

Getting Your Goat  
July 14, 2022

**Q** I bought a pregnant goat. Will its firstborn have *kedushas bechor*?

**A** The Torah commands that a firstborn animal be sanctified, given to a kohein, and ultimately offered as a *korban* (Shmos 13:2). The mitzvah applies to all kosher livestock species.



Though we cannot bring a *korban* today, the mitzvah of sanctifying a *bechor* is still in effect. The animal's *kedushah* prohibits all usage, including shearing it, milking it, slaughtering it, or working it (Devarim 15:19). If it suffers an injury that qualifies as a *mum* (blemish), its *kedushah* is reduced and it may be slaughtered, but other uses remain prohibited. The Torah forbids intentionally inflicting a *mum*, even indirectly, so to avoid inadvertently using a *bechor*, one should partner with a non-Jew, as only a *bechor* wholly owned by a Jew is subject to the mitzvah (Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 320:6). Do this by selling even a small share (*ibid.* 3) of the pregnant mother to a non-Jew by having him pay cash (*ma'os*) and then pull the animal (*meshichah*) into his property, or use another effective method (see *ibid.* 6).

If the livestock dealer is not an observant Jew and he says that the goat gave birth previously, he cannot be relied upon in the absence of clear support for his claim (*ibid.* 316:1,3).