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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

I. Introduction

- A. What is Mishnah Kelim
- B. Sources
- C. The concerns of the Torah and the concerns of the Mishnah
- D. Definition of terms: susceptible and insusceptible:
clean and unclean
- E. The Avot Hatum'ah: The sources of uncleanness
- F. Date and Authorship
- G. The organization of Mishnah Kelim
- H. Specific content
- I. Methodology

II. General rules affecting all vessels

III. Metal Vessels

- A. Introduction
- B. Susceptible Vessels
 - 1. General rules
 - 2. Specific vessels: whole
 - 3. Specific utensils: damaged
- C. Insusceptible vessels
 - 1. General rules
 - 2. Specific vessels: whole
 - 3. Specific vessels: damaged
- D. Vessels whose susceptibility is disputed
 - 1. General rules
 - 2. Specific vessels: whole
 - 3. Specific vessels: damaged

IV. Wooden Vessels

- A. Introduction
- B. Susceptible vessels:
 - 1. General rules
 - 2. Specific vessels: whole
 - 3. Specific vessels: damaged
- C. Insusceptible vessels
 - 1. General rules

2. Specific vessels: whole

3. Specific vessels: damaged

D. Vessels whose susceptibility is disputed

1. Specific vessels: whole

2. Specific vessels: damaged

V. Analysis and conclusions

A. Introduction

B. General rules affecting vessels of metal and wood

C. General rules and specific vessels: metal

1. Rules M1 and M3

2. Rule M4

3. Rule M5

4. Rule M6

5. Rule M8

6. Rule M10

7. Rule M11

8. General rules implied by the text

9. Disputed vessels consistent with the general rules

D. General rules and specific vessels: wood

1. Rule W1

2. Rule W5

3. Rule W6

4. Rule W8

5. Rule W10

6. Rule W11

7. Disputed vessels consistent with the general rules

8. Wooden vessels not accounted for

E. Conclusions

Notes

Bibliography

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. WHAT IS MISHNAH KELIM

Kelim is the first tractate of Seder Tohorot (The Order of Purities), the sixth¹ and longest of the six orders of the Mishnah. Its thirty chapters, containing two hundred and fifty-two mishnayot (teachings or paragraphs), makes it the longest tractate within Tohorot.

Tractate Kelim, which means vessels, utensils, implements, or tools, deals with the ritual defilement of these objects through contact with one of the sources of impurity. These are set forth in Chapter One of the text.

The importance of Kelim as an object of study lies in the rich catalogue of realia it preserves from the first and second centuries of the common era. In fact, the data it contains about the implements, tools, and vessels employed in the daily life of this period exists in no other place in such breadth and detail. Such information is of great value to historians seeking to reconstruct the social and economic conditions of the Tannaitic period of Jewish history.

Mishnah Kelim also preserves valuable linguistic evidence from this period. It is particularly rich as a source for Hebrew terminology and Greek and Latin words in popular use at that time.

B. SOURCES

The laws and teachings of Mishnah Kelim originate in the Torah, specifically the books of Leviticus and Numbers. Yet it remains unclear whether the framers of the Mishnah relied

directly upon these passages, upon other traditions, or upon unknown intermediary documents. The Mishnah contains no direct references to, or citations of, any biblical passages.

Albeck² views the halakhic midrashim as the bridge linking the Mishnah to the Torah. In particular, he cites the Sifra³ and claims that the principles which this midrash derives from the Torah enables the Mishnah to determine the susceptibility or insusceptibility of the various vessels and utensils to uncleanness or impurity. He then explains the general philosophy of the tractate on the basis of this assumption and several other principles, claiming they are the Mishnah's general rules applying to all vessels of all substances.

Albeck's approach is, however, methodologically flawed. He fails to substantiate his assertions, and his use of internal criteria from the Mishnah is selective. Neusner⁴ considers the same sources as Albeck and suggests that the midrashic linkage of the content of Kelim to its scriptural sources was not accomplished until the third or fourth centuries of the common era. This development, according to Neusner, served to compensate for the Mishnaic rabbis' apparent disinterest in basing their laws directly upon the Torah.

The following are the relevant Torah passages which underlie Mishnah Kelim:⁵

Leviticus 6:19-21

The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in the sacred precinct, in the enclosure of the

Tent of Meeting. Anything that touches its flesh shall become holy; and if any of its blood is spattered upon a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in the sacred precinct. An earthenware vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; if it was boiled in a copper vessel, (the vessel) shall be scoured and rinsed with water.

Leviticus 11:31-35

Those are for you the unclean among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. And anything on which one of them falls when dead shall be unclean: be it any article of wood, or a cloth, or a skin or a sack--any such article that can be put to use shall be dipped in water, and it shall remain unclean until evening; then it shall be clean. And if any of those falls into an earthen vessel, everything inside it shall be unclean and (the vessel) itself you shall break. As to any food that might be eaten, it shall become unclean if it came in contact with water; as to any liquid that might be drunk, it shall become unclean if it was inside any vessel. Everything on which the carcass of any of them falls shall be unclean: an oven or a stove shall be smashed. They are unclean and unclean they shall remain for you.

Leviticus 15:4-6

Any bedding on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and every object on which he sits shall be unclean. Anyone who touches his bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening. Whoever sits on an object on which the one with the discharge sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:9-12

Any means for riding which one with a discharge has mounted shall be unclean; whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until evening; and whoever carries such things shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening. If one with a discharge, without having rinsed his hands in water, touches another person, that person shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening. An earthen vessel which one with a discharge touches shall be broken; and any wood implement shall be rinsed with water.

Leviticus 15:16-17

When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening. All cloth or leather on which semen falls shall be washed in water and remain unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:19-27

When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her body, she shall remain in her impurity seven days; whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Anything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; and anything that she sits on shall be unclean. Anyone who touches her bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; and anyone who touches any object on which she has sat, on touching it he shall be unclean until evening. And if a man lies with her, her impurity is communicated to him; he shall be unclean seven days, and any bedding on which he lies shall become unclean. When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or when she has a discharge

beyond her period of impurity, she shall be unclean, as though at the time of her impurity, as long as her discharge lasts: she shall be unclean. Any bedding on which she lies while her discharge lasts shall be for her like bedding during her impurity; and any object on which she sits shall become unclean, as it does during her impurity: whoever touches them shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.

Numbers 19:14-16

This is the procedure: When a person dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be unclean seven days; and every open vessel, with no lid fastened down, shall be unclean. And in the open, anyone who touches a person who was killed or who died naturally, or human bone, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

Numbers 31:19-23

You shall then stay out of the camp seven days; everyone among you or among your captives who has slain a person or touched a corpse shall cleanse himself on the third and seventh days. You shall also cleanse every cloth, every article of skin, everything made of goat's hair, and every object of wood.

Eleazar the priest said to the troops who had taken part in the fighting. 'This is the ritual law that the Lord has enjoined upon Moses: Gold and silver, copper, iron, tin, and lead--any article that can withstand fire--these you shall pass through fire and they shall be clean, except that they must be cleansed with water of lustration, and anything that cannot withstand fire you must pass through water.'

C. THE CONCERNS OF THE TORAH AND THE CONCERNS OF THE MISHNAH

Neusner⁶ suggests that the concerns of the Mishnaic rabbis about Kelim would have been completely foreign to the authors of the Levitical legislation. First, the preceding passages from the Torah relate primarily to cultic matters. Mishnah Kelim, on the other hand, is devoted almost entirely to vessels used domestically and commercially. Second, the emphasis of the material in the Torah is on the sources of impurity and the manner and means of purification. In contrast, the Mishnah is concerned almost exclusively with the nature of the vessels, their substance, their function, and the circumstances in which they may be rendered impure.

Leviticus 11:31-35 contains the only example where the Torah shows interest in the substance and purpose of vessels:

...be it any article of wood, or a cloth, or a skin, or a sack--any such article that can be put to use....

Yet even here, the discussion deals only with a dead creeping thing. The Torah lacks a systematic explication of the susceptibility of different vessels to different uncleannesses. It is concerned with the effects upon vessels and people of the impurities of a dead creeping thing, a zab (a male with a flow or flux), a zabah (a woman with a flow or discharge), a menstruating woman, or a corpse. It is not concerned with the nature, condition, and utilization of the vessels themselves. The latter interests, along with the susceptibility to uncleanness of considerably long lists of specific vessels, are the foci of the Mishnah.

D. DEFINITION OF TERMS: SUSCEPTIBLE AND INSUSCEPTIBLE: CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

The primary focus of Mishnah Kelim is the susceptibility and insusceptibility to impurity or uncleanness of different vessels. A vessel may become unclean when it comes in contact with one of the primary sources of uncleanness, depending on the nature, function, and condition of that vessel. To say that a vessel or utensil is susceptible to uncleanness is to say that in its current state it may be rendered unclean by a primary source of uncleanness, an avi hatum'ah (father of uncleanness). An insusceptible vessel is, by contrast, one that may not contract uncleanness because of its nature, function, or condition. Neusner⁷ believes that the term "susceptible" refers to a vessel that has a distinctive character, form, use, or purpose, while "insusceptible" refers to one that lacks these qualities. "Clean" and "unclean" are synonymous with "useful" and "useless."

While in many cases Neusner's definitions are applicable, there are significant instances where a vessel deemed "insusceptible" has a distinctive character, form, use, or purpose.⁸ As this study will show, the reasons and conditions for an object's susceptibility are far more numerous and complex than Neusner's definitions indicate. For whatever reason a given item is declared "susceptible" or "insusceptible," there are no grounds for theorizing that these terms mean anything other than that a given utensil may or may not be

contaminated by contact with one of the avot hatum'ah.

E. THE AVOT HATUM'AH: THE SOURCES OF UNCLEANNESS

The first chapter of Mishnah Kelim begins with a presentation of the avot hatum'ah. The prominent position given to this material is an indication of the Mishnah's concern with the purity and impurity of vessels, rather than with their mere utility.

Albeck⁹ views this first chapter as an introduction to the entire order of Tohorot, since it sets forth the operative principles of purity and impurity governing this division of the Mishnah. At no other point in tractate Kelim does there appear a chapter concerned with the general subject of impurities. Impurity is only important to Mishnah Kelim as it relates to vessels.

The Mishnah presents the avot hatum'ah in eleven degrees, from the least potent contaminators to the most potent!¹⁰

Level I: these contaminators convey uncleanness to people and vessels by contact, and to earthenware vessels by presence within their air-space. However, they do not convey uncleanness by carrying (carrying means being moved at all, even with a stick). These contaminators are the following: a dead creeping thing, male semen, one who has had contact with a corpse, a leper during his days of reckoning, and the water of the sin-offering that is insufficient to sprinkle.

Level II: these contaminators convey uncleanness by carrying, and also render impure the garments of the carrier while he is in contact with the source of impurity. These are the carcass of an unclean animal and the water of the sin-offering that is sufficient to sprinkle.

Level III: this contamination comes from one who has had sexual contact with a menstruant. Its additional stringency is that such a person contaminates what lies beneath him.

Level IV: these impurities contaminate by both contact and carrying. They include the issue of one that has a flux, his spittle, his semen, his urine, and the blood of a menstruant.

Level V: the uncleanness of what a person with a flux rides upon. This contaminates even what lies beneath a heavy stone.

Level VI: the uncleanness of what a man with a flux lies upon, because the impurity caused by contact with it is equal to that caused by carrying it.

Level VII: the uncleanness of one who has a flux. He conveys uncleanness to what he lies upon, whereas what he lies upon conveys a lesser impurity.

Level VIII: the contamination of a woman who has a flux. She contaminates a man who has sexual relations with her.

Level IX: the contamination of a leper. He contaminates a house upon entering it.

Level X: the contamination of a barleycorn's bulk of bone from a corpse. It conveys a seven day impurity.

Level XI: the most potent source of uncleanness: a corpse. It contaminates by merely overshadowing a susceptible object.

F. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

Most speculation about the date and authorship of Mishnah Kelim is based upon R. Jose's statement at the end of Chapter Thirty which concludes the tractate:

Blessed are you, O Kelim, for you did enter in uncleanness, but have gone forth in cleanness.¹¹

Some scholars see this as proof that there was a tractate Kelim in the days of R. Jose.¹² How else, they reason, could he know that this tractate begins with a discussion of uncleannesses and concludes with the statement that an afarkass of glass is clean? If this is so, then Kelim predates the complete Mishnah of R. Judah Hanasi.¹³ Albeck agrees that this statement verifies the establishment of the laws of Kelim in the time of R. Jose, but claims that these laws could not be

the same as our tractate Kelim, since our text cites R. Jose throughout. Albeck says that Mishnah Kelim, as it has come down to us, is, like all the other tractates of the Mishnah, the work of R. Judah Hanasi. Neusner¹⁴ places the date of its completion between 150 C.E. and 175 C.E. This determination is the result of a lengthy study whose purpose is to trace the history of the laws of purity. Neusner's results are founded upon his consideration of the tradents cited in the text, as well as upon literary and source criticism.

Several scholars have gone so far as to attribute the authorship of the entire tractate to R. Jose. This thesis is developed at length by Graubart¹⁵ and Epstein.¹⁶ Graubart argues that the tractate exhibits overall the spirit of the material attributed to Jose. Furthermore, in fourteen places, Jose gives the final opinion or a general rule.

Epstein attempts to show that R. Judah Hanasi used the Mishnah of R. Jose, together with material from the Mishnahs of R. Meir, R. Judah, and R. Simeon, to formulate the Mishnah Kelim that we have received.

Neusner¹⁷ criticizes Graubart for failing to define the term "author of a tractate." Neusner notes a difficulty with the opinion that Jose was the final redactor of Kelim. This fails to account for the statements in Mishnah Kelim attributed to sages who lived after Jose's death.

As for Epstein, Neusner holds his work in greater esteem, but questions what he means by "Mishnah." If Epstein means individual pericopae, then Neusner agrees with him. But if

by "Mishnah" he means a complete, redacted collection of laws, then Neusner disagrees. It is difficult to judge Epstein's intent, says Neusner, because his book was compiled by his student E. Z. Melamed on the basis of notes from Epstein's lectures.

G. THE ORGANIZATION OF MISHNAH KELIM

It is difficult to describe the organization of Mishnah Kelim because there is no single principle of order used by its redactor. In reality, it reflects several principles of organization, some of which are in use simultaneously, others of which alone account for the ordering of a given section of the text.

The first chapter, as mentioned above, is anomalous to the rest of the tractate. ¹⁸ Albeck suggests that it is a general introduction to the entire order of Tohorot, and there is good reason to believe that this is true. The various degrees of impurity and sanctity presented in this chapter operate through the whole of Tohorot. Its location at the beginning of the first tractate in this order of the Mishnah is certainly logical. The remainder of tractate Kelim is devoted to laws and teachings about the effects of these impurities upon vessels, utensils, tools, and implements of various substances.

There are four basic principles by which material is organized in Chapters Two through Thirty of the tractate. First is the substance of which the vessels or utensils are

made. These include earthenware, metal, wood, leather, cloth, bone, wicker, and glass. Second is specific types of objects, regardless of the material from which they are made. These include ovens, stoves, beds, seats, etc. Third is certain aspects of vessels or utensils, such as covers, rims, insides and outsides, handles, and their condition, whether they are whole or damaged. Fourth is certain types of uncleanness to which vessels or utensils are susceptible, such as midras (the uncleanness from a man or a woman with a flux or a flow) or corpse contamination.

Mishnah Kelim is divided into thirty chapters, but these are not necessarily indicative of the beginning or end of a given division of content. In fact, the gaonic commentaries reflect a further division in some of the manuscripts that were available to the gaonim. In these, the thirty chapters of Mishnah Kelim were broken down into three sections called bavot (gates), each ten chapters long. These were baba kamma (first gate), baba metzia (middle gate), and baba batra (last, or final gate). This system of division is identical with that which is preserved in Tosefta Kelim. There too the divisions are arbitrary.

H. SPECIFIC CONTENT

As the previous section of this study describes, Chapter One serves as a general introduction to the entire order of Tohorot, as well as to tractate Kelim. It begins with a list of the avot hatum'ah in ascending order of potency. Following

this is an enumeration of the ten degrees of uncleanness that issue from a person. The chapter concludes with the ten degrees of holiness: from the Holy Land to the Holy of Holies of the Temple.

Chapters Two through Four deal primarily with vessels of earthenware. But Chapter Two begins with a statement regarding the general susceptibility of vessels of wood, leather, bone, and glass. Following this, the remainder of the material through Chapter Four treats the susceptibility of earthenware vessels in general; damaged earthenware vessels that remain susceptible; insusceptible earthenware; earthenware with receptacles; covers and rims; susceptible earthenware vessels; and the effects of damages and repairs on the susceptibility of earthenware.

Chapters Five through Nine contain laws and teachings about ovens and stoves. This includes the size determining susceptibility to uncleanness; the point in manufacture at which they become susceptible; parts of ovens and stoves, such as fenders, crowns, chimneys, etc., that are and are not susceptible; the purification of a contaminated oven; ovens of stone and metal and their susceptibility when whole and when damaged. Chapter Six contains the susceptibility to uncleanness of stoves made from clay props and stones. Chapter Seven deals with firebasket stoves; receptacles within a stove; and further aspects and parts of stoves that affect their susceptibility. Chapter Eight covers ovens and their contact with specific uncleannesses such as a dead

creeping thing, a corpse, the issue of a woman's breast, and the manner, degree, and conditions under which they contaminate the oven. Chapter Nine deals with a metal needle or ring embedded in an oven; tightly sealed ovens and vessels in a tent which has housed a corpse; the effects of unclean liquids upon different substances and the contact of these substances with ovens; the susceptibility of metal immersed in other substances; and the effects of different size holes on the susceptibility of earthenware vessels and ovens that are tightly sealed.

Chapter Ten contains regulations concerning earthenware vessels and other substances which, when tightly sealed, protect their contents from corpse defilement within a tent; and the effect of a creeping thing contaminating one of several vessels stacked one inside another.

Chapters Eleven through Fourteen deal with vessels of metal. Chapter Eleven contains general rules affecting all metal vessels and types of metal articles that are susceptible and insusceptible. Chapter Twelve lists more articles, susceptible and insusceptible; articles with metal mixed with wood; finished and unfinished vessels of metal and wood. Chapter Thirteen describes metal utensils with cutting edges; metal utensils with multiple functioning parts and the effects of damage to one of the parts; utensils of wood and metal mixtures; and damaged metal utensils that have teeth. Chapter Fourteen discusses the requisite size for a damaged metal vessel to remain susceptible; vessels of wood and metal mixtures;

professionals' metal tools; parts of a wagon that are susceptible and insusceptible; purification of unclean metal vessels; and damaged metal utensils.

Chapters Fifteen through Nineteen consider vessels of wood, leather, and wicker. Chapter Fifteen deals with the general susceptibility of vessels of wood, leather, bone, and glass; insusceptibility of wood vessels greater than a certain size; utensils of professionals and non-professionals, primarily of wood. Chapter Sixteen considers the point at which utensils and vessels of wood, leather, and wicker become susceptible and insusceptible. It also deals with bags, cases, baskets, and covers, and how the purpose of the implement and intention of its user affects its susceptibility to impurity. Chapter Seventeen describes the degrees of damage that render an article of wood, leather, or wicker insusceptible; damaged articles of professionals and non-professionals; how these damages are measured; susceptibility according to which of the first six days an object was created; general rules that any vessel that forms a receptacle is susceptible and that any vessel that can be sat upon or lain upon is susceptible; objects with secret compartments. Chapter Eighteen discusses how a chest is to be measured to determine its susceptibility by size; whether removable parts of an object are susceptible along with the object; damaged objects of wood; aspects of beds and various uncleannesses, such as midras and corpse contamination; and the degree of damage necessary to render an object clean again: and a phylactery and its parts. Chapter Nineteen

covers aspects of beds and their parts; midras uncleanness; boxes and bags and their susceptibility to corpse and midras uncleanness under different circumstances.

Chapter Twenty deals with midras uncleanness. It specifies the objects and vessels of different substances that it may contaminate under varying circumstances.

Chapter Twenty-one considers the objects made of multiple parts, such as a loom, a wagon, a saw, etc. Chapter Twenty-two returns to objects of wood, including tables, benches, stools, chests, and blocks; their susceptibility when damaged; and, particularly, their susceptibility to midras uncleanness.

Chapter Twenty-four is a list of objects of which there are three kinds, one of which is susceptible to midras and corpse uncleanness, one of which is susceptible only to corpse uncleanness, and one of which is insusceptible to all uncleanness.

Chapter Twenty-five deals with aspects of vessels and utensils, their insides and outsides, stands, rims, hangers, and handles; susceptibility of vessels determined by their use and the intention of the user.

Chapter Twenty-six considers objects of leather, particularly sandals, pouches, hides, and coverings; the susceptibility of various leather articles to midras uncleanness; the general rule that articles whose manufacture is incomplete become susceptible through the intention to use them, whereas incomplete utensils do not; specific examples of the rule of use and intention.

Chapters Twenty-seven through Twenty-eight contain the regulations regarding objects of cloth, sackings, and leather, with particular emphasis on their susceptibility to midras uncleanness and the size required for their susceptibility.

Chapter Twenty-nine deals with the subject of connectives, the lengths of wood, textile, and leather that extend from an object or vessel. These count as part of the object or vessel insofar as uncleanness is concerned.

Chapter Thirty contains the rules pertaining to the susceptibility and insusceptibility of glass, the last of which, the afarkass, is always insusceptible. The tractate then concludes with R. Jose's statement:

Blessed are you, O Kelim, for you did enter in uncleanness, but have gone forth in cleanness.¹⁹

I. METHODOLOGY

There are several significant problems that one faces when approaching tractate Kelim. First, this Mishnah contains data about many objects whose specific form and purpose are no longer known. Even the earliest secondary works, the gaonic commentaries, share this problem. Because of this, it is often impossible to determine the purpose and meaning behind the Mishnah's declaration that a given object is susceptible or insusceptible to uncleanness.

Second, the nature of the organization of the tractate is sometimes an obstacle to the interpretation of its data. There are many points in the text where a general rule is

is stated, but the principle of organization of that section is unclear. This makes it hard to determine the precise object of the rule. For example, Chapter Twenty-six²⁰ states that articles whose manufacture is incomplete become susceptible when one intends to use them. This principle is stated in the form of a general rule, in the midst of a section of laws dealing primarily with objects of leather, and secondarily with midras uncleanness. Does this principle relate to all vessels of all substances, or only to those of leather? Does it refer to all forms of uncleanness, or only to midras uncleanness?

Another question of concern to those who study this tractate is the relationship of the Mishnah to the Tosefta and the tannaitic midrashim. In his lengthy and profound analysis of Mishnah Kelim, Neusner²¹ uses the parallel traditions in the Tosefta to attempt to reconstruct the historical development of the laws of purities contained in Kelim. Though Neusner believes that the tannaitic midrashim postdate the Mishnah-Tosefta, Albeck,²² as mentioned above, sees these interpretations of the Torah's treatment of purity and impurity of vessels as the basis for the Mishnaic laws and teachings about Kelim.

This study has a different point of departure. Its purpose is to deal strictly with the data of Mishnah Kelim. The process of inquiry began with multiple careful readings of the text in its original, without recourse to secondary sources. It proceeded by determining the internal logic of

organization of material within the tractate. On this basis all the data of the tractate was catalogued into the categories inherent in the text. For the reasons discussed in section G, above, most of the data appeared in more than one category. Having developed a thorough catalogue of Mishnah Kelim, it was obviously necessary to select a limited portion of this data for presentation and analysis in this paper. Thus, Chapter Three of this study contains all the data in tractate Kelim about vessels of metal, and Chapter Four contains all the data regarding vessels of wood.

The analysis of this data is presented in Chapter Five. It compares the specific information about the vessels of wood and metal to the general rules applicable to all vessels and the general rules about vessels of wood and metal. The former are presented in Chapter Two and the latter in Chapters Three and Four. The purpose of this comparison is to account, insofar as this is possible, for the susceptibility or insusceptibility of the specific vessels of each of these substances, and to note the consistencies and inconsistencies. Following this, is a modest number of tentative conclusions, and a considerable number of questions that this data raises. The questions are not answered because they each point to new areas of research that need to be conducted in order to draw the full implications of the material in Mishnah Kelim.

As for the methodological difficulties raised above, this study tries to take them into account and resolve them where

possible. First, where secondary sources help describe the form or function of an enigmatic vessel, they are utilized. Where there is no basis for thinking that the commentator had any greater knowledge than is available to the current researcher, secondary speculations have been overlooked. The truth is that there are objects that are unidentifiable, and must remain so, unless and until some new archeological evidence comes to light.

Second, in determining whether a general rule applies to vessels of all substances, or just to a limited category, all those rules which are stated in clearly general language are considered to be general, and all others are considered to be specific. Finally, the question of the relationship of other texts to Mishnah Kelim is not relevant to this study. The concern of this paper is the data of the Mishnah as it has been received. Source and form criticism will be valuable for any further treatment of the results of this research, but not for the process represented here.

II. GENERAL RULES AFFECTING ALL VESSELS

At various places within tractate Kelim, the Mishnah presents rules in the form of general principles applying to all vessels, regardless of their substance. These rules are not set forth in a clear declarative manner, nor are they identified as concepts which underlie the Mishnah as a whole. The assessment that these are indeed general regulations has two bases. First is the force of the language in which the text states these rules as compared to the language used to present a rule for a specific category of vessels. For example, Chapter Twenty-five, paragraph seven states:

In all utensils an inner and an outer
part are distinguished, and also a
part by which they are held.

The force of the language "all utensils" suggests more than all vessels of a given type. This contrasts with the language of rules applicable to a specific category of vessels, as in Chapter Eleven, mishnah two:

Every article of metal that has a name
of its own is susceptible to uncleanness.

Thus, it is possible to compile a list of all the statements in tractate Kelim which apply to all vessels. The order of this list corresponds to the sequence of their appearance in the text.

The first principle is presented in the name of R. Jose. The Mishnah gives no conflicting opinion to this rule:

This, said R. Jose, is the general rule:
Such as are accessory to what a man uses
both during his work and not during his
work are susceptible to uncleanness; but
if only during his work they are not susceptible.¹

The intention of this rule is obvious upon careful reading. It refers to those objects that serve a person's tools. The distinction between those objects that are susceptible and those that are insusceptible is whether the object is integral to the tools or not. The rule considers whether the object serves the tools both when they are in use and when not in use. A tool case, for example, serves the tools when in use and when not in use. But the lid of a kettle serves the kettle only when in use.

The second rule contains the two most basic principles of the tractate:

If a man made an article that could in any way be a receptacle it is susceptible to uncleanness. If he made an article that could in any way be lain upon or sat upon it is susceptible to uncleanness.²

The first of these two rules refers to a necessary condition for any utensil to be considered a "susceptible vessel." The only exception to this is metal utensils which are susceptible even if they are flat. The second rule concerns midras uncleanness, the impurity caused by a man or a woman with a flux or a flow (a zab or a zabah).

The third rule, like the first, specifies conditions of susceptibility that relate to the purpose and function of a vessel:

If the primary purpose of a vessel is annulled, its secondary purpose is also annulled, rendering it insusceptible.³

This rule is first set forth in Mishnah Kelim in the specific case of a damaged box that opens at the side. The condition

of the box is such that it can no longer serve as a receptacle. Thus it is no longer susceptible to impurities that contaminate receptacles, such as corpse uncleanness. But the box may still be susceptible to midras uncleanness since it is something that may be sat upon, as described in rule two above. The force of rule three is to negate this secondary susceptibility.

Rule four appears above as the example of a general rule at the beginning of this chapter. It specifies three aspects of a vessel: an inside, an outside, and a handle or gripping part.⁴ The intention of this rule is to permit the division of a given vessel into susceptible and insusceptible parts. Thus a vessel which is by nature susceptible to uncleanness may have a part designated as a handle. This part may come into contact with a source of impurity without contaminating the vessel. Such contamination would necessitate its damage or destruction to make the vessel clean.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh general rules are inter-related. They all focus on the intention of the user of a utensil vis-a-vis the purpose of a vessel and his actual use of it, rather than the inherent nature of the utensil itself. Rule five states:

All articles can be rendered susceptible through intention and they cannot be rendered insusceptible except by an act which changes their use.⁵

If one took the lid of a kettle, which is insusceptible as are all covers, and intended it to be used as a saucer, the

mere intention makes it susceptible. This is because a saucer is a susceptible receptacle. And if one took a saucer that was susceptible, the intention to use it as the lid of a kettle does not render it insusceptible. It is its actual use as the lid of a kettle that renders it insusceptible.

Rule five provides the basis for rule six:

An act of use can disannul both an earlier act of use and an earlier intention. But an intention cannot disannul either a present act of use or a former intention.⁶

According to rule five, an intention can render an object insusceptible, but cannot make a susceptible object insusceptible. Thus, once the user intends that the lid of a kettle be used as a saucer, it becomes susceptible. But if he then decides that a saucer, which is susceptible, should be used as a lid for a kettle, it does not become insusceptible until such time as it is actually put to use in that capacity. As a susceptible object, only an act of use may render it insusceptible. This act of use disannuls its former use as a saucer. It also disannuls the original intention to use it as a saucer, which made it susceptible in the first place. Thus an act of use disannuls both an earlier act of use and an earlier intention.

Only an act can render a susceptible object insusceptible, says rule five. Objects that were made susceptible by intention or use can only be made insusceptible by another act of use. An intention does not affect a susceptible vessel. Therefore, part two of rule six states that "...an intention cannot disannul either a present act of use or a former

intention."

Rule seven designates the point in time when rules five and six begin to apply. It tells us when the susceptibility of a vessel begins:

What suffers no lack in its readiness for use, intention to use it makes it susceptible to uncleanness; but what suffers any lack in its readiness for use, intention to use it does not make it susceptible.⁷

These last rules function in a very interesting way. They shift the cause of a vessel's susceptibility from its form and substance to the user's intention in the first place. Thereafter, the vessel's continuing susceptibility depends on the function for which it is employed by the user. Thus, regulations five, six, and seven inject an element of subjectivity into determining the susceptibility and insusceptibility of vessels. Rule one does this as well, though to a lesser degree. There are objects which are, by nature, accessory to a person's tools at all times. And there are objects the accessory nature of which a user can himself determine. For example, a table that holds tools may be used to store the tools when they are not in use. If so, the table would be a susceptible item, according to rule one. But if the table were utilized to hold the tools only at the time of their use, it would not be susceptible to uncleanness. This latter case is determinable subjectively, while the former is not.

By contrast, in rules two, three, and four the suscepti-

bility or insusceptibility of vessels is contingent upon this objective status both in form and condition.

The implications of the seven general rules presented and explicated in this chapter are the focus of the discussion in Chapter Five, along with the consideration of their correlation to the specific data of Chapters Three and Four.

III. METAL VESSELS

A. INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of data concerning vessels of metal in Mishnah Kelim. This chapter will present all of that data in three major sub-categories: vessels that are susceptible, insusceptible, and those whose susceptibility is disputed by the rabbis. In each of these divisions there are further subdivisions into general rules and specific vessels. Specific vessels are treated in two groupings, whole and damaged. The information that this chapter presents will be analyzed in Chapter Five of this paper.

B. SUSCEPTIBLE VESSELS

1. GENERAL RULES

All metal utensils, whether flat or forming a receptacle, are susceptible to uncleanness.¹ If they are broken because they became unclean, and vessels are once more made of them, they are again susceptible to impurity.² Utensils that have a name of their own are, according to the text, susceptible.³ A utensil having its own name means it is a vessel in itself, and not merely part of another object. Broken utensils remain susceptible if they are still functional.⁴ All metal hooks are susceptible if they are joined to an object which is itself susceptible.⁵ Also susceptible are those vessels made from the remnants of other vessels.⁶ These include vessels composed of the fragments of other vessels, of refuse, and of nails known to be made from other utensils.

Mishnah Kelim states all of these general rules anonymously

and unopposed by other authorities. One exception is where Rabban Gamliel⁷ states that the susceptibility of all flat metal vessels and those that form receptacles is limited to corpse uncleanness.

2. SPECIFIC UTENSILS: WHOLE

Tractate Kelim lists many specific vessels of metal that are susceptible to uncleanness. They are grouped into the following categories: utensils with teeth, chains, nails, women's adornments, shovels, covers, ovens, stoves, utensils immersed in non-metal objects, weapons of war, shields, parts of a wagon, and miscellaneous metal utensils. This section contains only those susceptible metal items not damaged.

Among susceptible undamaged utensils, Mishnah Kelim lists the following toothed objects: the teeth of the plate of a key;⁸ the tooth of a comb that was made into a lamp, or into a stretching pin,⁹ or two teeth made into forceps;¹⁰ each tooth of a comb in itself;¹¹ a saw whose teeth are set in sockets.¹²

The following chains are susceptible to uncleanness: those with a lock piece;¹³ that of a corn merchant;¹⁴ that of a surveyor;¹⁵ and those of buckets. The chain of a big bucket is susceptible to four handbreadths from the bucket. The chain of a little bucket is susceptible to ten handbreadths from the bucket.¹⁶

Nails are susceptible when used in the following ways: three nails fixed to the ground as a stove for a cooking pot to rest upon;¹⁷ as a tool to open or shut a lock;¹⁸ as a

club-headed nail at the end of a staff;¹⁹ as any that hold parts of a wagon together.²⁰

Women's adornments of metal are susceptible to uncleanness. Specifically, the text mentions the "golden city," a necklace, ear-rings, finger rings with or without a seal, and nose rings.²¹

The text presents a general rule regarding shovels that are susceptible to impurity. All shovels meant to hold or contain anything are susceptible.²² Two specific cases contained in the same mishnah are a grist-dealer's shovel and a wine press shovel.

Covers of vessels are somewhat ambiguous. The text first states that the only type of susceptible cover is that of a kettle.²³ It then notes that a further exception is the cover of a physician's basket.²⁴

Metal ovens²⁵ are susceptible after the fashion of any vessel of metal, not in the manner of earthenware ovens. The same is true of metal stoves.

Three examples are given of metal objects susceptible to uncleanness even when immersed in a non-metal substance:²⁶ a spindle hook inside a spindle; the iron point inside an ox-goad; and a ring inside a clay brick. These are susceptible to corpse uncleanness if they are in a tent where a corpse has been, and are subject to midras impurity if moved by one with a flux.

A variety of objects of metal and non-metal mixtures are susceptible to impurity. Susceptible items of wood that have

metal hooks²⁷ are the wood beam of a woolcomber's balance and the wood beam of a householder's balance. Other susceptible hooks are those of a bed-frame, those of a box, and that of a table. Additional items of metal and non-metal are the iron-shod beam used as a target for arrows,²⁸ a wooden lock whose clutches are of metal,²⁹ and a metal ring with a seal of coral.³⁰

All weapons of war are susceptible to uncleanness.³¹ The tractate introduces this principle in general wording resembling the principles in Chapter Two above. Its placement here, rather than there, is because all the specific objects mentioned after this general statement are made of metal. The specific items Mishnah Kelim lists are a javelin, a spear-head, greaves, and a breastplate.³² A sword becomes susceptible to impurity as soon as it is polished, and a knife as soon as it is whetted.³³ Different types of shields are susceptible to different uncleannesses.³⁴ The shield used in an arena is susceptible to corpse uncleanness only. But a bent shield is susceptible to both corpse and midras impurities.

The following metal parts of a wagon are susceptible to uncleanness:³⁵ a cattle-yoke, a cross-bar, the side pieces that hold the straps, the iron piece that comes under the neck of the cattle, the pole-pin, the girth, the trays, the clapper, the hook, and any nail that holds the parts together.

In addition to the categories of specific utensils listed above, the tractate contains a miscellany of susceptible

metal objects. They are as follows: helmets, the cheek pieces of a helmet if it has a cavity,³⁶ a neck-iron, rings worn by people,³⁷ the base of a goldsmith's anvil,³⁸ a blacksmith's jack,³⁹ cattle shoes,⁴⁰ a builder's crowbar, a carpenter's pick, tent pegs, surveyor's pegs,⁴¹ a pen-knife, a pen, a plummet, weights, pressing plates, a measuring rod, measuring-tables,⁴² swords, knives, daggers, spears, handsickles, harvest-sickles, a razor, barbers' scissors even if sundered in two parts,⁴³ the scorpion-shaped hook in the olive press,⁴⁴ a blood-letter's lancet, a weaver's pin,⁴⁵ the cups and base of a candlestick, the whole candlestick when the parts are joined together, a curved horn,⁴⁶ the clutches and cross-piece of a lock, a door-bolt,⁴⁷ a spindle, a distaff, a rod, a double flute, and a pipe.⁴⁸

3. SPECIFIC UTENSILS: DAMAGED

Mishnah Kelim speaks of many metal vessels that remain susceptible even when damaged. A large portion of these fall into definable groups or categories: toothed utensils, women's adornments, ovens, coins, multi-functional utensils, and miscellaneous objects.

The first grouping among damaged toothed utensils that remain susceptible is combs:⁴⁹ a flax comb that has lost all its teeth but two and a wool comb which has any three teeth remaining together. Saws that have a length of one sit of teeth remaining in any one place are still susceptible.⁵⁰ Keys⁵¹ which have lost their teeth but retain their gaps, or

have lost their gaps but retain their teeth, remain susceptible. So too a gamma-shaped key, if it retains its teeth and gaps.

Among the number of women's adornments that remain susceptible when damaged are two types of necklaces.⁵² If a necklace of metal beads is strung on a thread of flax or wool, and the thread breaks, each bead remains susceptible. This is because each bead is considered an article in itself. Or if a necklace of a metal thread with beads of precious stones, pearls, or glass has its beads broken, the metal thread remains susceptible. If an ear-ring⁵³ with a pot-shaped bottom and a lentil-shaped top falls apart, the pot-shaped piece remains susceptible because it is a receptacle, and the lentil-shaped piece is in itself susceptible.

A metal oven is also susceptible even when damaged.⁵⁴ If one is damaged either with a hole or a split, and is mended by plastering or is patched with clay, it remains susceptible. But it remains so after the fashion of an earthenware oven, not a vessel of metal. When is such an oven considered to be damaged? When the flame comes through.

So too a metal stove⁵⁵ with a hole or a split which has been mended with plaster or with clay props is susceptible like an earthenware oven or stove.

Damaged coins⁵⁶ remain susceptible if employed for some other purpose. The text cites two examples: a denar fashioned to hang around a young girl's neck, and a sela fashioned to be used as a weight.

One of the longest groups of damaged metal utensils is of multi-functional tools.⁵⁷ In these cases, one of the functions of these tools has been nullified by damage. If a shovel-fork loses its shovel end, it remains susceptible because of its pointed end. If it loses its pointed end, it remains susceptible because of its shovel end. A kohl-stick that loses its ear-spoon remains susceptible because of its point. If it loses its point, it remains susceptible if it retains its ear-spoon. A stylus that loses its writing point remains susceptible if it retains its eraser. Or if it loses its eraser, it remains susceptible because of its writing point. A soup ladle that loses its spoon remains susceptible because of its forked end. If it loses its forked end, it remains susceptible because of its spoon. A mattock that loses its prongs remains susceptible because of its remaining part. But if it loses all but its prongs, it remains susceptible because of them. A hatchet-head⁵⁸ that loses its cutting edge remains susceptible because of its splitting edge. A needle⁵⁹ that loses its eye or its point remains susceptible because it can be fashioned to function as a stretching-pin. A pack-needle that loses its eye remains susceptible because one can write with it. A stretching-pin that loses its eye or its point remains susceptible if it still functions. And Ashkelon gripping-irons⁶⁰ that were damaged remain susceptible to uncleanness if their hooks remain.

The last group of damaged metal vessels that remain susceptible to uncleanness is a collection of miscellaneous

items presented in Mishnah Kelim. These are a coulter that retains its greater part; an adze, a scalpel, or a plane that split in two but retain their sharp edges; a drill that is damaged but retains its sharp edge;⁶¹ a rusty needle still useable for sewing; a straightened hook bent back again; a mill-funnel⁶² with three holes stopped up or three holes merged into one; a kettle plastered with mortar and potter's clay; and copper vessels in two conditions, when mended with pitch, and when used only for wine, since they can no longer be heated.⁶³

C. INSUSCEPTIBLE VESSELS

1. GENERAL RULES

All vessels of metal become insusceptible after they are broken,⁶⁴ if they cease to function,⁶⁵ or, according to R. Johanan b. Nuri, if they are made from broken-up metal articles.⁶⁶ Vessels made from iron-ore are insusceptible to uncleanness. So too are vessels made from a piece of unshaped smelted iron, the iron hoop of a wheel, sheet metal or metal plate, or from these parts of other vessels: bases, rims, and handles. Also insusceptible are metal chippings or filings,⁶⁷ hooks that are joined to insusceptible objects,⁶⁸ metal that serves as part of a wooden utensil.⁶⁹

2. SPECIFIC VESSELS: WHOLE

Tractate Kelim lists many metal vessels that are insusceptible to impurity. These fall into roughly the same categories as the susceptible vessels: named vessels (those that are utensils in themselves, not just parts of others),

utensils with teeth, chains, nails, women's adornments, shovels, covers, metal and non-metal mixtures, hooks, rings, parts of wagons, and miscellaneous objects. The presentation of these categories of objects begins with whole and undamaged vessels, and continues with those that are damaged.

The text presents a group of named vessels not susceptible to impurity.⁷⁰ These vessels, though they are objects and not merely parts of other objects, are insusceptible because they are made to be attached to the ground. Yet, they are susceptible even before they are attached. They are a door, a bolt, a lock, a hinge-socket, a hinge, a clapper, and a threshold groove.

A saw⁷¹ whose teeth are set in sockets is insusceptible when its teeth are upside down.

Two different types of chains are insusceptible to uncleanness: a chain with a lockpiece that is used to tie up a beast,⁷² and a chain for binding up faggots.⁷³

A nail the sole function of which is to serve as a safeguard in a door (to determine whether anyone has attempted to enter) is insusceptible.⁷⁴ Other insusceptible nails are those not needed to hold the parts of a wagon together,⁷⁵ and those studs on a staff for adornment alone.⁷⁶

A woman's ear-ring hooklet is not susceptible to uncleanness.⁷⁷

All shovels⁷⁸ that are made to heap things up, not to contain things, are insusceptible. Among these are the shovel of a threshing-floor and the shovels of storerooms for grain.

All covers are insusceptible except that of a kettle.⁷⁹

A number of objects made partly of metal and partly of other substances are insusceptible. Among these are a coral ring with a metal seal, a metal lock whose clutches are made of wood,⁸⁰ and an iron-shod beam that is used as a footstock for prisoners.⁸¹ Also in this category are metal-plated objects: a spindle, a distaff, a rod, a double flute, a pipe, a spindle-knob, a door-bolt, and a cattle-yoke.⁸² If these are not metal-plated they fall into a different category.

The following hooks are insusceptible to uncleanness: hooks in walls, porters' lading hooks, the hooks on bedpoles, the hook of a fish-trap, and the hook of a wooden candlestick.⁸³

All rings⁸⁴ except those worn by people are insusceptible. Mishnah Kelim specifies those used for cattle and those used as parts of other utensils.

Certain parts of wagons are insusceptible:⁸⁵ a metal-plated cattle-yoke, the side pieces that are only for adornment, tubes that give a noise, the lead by the side of the necks of the cattle, the rim of the wheels, metal plates and mountings, and nails that do not serve to hold parts of the wagon together.

Miscellaneous metal objects that are insusceptible to impurity are fire-bars, the door to a householder's cupboard,⁸⁶ the base of a blacksmith's anvil,⁸⁷ the toy shield of the Arabs,⁸⁸ the cheek pieces of a helmet,⁸⁹ the branches of a candlestick,⁹⁰ and the tube on the end of a staff or a door that has never served as a vessel.⁹¹

3. SPECIFIC VESSELS: DAMAGED

Mishnah Kelim lists a number of specific cases in which damaged vessels become insusceptible to uncleanness. This would seem superfluous considering the general rule at the beginning of this chapter which specifies that metal objects become insusceptible when broken. The problem is that the general rule fails to stipulate the nature of the damage necessary to render a given object insusceptible. The categories contained in this section are utensils with teeth, women's adornments, hooks, needles, vessels mended with pitch, and miscellaneous objects.

Damaged utensils with teeth include saws, combs, and keys. A saw that loses one tooth in every two becomes insusceptible.⁹² So too a flax comb that loses all but one of its teeth. Also insusceptible is a wool comb that loses one of every two teeth or has three teeth remaining in one place, one of which is the end of the comb.⁹³ In general, keys⁹⁴ become insusceptible to impurity if they lose their teeth and have their gaps blocked up or merged. A gamma-shaped key becomes insusceptible if it is broken off at its bend.

A woman's pendant shaped like a grape cluster becomes insusceptible if its pieces fall apart.⁹⁵

Hooks of metal become insusceptible if they are straightened out.⁹⁶

Three types of needles⁹⁷ become insusceptible when damaged: ordinary needles, rusty needles, and pack-needles.

An ordinary needle is no longer susceptible to uncleanness when it loses either its eye or its point. A rusty needle is insusceptible if the rust hinders it from use in sewing. A pack-needle becomes insusceptible when it loses its point.

Two types of vessels remain insusceptible when mended with pitch: copper vessels, except those used for wine; and a cauldron that has a hole.⁹⁸ R. Jose says that the latter is insusceptible because it can hold only cold water.

Among the miscellaneous vessels of metal, Mishnah Kelim lists the following as insusceptible after incurring specific damages: a mirror reflecting less than half of a person's face,⁹⁹ a mustard strainer with three holes merged at its bottom,¹⁰⁰ a coultter that either has lost its greater part or has had its shaft-socket broken, a hatchet whose shaft-socket breaks, an adze, a scalpel, or a plane that has lost its sharp edge, and a drill that either has lost its sharp edge or has split in two.¹⁰¹

D. VESSELS WHOSE SUSCEPTIBILITY IS DISPUTED

The data concerning vessels of metal in the sections above is generally presented anonymously. A few exceptions occur in cases where a rabbi gives an uncontested view. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the tractate is anonymous. This section, however, deals with the statements and arguments attributed to various rabbis. Most of these date from the first and second centuries of the common era. Often, the conflicting opinions of several rabbis will be prefaced by an anonymous statement. Therefore, the material is set forth in

this chapter with the anonymous position preceding the conflicting statements of the rabbi or rabbis.

1. GENERAL RULES

There are two controversies in this tractate regarding general rules about metal vessels.¹⁰² One deals with the purification of metal items that are broken. R. Eliezer says that vessels of metal may be rendered unclean and made clean again even when broken. But R. Joshua says that they can be made clean only when they are whole. The latter goes on to say that the first sprinkling with water of purification may not be done earlier than the third day after vessels are damaged, and the second sprinkling may not be done until the seventh day. Yet R. Eliezer holds that if they were sprinkled and broken on the same day (because they again became impure) and recast and sprinkled a second time on the same day, they are clean.

The other disputed general rule regards metal vessels whose manufacture is incomplete. Rabban Gamliel declares them susceptible and the Sages say they are insusceptible.

2. SPECIFIC VESSELS: WHOLE

According to the anonymous mishnah, the metal basket-cover of a householder¹⁰³ is insusceptible to uncleanness. Rabban Gamliel declares it susceptible, and the Sages declare it insusceptible. Another dispute between Rabban Gamliel and the Sages is over the hanger of a strigil. Rabban Gamliel declares it susceptible and the Sages do not.

A metal tube used previously as a vessel and then placed

on a staff or a door¹⁰⁴ is susceptible, according to the anonymous position in the Mishnah. Beit Hillel says that it is insusceptible. Beit Shammai says it is only insusceptible if first broken.

A mirror made from a basket-cover¹⁰⁵ is insusceptible in the opinion of R. Judah. The Sages declare it susceptible.

Four different types of nails are disputed. Nails studded over a staff¹⁰⁶ render the staff susceptible, according to the anonymous mishnah. But R. Simeon declares it susceptible if it has three rows of nails. A money-changer's nail, says the anonymous position, is insusceptible. R. Zadok declares it susceptible, but the Sages disagree. R. Akiva says that a nail fashioned to open a jar is susceptible. The Sages say that it is insusceptible unless forged anew.¹⁰⁷ Utensils made from common nails¹⁰⁸ are susceptible according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel declares them insusceptible.

A grist-dealer's chest, R. Zadok declares susceptible. Yet, according to the Sages, it is insusceptible unless its wagon was also made of metal. Another dispute between the Sages and R. Zadok is over the point of a sundial. The unattributed position rules it insusceptible, but R. Zadok says it is susceptible. The Sages side with the anonymous view.¹⁰⁹

The unnamed position concerning la'ing hooks of peddlers is that they are susceptible. R. Judah asserts that the one in front is susceptible, but the one behind is not.¹¹⁰

A householder's chain¹¹¹ is insusceptible, according to

the anonymous position. R. Jose agrees that it is insusceptible if it has only one link. But if the chain has two links, or if it has a slug-piece, it is susceptible.

Another metal item of controversy is a straight horn.¹¹² The unattributed view holds that it is susceptible when its mouthpiece is of metal, and when all its parts are joined together. R. Tarphon says that the wide metal end is susceptible, but the Sages declare it insusceptible.

R. Akiva says that a spindle-knob is susceptible, but the Sages do not.¹¹³

The anonymous view of Mishnah Kelim is that the scorpion bit of a bridle¹¹⁴ is susceptible, but the cheek pieces are not. R. Eliezer says that the cheek pieces are also susceptible. The Sages say that the scorpion bit is susceptible, and the cheek pieces are not, but the whole is susceptible when joined together.

3. SPECIFIC VESSELS: DAMAGED

The final category of metal vessels covers specific damaged objects about which the rabbis disagree. Rabban Gamliel rules that a plate broken in two equal pieces¹¹⁵ is susceptible to uncleanness. But the Sages declare it insusceptible.

Mishnah Kelim preserves a controversy among R. Eliezer, R. Akiva, and the anonymous mishnah about the condition under which certain damaged metal vessels remain susceptible to uncleanness.¹¹⁶ According to the anonymous view, a bucket remains susceptible if it can still draw water; a boiler, if

it can still be used to heat water; a kettle, if it can still hold selas; a cauldron, if it can still hold jugs; jugs, if they can still hold prutahs; a wine measure, if it can still measure wine; and an oil measure, if it can still measure oil. R. Eliezer says that all these remain susceptible if they can still hold prutahs. R. Akiva says that any vessel lacking only trimming to make it useable is susceptible, but any vessel requiring polishing is insusceptible.

A knee-shaped key broken at its joint¹¹⁷ is not susceptible, says the anonymous mishnah. But R. Judah says that it remains susceptible because the inner portion can still open the door.

The anonymous view concerning the remnants of a woman's necklace¹¹⁸ is that if enough remains to encompass the neck of a little girl, it is susceptible. But R. Eliezer says that it is susceptible even if only a single link remains, since the like of it is hung around the neck.

If a shovel loses its blade,¹¹⁹ R. Meir rules that it is still susceptible, since it functions as a hammer. But the Sages declare it insusceptible.

The anonymous position concerning barbers' scissors¹²⁰ that are divided in two is that they are susceptible. R. Jose says that the part near the hand is susceptible, but the part near the point is not.

Shears sundered in two parts,¹²¹ R. Judah declares susceptible. The Sages disagree.

If a damaged stove is smeared with clay on either the outside or the inside,¹²² the unattributed mishnah declares

it insusceptible. But R. Judah rules that it is susceptible if smeared on the inside, and insusceptible if smeared on the outside.

I V. WOODEN VESSELS

A. INTRODUCTION

Along with the category of metal vessels, tractate Kelim contains more information about utensils of wood than of any other substance. This chapter sets forth all of the data concerning wooden vessels. It is organized as is the previous chapter, treating susceptible, insusceptible, and disputed vessels. The data concerning all vessels of wood precedes, in the form of general rules, the data about specific vessels in each of these divisions.

B. SUSCEPTIBLE VESSELS

1. GENERAL RULES

All utensils of wood are susceptible to uncleanness if they form a receptacle or can be sat upon.¹ These rules apply even if the vessels become unclean, are broken, and are made into new vessels,² or if their manufacture is incomplete.³ Furthermore, greater stringency applies to the remnants of wooden utensils than applies to them when they are whole.⁴

Wood that serves as part of a metal utensil is susceptible to impurity.⁵

2. SPECIFIC VESSELS: WHOLE

As in the preceding chapter, the discussion of the specific vessels of wood is organized into categories and subcategories. The category of whole susceptible items contains the following subdivisions: wood and non-wood mixtures, boxes, professionals' utensils, householders' utensils, a weasel

trap, harps for singing, baskets, the container of a sifter and the cup of a balance, utensils with hidden compartments, seats, a block fixed to a wall, parts of a loom, parts of a plough, a saw-handle, the bier of a corpse, wagons, baking troughs, a dais, and beds.

Tractate Kelim describes four objects of wood and non-wood mixtures that are susceptible to uncleanness. These are a wooden lock whose clutches are of metal;⁶ the wooden haft of a hatchet at the time of its use⁷ because it serves as a connective⁸ for uncleanness; a yarn winder because it serves as a connective when used. But when the yarn winder is fixed to a post, the post is not a connective. And when the post itself is used to make a yarn winder, only the part of the post that is actually in use serves as a connective.⁹ The fourth object is a mole trap. It is susceptible because its iron spring serves as a connective for uncleanness when the trap is set.¹⁰

The following boxes are susceptible. A box that opens from the top is susceptible to corpse impurity alone.¹¹ After such a box has been purified from its contamination, partitions within it that remain unbroken are still unclean. These unclean partitions, however, are not considered as connectives with the box.¹² A box that opens from the side is susceptible to both midras and corpse uncleannesses.¹³ The cover of a casket is also susceptible.¹⁴

A number of professionals' wooden utensils are susceptible. These include a baker's rolling pin and baking board,¹⁵ and a

flour dealer's sifter.¹⁶

A householder's baking frame is susceptible if it is enclosed on all four sides. So too is a householder's baking-board if it is colored red or saffron.¹⁷

Other susceptible items that Mishnah Kelim lists are a weasel trap and harps that are used for singing.¹⁸

A significant number of wooden baskets are susceptible to uncleanness. In general, baskets become susceptible after their rims are bound and their rough edges are smoothed.¹⁹ A big basket becomes susceptible after its rim is bound, its rough edges are smoothed, and its hanger is finished.²⁰ Small food-baskets are susceptible after their rims are bound and their edges are smoothed, just as the general rule for baskets prescribes. But large food-baskets and hampers do not become susceptible until two circling bands have been made around their sides.²¹ A fig basket is also susceptible.²² Two related items are the container of a sifter and the cup of a balance. These become susceptible after one circling band has been made around their sides.²³

Utensils that have hidden compartments²⁴ are susceptible, according to the text. It mentions a number of specific examples: the beam of a balance having a secret receptacle that may be loaded with metal; a leveling rod with a similar place to contain metal; a carrying-yoke with a compartment for stolen money; a beggar's cane wherein water may be concealed; and a stick with a secret receptacle for a mezuzah or pearls. Concerning these objects R. Johanan ben Zakkai

said:

Woe is me if I speak of them, and
woe is me if I speak not of them.²⁵

Ben Zakkai's qualms were due to his realization that by mentioning these objects he might teach another the means of deception. But if he failed to mention them, he might cause a person to violate the laws of purity.

Tractate Kelim lists wooden objects that may serve as seats, and specifies qualifications for their susceptibility. A post that serves as a seat is susceptible, but only the part that is actually sat upon. If a seat is fixed to a post, only the seat is susceptible, and the post is not a connective. So too with a seat fixed to the beam of an olive press--the seat alone is susceptible, and the beam is not a connective.²⁶ What a stone cutter sits upon is susceptible to midras impurity.²⁷ A big basket filled with straw or flocking is susceptible as a seat if it is plaited over with reed-grass or cords.²⁸ A bath-house bench is susceptible if it has two wooden legs.²⁹ The pack-frame of an ass³⁰ is susceptible if one alters the width between the spaces or breaks them into one another. A plate without a rim is susceptible to midras impurity because it may be sat upon.³¹ And a child's stool with legs is susceptible even if it is less than one handbreadth high.³²

A wooden block fixed to a wall is susceptible if it is fixed in but not built upon, or built upon but not fixed in.³³

Of the parts of a loom, the spinner is susceptible before it is laid bare.³⁴

The following parts of a plough are susceptible: the tail-

piece, the knee, the handle, and the plough-flanks.³⁵

Both ends of a saw-handle are susceptible to impurity.³⁶

The bier of a corpse is susceptible to midras as well as corpse uncleanness.³⁷

Different wagons are susceptible in different degrees.³⁸
A wagon that is made like a throne is susceptible to both corpse and midras uncleannesses. A wagon made like a bed, however, is susceptible to corpse contamination only.

An undamaged baking trough with a capacity of two logs to nine kabs is susceptible to corpse uncleanness alone.³⁹

The dais of a bed is susceptible to midras and corpse uncleannesses. But the dais of a side-table is susceptible to corpse uncleanness only.⁴⁰

Two types of beds are susceptible in two different degrees.⁴¹ A bed for lying upon is susceptible to both corpse and midras impurities. The bed of a glass maker, however, is only susceptible to corpse uncleanness.

3. SPECIFIC VESSELS: DAMAGED

Specific wooden vessels that are damaged and still susceptible to uncleanness include the following: a box, seats, troughs, a chest, objects broken in two, a funnel, and a dish-holder.

If a box that opens from the top has its top damaged, it remains susceptible.⁴²

Mishnah Kelim's discussion of damaged seats that are susceptible considers benches and stools. A bench that loses both its ends remains susceptible if it is at least one hand-

breadth high.⁴³ A stool that loses its middle seat-board remains susceptible if its outer seat-boards remain.⁴⁴ A stool whose seat-boards do not extend beyond its sides is still susceptible if its seat-boards are removed because it is unusual to turn it on its side and sit on it.⁴⁵ And a footstool or a stool in front of a throne is still susceptible if it loses one of its two feet.⁴⁶

A trough with a capacity of two logs to nine kabs that splits becomes susceptible to midras uncleanness.⁴⁷ If it splits and is left out in the rain so that it swells, it is susceptible to corpse impurity alone. But if it is then left out in the east wind so that it splits again, it is once more susceptible to midras contamination.⁴⁸ A large trough that is damaged so that it cannot contain pomegranates is still susceptible, even if fixed to a wall, if it is made into a seat, or serves as a feeding trough for cattle.⁴⁹

A chest that loses its top part remains susceptible because of its bottom part. If it loses its bottom part, it is still susceptible because of its top part.⁵⁰

Tractate Kelim lists a number of wooden objects that remain susceptible when broken in two.⁵¹ These are a folding table, a dish made with several partitions for food, and the footstool of a householder. R. Judah adds a double-dish and a Babylonian tray.

Rabbis Eliezer b. Azariah, Akiva, and Jose all agree that a funnel stopped with pitch is susceptible to impurity.⁵² A dish-holder that has been broken so that it can no longer

hold dishes remains susceptible if it can still hold trays.⁵³

C. INSUSCEPTIBLE VESSELS

1. GENERAL RULES

All utensils and vessels of wood that are flat are insusceptible to uncleanness.⁵⁴ All unfinished utensils made of boxwood are insusceptible.⁵⁵ R. Judah adds unfinished items of olive-tree branches if the wood has not been heated.⁵⁶ Vessels of wood become clean and insusceptible when broken.⁵⁷ Another anonymous position is that the purification of vessels requires that they be broken in two.⁵⁸ All insusceptible vessels of wood protect against corpse uncleanness in a tent when they are tightly sealed.⁵⁹ Vessels of wood that can hold more than forty seahs are insusceptible to impurity.⁶⁰ Metal that serves as part of a wooden utensil is insusceptible to impurity.⁶¹

2. SPECIFIC VESSELS: WHOLE

The specific vessels of wood that are insusceptible to uncleanness and are undamaged fall into the following categories: wood and non-wood mixtures, boxes, professionals' utensils, householders' utensils, a mousetrap, a markof, baskets, seats, a wooden block fixed to the course of a wall, parts of a loom, parts of a plough, a wagon, a baking trough that holds forty seahs, the dais of a cupboard, covers, and miscellaneous objects.

Among objects of wood and non-wood mixtures, a lock made of metal whose clutches are of wood is insusceptible to impurity.⁶² A mole trap is insusceptible if it is not set.⁶³

A bath-house bench is insusceptible if one leg is made of wood and one of stone.⁶⁴ And R. Judah says that the frame of a large saw is also insusceptible.⁶⁵

Boxes are insusceptible if they can hold more than forty seahs.⁶⁶

The tractate mentions several professionals' utensils that are insusceptible to uncleanness. These include a turban-maker's block, a singer's markof, a cloak-maker's block, a carpenter's vice,⁶⁷ Levites' harps,⁶⁸ a harness-maker's bed,⁶⁹ and several different types of stools.⁷⁰ These stools are a midwife's travailing stool and a washer-man's stool upon which he piles the clothes. These stools are not susceptible to midras uncleanness because they do not count as objects that are sat upon.

Householders' utensils that are insusceptible are the container of a flour sifter,⁷¹ and a baking frame⁷² that is not closed in on all four sides.

A mousetrap and a markof are insusceptible to uncleanness.⁷³ So too is a rubbish basket.⁷⁴

Among seats that are insusceptible, Mishnah Kelim mentions the end of a beam of an olive-press. This is insusceptible because the workers say to one who sits on it, "Get up and let us do our work."⁷⁵ A small or big basket filled with straw or flocking and fashioned as a seat is insusceptible.⁷⁶ So too is an ass's pack-frame.⁷⁷ Also in the category of insusceptible seats are those of professionals, mentioned above. These seats are insusceptible to midras impurity

because they do not count as objects that are sat upon.⁷⁹

The following parts of a loom are insusceptible: the upper beam, the lower beam, the heddles, the sley, and the spool.⁸⁰

The following parts of a plough are insusceptible, even at the time of its use: the yoke, the cross-bar, and the collar-piece.⁸¹

A wagon that is used for carrying stones is not susceptible to uncleanness.⁸² So too is a baking trough that can hold more than forty seahs,⁸³ and the dais of a cupboard.⁸⁴

Among wooden covers that are insusceptible are the cover of a clothes-chest, the cover of an ark, and that of a basket.⁸⁵

The last category of whole, insusceptible wooden objects is a list of miscellaneous items. These are the bow-handle of a drill,⁸⁶ the cross-piece and side-pieces of a carpenter's press,⁸⁷ a reading desk for a book, a bolt-socket, a lock-socket, a mezuzah case, a viol-case and a lyre-case, the clappers of a wailing woman, a poor man's parasol, bed struts, and a phylactery mould.⁸⁸

3. SPECIFIC VESSELS: DAMAGED

The damaged and insusceptible items mentioned in tractate Kelim fall into the following categories: a chest, a box, and a cupboard; baskets; seats; and tables.

A chest, a box, or a cupboard that loses a leg is insusceptible even if it can still contain aught. This is because it can no longer function in its usual fashion.⁸⁹ R. Judah adds to this category a chest that cannot stand on its own.⁹⁰

Many types of baskets are insusceptible when damaged. The text stipulates the degree of damage necessary to render them insusceptible or clean. A gardener's basket becomes insusceptible or clean when it is so damaged that bundles of vegetables will fall through. A householder's basket is insusceptible or clean when bundles of straw can fall through. A bath keeper's basket is clean when bundles of shavings can fall through it.⁹¹ Bread baskets⁹² are insusceptible when loaves can fall through them.

A bench becomes insusceptible after it loses either one or both of its upright ends.⁹³ R. Judah says that a bride's stool which loses its seat-boards but retains its under-receptacle is insusceptible because once its primary purpose is annulled, its secondary purpose is also annulled.⁹⁴

A three-legged table becomes insusceptible if it loses one or two legs.⁹⁵

D. VESSELS WHOSE SUSCEPTIBILITY IS DISPUTED

This section contains the data that Mishnah Kelim presents concerning wooden vessels whose susceptibility is disputed by the rabbis. As in the last chapter of this paper, the anonymous position is presented before the attributed views. In every other way, this section is organized in the same way as section D of Chapter Three. One minor exception is that this chapter lacks controversy regarding general rules. This is because Mishnah Kelim contains no general rules about wooden vessels.

1. SPECIFIC VESSELS: WHOLE

The specific undamaged vessels of wood about which Mishnah Kelim reports a conflict fall into the following sub-categories: a box, utensils of professionals, seats, a wooden block, parts of a plough, a trough, beds and cots, susceptibility by size and how size is measured, and the boards of a bath-house.

The anonymous position is that a box opening at the side is susceptible to both midras and corpse uncleannesses.⁹⁶ R. Jose says that this applies only if the box is less than ten handbreadths high, or if it does not have a rim one handbreadth deep.⁹⁷

Among professionals' utensils the text contains conflicts about several objects belonging to bakers.⁹⁸ A baker's shelf that is fixed to the wall is insusceptible, according to R. Eliezer. The Sages declare it susceptible. The anonymous mishnah states that a baker's frame is susceptible. R. Simeon says, however, that this is so only if the baker arranges it so he can cut dough on it.

A stool fixed to a baking trough⁹⁹ is susceptible, according to Beit Shammai, even if it is made to be used inside the trough. Beit Hillel declares it insusceptible.

R. Akiva and the Sages disagree about the susceptibility of a wooden block that is stained red or saffron or is polished.¹⁰⁰ R. Akiva rules that it is susceptible to midras uncleanness, and the Sages claim that it is insusceptible unless it is hollowed out.

The anonymous position states that the plough guides are susceptible to impurity. R. Judah declares them insusceptible because they are only used to increase the soil. Or as a variant reading of the text indicates, R. Judah reasons that they only serve to break up the soil.¹⁰¹

Beit Hillel and Beith Shammai argue about the degree of susceptibility of a trough for mixing mortar.¹⁰² The former argues that it is susceptible to corpse impurity alone, while the latter claims that it is susceptible to both corpse and midras uncleanness.

According to the anonymous mishnah, beds and cots become susceptible to uncleanness after they are rubbed with fish skin. Or, if one decides not to rub them with fish skin, they become susceptible at that point. R. Meir says that a bed becomes susceptible after three rows of meshes have been knit together.¹⁰³

In the general rules affecting all insusceptible vessels of wood, the text states that those which can hold more than forty seahs are insusceptible. While this is not an item of controversy, there is a conflict between R. Meir and R. Judah as to which vessels this refers. R. Meir says a chest, a box, a cupboard, a straw basket, a reed basket, and the tank of an Alexandrian ship, all of which have flat bottoms and are insusceptible to uncleanness if they hold more than forty seahs of liquid or two kors of dry wares. All other vessels, according to R. Meir., whether they can hold such measure or not, are susceptible.¹⁰⁴ R. Judah, on the other hand, says

that all vessels that can hold forty seahs are insusceptible, except for the tub of a water wagon, the food chests of kings, a tanner's trough, the tank of a small ship, and an ark, because these have no other use than to go about carrying what is in them. All vessels that cannot hold forty seahs, says R. Judah, are susceptible.¹⁰⁵

Pursuant to the regulation that size may determine the susceptibility of a vessel, Mishnah Kelim contains a dispute over the means of measuring a vessel.¹⁰⁶ Beit Shammai says that a chest should be measured on the inside; Beit Hillel says that it should be measured on the outside. They agree that the thickness of the legs and of the rim should not be included in the measurement. R. Jose claims that they agree that the thickness of the legs and of the rim should be included in the measurement, but that the space between them should not be included. R. Simeon of Shezur says that if the legs are a handbreadth high, then the space between them should be included. If a device connected to the chest can be slipped off, it does not count as a connective. Furthermore, it neither counts in the measurement nor seals a hole to protect against corpse defilement in a tent. If a chest with an arched top has its top fixed in place, then the top counts as a connective and is included in the measurement. If it is not fixed in place, it is not considered a connective and is not counted in the measurement. If the top is counted in the measurement, it is measured in ox-head fashion (i.e., with an isosceles triangle).

R. Akiva declares the boards in a bath-house susceptible if they are joined together. The Sages rule that they are insusceptible because their sole purpose is to allow the water to drain away.¹⁰⁷

2. SPECIFIC VESSELS: DAMAGED

The specific damaged vessels of wood over which the mishnaic rabbis argued fall into the following categories: vessels of wood and non-wood mixtures; a box, a chest, or a cupboard; vessels of householders; a trough as a seat; and tables.

All four of the damaged vessels of wood and non-wood mixtures are utensils with teeth.¹⁰⁸ The anonymous mishnah states that a wooden pitch-fork, a winnowing-fan, a rake, or a hair-comb that has lost one of its teeth and has had it replaced by one of metal become susceptible to uncleanness. Concerning these, R. Joshua says:

The Scribes have invented a new thing,
and I cannot make answer.

The unattributed position of the text is that a chest, a box, or a cupboard that loses one leg, even if it can contain aught, is insusceptible. Or, as a variant reading suggests, if it cannot hold the forty seahs in its usual fashion, R. Jose declares it susceptible.¹⁰⁹ A box that opens from the side and is damaged below, is still susceptible to midras uncleanness, according to R. Meir.¹¹⁰ But the Sages say that it is insusceptible to midras uncleanness because, its primary purpose having been annulled, its secondary purpose is also annulled. A chest that loses both its top part and

111

its bottom part, R. Judah declares susceptible because of its sides. The Sages declare it insusceptible.

The anonymous postition states that the broken vessels of householders become clean or insusceptible when they have a breach large enough for pomegranates to fall through.
112
R. Joshua agrees with the anonymous postition.

Mishnah Kelim contains several controversies over damaged seats. Beit Hillel says a bride's stool missing its seat boards is susceptible. Beit Shammai, however, declares
113
it susceptible; even its frame alone remains susceptible.
114
If a stool loses two adjacent seat-boards, R. Akiva declares it susceptible, but the Sages say it is insusceptible. If a stool is so damaged that it loses its outer seat-boards
115
and only the center one remains, the unattributed position deems it insusceptible. R. Simeon says it is only susceptible if it is a handbreadth wide.

If a large trough is damaged so it cannot hold pome-
116
granates and it is made into a seat, R. Akiva declares it susceptible. The Sages say it is only susceptible if its rough parts are smoothed.

117

The text contains several controversies about tables. The unattributed position considers a table or a side-table susceptible when damaged or overlaid with marble if enough room remains to set cups upon it. R. Judah says it is susceptible if there remains enough room to set pieces of food upon it. A three-legged table missing all three of its legs is susceptible, according to the anonymous view in the

text, if one intends to use it in this fashion. R. Jose
says not even the intention is necessary.

V. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two, above, presents and explicates the general rules in tractate Kelim affecting all vessels regardless of their substance. Chapters Three and Four contain general rules pertaining to vessels of metal and wood, as well as lists of specific vessels of these substances. The data in these last two chapters is collected and presented in an organized way, but is not discussed or analyzed.

The following chapter analyzes the data in several ways. First, it attempts to link the specific examples of metal and wood vessels to the general rules accounting for their susceptibility or insusceptibility. Second, where necessary, it explicates the general rules from Chapters Three and Four. Third, it notes inconsistencies between the specific examples and these rules. Fourth, it attempts to provide the actual reasoning behind the susceptibility or insusceptibility of vessels which these rules do not take into account. Fifth, it seeks to establish the overall relationship between the specific examples and the general rules. Finally, it raises questions that the data and its analysis suggest. These point to areas of further investigation and some tentative conclusions about the treatment of wood and metal vessels in Mishnah Kelim.

For the purpose of identification, the rules in Chapter Two are referred to in this chapter according to the order in which they appear in Chapter Two. To further set them

apart from the rules in Chapters Three and Four, they are prefaced by a "G," meaning "general." Thus, the first rule described in Chapter Two is G1, and so forth.

The general rules specific to metal and wood are repeated here for clarity and more immediate reference. Those pertaining to metal are prefaced by "M," and those of wood are prefaced by "W."

B. GENERAL RULES AFFECTING VESSELS OF METAL AND WOOD

M1: All metal vessels, whether flat or forming receptacles, are susceptible to uncleanness.¹

M2: Unclean metal vessels are susceptible if they become unclean, are broken, and are made into vessels again.²

M3: Metal vessels having names of their own, meaning that they are utensils and not merely parts of others, are susceptible to impurity.³

M4: Broken metal vessels remain susceptible if they still function.⁴

M5: All metal hooks are susceptible if they connect to susceptible objects.⁵

M6: Wood that serves as part of a metal utensil is susceptible.⁶

M7: Metal vessels are susceptible if they are made from the remnants of other vessels. This includes vessels made from fragments

- W1: All vessels of wood are susceptible to uncleanness if they form a receptacle or may be sat upon or lain upon.¹⁵
- W2: Wooden vessels are susceptible to uncleanness if they become unclean, are broken, and are made into vessels again.¹⁶
- W3: Vessels of wood are susceptible even before their manufacture is complete.¹⁷
- W4: Greater stringency applies to the remnants of wooden utensils than applies to them when they are whole.¹⁸
- W5: Wood serving as part of a metal utensil is susceptible to impurity.¹⁹
- W6: Flat wooden utensils are insusceptible to uncleanness.²⁰
- W7: Unfinished utensils of boxwood are insusceptible. R. Judah adds unfinished items of olive-tree branches if the wood has not been heated.²¹
- W8: Vessels of wood become insusceptible and clean when they are broken.²² Another anonymous position in Mishnah Kelim says they are purified when broken in two.²³
- W9: All insusceptible tightly sealed vessels of wood protect against corpse uncleanness in a tent.²⁴

W10: Vessels of wood containing more than²⁵
 forty seahs are insusceptible.

W11: Metal serving as part of a wooden²⁶
 utensil is insusceptible to uncleanness.

C. GENERAL RULES AND SPECIFIC VESSELS: METAL

1. RULES M1 AND M3

Rules M1 and M3 must be considered together because rule M3 further defines rule M1. Rule M1 states the most basic principle of the susceptibility of metal vessels, and rule M3 defines what is considered a metal vessel.

The following specific metal vessels are susceptible to uncleanness as explained by these two rules: All of the susceptible toothed utensils that are undamaged (see p. 30 above), because in each case they are vessels in themselves; chains²⁷ that have a lock-piece,²⁸ corn merchants' chains, and surveyors' chains;²⁹ three nails fixed to the ground as a tripod stove and³⁰ a nail fashioned to open or shut a lock;³¹ all of the undamaged women's adornments listed above (see p. 31); the shovels used to contain things, specifically shovels of grist-dealers and³² wine presses;³³ the cover of a kettle and the cover of a physician's basket;³⁴ because they are used as receptacles; metal³⁵ ovens and stoves; the metal utensils immersed in non-metal objects (see p. 31), since they are metal utensils and the objects surrounding them do not protect them in a tent housing a corpse; all of the weapons of war listed above (see p. 32);³⁶ the shield used in an arena and a bent shield, the latter of which is also susceptible to midras impurity according to rule

G2; all of the metal parts of wagons listed above (see p. 32), because these are all independent utensils; and the entire list of miscellaneous undamaged metal objects that are susceptible (see p. 33).

The relationship between these examples and the two rules is clear and needs no further explanation. One may wonder, however, why the enumeration of these examples is necessary. Are not the rules sufficient in themselves?

2. RULE M4

This rule covers all damaged utensils that remain susceptible because they still function. The listing of specific examples of this rule is more readily understandable than in the case of the previous two rules. This is because the text provides no further explanation to elucidate the degree or manner of function that qualifies a damaged vessel to remain susceptible. This rule includes the following examples: all of the damaged toothed utensils that remain susceptible (see above pp. 33 and 34); all of the damaged women's adornments that remain susceptible (see above p. 34); the coins mentioned above that are put to other uses after being damaged (see above p. 34); all of the multi-functional utensils listed above (see p. 35); and all of the miscellaneous damaged objects that still function, as are presented above (see top of p. 36).

All these are examples of metal objects that are still susceptible because they still function. In many cases, these objects function differently after incurring damage. But this is immaterial to the question of their susceptibility. This

differs from several significant examples of wood utensils which are insusceptible even though they still function, because they can no longer function in their intended manner.

There are two damaged metal vessels remaining susceptible that do not conform to the above specifications. These are metal ovens and metal stoves.³⁷ They are different from the other items listed because when metal ovens and stoves are damaged and mended with clay they are no longer susceptible as metal vessels. They take on the character of earthenware vessels and are henceforth susceptible as earthenware ovens. No general rule in tractate Kelim sets forth this distinction.

3. RULE M5

The category of susceptible metal vessels contains several examples of susceptible hooks. These are the hook of a bed frame, a box, a table, and the hooks of a woolcomber's balance and a householder's balance.³⁸ The first two of these examples are clear. The last three, however, are problematic. These items should be insusceptible, and therefore their hooks should be insusceptible because they are all flat objects of wood, and all flat wooden objects are insusceptible according to rule W6.

A table presents a case slightly different from the two balances. Mishnah Kelim contains several examples of tables that are susceptible, though, as our discussion will show, there seems to be little or no reason for this. The susceptibility of the balances, however, is enigmatic. The only possible explanation, short of suggesting that there is no

relation between these examples and rule M5, is that the hooks are considered an operative portion of the balance. This would make the balance an object of metal served by wood, and thus make it susceptible according to rule W5. Unfortunately, there is insufficient information about the exact nature of these balances to draw any certain conclusion. But one would not be wrong to speculate that the relation between these examples and rule M5 is dubious.

4. RULE M6

Wood serving as part of a metal utensil is susceptible to impurity. This may even be a vessel whose greater part is wood, but is considered to be a metal utensil because its functioning parts are of metal. There are three such examples in Mishnah Kelim. A staff with a club-headed nail fashioned on its end is susceptible because the nail is the operative portion of the object.³⁹ A wooden lock with metal clutches is susceptible because the clutches are its functioning part.⁴⁰ And an iron-shod beam fashioned as a target for arrows is susceptible because the iron portion is its operative part.

It is obvious why it is necessary to list these examples. There could very easily be doubt as to whether an object is made of wood served by metal, or of metal served by wood.

5. RULE M8

Broken objects of metal are insusceptible to uncleanness, according to rule M8. Yet this rule goes even further and answers the obvious question: how broken must it be to become insusceptible? The answer is that a vessel becomes insusceptible

when it ceases to function. Though these are two separate rules, they are actually two aspects of one rule.

All of the items to which this rule applies are insusceptible as a result of damage, with one exception. A saw whose teeth are set in sockets is insusceptible when the teeth are turned upside down.⁴¹ This is because the saw does not function in this condition.

All of the toothed damaged utensils mentioned above that are insusceptible follow rule M8 (see p. 39). Other items that are insusceptible in accordance with this rule are a woman's pendant shaped like a grape-cluster that has fallen apart,⁴² hooks that are straightened out,⁴³ the damaged needles mentioned above (see pp. 39-40), certain vessels mended with pitch (see above p. 40), and all of the miscellaneous damaged utensils listed above as insusceptible metal vessels (see p. 40).

6. RULE M10

Mishnah Kelim lists several hooks that are susceptible for the reasons given in rule M10. Hooks in walls are insusceptible because the wall is insusceptible as an object attached to the ground.⁴⁴ The hook of a fish-trap and the hooks on bed poles are insusceptible because the fish trap and the bed poles are insusceptible.⁴⁵ But there are also several hooks mentioned in tractate Kelim seemingly in contradiction to rule M10, or oblivious to it. The lading hooks of porters and the hook of a wooden candlestick seem as though they should be susceptible.⁴⁶ The porters' hooks appear to be utensils in themselves, and the candlestick is a susceptible wooden vessel. Neusner agrees that

Mishnah Kelim 12:2 contains examples of hooks that contradict the general rule presented in that very ⁴⁷ mishnah. He is unable to account for this conflict. When this difficulty is considered together with the anomalies to the flip-side of this rule, rule M5, it becomes clear that the specific examples are unrelated to the general rules M5 and M10. By formulating general rules, the rabbis attempt to deal systematically with the various hooks and their susceptibility. But the pre-existence of rules in the form of specific cases renders impossible any effort to systematize. The logic of their general rules is imposed upon the individual cases. This results in an inconsistency between the specific cases and the general rules. Other examples of this are discussed below.

7. RULE M11

This rule is related to rule M6. As in rule M6, the key to determining whether a utensil of both metal and non-metal is considered a metal vessel is whether its functioning parts are of metal. Rule M11 deals with those vessels to which the metal part is secondary. A ring of coral whose seal is of metal is insusceptible, as is a metal lock whose ⁴⁸ clutches are of wood. An iron-shod beam serving as a foot-stock for prisoners is insusceptible because the beam would ⁴⁹ function without the iron. This same logic is behind the statement in rule M9 that metal plated objects are insusceptible. Thus, the following metal plated utensils are insusceptible according to both rule M9 and rule M11: a spindle,

a distaff, a rod, a double-flute, a pipe, a spindle-knob,⁵⁰ a door-bolt, and a cattle yoke.⁵¹ If these items are not metal plated, they are considered in a different category under different rules.

8. GENERAL RULES IMPLIED BY THE TEXT

There are a number of metal vessels whose susceptibility or insusceptibility cannot be accounted for by the general rules for all vessels or the general rules for specific categories of utensils. It is possible, however, to determine from the specific examples implicit reasons for their status.

The first such example is a rule that extrapolates from rule G4. Rule G4 states that all vessels have an inner part, an outer part, and a part by which they are held. This new implied rule deals with the part by which vessels are held and extensions from vessels, integral to the vessels. The text calls these "connectives". A connective is susceptible if it is an integral part of a utensil at the time of its use. For the purpose of this study this rule is designated M14. This rule applies to vessels of metal and non-metal.

Here are two examples of metal chains consistent with rule M14: the chain of a big bucket is susceptible up to a length of four handbreadths from the bucket, and the chain of a little bucket is susceptible to a length of ten handbreadths from the bucket.⁵² In each case the specified length of chain is considered an integral part of the bucket at the time of its use. Thus they are susceptible according to rule M14.

Another rule not stated explicitly in the text accounts for the insusceptibility of a significant number of metal objects. The reason for their insusceptibility is the opposite of rules M1 and M3. None of them is a vessel in itself or a vessel with its own name. This new rule, hereafter referred to as rule M15, accounts for the insusceptibility of a group of named utensils serving as parts of an entrance-way: a door, a bolt, a lock, a hinge-socket, a hinge, a clapper, and a threshold groove.⁵³ These are insusceptible even though named because they are attached to the ground. They are therefore considered part of the ground and not independent objects. The text makes the added distinction that these objects are insusceptible even before they are attached to the ground.

It is curious indeed that all of these objects should be associated with an entrance-way. Furthermore, the reasoning that these objects are all attached to the ground sounds like a tertiary statement. It may well be that an earlier level of the text declared these objects insusceptible for practical reasons; these objects are too important to become contaminated. At a later point then, the rabbis who sought to establish general rules developed the reasoning that they are not separate utensils because they are attached to the ground.

Two types of chains are insusceptible for the apparent reason that they are not utensils in themselves. One is a chain with a lockpiece used to tie up a beast, and the other

is a chain for binding up faggots.⁵⁵ Albeck suggests that the former is insusceptible because it is always connected to another object to tie up an animal, and thus is not an object in itself. Furthermore, it is usually indirectly connected to the ground. One could probably reason similarly in the case of the latter chain as well. Its function is only to be a part of the faggots when they are bound. Thus it is not a separate utensil.⁵⁶

This reasoning seems dubious. One could surely make the same case for any of the chains that are susceptible. Again, it appears that the reasoning for practical concerns is far more compelling than the logic implied by the general rule.

Other objects deemed insusceptible because they are not separate utensils are a nail used as a safeguard in a door,⁵⁷ nails of a wagon not holding parts together,⁵⁸ and nails studied on a staff for adornment only;⁵⁹ the hooklet of a woman's ear-ring;⁶⁰ shovels of threshing-floors and store-rooms,⁶¹ because they do not form receptacles but only heap things up; covers other than those used as receptacles;⁶² an iron-shod beam used as a foot-stock for prisoners,⁶³ because it is attached to the ground and metal plated; rings used for cattle and utensils;⁶⁴ wagon parts that are only adornments;⁶⁵ and the entire list of undamaged miscellaneous objects that are insusceptible (see above p. 38), because they are merely parts of other utensils. One item in this miscellaneous group is anomolous. The toy shield of the Arabs is clearly not part

of another utensil, and seems to have a name.⁶⁶ It appears to be insusceptible because it does not function as a utensil, even though it forms one.

9. DISPUTED VESSELS CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL RULES

a. RULES M1 AND M15

Mishnah Kelim preserves numerous disputes among the rabbis about vessels whose susceptibility or insusceptibility hinges on whether they are vessels in themselves. These include the metal basket-cover of householders,⁶⁷ the hanger of a strigil, unfinished metal vessels,⁶⁸ the mirror made from a basket-cover,⁶⁹ a money changer's nail, the point of a sundial,⁷⁰ a householder's chain,⁷¹ a spindle-knob,⁷² the parts of a bridle,⁷³ and utensils made from common nails.⁷⁴

Two disputed items hinge on these two rules and rules G5 and G6. These are the metal tube placed over the end of a staff or a door,⁷⁵ and a nail fashioned to open a jar.⁷⁶ In the first case, the tube is an item that was previously a vessel. But in its present state it no longer functions as a separate utensil. Beit Hillel says the act of using it as part of another object alters its status and renders it an insusceptible item. Beit Shammai, which disagrees, seems either not to accept rules G5 and G6, or is oblivious to them. Beit Shammai claims that the tube must be broken in order for it to become insusceptible.

The second item, a nail fashioned to open a jar, is not clearly a separate utensil. R. Akiva argues that it is susceptible. His reasoning follows rules G5 and G6 since an

act of use has changed the status of the nail making it a separate utensil. The Sages are either unaware of rules G5 and G6, or reject them in this case. They say that the nail must be forged anew to be susceptible.

R. Judah and the anonymous position differ over the susceptibility of a pedlar's lading hook.⁷⁷ The anonymous view considers it a utensil in itself and thus susceptible. R. Judah says the hook carried in front is a utensil, and the one behind is not.

b. RULES M4 AND M15

This category contains items about which the rabbis disagreed whether they were sufficiently damaged to be insusceptible. These include a plate broken in two pieces;⁷⁸ buckets, boilers, kettles, cauldrons, jugs, wine measures, and oil measures;⁷⁹ a knee shaped key broken at its joint;⁸⁰ women's necklaces;⁸¹ barbers' scissors split in two; shears split in two;⁸² and metal ovens and stoves.⁸³

R. Meir and the Sages disagree on whether a shovel that loses its blade remains susceptible because it functions as a hammer.⁸⁴ The Sages' ruling that it is insusceptible seems to involve the principle in rule G3. The primary purpose of the shovel has been annulled, so the secondary purpose (as a hammer) is also annulled. R. Meir either does not know of rule G3 or does not feel that it applies.

c. RULES M6 AND M11

The rabbis dispute two items of metal and non-metal mixtures. The issue is whether they are of metal

served by wood, or wood served by metal. According to the anonymous mishnah, a staff studded with nails is susceptible.⁸⁵ Thus, it is considered a metal utensil served by wood. R. Simeon, however, deems it insusceptible until it has three rows of nails.⁸⁶ At this point, he believes, it becomes a metal utensil served by wood. The second item is a straight horn or bone and metal. The various rabbis differed over which is the integral part of the horn, the metal or the bone.⁸⁷

d. ITEMS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR

There remains one item disputed by the rabbis the reason for whose susceptibility or insusceptibility is elusive. R. Zadok declares a grist-dealer's chest susceptible, but the Sages declare it insusceptible unless it has a wagon of metal.⁸⁸ As a receptacle, it is hard to imagine how it could be insusceptible. It may be a wooden chest that holds more than forty seahs, as specified in rule W10. But this fails to account for why a metal wagon would make it susceptible, unless the wagon is susceptible and the chest is a connective with it. Unfortunately, this item remains enigmatic.

D. GENERAL RULES AND SPECIFIC VESSELS: WOOD

1. RULE W1

This rule actually encompasses two rules, referring to two different types of uncleanness. Wooden receptacles are susceptible to corpse uncleanness, and wooden objects one may sit upon or lie upon are susceptible to midras

impurity.

Rule W1 accounts for the susceptibility of the following vessels: a box opening from the top, because it forms a receptacle;⁸⁹ a box opening from the side, because one may sit upon it;⁹⁰ all of the utensils with hidden compartments, because they are receptacles (see above pp. 48 and 49); all of the seats mentioned above (see p. 49); a wooden block fixed to a wall that is fixed in but not built upon, or built upon but not fixed in, because one sits upon it;⁹¹ the bier of a corpse, since it is both a receptacle and something one lies upon;⁹² wagons made like thrones and like beds;⁹³ a baking trough holding from two logs to nine kabs, since it forms a receptacle;⁹⁴ a householder's baking frame enclosed on all four sides, since it forms a receptacle;⁹⁵ a weasel trap, because it has a receptacle;⁹⁶ the dais of a bed, because one lies upon it, and the dais of a side-table, since it is a receptacle;⁹⁷ a normal bed, because one lies upon it; and the bed of a glass-maker, since it forms a receptacle.⁹⁸

Though there is no such general rule about wooden vessels, a number of damaged wooden utensils remain susceptible because they still function. Perhaps rule M4 actually pertains to vessels of all substances. The specific cases below certainly suggest that it applies to wooden vessels.

Damaged wooden vessels remaining susceptible because they still function include a box opening from the top whose top is damaged, since it still functions as a receptacle;⁹⁹ all of the damaged seats listed above (see pp. 50 and 51); the chest

that loses its top part or its bottom part, because the re-
 maining part still serves as a receptacle; a funnel stopped
 with pitch, because it becomes a receptacle; and the list of
 objects broken in two (see above p. 51), because these objects
 are made to function this way.

Other items in this category are two kinds of troughs.
 A trough with a capacity of two logs to nine kabs becomes
 susceptible to midras uncleanness when split in two. This is
 curious considering rule 63. Since the primary purpose of
 the trough, a receptacle, is annulled, its secondary purpose,
 a seat, should also be annulled. But in this case, the text
 is either unaware of rule 63, or the author thought it did
 not apply. The former reasoning, however, seems much more
 likely, and has very interesting implications. Furthermore,
 the case of the second trough presents this same problem.
 It is in relation to these two cases that the text states
 rule 64. There are no other specific examples of this rule,
 which clearly contradicts rule 63.

2. RULE 65

All of the undamaged susceptible utensils of wood
 and metal mixtures listed above (see p. 47) can be explained
 by rule 65. In all these cases, the integral part of the
 object is metal. Thus the wooden part serves the metal
 utensil.

But there are several insusceptible utensils of wood and
 metal mixtures that appear as though they should be susceptible
 for the reasons just mentioned. These are the bow-handle of

a drill, the cross-pieces and side-pieces of a carpenter's press, and the frame of a large saw. ¹⁰⁴ There is no satisfactory explanation for why these wooden parts serving metal utensils are insusceptible! This is either another situation wherein the specific cases are oblivious to the general rules, or one wherein the rules are flagrantly ignored. Since it is hard to think of a scenario for the latter possibility, the former seems most likely.

3. RULE W6

According to this rule, flat wooden utensils are insusceptible. Rule W1 provides one qualification of this principle. Flat wooden objects one that one may sit upon are susceptible to midras impurity. By "flat" the text means a wooden utensil not forming a receptacle, not one that is actually flat. These include a householder's baking frame ¹⁰⁵ not closed in on all four sides; a wooden block fixed to the ¹⁰⁶ course of a wall that is both fixed in and built upon, because it cannot be sat upon and does not form a receptacle; a wagon made for carrying stones, because it is flat and is not sat ¹⁰⁷ upon; ¹⁰⁸ the dais of a cupboard, since it only supports the cupboard and is neither a seat nor a receptacle; a mouse trap; ¹⁰⁹ the markof (the wooden arm of a harp); the end of the beam of an olive-press, since the workers do not permit one to sit ¹¹⁰ upon it; the bed of a harness-maker, because it is a flat of ¹¹¹ wood not for lying upon; and the following stools: a bride's stool, a midwife's travelling stool, and a washerman's stool, ¹¹² because these are used for purposes other than sitting.

4. RULE W8

This category contains wooden utensils rendered insusceptible through damage. Some of these have ceased functioning altogether, and others have merely stopped functioning in the manner they were intended to function. A three-legged table becomes insusceptible if it loses one or two legs.¹¹³ So too does a bench if it loses one or both of its upright ends.¹¹⁴ R. Judah says a bride's stool is insusceptible if it loses its seat-boards but retains its under receptacle, since once its primary purpose is annulled, its secondary purpose is also annulled (rule G3).¹¹⁵ But this is curious indeed. Chapter Twenty-two, mishnah four states that a bride's stool is by nature insusceptible. Here, mishnah seven of that same chapter states that a bride's stool is insusceptible after it incurs damage. These two mishnayot are clearly oblivious to each other.

Other insusceptible damaged objects are all the baskets listed above (see p. 55); and a box, a chest, or a cupboard that loses a leg, even if it can still contain aught.¹¹⁶ These last objects are insusceptible because they can no longer function after their intended fashion. This rule is characterized by great leniency, since it permits certain damaged objects to be used without fear of their becoming impure. Again, the pragmatic nature of this ruling seems to be very clear. The final object in this category is a chest that cannot stand on its own. R. Judah declares this to be insusceptible.¹¹⁷

5. RULE W10

R. Meir says a chest, a box, a cupboard, a straw basket, a reed basket, and the tank of an Alexandrian ship, all of which have flat bottoms are insusceptible if they hold more than forty seahs of liquid or two kors of dry goods. All other vessels, whether they can hold such measure or not, are susceptible. R. Judah says all vessels holding forty seahs are insusceptible except the tub of a water wagon, the food chests of kings, a tanner's trough, the tank of a small ship, and an ark, because they have no other use than to go about carrying what is in them.¹¹⁸ The distinction of size, specifically the measure of forty seahs, is a rule accepted by rabbis other than Judah and Meir. This is borne out by the anonymous statements declaring insusceptible a baking trough¹¹⁹ or a box¹²⁰ holding more than forty seahs. Furthermore, the complicated argument about the manner in which a chest is to be measured (see above p. 58) makes no sense if one discounts the seriousness with which the rabbis considered the size of a vessel.¹²¹

This rule is undoubtedly the finest example of a pragmatic concern behind the laws in Kelim. As wooden objects forming receptacles, all of these should be susceptible! Yet they are not.

The differences between the formulations of this rule by R. Meir and R. Judah clarify their intent. Of particular interest is the list of exceptions that R. Judah presents. According to the text, these vessels have no other use than

to go about carrying what is in them. In other words, these are merely receptacles, and as such are susceptible. By comparison, vessels on R. Meir's list are all containers utilized in commerce. These are exempted from susceptibility for a very simple reason. Were any of these containers holding such immense volume to become unclean, the result would be economically devastating to a merchant.

6. RULE W11

A lock made of metal whose clutches are of wood is ¹²²insusceptible because it is considered a wooden utensil.

This is because the clutches are the operative part of the object. Thus the metal merely serves the wooden utensil. The wooden clutches are insusceptible utensils because they are neither sat upon nor form a receptacle.

7. DISPUTED VESSELS CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL RULES

a. RULE W1

Mishnah Kelim preserves numerous disputes among the rabbis as to whether various vessels are receptacles, and whether various objects are susceptible as things sat upon or lain upon.

Several items the rabbis considered questionable receptacles are the boards of a bath-house that are joined together; ¹²³
a chest; a box, or a cupboard missing one leg but still able ¹²⁴
to contain aught; and a damaged chest. ¹²⁵ R. Akiva declares the bath-house boards susceptible because they contain water. The Sages say that they do not form a receptacle because their sole purpose is to allow the water to flow away beneath them.

A chest, a box, or a cupboard is insusceptible if it loses a leg, according to the anonymous position in the text. But R. Jose declares them susceptible only if they cannot contain forty seahs after their usual fashion. A chest missing both its top part and its bottom part remains susceptible because of its sides, according to R. Judah. The Sages, however, rule it isnsuscpetible.

The text contains an even greater number of instances where rabbis argue over whether an object fuctions as a seat or bed. The anonymous mishnah says a box opening at the side is susceptible to midras impurity, as something one sits
126 upon. R. Jose, however, limits this to one less than ten
127 handbreadths high or one without a rim one handbreadth deep. The distinction made by R. Jose limits the susceptibility of chests only to those one may truly sit upon. R. Akiva and the Sages differ over the susceptibility of a wooden block stained red or saffron or polished. R. Akiva declares it susceptible to midras uncleanness as something one may sit upon. The Sages, however, claim it is only susceptible if it is first hollowed out, since only in this fashion is it
128 actually functional as a seat. Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai
129 differ over a trough for mixing mortar. The former declares it susceptible to corpse uncleanness only. The latter says it is also susceptible to midras impurity as something one sits upon.

Two other examples are of damaged seats. The rabbis disagree as to whether they still function as seats. A seat with two adjacent seat-boards missing remains susceptible,

according to R. Akiva. The Sages declare it insusceptible.¹³⁰
 In the opinion of the anonymous mishnah, a stool which loses
 its outer seat boards and has only one center one remaining,
 is still susceptible. R. Simeon says the remaining seat board
 must be a handbreadth wide for the stool to be susceptible.¹³¹

b. RULE W8

Mishnah Kelim preserves a controversy among the
 anonymous mishnah, R. Eliezer, and R. Joshua as to when
 wooden vessels are sufficiently damaged to be insusceptible.¹³²
 The unattributed position says they become clean when they
 have a breach large enough for pomegranates to fall through.
 R. Eliezer says they become clean when anything at all can fall
 through. And R. Joshua agrees with the anonymous position.

8. WOODEN VESSELS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR

There are a considerable number of wooden vessels
 whose susceptibility or insusceptibility is not accounted
 for by the rules governing wooden vessels. There are also
 a significant number of cases where specific vessels are
 susceptible or insusceptible in direct contradiction to these
 rules.

a. RULE G1

Chapter sixteen, paragraph seven of Mishnah
Kelim contains a list of insusceptible wooden vessels. Some
 items on this list are undoubtedly flat, and thus insuscep-
 tible. But this rule is inadequate to explain the insuscep-
 tibility of this group of vessels. It appears that rule G1
 may apply to all of these items, since they serve a purpose

only when actually in use. But the connection is tenuous, since rule G1 states that they must serve a person's tools, not that they must serve a person. One may resolve this problem by referring to rule G1. The text presents this rule in the context of this list of objects, where it is a later effort to account for the insusceptibility of these vessels. This list includes the reading desk for a book, a bolt-socket, a lock-socket, a mezuzah case, a viol-case and a lyre-case, the clappers of a wailing woman, a poor man's parasol, bed struts, a phylactery-mould, a turban-maker's block, a singer's markof, a cloak-maker's block, a carpenter's vice, the cover of a clothes-chest, the cover of an ark and its arched cover, and the cover of a basket.¹³³

b. CONTRADICTIONS TO RULE W3

Though rule W3 states that vessels of wood are susceptible even before their manufacture is complete, the text contains several discussions of the point at which various vessels become susceptible. In all of these cases, the objects do not become susceptible until their manufacture is complete. These examples from the text either ignore this basic rule or flagrantly contradict it.

An ass's pack-frame on which a person may sit is insusceptible until it has been altered to make it more accept-

¹³⁴
able for sitting. So too is a small or big basket filled with straw or flocking an insusceptible seat until it is

¹³⁵
plaited over and bound. According to rule W3, these items should be susceptible even before these finishing touches

are added.

The text states that beds and cots become susceptible after being rubbed over with fish skin. Or if it is determined not to rub them with fish skin, they become susceptible immediately. But R. Meir says that they become susceptible after three rows of meshes have been knit together.¹³⁶ Again, this entire discussion stands in contradiction to rule W3.

In the section above dealing with susceptible wooden vessels, there is a lengthy discussion of the point at which baskets become susceptible (see above p. 48). This entire discussion contradicts rule W3.

One final example is of a trough so damaged it can no longer hold pomegranates. R. Akiva says it is susceptible if it is made into a seat. The Sages, however, rule that it does not become susceptible until its rough parts have been smoothed.¹³⁷

It is clear that the presentation immediately preceding takes no account of general rule W3. Therefore, rule W3 must be a later development.

c. RULE G3

The discussion above shows several examples of this rule. In each of those cases there is another rule that also serves to explain the susceptibility or insusceptibility of the vessels in question. Here is one final example that is explained by this rule alone. A box that opens from the side remains susceptible to midras uncleanness, according to R. Meir, if it is damaged on its lower part. The Sages, however, say that it is insusceptible

since once its primary purpose is annulled, its secondary
¹³⁸
 purpose is also annulled.

d. VESSELS OF PROFESSIONALS AND HOUSEHOLDERS

There are a number of examples in the text of Mishnah Kelim where the same utensil is treated differently when it belongs to a professional than when it belongs to a householder. In some cases, such as those discussed above (see pp. 30, 32, 33, 38, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, and 60), the susceptibility or insusceptibility of these vessels is accounted for by other rules. Several are, however, determined solely by the distinction of "professional" versus "householder," with no other apparent rationale.

The text states that harps for singing are susceptible to uncleanness, while the harps of the Levites are not.
¹³⁹
 It is hard to imagine why a harp should be susceptible at all. Does it form a receptacle? Can it be sat upon? There are no satisfactory answers to these questions. Tractate Kelim distinguishes between several implements of bakers and
¹⁴⁰
 householders' baking utensils. The baking boards of bakers are susceptible, while those of householders are not. As flat wooden utensils, all baking boards should be insusceptible. Why then is that of a baker susceptible? The householder's baking board that is colored red or saffron is susceptible. This may provide some insight into this question. The distinction may be economic. The basic baking board is exempted from susceptibility so as not to cause a hardship to the common person. One who could afford a decorative

board would not need such protection, and neither would a professional baker who probably has several such boards. Were the baking board of one of these people to become unclean, he would have an alternative means of providing for himself. The common person, on the other hand, would not. A similar case is that of the flour sifter.¹⁴¹ The sifter of a flour-dealer is susceptible, while that of a householder is not. This is strange, since the sifter is a receptacle. But it is not surprising considering the logic in the case of the baking boards.¹⁴² Another example is the baking frame. Those of bakers are susceptible, while those of householders are not.

One final case is that of a baker's shelf attached to a wall.¹⁴³ R. Eliezer declares it insusceptible. The reason for this is probably that it is a flat wooden object. The Sages, however, declare it susceptible. This ruling makes no sense according to the general rules. Therefore, it must be ignorant of those rules. The distinction between householders and professionals seems to predate the rules.

e. INTEGRAL AND NON-INTEGRAL PARTS OF UTENSILS

Another distinction by which vessels are determined to be susceptible or insusceptible is whether they are parts of a larger utensil that are integral to the utensil's function. The text lists parts of a plough that are susceptible and parts that are insusceptible:¹⁴⁴ the tail-piece, the knee, the handle, and the flanks are susceptible. The anonymous position is that the plough guides are susceptible. But R. Judah declares them insusceptible because they only

serve to break up the soil. The case of the plough guides indicates the reason for distinguishing between the susceptible and insusceptible plough parts. The susceptible parts are those integral to the function of the plough. Those insusceptible are not integral to its function.

The same distinction applies to the parts of a loom.¹⁴⁵ The upper beam, the lower beam, the heddles, the sley, and the spool are insusceptible because they are not the integral functioning parts. The spinner, however, is integral and is therefore susceptible before it is laid bare.

f. MISCELLANEOUS INCONSISTENCIES

Several other items mentioned in Mishnah Kelim contradict general rules of the tractate. One is a stool¹⁴⁶ fixed to a baking trough. Beit Shammai declares it susceptible even if it is made to be used inside the trough. Beit Hillel, however, declares it insusceptible. It is incomprehensible how Beit Hillel could make such a ruling. All seats are susceptible according to rules W1 and G2.

The next example is interesting because the disregard it shows for a for a basic rule of the tractate is incomprehensible to R. Joshua. A wooden pitch-fork, winnowing fan, rake, or hair-comb that loses a tooth and has it replaced by one of metal is insusceptible, according to the anonymous position in the text.¹⁴⁷ In response to this R. Joshua says, "The scribes have invented a new thing, and I cannot make answer."¹⁴⁸ Rabbi Joshua is surprised because the utensils mentioned are flat and of wood. The replacement of

one wooden tooth with a metal tooth should not affect its status, since this would be metal serving a wooden vessel (rules M11 and W11).

The final illustration is a three-legged table missing all of its legs.¹⁴⁹ The anonymous view is that it is susceptible if one intends to use it in this condition. R. Jose says that even the intention is not necessary. It may be that the anonymous position is referring to rules G5 and G6. But it is difficult to imagine why a table should be susceptible at all. It is a flat wooden object that one does not sit upon, and should be insusceptible! The only possible explanation is that it is susceptible according to rule G1. But a more reasonable suggestion is that the rules post-date the determination that a table is a susceptible object.

E. CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to make several conclusions based upon the analysis above. First, it seems clear that significant inconsistencies exist between the general rules and the cases of specific vessels discussed in tractate Kelim. There are many cases where the specific examples are unaware of the general rules. Numerous examples completely contradict these rules. And there are many rules for which there are no examples at all. Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the general rules post-date a large percentage of the specific cases.

Second, these inconsistencies suggest that the later rabbis had different concerns from the earlier rabbis. The general rules attempt to harmonize and package the issues of

Kelim in neat formulas. The early rabbis, however, seem to be concerned with the real life implications of the susceptibility or insusceptibility of vessels and utensils. Of particular interest are the distinctions the early rabbis made between professionals and householders, and between commercial and non-commercial interests. This matter bears much further investigation, particularly through the analysis of the remaining data of tractate Kelim.

It is also possible to conclude that Mishnah Kelim treats wooden utensils more leniently than metal utensils. Further study is necessary to determine whether this is mere coincidence or whether it has some concrete basis. Was metal more precious than wood at the time reflected by Mishnah Kelim? If so, what are the implications of this?

Another issue raised by this study is the relationship of these laws to similar laws in surrounding cultures, particularly Roman civilization. Do their laws about vessels display concern for certain classes or groups of people? Finally, it would be most interesting to attempt to place the early level of this text in time. This task requires in-depth investigation to discover the context in which the concerns of the text correspond to the real issues of the day.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. According to R. Tanchum, Tohorot was the third order of the Mishnah. Bamidbar Rabbah 13:5.
2. Hanoh Albeck, Shishah Sidrei Mishnah The Six Orders of the Mishnah, 6 vols. (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: The Bialik Institute and D'vir Co., 1959), vol. 6, Seder Tohorot The Order of Purities, p. 14.
3. Shemini 6:4.
4. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities, 24 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), part one, Kelim Chapters One Through Eleven, p. 6.
5. All passages quoted from the Torah are from the new JPS translation, The Torah: The Five Books of Moses (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1962).
6. Neusner, op. cit., p. 4.
7. Ibid., p. 1.
8. Examples of this are found in Mishnah Kelim (Hereafter cited as M.K.) 15:1 and 16:7 in particular, though many other examples appear throughout the tractate.
9. Albeck, op. cit., p. 9.
10. M.K. 1:1-4.
11. M.K. 30:4.
12. Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1942 ed., s.v. "Kelim," by Johann Krengel; Encyclopedia Judaica, 1972 ed., s.v. "Kelim," by Arnost Zvi Ehrman; and J. N. Epstein, M'vo'ot L'sifrut Hatannaim Introduction to the Tannaitic Literature, ed. E. Z. Melamed (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1957), pp. 459-463.
13. Albeck, op. cit., p. 15.
14. Neusner, op. cit., p. 1; also part three, Kelim: Literary and Historical Problems, pp. xi-xvi and 349-354.
15. D. Graubart, "Le veritable auteur du traite Kelim," in Revue des etudes Juives, vol. 32 (1896), pp. 200-225.
16. Epstein, op. cit., pp. 459-463.

17. Neusner, op. cit., part three, p. 350.
18. Albeck, op. cit., p. 9.
19. M.K. 30:4.
20. M.K. 26:7.
21. Neusner, op. cit.
22. Albeck, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER TWO

1. M.K. 16:17.
2. M.K. 17:15.
3. M.K. 19:19 and 22:7.
4. M.K. 25:7.
5. M.K. 25:9.
6. Ibid.
7. M.K. 26:7.

CHAPTER THREE

1. M.K. 11:1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. M.K. 13:2.
5. M.K. 12:2.
6. M.K. 11:3.
7. M.K. 11:1.
8. M.K. 13:6.
9. M.K. 13:8.
10. Ibid.

11. Ibid
12. M.K. 14:3
13. M.K. 12:1
14. Ibid
15. M.K. 14:3
16. Ibid
17. M.K. 6:1
18. M.K. 12:5
19. M.K. 14:2
20. M.K. 14:4
21. M.K. 11:8
22. M.K. 15:5
23. M.K. 14:3
24. M.K. 12:3
25. M.K. 5:11
26. M.K. 9:6
27. M.K. 12:2
28. M.K. 12:1
29. M.K. 13:6
30. Ibid
31. M.K. 11:8
32. Ibid
33. M.K. 14:5
34. M.K. 24:1
35. M.K. 14:1
36. M.K. 11:8
37. M.K. 12:1

38. M.K. 17:7
39. M.K. 14:3
40. M.K. 14:5
41. M.K. 14:3
42. M.K. 12:8
43. M.K. 13:1
44. M.K. 12:3
45. M.K. 12:4
46. M.K. 11:7
47. M.K. 11:4
48. M.K. 11:6
49. M.K. 13:8
50. M.K. 13:4
51. M.K. 14:8
52. M.K. 11:8
53. M.K. 11:9
54. M.K. 5:11
55. Ibid
56. M.K. 12:7
57. M.K. 13:2
58. M.K. 13:3
59. M.K. 13:5
60. M.K. 13:7
61. M.K. 13:3-4
62. M.K. 14:8
63. M.K. 3:7
64. M.K. 11:1

65. M.K. 13:2
66. M.K. 11:3
67. Ibid
68. M.K. 12:2
69. M.K. 13:6
70. M.K. 11:2
71. M.K. 14:3
72. M.K. 12:1
73. M.K. 14:3
74. M.K. 12:5
75. M.K. 14:5
76. M.K. 14:2
77. M.K. 11:9
78. M.K. 15:5
79. M.K. 14:3
80. M.K. 13:6
81. M.K. 12:1
82. M.K. 11:6
83. M.K. 12:2-3
84. M.K. 12:1
85. M.K. 14:5
86. M.K. 12:3
87. M.K. 17:7
88. M.K. 24:1
89. M.K. 11:8
90. M.K. 11:7
91. M.K. 14:2

- 92. M.K. 13:4
- 93. M.K. 13:8
- 94. M.K. 14:8
- 95. M.K. 11:9
- 96. M.K. 13:5
- 97. Ibid
- 98. M.K. 3:7
- 99. M.K. 14:6
- 100. M.K. 14:8
- 101. M.K. 13:3-4
- 102. M.K. 14:7
- 103. M.K. 12:3
- 104. M.K. 14:2
- 105. M.K. 14:6
- 106. M.K. 14:2
- 107. M.K. 12:5
- 108. M.K. 11:3
- 109. M.K. 12:4
- 110. M.K. 12:2
- 111. M.K. 12:1
- 112. M.K. 11:7
- 113. M.K. 11:6
- 114. M.K. 11:5
- 115. M.K. 12:6
- 116. M.K. 14:1
- 117. M.K. 14:8
- 118. M.K. 11:8

- 119. M.K. 13:3
- 120. M.K. 13:1
- 121. Ibid
- 122. M.K. 5:11

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1. M.K. 2:1, 15:1, and 27:1
- 2. M.K. 2:1 and 15:1
- 3. M.K. 12:8
- 4. M.K. 20:2
- 5. M.K. 13:6
- 6. Ibid
- 7. M.K. 20:3
- 8. An object that serves as a connective is one that is considered a virtual part of a vessel at the time of its use. At that time, it has the same status of susceptibility as the vessel.
- 9. M.K. 20:3
- 10. M.K. 21:3
- 11. M.K. 19:7 and 24:4
- 12. M.K. 19:7
- 13. M.K. 24:4
- 14. M.K. 16:7
- 15. M.K. 15:2
- 16. M.K. 15:3
- 17. M.K. 15:2
- 18. M.K. 15:6
- 19. M.K. 16:2
- 20. Ibid

21. M.K. 16:3
22. M.K. 16:5
23. M.K. 16:3
24. M.K. 17:16
25. Ibid
26. M.K. 20:3
27. M.K. 22:8
28. M.K. 22:9
29. M.K. 22:10
30. M.K. 23:3
31. M.K. 27:1
32. M.K. 27:5
33. M.K. 20:5
34. M.K. 21:1
35. M.K. 21:2
36. M.K. 21:3
37. M.K. 23:4
38. M.K. 24:2
39. M.K. 24:3
40. M.K. 24:6
41. M.K. 24:8
42. M.K. 19:7
43. M.K. 22:3
44. M.K. 22:6
45. M.K. 22:5
46. M.K. 22:3
47. M.K. 20:2 and 24:3

48. M.K. 20:2
49. M.K. 20:4
50. M.K. 22:8
51. M.K. 16:1
52. M.K. 3:8
53. M.K. 17:2
54. M.K. 2:1 and 15:1
55. M.K. 12:8
56. Ibid
57. M.K. 2:1 and 15:1
58. M.K. 16:1
59. M.K. 10:1
60. M.K. 24:4 and 15:1
61. M.K. 13:6
62. Ibid
63. M.K. 21:3
64. M.K. 22:10
65. M.K. 21:3
66. M.K. 24:4
67. M.K. 16:7
68. M.K. 15:6
69. M.K. 24:8
70. M.K. 23:4
71. M.K. 15:3
72. M.K. 15:2
73. M.K. 15:6
74. M.K. 15:5

- 75. M.K. 20:3
- 76. M.K. 20:9
- 77. M.K. 23:3
- 78. M.K. 23:4
- 79. M.K. 20:5
- 80. M.K. 21:5
- 81. M.K. 21:2
- 82. M.K. 24:2
- 83. M.K. 24:3
- 84. M.K. 24:6
- 85. M.K. 16:7
- 86. M.K. 21:3
- 87. Ibid
- 88. M.K. 16:7
- 89. M.K. 18:3
- 90. M.K. 18:2
- 91. M.K. 17:1
- 92. M.K. 17:3
- 93. M.K. 22:3
- 94. M.K. 22:7
- 95. M.K. 22:2
- 96. M.K. 19:9
- 97. Ibid
- 98. M.K. 15:2
- 99. M.K. 22:4
- 100. M.K. 22:9
- 101. M.K. 21:2

- 102. M.K. 20:2
- 103. M.K. 16:1
- 104. M.K. 15:1
- 105. Ibid
- 106. M.K. 18:1
- 107. M.K. 20:10
- 108. M.K. 13:7
- 109. M.K. 18:3
- 110. M.K. 19:9
- 111. M.K. 22:8
- 112. M.K. 17:1
- 113. M.K. 22:4
- 114. M.K. 22:7
- 115. M.K. 22:6
- 116. M.K. 20:4
- 117. M.K. 22:1-2

CHAPTER FIVE

- 1. M.K. 11:1
- 2. Ibid
- 3. M.K. 11:2
- 4. M.K. 13:2
- 5. M.K. 12:2
- 6. M.K. 13:6
- 7. M.K. 11:3
- 8. M.K. 11:1
- 9. M.K. 11:3

10. Ibid
11. M.K. 12:2
12. M.K. 13:6
13. M.K. 11:3
14. M.K. 12:6
15. M.K. 2:1, 15:1, and 27:1
16. M.K. 15:1
17. M.K. 12:8
18. M.K. 20:2
19. M.K. 13:6
20. M.K. 15:1 and 2:1
21. M.K. 12:8
22. M.K. 15:1
23. M.K. 16:1
24. M.K. 10:1
25. M.K. 15:1, 24:3, and 24:4
26. M.K. 13:6
27. M.K. 12:1
28. Ibid
29. M.K. 14:3
30. M.K. 6:1
31. M.K. 12:5
32. M.K. 15:5
33. M.K. 14:3
34. M.K. 12:3
35. M.K. 5:11
36. M.K. 24:1

37. M.K. 5:11
38. M.K. 12:2
39. M.K. 14:2
40. M.K. 13:6
41. M.K. 14:3
42. M.K. 11:9
43. M.K. 13:5
44. M.K. 12:3
45. M.K. 12:2
46. Ibid
47. Neusner, op. cit., part two, Kelim: Chapters twelve Through Thirty, pp. 5-6.
48. M.K. 13:6
49. M.K. 12:1
50. M.K. 11:6
51. M.K. 11:4
52. M.K. 14:3
53. M.K. 11:2
54. M.K. 12:1
55. M.K. 14:3
56. Albeck, op. cit. p. 58.
57. M.K. 12:5
58. M.K. 14:5
59. M.K. 14:2
60. M.K. 11:9
61. M.K. 15:5
62. M.K. 14:3
63. M.K. 12:1

- 64. M.K. 12:1
- 65. M.K. 14:5
- 66. M.K. 24:1
- 67. M.K. 12:3
- 68. Ibid
- 69. M.K. 14:6
- 70. M.K. 12:5
- 71. M.K. 11:3
- 72. M.K. 11:6
- 73. M.K. 11:5
- 74. M.K. 11:3
- 75. M.K. 14:2
- 76. M.K. 12:5
- 77. M.K. 12:2
- 78. M.K. 12:6
- 79. M.K. 14:1
- 80. M.K. 14:8
- 81. M.K. 11:8
- 82. M.K. 13:1
- 83. M.K. 5:11
- 84. M.K. 13:3
- 85. M.K. 14:2
- 86. Ibid
- 87. M.K. 11:7
- 88. M.K. 12:5
- 89. M.K. 19:7
- 90. M.K. 24:4

91. M.K. 20:5
92. M.K. 23:4
93. M.K. 24:2
94. M.K. 24:3
95. M.K. 15:2
96. M.K. 15:6
97. M.K. 24:6
98. M.K. 24:8
99. M.K. 19:7
100. M.K. 22:8
101. M.K. 3:8
102. M.K. 20:2
103. M.K. 20:4
104. M.K. 21:3
105. M.K. 15:2
106. M.K. 20:5
107. M.K. 24:2
108. M.K. 24:6
109. M.K. 15:6
110. M.K. 20:3
111. M.K. 24:8
112. M.K. 23:4
113. M.K. 22:2
114. M.K. 22:3
115. M.K. 22:7
116. M.K. 18:3
117. M.K. 18:2

- 118. M.K. 15:1
- 119. M.K. 24:3
- 120. M.K. 24:4
- 121. M.K. 18:1-2
- 122. M.K. 13:6
- 123. M.K. 22:10
- 124. M.K. 18:3
- 125. M.K. 22:8
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- 130. M.K. 22:7
- 131. M.K. 22:6
- 132. M.K. 17:4
- 133. M.K. 16:7
- 134. M.K. 23:3
- 135. M.K. 22:9
- 136. M.K. 16:1
- 137. M.K. 20:4
- 138. M.K. 19:9
- 139. M.K. 15:6
- 140. M.K. 15:2
- 141. M.K. 15:3
- 142. M.K. 15:2
- 143. Ibid
- 144. M.K. 21:2

145. M.K. 21:1

146. M.K. 22:4

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