



Volume 6. Issue 9

The Wool Comb

... [A comb used] for wool from which every second tooth was removed is *tahor* (i.e. no longer susceptible to *tumah*). If three [teeth] remained in one place it would be *tameh* (susceptible to *tumah*). If one of the external teeth was one of [the three remaining teeth] then it is *tahor*...

Keilim 13:8

The above *Mishnah* learnt this week deals with a wool comb whose “teeth” break, focusing on when it is no longer susceptible to *tumah*.

At a quick glance, one would be hard pressed to extract a rule for when this comb would be *tahor*. The first statement that the comb would be *tahor* if every second tooth was removed seems to imply that provided that two consecutive teeth remained, the comb would be susceptible to *tumah*. However the next statement explicitly states that three teeth must remain in one place. Do we require two or three teeth?

The above observation is not new; the *Gemara* asks this very question. Before bringing the answer, one must first understand that the wool comb in the times of the *Mishnah* was made of multiple rows (we might refer to it as a narrow brush). The *Gemara* therefore responds that one statement refers to the “inner” row of teeth while the other statement refers to the “outer” row of teeth. *Rashi* explains that most of work when combing wool was performed with the outer teeth. Consequently the outer row required a greater number of teeth (three) than the inner rows (two) for the comb to maintain its susceptibility to *tumah*.¹

When the *Rambam* brings this *halacha* (*Hilchot Keilim* 11:3) he appears to require three teeth under in all cases:

A comb used for wool from which teeth were removed, if three remained in one place then it is *tameh*...

The *Kesef Mishnah* draws our attention to the above cited *Gemara* and is at a loss for why the *Ra'avad* did not even question the *Rambam*.

Rav Shach *ztz"l* explains (*Avi Ezri, Keilim* 11:3) that according to the *Rambam* there are two reasons why this comb can become *tahor*. If there are less than three teeth together in any part of the comb then the comb is indeed *tahor* for it is no longer fit for purpose. The first statement of the *Mishnah* however refers to a different reason why the comb becomes *tahor* as will be explained.

The *Rambam* writes (*Hilchot Keilim* 18:10):

All utensils that broke and lost their form, the broken parts are not susceptible to *tumah*, even if those parts are useful, except for *klei cheres*...

The loss of form is therefore another means to which the utensil becomes *tahor*. Therefore if the comb does not have three teeth together, it might not be fit for purpose, but still have the form of the comb. It is only when every second tooth is removed that it also has lost its form.

One would then understand the *Gemara's* explanation of our *Mishnah* differently. The first statement (regarding the removal of every second tooth) refers to the “outside” of the *kli* - its form. The second statement (regarding the requirement of having three teeth together) refers to its “inside” – its function.

[*Rav Shach* explains (based on *Rambam* 19:13) that the following is the practical difference. If a utensil loses its function but still maintains its form, then (using the above example) even if a third tooth was replaced with one whose substance ordinarily would not be susceptible to *tumah*, the comb is now susceptible to *tumah*. If however the comb lost its form and (using our case) every second tooth was replaced with one that is not susceptible to *tumah*, then the comb would still not be susceptible to *tumah* as it no longer can be.]²

Yisrael Yitzchak Bankier

¹ The *Chazon Ish* (*Nashim* 143, 43a) explains that according to this understanding a total of five teeth would be required.

² *Rav Shach* adds that the first statement is not included explicitly in the *Rambam* as the rule is covered by the above cited *Rambam* and “loss of form” is something that depends on the opinion of a people. See inside for

more detail. Also see the volume 6 issue 4 for a similar discussion regarding earthenware utensils. Rav Shach brings the *Rabbeinu Chaim* cited in that issue to explain the *Rambam* (*Keilim* 19:14) which at face value seem to imply that the loss of form removing the ability for a *kli* to become susceptible to *tumah* only applies to *klei cheres*.

Revision Questions

כלים יידי: ר' – ט"ז: ה'

- What has happened to a cover of a *teni* such that it is now debated whether it is susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ר')
- When is a broken mirror still susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ר')
- What two points are debated between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua regarding broken metalware that became *tameh met*? (י"ד: ז')
- What is the debate regarding an *arkuva* key? (י"ד: ח')
- List some ways a *gam* key can be no longer be susceptible to *tumah*. (י"ד: ח')
- How broken must a mustard sieve be to no longer be susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ח')
- List two differences between metal and wood utensils. (י"ד: א')
- Greater than what volume must a wooden chest be such that it is no longer susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: א')
- Related to the previous question, regarding what do R' Meir and R' Yehuda argue? (י"ד: א')
- Explain the debate regarding the baker's plank. (י"ד: ב')
- How can a *serod* belonging to a homeowner become susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ב')
- Which *yam nafa* is susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ג')
- Regarding the previous question, which case does R' Yehuda add? (י"ד: ג')
- Explain the debate regarding *teluyim*. (י"ד: ד')
- What is the general rule regarding when a *rachat* is susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ה')
- Which of the seven liquids is not susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ו')
- Which of the books of *Tanach* is not *metameh* hands? (י"ד: ו')
- Which animal trap is *tameh* and which is *tahor*? (י"ד: ז')
- What is the law regarding a wooden utensil that is broken in two? (י"ד: ז')
- What is the exception to the previous question? (י"ד: ז')
- When is a wooden utensil considered complete? (י"ד: ז')
- When are the following wooden utensils considered complete:
 - Wooden *salim*?
 - *Kalkala*?
 - *Beit Haleginim*? (י"ד: ז')
 - Small and large *kenonim*?
 - *Arak*? (י"ד: ז')
- When are the following leather utensils considered complete (include both opinions):
 - *Turmel*?
 - *Skurteya*?
 - *Ketavulya*? (י"ד: ז')
- When is a *chatol* susceptible to *tumah*? (י"ד: ח')

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
19 th April כ"ה ניסן	20 th April כ"ו ניסן	21 st April כ"ז ניסן	22 nd April כ"ח ניסן	23 rd April כ"ט ניסן	24 th April ל' ניסן	25 th April א' אייר
Keilim 16:6-7	Keilim 16:8-17:1	Keilim 17:2-3	Keilim 17:4-5	Keilim 17:6-8	Keilim 17:8-9	Keilim 17:10-11

