Transmitting Mishnah

Departing from the conventional view of mishnaic transmission as mindless rote memorization, Transmitting Mishnah reveals how multifaceted the process of passing on oral tradition was in antiquity. Taking advantage of the recently burgeoning field of orality studies, Elizabeth Shanks Alexander develops a model of transmission that is both active and constructive. Proceeding by means of intensive readings of passages from tractate Shevuot and its talmudic commentaries, Alexander alerts us to the fact that transmitters and handlers of mishnaic text crafted both the vagaries of expression and its received meanings. She illustrates how the authority of the Mishnah grew as the result of the sustained attention of a devoted community of readers and students. She also identifies the study practices and habits of analysis that were cultivated by oral performance and shows how they were passed on in tandem with the verbal contents of the Mishnah, thereby influencing how the text was received and understood.

Elizabeth Shanks Alexander received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1998. She has taught at Haverford College and Smith College, and she is currently an assistant professor at the University of Virginia. She received an NEH summer grant to work on this book.
For Avraham Dov Baer ben Avraham
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Elizabeth Shanks Alexander
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Abbreviations

b. Bavli
BB Baba Batra
Bekh. Bekhorot
Bik. Bikkurim
BK Baba Kamma
BM Baba Metzia
Dem. Demai
Deut. Deuteronomy
Dt. Deuteronomy
Eruv. Eruvin
Ex. Exodus
Ez. Ezekiel
Gen. Genesis
Git. Gittin
Hal. Hallah
HJP Hellenism in Jewish Palestine
Hor. Horayot
IRSG Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon
ITL Introduction to Tannaitic Literature
ITM Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah
Abbreviations

Ker. Keritot
Ket. Ketubot
Kid. Kiddushin
Lev. Leviticus
Mak. Makkot
Maas. Maaserot
m. Mishnah
Meg. Megillah
Ned. Nedarim
San. Sanhedrin
Shab. Shabbat
Shev. Shevuot
Shevi. Shevi`it
Shevu. Shevuot
Sif. Sifre
t. Tosephta
Ter. Terumot
y. Yerushalmi
YBC Yale Babylonian Collection
Yeb. Ye`bamot
Zev. Zevahim