The Airspace of *Klei Cheres*?

The first number of *perakim* of *masechet Keilim* deal with the laws of *tumah* as they related to *klei cheres* (earthenware utensils). What is unique about *klei cheres* is that they only attract *tumah* if the source of *tumah* is inside the *kli* (vessel); even if it is only in its airspace. The *Mishnah* (2:7) discusses the case of a tray, with multiple bowls connected to its surface.

The *Mishnah* teaches that iff one of the bowls become *tameh*, the others remain *tahor*. If however the rim around the edge of the tray is taller than the height of the bowls, then if one of the bowls become *tameh* so do the others. The *Bartenura* explains that in the latter case, since the rim is higher than the bowls, even before the source of *tumah* reached one of the bowls, it was within the airspace of the tray. That being the case the entire tray became *tameh* along with the bowls connected to it.

The *Tosfot R' Akiva Eiger* however finds this explanation difficult, considering that the *Mishnah* rules that a wooden spice box, with multiple compartments, would also share the same law. Note that for a wooden utensil to become *tameh* the source of *tumah* must be in direct contact with the *kli*. In other words, the explanation of the *Bartenura* would not work for the spice box. The *Tosfot R' Akiva Eiger* instead cites the explanation of the *Rash* that when the rim of the tray is higher than the bowls, it is all considered one *kli*. When it is lower, the bowls are considered independent *keilim*. R' Akiva Eiger notes however that the *Rambam* explains like the *Bartenura* in our case, yet explains like the *Rash* in the case of the scribe's box that has multiple compartments.

The *Rav* (*Igrot HaGrid HaLevi*, *Keilim* 5:6-7) however notes that the *Rambam* explains that this tray that has the bowls connected to it, is considered one *kli*. The *Rambam*'s statement does not appear to differentiate regarding the height of the rim and simply rules that it is one *kli*. That being the case, the height of the rim around the tray does not affect whether it and the bowls are considered one *kli*. That being the case, what difference does the height of the rim make?

The *Rav* explains that this *Mishnah* teaches us a unique law regarding *klei cheres* with respect to *tumat avir* (attracting *tumah* by way of *tumah* being in the airspace). Unlike other *keilim* for *klei cheres*, *tumat avir* is not dependant on whether the various components are considered one *kli*. What is important for a *kli cheres* is whether there is one "inside" or not. If there are many distinct insides, then they are treated separately.

The *Rav* uses this explanation to explain the debate regarding whether a partition can divide an earthenware oven. *R' Eliezer* maintains it can, while the *Chachamim* disagree. The *Rav* asserts that *R' Eliezer* agrees that a partition does not turn one *kli* into two. *R' Eliezer* however argues that the partition does however change the oven, in that it has two insides. That being the case, if *tumah* is inside one side, food that is on the other side of the partition remains *tahor*. The *Chachamim* do not disagree with this principle. They instead maintain that the introduction of a partition does not create two insides.[1]

Returning to our *Mishnah* we can suggest that when the *Bartenura* explains that the *tumah* reaches the airspace of the tray prior to reaching the cups, it is not just to explain that the tray becomes *tameh* first, but illustrating that the taller rim makes the tray considered as if it has one inside.[2]

Yisrael Bankier

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[1] See inside where this *Mishnah* and the case of the *gistra* are discussed at length.

[2] One may suggest that the reason why the *Rambam* explains our case and the *kalmarin* and *beit hatavlin* differently is because the reason why the rim impacts these *keilim* is different. For *klei cheres*, what is important is determining the insides. For the *beit hatavlin*, considering it is made of wood, what is important is whether it is defined as a single *kli*. The case of the *kalmarin* requires further thought.

Revision Questions

<div dir="rtl">כלים ב׳:ג׳ – ג׳:ח׳</div>

- What is the rule regarding *klei cheres* that cannot become *tameh*? List some of the examples brought in the *Mishnah*. **(ב׳:ג׳)**
- When are lanterns susceptible to *tumah*? **(ב׳:ד׳)**
- What are the explanations why a peddler's funnel is susceptible *tameh*? **(ב׳:ד׳)**
- When are covers of wine jars susceptible to *tumah*? **(ב׳:ה׳)**
- What are the two reasons why stew pot covers are (generally) susceptible to *tumah*? **(ב׳:ה׳)**
- What is a *gistra* and when is it susceptible to *tumah*? **(ב׳:ו׳)**
- What is the law if one of the compartments in a spice container becomes *tameh*? **(ב׳:ז׳)**
- Explain the debate regarding a *masrek shel tzirtzur*. **(ב׳:ח׳)**
- How large must a hole be in a *tameh kli cheres* to render it *tahor*? (Provide both measures.) **(ג׳:א׳)**
- Regarding the previous question, how large must the holes be in the following utensils: **(ג׳:ב׳)**
  - A barrel?
  - A large pot?
  - A *pach*?
  - A *tzartzur*?
- If a broken piece of *kli cheres* had a hole that was sealed, when is it still *tameh*? **(ג׳:ג׳)**
- What other case shares a similar law to the previous question? **(ג׳: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? **(ג׳:ה׳)**
- If food touches the plastering of a *tameh* oven, does it become *tameh*? **(ג׳:ו׳)**
- Which of the following two substances that are used to plaster a water-heater are considered a *chibur* (attachment): *chomer* or *charsit*? **(ג׳:ז׳)**
- Why does *R' Yosi* declare that a kettle whose hole is plugged with *zefet* (pitch) is considered *tahor*? **(ג׳:ז׳)**
- What is the law regarding a barrel whose hole has been repaired with an excessive amount of *zefet*? **(ג׳:ח׳)**
- What are the three opinions regarding plugged funnels made of wood or of earthenware and their susceptibility to *tumah*? **(ג׳:ח׳)**

Next Week's Mishnayot…

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
23 August ג׳ אלול Keilim 4:1-2	24 August ד׳ אלול Keilim 4:3-4	25 August ה׳ אלול Keilim 5:1-2	26 August ו׳ אלול Keilim 5:3-4	27 August ז׳ אלול Keilim 5:5-6	28 August ח׳ אלול Keilim 5:7-8	29 August ט׳ אלול Keilim 5:9-10