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“Fixing” A Needle

A needle whose hole or tip broke off is *tahor* (no longer susceptible to *tumah*). If it was “fixed” for stretching [the edge of a curtain for weaving] then it is *tameh* (susceptible to *tumah*)...

Keilim 14:5

When the end of a needle breaks, it can no longer serve its original purpose. It might however be used to pin down fabric. The *Bartenura* explains that it was indeed the practice of weavers to use broken needles. The *Mishnah* however explains that it must be “fixed” for that end to be susceptible to *tumah*. There are two ways to understand this requirement. The *Mishnah* may be understood literally requiring some modification to the broken needle. Alternatively, we sometimes find that designation is enough.

The *Tosfot* (*Shabbat* 49b, 123a) explains that ordinarily simple designation is enough. For example if a utensil breaks and its remainder is still fit for another purpose, designating for that purpose would make it susceptible to *tumah*. In this case however some physical modification is required. Based on the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 123a) on which the *Tosfot* comment, it would appear that the reason that this case is different, is because once the utensil is broken it is no longer defined as a *kli* (utensil) and generally discarded. Consequently a more significant act is required then simple designation.

The *Mishnah Acharona* (12:7) understands the *Tosfot* in the above described manner but raises a difficulty from a *Mishnah* learnt last week. The *Mishnah* (12:7) explains:

A *dinar* (coin) that is no longer in circulation and was “fixed” to hang [as a necklace] around the neck of a minor is susceptible to *tumah*...

The *Mishnah Acharona* explains that a coin is not defined as a *kli* as it has no function and is not used as jewellery. Consequently, one would expect that the *Tosfot* would explain that the term “fix” there is also understood literally and some change is required.

Based on the above expectation the *Tosfot* (*Bava Metzia* 52b) are surprising. They explain that if the coin requires some modification to be used as a necklace then fine. If however the coin does not require anything, then designation alone is enough because “all utensils descend to *tumah* (i.e. become susceptible to *tumah*) through *machshava* (thought).” What is odd here is that it appears that even items that are not defined as *keilim* can become susceptible to *tumah* with designation alone.

Perhaps we can answer the *Mishnah Acharona*'s question based on the *Ritva*'s understanding of our *Mishnah*. He explains that once it is broken in this manner such that it is normally discarded, “thought [alone] no longer helps, because since it was once [susceptible] then rejected (i.e. no longer susceptible), it can no longer be susceptible with *machshava* unless it is [physically improved].” Based on this explanation, perhaps it not just because the needle is not a *kli* that it requires more than *machshava*; indeed we find by the coin that *machshava* is enough. This needle is subject to a worse circumstance; it had the ability and then lost it. Only with a physical modification can new life be given to it, enabling it once again to be susceptible to *tumah*.¹

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¹ See *Tosfot* in *Chulin* 55a from which this idea could be based.

Revision Questions

כלים י"ב ח' – י"ד ה'

- Is a ruler susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ב ח')
- Which *golmei kli eitz* are not susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ב ח')
- What are the two opinions regarding the susceptibility to *tumah* of knives? (י"ג א')
- Explain the debate regarding whether scissors that come apart are susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ג א')
- What is a *koligrifon* and explain the law discussed regarding it? (י"ג ב')
- What other utensil is discussed in a similar manner? (י"ג ב')
- What are the three ways a needle can no longer be susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ג ה')
- Regarding the previous question: (י"ג ה')
 - What two cases are the exceptions?
 - How can it become *tameh* again?
- Explain the case of a utensil where the “wood serves the metal” and another utensil where “the metal serves the wood” and what is the law? (י"ג ו')
- What is a *kadum* and when is it susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ג ז')
- Regarding what did R' Yehoshua say: (י"ג ז')

"דָּבַר חֵידוּשׁ חֵידוּשׁוֹ סוּפְרִים וְאֵין לִי מָה אֶשְׁיב"
- What is the difference between flax and wool combs regarding their susceptibility to *tumah* when the teeth break off? (י"ג ח')
- List some cases when those teeth are susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ג ח')
- How large must the remainder of a broken utensils be to be susceptible to *tumah* for the following vessels: (י"ד א')
 - A bucket?
 - A large urn?
 - A large pot?
- Explain the debate regarding a stick that had nails driven into it. (י"ד ב')
- Are tent pegs susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד ג')
- Are measuring chains susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד ג')
- Are lids susceptible to *tumah*? What is the exception? (י"ד ד')
- List some of the parts of a wagon that are susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד ד')
- List some of the parts of a wagon that are not susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד ה')

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
12 th April י"ח ניסן	13 th April י"ט ניסן	14 th April כ' ניסן	15 th April כ"א ניסן	16 th April כ"ב ניסן	17 th April כ"ג ניסן	18 th April כ"ד ניסן
Keilim 14:6-7	Keilim 14:8-15:1	Keilim 15:2-3	Keilim 15:4-5	Keilim 15:6-16:1	Keilim 16:2-3	Keilim 16:4-5

