



Volume 6. Issue 2

Broken Klei Cheres

We learnt this week that if a *kli cheres* (earthenware utensil) has a large hole in it is no longer susceptible to *tumah* (impurity) (3:1-2). Furthermore if it was *tameh* (impure) prior to the perforation, it is no longer. We also learnt a different law that if an earthenware utensil shatters and one of the pieces can contain a significant measure (*revi'it*) of water then it is still susceptible to *tumah*. Two *mishnayot* combine these two principles together.

The first *Mishnah* (3:3) teaches that if a barrel was perforated, the hole was then plugged and then the barrel was shattered, if the broken piece with the plugging could contain a *revi'it* then it is still susceptible to *tumah*. If however a broken piece was perforated and then plugged, that piece is not susceptible to *tumah*. The *Mishnah* explains that in the first case it was always considered a *kli* (utensil), even when the barrel had a hole in it.¹ Consequently, the piece (with its plugged hole) came from a complete utensil. However in the latter case, the broken piece prior to being plugged is no longer considered a *kli*; plugging it later has no effect – it is just a piece of pottery.

The second *Mishnah* teaches a similar case, of a barrel in a very poor state. It is severely cracked yet maintains its shape. If it is supported with a coating then is still susceptible to *tumah*. If however it fell apart in to small pieces then put together again with that same coating it is no longer susceptible to *tumah*. As with the previous *Mishnah*, the reason is since the barrel fell apart completely and is no longer defined as *kli*, when put together again, it is considered to be a new *kli* and would need to be fired in a kiln to be completed.

It appears that the ruling in both *Mishnayot* depends on principle: once the utensil loses its status as a *kli*, if the large broken pieces is plugged or the finely broken pieces are put together then they are no longer susceptible to *tumah*.

When citing these rulings, the *Rambam* (*Hilchot Keilim* 19:13) appears to differentiate between them. When citing the ruling of the first *Mishnah*, he explains the reason why a broken piece that was perforated and then plugged is *tahor* is because “the [broken] *cheres* that has a hole is no longer a *kli* and *tahor* and once it is *tahor* for one moment it can longer become *tameh*.” Why was it necessary to provide this additional reason in this case?

R' Chaim HaLevi, citing *Rambam* (ibid. 18:10), explains that normally utensils as soon as they lose their form are *tahor*, irrespective of what the broken pieces can contain. By *klei cheres* however provided that the broken pieces can contain fluid, they have a use and are still susceptible to *tumah*. This exception is learnt from a *pasuk* “*ve'kol kli cheres*”. Consequently the loss of form does not remove the status of a *kli* from *klei cheres*. A broken piece still has the status of a *kli* while it is susceptible to *tumah*.

Accordingly there is a difference between a fully formed *kli cheres* with a hole in it and broken piece of *kli cheres*. In the former, even though it is *tahor*, it has the form of a *kli* and it still considered a *kli*.² In contrast the above *pasuk* ruled that a broken piece of a *kli cheres* that loses its form, is still considered a *kli* provided it is susceptible to *tumah*. Once it is no longer susceptible to *tumah* a *kli cheres* is no different to any other utensil.

With this difference in hand one might have thought as follows. It appears that the loss of form does not apply to a broken piece; only utility is of interest. Consequently once the broken piece is plugged and can again contain fluid, perhaps it should once more fall under the category of “*v'kol kli cheres*” and be susceptible to *tumah*. The *Rambam* therefore had to add the reason in this case that “once [a broken piece] become *tahor* for one moment”, even if its utility is returned, “it can no longer become *tameh*”; its status as a *kli* is lost.

Yisrael Yitzchak Bankier

¹ The *Tifferet Yisrael* explains that despite this hole that would render it *tahor*, the barrel is still suitable to contain large items even though it will only be susceptible to *tumah* if set aside for that purpose. Alternatively the *Mishnah Achrona* however explains that even with a hole in it, it is still called a barrel. Also

unlike broken pieces, the owner has not given up hope that the utensil can still be salvaged. (See the *Mishnah Achrona* for why he prefers this solution.)

² See previous footnote.

Revision Questions

כלים בי:א' – ג:ו'

- What four utensils are: "פשוטיהן טהורים ומקבליהן טמאים" (בי:א')
- What is the law if one of these utensils that were *tameh* broke and then were reformed? (בי:א')
- How do *klei cheres* (earthenware vessels) become *tameh*? (אי:א')
- How do *klei cheres* transfer *tumah*? (בי:א')
- How can one remove the *tumah* from *klei cheres*? (בי:א')
- How small can *klei cheres* (or parts of *klei cheres*) still be defined as utensils? (Provide all three opinions.) (בי:ב')
- What is the rule regarding *klei cheres* that cannot become *tameh*? List some of the examples brought in the *Mishnah*. (בי:ג')
- When are lanterns susceptible to *tumah*? (בי:ד')
- What are the explanations why a peddler's funnel is susceptible *tameh*? (בי:ד')
- When are covers of wine jars susceptible to *tumah*? (בי:ה')
- What are the two reasons why stew pot covers are (generally) susceptible to *tumah*? (בי:ה')
- What is a *gistra* and when is it susceptible to *tumah*? (בי:ו')
- What is the law if one of the compartments in a spice container becomes *tameh*? (בי:ו')
- Explain the debate regarding a *masrek shel tzirtzur*. (בי:ח')
- Who large must a hole be in a *tameh kli cheres* to render it *tahor*? (Provide both measures.) (אי:ג')
- Regarding the previous question, how large must the holes be in the following utensils: (בי:ג')
 - A barrel?
 - A large pot?
 - A *pach*?
 - A *tzartzur*?
- If broken piece of *kli cheres* had a hole that was sealed, when is it still *tameh*? (גי:ג')
- What other case shares a similar law to the previous question? (גי:ד')
- Explain the debate regarding when an outer coating of plaster on a *kli cheres* is considered part of the *kli* and why is this important? (גי:ה')
- If food touches the plastering of a *tameh* oven, does it become *tameh*? (גי:ו')

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

Between mincha & ma'ariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
Mizrachi Shul

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
1 st March ה' אדר	2 nd March ו' אדר	3 rd March ז' אדר	4 th March ח' אדר	5 th March ט' אדר	6 th March י' אדר	7 th March י"א אדר
Kinim 3:7-8	Kinim 4:1-2	Kinim 4:3-4	Keilim 5:1-2	Keilim 5:3-4	Keilim 5:5-6	Keilim 5:7-8

