver.

ANSWER

אָלֹא, אָמַר קְרָא: "אַךְ פְּדוּה תִּפְדֶּה אֶת בְּכוֹר הָאָדָם וְאֶת בְּכוֹר הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּמְאָה תִּפְדֶּה",

Rather, the verse states: "But you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of the impure animal you shall redeem."

EXPLANATION

מָה בְּכוֹר אָדָם לֹא חִלְקֶת בֵּין לְדוֹרוֹת בֵּין לְאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה — בְּכֶסֶף,

The Torah juxtaposes them: **Just as** by the firstborn of man you did not differentiate between the law for future generations and the law for that time, as both were redeemed with silver,

EXPLANATION

אֲךָ בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה לֹא תַחְלוּק בּוֹ בֵּין לְדוֹרוֹת בֵּין לְאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה — בְּשֶׁה.

so too, by the impure animal you should not differentiate in its redemption between the law for future generations and the law for that time, and both must be redeemed with a lamb.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: שֶׁהָאֶחָד שֶׁל בֶּן לֵוִי פָטַר בָּמָה פְּטָרִי חֲמוּרִים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.

Rabbi Chanina said: One lamb of a Levite exempted several firstborn donkeys of Israelites in the wilderness.

PROOF

אָמַר אֲבִי: תִּדַּע, שֶׁהָרִי מָנָה הַפְּתוּב עוֹדְפִים בָּאָדָם, וְלֹא מָנָה עוֹדְפִין בְּבְהֵמָה.

Abaye said: Know that this is so, for the verse enumerated the surplus in humans, where there were 273 extra Israelite firstborns, but it did not enumerate any surplus in animals. This proves that the Levites' animals must have exempted multiple Israelite animals.

QUESTION

מִמָּאִי? דִּילְמָא לֹא הָוִי נִפְיִשִּׁי לְהוּ בְּהֵמוֹת טוֹבָא?

The Gemara asks: **From where** is this proven? Perhaps they did not have many animals, and the Israelite firstborn donkeys did not actually outnumber the Levites' lambs?

ANSWER

לֹא סָלְקָא דַּעְתָּהּ! דְּכַתִּיב: "וּמִקְנֵה רֶב הָיָה לְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וְלְבְנֵי גָד".

The Gemara answers: **Do not let this enter your mind!** For it is written: "And a great multitude of livestock belonged to the children of Reuven and the children of Gad." So they certainly had many animals.

QUESTION

דִּילְמָא אֲפִילוּ הָבִי, פְּשוּטִים דְּלוֹיִם הָווּ קִיִּימִי לְבִהְדִּי בְּכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל!

The Gemara asks: Perhaps even so, the non-firstborn animals of the Levites stood in equal number against the firstborn animals of the Israelites, and it was a one-to-one exchange?

ANSWER

אָמַר קְרָא: "וְאֵת בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמָתָם", בְּהֵמָה אַחַת תַּחַת בְּהֵמוֹת הָרַבָּה.

The verse states: "And the animal of the Levites in exchange for their animals." The singular word "animal" implies one animal of the Levites was exchanged for many animals of the Israelites.

QUESTION

וַאֲימָא בְּהֶמָּה רַבָּה?

The Gemara asks: **But say** that the singular word "animal" is a collective noun referring to **many animals**, just as we find in the verse "and many animals"?

ANSWER

אִם כֵּן, לִיכְתּוּב קָרָא אוֹ "בְּהֶמָּה תַּחַת בְּהֶמָּה" אוֹ "בְּהֶמָּתָם תַּחַת בְּהֶמָּתָם!"

The Gemara answers: **If so, let the verse write either "animal in exchange for animal" or "their animals in exchange for their animals"!**

EXPLANATION

מַאי "בְּהֶמָּת... תַּחַת בְּהֶמָּתָם"? שָׁמַע מִינָּהּ חֵד פֶּטֶר טוֹבָא.

What is the meaning of "the animal of the Levites in exchange for their animals"? Learn from this that one animal of a Levite exempted many Israelite animals.

PROOF

אָמַר רַבָּא, אֲרֵי אֲנִי נִמְי תְּנִינָא: וּפְדָה בּוֹ פְּעָמִים הָרַבָּה.

Rava said: We also learned a support for this in our Mishnah: And he may redeem with it many times, if he returns the lamb to the Kohen and buys it back.

EXPLANATION

וְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא טַעְמָא דְּמִתְנִיתִין מְפָרֵשׁ, וְהֵכִי קֹאמְרִי: מַאי טַעְמָא פְּדָה בּוֹ פְּעָמִים הָרַבָּה? מִשּׁוּם דְּשָׁה אֶחָד שָׁל בֶּן לֵוִי פּוֹטֵר כַּמָּה פְּטָרֵי חֲמוּרִים שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

And Rabbi Chanina is explaining the reason of the Mishnah, and this is what he is saying: What is the reason that one may redeem with it many times? Because one lamb of a Levite exempted several firstborn donkeys of Israelites in the wilderness, showing that a single lamb has the power to exempt multiple firstborns.

STATEMENT

אֵיתָמַר, רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: קֳדָשׁ בְּכוֹרוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר, וְרִישׁ לָקִישׁ אָמַר: לֹא קֳדָשׁ בְּכוֹרוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר.

It was stated: Rabbi Yochanan said: The firstborns were sanctified in the wilderness; and Reish Lakish said: The firstborns were not sanctified in the wilderness.

EXPLANATION

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: קֳדָשׁ בְּכוֹרוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר, דִּרְחֻמָּנָא אָמַר לִיקְדָּשׁוּ, דְּכָתִיב: "קֳדָשׁ לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר."

Rabbi Yochanan said: The firstborns were sanctified in the wilderness, because the Merciful One said they should be sanctified, as it is written: "Sanctify to Me every firstborn."

EXPLANATION

וְרִישׁ לָקִישׁ אָמַר: לֹא קִדְּשׁוּ בְּכוֹרוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר, מִדִּכְתִּיב: "וְהָיָה כִּי יָבִיֵאֲךָ", וּכְתִיב בְּתַרְיָה: "וְהִעֲבַרְתָּ", מִכָּל דִּמְעִיקָרָא לֹא קָדוֹשׁ.

And Reish Lakish said: The firstborns were not sanctified in the wilderness, because it is written: "And it shall be when He brings you," and it is written after it: "And you shall set apart." By inference, initially in the wilderness they were not sanctified.

OBJECTION

אִתְיָבִיָּה רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן לְרִישׁ לָקִישׁ: עַד שֶׁלֹּא הוּקָם הַמִּשְׁכָּן הָיוּ בָּמוֹת מוֹתְרוֹת וְעֹבֹדָה בְּבִכּוֹרוֹת!

Rabbi Yochanan challenged Reish Lakish: Before the Tabernacle was erected, high places were permitted and the service was performed by the firstborns! This shows they were sanctified in the wilderness.

ANSWER

אָמַר לִיָּה: בְּאוֹתָן שִׁינְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם.

Reish Lakish said to him: That refers to those firstborns who left Egypt, who were already sanctified, but not to those born in the wilderness.

INFERENCE

הֲכִי נִמִּי מְסַתְפָּרָא, דְּאִי לֹא תִימָא הֲכִי, בֶּן שָׁנָה בַּר מֵיַעֲבַד עֹבֹדָה הוּא?

The Gemara notes: This also stands to reason, for if you do not say so, is a one-year-old child fit to perform the Temple service? Since the Mishkan was built one year after leaving Egypt, any firstborn born in the wilderness would be too young.

QUESTION

וּדְקָאֲרִי לָהּ, מַאי קָאֲרִי לָהּ?

The Gemara asks: And the one who asked this challenge, why did he ask it? He surely knew a one-year-old cannot perform the service!

EXPLANATION

הֲכִי קָא קִשְׁיָא לִיָּה: אִי אָמַרְתָּ בְּשָׁלְמָא דְּלֹא פָּסִיק קְדוּשַׁתִּיָּהוּ — הֲנָה דִּמְעִיקָרָא נִמִּי לֹא פִקְעָא קְדוּשַׁתִּיָּהוּ, אֶלָּא אִי אָמַרְתָּ דְּפָסִיק קְדוּשַׁתִּיָּהוּ — הֲנָה דִּמְעִיקָרָא נִמִּי פִקְעָא לִיָּה קְדוּשַׁתִּיָּהוּ.

The Gemara answers: This is what was difficult for him: Granted if you say that their sanctity did not cease in the wilderness, then those original ones also did not lose their sanctity. But if you say that their sanctity ceased for those born in the wilderness, then those original ones should also have lost their sanctity!

ANSWER

וְאִידֵּה: דְּקָדוֹשׁ — קָדוֹשׁ, דְּלֹא קָדוֹשׁ — לֹא קָדוֹשׁ.

And the other, Reish Lakish, would answer: Those that were sanctified in Egypt remained sanctified; those that were not sanctified in the wilderness were not sanctified.

OBJECTION

אִתְיָבִיָּה: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם שֶׁהוּקָם הַמִּשְׁכָּן, קָרְבוּ בּוֹ לָהֶם בִּישְׂרָאֵל נְדָרִים וּנְדָבוֹת, חֲטָאוֹת וְאַשְׁמוֹת, בְּכוֹרוֹת וּמַעֲשָׂרוֹת.

Rabbi Yochanan challenged him: On the day the Tabernacle was erected, Israel offered vows, free-will offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, firstborns, and tithes. This shows firstborns were offered in the wilderness!

ANSWER

הָכִי נָמִי — בְּאוֹתָן שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם.

Reish Lakish answers: Here too, it refers to those firstborns who left Egypt.

INFERENCE

וּמִיָּנָה: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם הוּא דְקָרוֹב, מִיָּכָן וְאֵילָּה לָא קָרוֹב!

The Gemara asks: But from this Baraisa itself we see: On that day they were offered, but from then on they were not offered! This supports Reish Lakish.

OBJECTION

אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי: אֵיתִיבִיהּ רִישׁ לְקִישׁ לְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם שֶׁהוּקָם הַמִּשְׁכָּן קָרְבוּ לָהֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל
נְדָרִים וְנִדְבּוֹת חֲטָאוֹת וְאַשְׁמוֹת בְּכוֹרוֹת וּמַעֲשָׂרוֹת. אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם — אֵין, מִיָּכָן וְאֵילָּה — לָא!

There are those who say a different version: Reish Lakish challenged Rabbi Yochanan: On the day the Tabernacle was erected, Israel offered vows, free-will offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, firstborns, and tithes. On that day, yes, but from then on, no! This proves firstborns were not offered in the wilderness.

ANSWER

אִימָא: מֵאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם וְאֵילָּה.

Rabbi Yochanan answers: Say and correct the text to read: From that day onward they offered them.

EXPLANATION

וּמֵאִי קָמַשְׁמַע לָן? מֵאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם — אֵין, מַעֲיָקְרָא — לָא. אֵלמָא חוֹבוֹת בְּבִמְה לָא קָרוֹב.

And what does this teach us? From that day when the Mishkan was built, yes, they offered them, but originally on private altars, no. Consequently, obligatory offerings were not offered on a private altar.

OBJECTION

תָּא שְׁמַע, נִמְצְאָתָא אֵתָּה אוֹמְרִי: בְּשְׁלֹשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת קִדְּשׁוּ בְכוֹרוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל — בְּמִצְרַיִם, וּבְמִדְבָּר,
וּבְכְנִיסְתָּן יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶרֶץ.

Come and hear a proof: You turn out to say: In three places firstborns were sanctified to Israel: in Egypt, in the wilderness, and upon Israel's entry into the Land. This explicitly contradicts Reish Lakish!

EXPLANATION

בְּמִצְרַיִם מַהוּ אוֹמְרִי? "קִדְּשׁ לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר". בְּמִדְבָּר הוּא אוֹמְרִי: "כִּי לִי כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּבִנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל".
בְּכְנִיסְתָּם לְאֶרֶץ הוּא אוֹמְרִי: "וְהָיָה כִּי יָבִיֵאֵךְ... וְהִעֲבַרְתָּ".

The Baraisa details: In Egypt, what does it say? "Sanctify to Me every firstborn." In the wilderness, it says: "For Mine is every firstborn among the children of Israel." Upon their entry into the Land, it says: "And it shall be when He brings you... and you shall set apart."

ANSWER

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: בשלשה מקומות הוזָהְרוּ על הבכורות ליקדש, ולא קדשו.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: This Baraisa means that in three places they were commanded regarding the firstborns to be sanctified, but they were not actually sanctified in the wilderness.

QUESTION

ובמצרים נמי לא קדוש? הא קאמרינן דקדוש!

The Gemara asks: And in Egypt were they also not sanctified? But we said that they were sanctified!

ANSWER

הכי אמר: מהן קדשו, ומהן לא קדשו.

The Gemara answers: This is what he meant to say: Of these three places, some were sanctified, and of these, some were not sanctified.

OBJECTION

מתקריף לה רב פפא: ובמדבר לא קדשו? והכתיב: "פקד כל בכר זכר לבני ישראל!"

Rav Pappa challenged this: And in the wilderness were they not sanctified? But isn't it written: "Count every male firstborn of the children of Israel" in the wilderness?

RESOLUTION

אלא, אי איתמר הכי איתמר: רבי יוחנן אמר: קדשו ולא פסקו, וריש לקיש אמר: קדשו

Rather, if it was stated, it was stated like this: Rabbi Yochanan said: They were sanctified in Egypt and their sanctity never ceased in the wilderness; and Reish Lakish said: They were sanctified in Egypt, but ceased in the wilderness.

SUMMARY

The Gemara resolves the Mishnah's phrasing by establishing that Kohanim and Levi'im are exempt from redeeming their own firstborn sons and donkeys. Rava derives the donkey exemption through a hekesh (comparison) in the pesukim between the redemption of man and non-kosher animals, teaching that anyone exempt from redeeming a son is exempt from redeeming a donkey. The Gemara then addresses various challenges regarding who is included in this exemption, proving that it applies to all Levi'im—including those under a month old in the midbar, Aharon HaKohen, and even the son of a female Levite because the Torah makes the exemption dependent on her womb. We also learn that Kohanim are included in this exemption because they are referred to as "Levites" in Tanach, and that this halacha remains for all generations. The daf concludes with Rav Chisda's attempt to derive that the firstborn donkeys in the midbar were redeemed with a lamb, using a gezerah shavah to the silver used for redeeming firstborn sons.

The Gemara is bothered by how the Levi'im could exempt their own firstborn sons and donkeys based on the exchange that happened in the midbar. Rava teaches us a beautiful yesod: the Levi'im exempted themselves through a kal v'chomer. If their holiness was powerful enough to lift and exempt the firstborns of all of Klal Yisrael, it must certainly work to exempt their own.

Think about what the Tanna is telling us here. Sometimes we spend so much time trying to help others, to share a good word, or to bring kedushah into the lives of those around us, that we forget about ourselves. We think our spiritual influence is only meant for the outside. But the Torah is teaching us that the very first place your kedushah must have an effect is on you and your own household. If you have the ability to inspire a friend or show warmth to a neighbor, that same koach must be turned inward to elevate your own avodas Hashem.

Today, take one small spiritual strength or positive attribute that you normally use when interacting with others, and apply it b'davka to your own personal avodah or your own family. If you are patient with strangers, bring that patience home; if you speak gently to colleagues, use that same gentle speech with your own children.