

# The Doctrine of Ancient Jewish Cooking Vessels

**Preface:** Okay, this might prove to be one of the least interesting doctrines of all time, but, when I ran across the list of four cooking vessels in NASB, and the fact that their exact meaning was unknown, I decided to make a list of all the cooking vessels found in Scripture, along with their probable meanings (if any).

## Charts:

### The Four Words of I Sam. 2:14

- In I Sam. 2:14, we have four different cooking containers mentioned, so we are going to make some attempt at distinguishing them. First, as always, we go back to the Hebrew:
- The first masculine singular noun found here is **kīyyōwr** (כִּיּוֹר) [pronounced *kee-YOHR*], which, according to BDB, means *pot, basin*. The KJV various translates this as *laver, pan, caldrons, scaffold, hearth*. Although, in our context, this is clearly a pot for cooking, this is not always how it is found. It is most often used for a *basin* of bronze utilized for washing in Ex. 30:18, 28; it is used once as a *platform* or *stage* made out of bronze on which someone stood (II Chron. 6:13—it was probably rounded like a bowl?); finally, it is used metaphorically for a *large fire pot* in Zech. 12:6. Given the large size of a wash basin or a platform, we may reasonably guess this to mean a *large (but not necessarily deep) pan*. Strong's #3595 BDB #468.
- We have a very similar word to this, **kīyr** (כִּיר) [pronounced *keer*], found in Lev. 11:35 in the dual. It is thought to be a cooking furnace which might support two pots (perhaps it is a pair of supports between which is hung a cooking vessel of some sort?). This word is not found in our passage. Strong's #3600 BDB #468.
- There is a similar noun which is a smelting pot for smelting metals—and it is only used metaphorically in Scripture. I mention it only because it is similar in spelling to the previous two words; however, its meaning is different enough not to take this any further. Strong's #3564 BDB #468.
- The second word found here is **dūd** (דוּד) [pronounced *dood*], which means *pot, jar, kettle* (I Sam. 2:14 II Chron. 35:13 Job 41:20); it is also used for a *receptacle for carrying* something (II Kings 10:7 Jer. 24:2). In our modern age, we have vessels which can be used to store food in the refrigerator, but then can be placed into the microwave to heat the food, and then, in a bachelor's home, used as the serving dish and the plate. It could be that these were vessels which had a dual purpose of storing or carrying food, and could also be used to cook the food in. The implication is that perhaps it had a handle. BDB suggests that this comes from a Syrian word which means *to disturb* (as in, *to boil*). I Sam. 2:14 is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture. Strong's #1731 BDB #188.
- The third word is **qallachath** (קַלְחָת) [pronounced *kal-lah-KHAHTH*], which means *pan*. This word is only found in I Sam. 2:14 and Micah 3:3. The verbal cognate of this means *to roast, to fry*; therefore, I have rendered it *pan* rather than *caldron* (BDB's rendering). Strong's #7037 BDB #886.
- The final word in our verse (I Sam. 2:14) for a cooking vessel is **pārûwr** (פַּרוֹר) [pronounced *paw-ROOR*], which means *pot*. This is only found in three passages: Num. 11:8 Judges 6:19 I Sam. 2:14. Strong's #6517 BDB #807.
- One of the words not found in this verse is **machāvath** (מַחְבַּת) [pronounced *mah-khah<sup>b</sup>-VAHTH*], which means *flat plate, pan griddle (for baking)*. We find this word in Lev. 2:5 6:21 7:9 I Chron. 23:29 Ezek. 4:3.\* it appears to be a flat pan or griddle used for baking breads. Strong's #4227 BDB #290.
- A second word not found in this verse is **tsêlâchâh** (צֵלְחָה) [pronounced *tzay-law-KHAW*], which means *pan* and is only found in II Chron. 35:13. Strong's #6745 BDB #852.
- The third word not found here is **ag<sup>e</sup>môn** (אֲגָמֹן) [pronounced *ag<sup>e</sup>-MOHN*], which means *pot, cauldron*. It is only found in Job 41:20 and appears to be a homonym. Strong's #100 BDB #8.

It might be nice to see how other translators dealt with these four words of I Sam. 2:14:

Hebrew	NAB	NASB	NIV	NJB	NRSV	Owen	REB	Young
kīyr	basin	pan	pan	caldron	pan	pan	caldron	pan
dūd	kettle	kettle	kettle	pan	kettle	kettle	pan	kettle

Hebrew	NAB	NASB	NIV	NJB	NRSV	Owen	REB	Young
qalachath	caldron	caldron	caldron	dish	caldron	caldron	kettle	caldron
pârûwr	pot	pot	pot	pot	pot	pot	pot	pot

Obviously, the translations of choice were, respectively, *pan*, *kettle*, *caldron* and *pot*.

11. Cooking was primarily the work of women, particularly prior to the conquest of Canaan. For roasting, a fire would be built, over which food would be roasted. An oven of sorts was used for baking. Israelites apparently boiled a lot of food in metal pans which would be placed over the fire (or perhaps on top of the stove?).<sup>1</sup>
12. According to Will Durant, the Greeks cooked over an open fire, stoves being a Hellenistic innovation.<sup>2</sup> However, it appears as though the Jews also had ovens.<sup>3</sup> However, also according to Durant, the Greek kitchen had a great variety of iron, bronze and earthenware vessels, which would be what we would expect, considering that we have several aforementioned words in the Hebrew for various cooking vessels.
13. The Israelites both roasted their grains and boiled their grains, the latter being done to make an oatmeal type concoction. However, it is unclear as to which type of pan was used for this.
14. The Jewish people primarily ate vegetables and fruits; however, for feast days they ate meat. We look at religious celebrations as a time of sacrifice and no fun; it was during these religious feasts when the Jews ate better than they did normally.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, they traveled, took a few days off work and they saw relatives and friends at these festivals.
15. Possibly I should have taken Clarke's approach here; concerning this variety of cooking vessels, he tells us: *We know not what these were, nor of what capacity; nor is it of any consequence.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Bible Almanac*, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; p. 470.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of Civilization; 2. The Life of Greece*, by Will Durant; MJF Books, ©1963; p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 957.

<sup>4</sup> *The Bible Almanac*, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; p. 470.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 2:14.