YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**Commentaries on the Mishna**

**By Rav Yosef Marcus**

**Shiur#15: The Commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo*,Part 1**

Translated by Rav Eli Ozarowski

1. **The Life of Rabbi Shlomo Adeni**

Rabbi Shlomo Adeni was born in Sana’a, Yemen in the year 1567 and died in the city of Hevron in the year 1624. In the introduction to his commentary on the Mishna, the *Melekhet Shlomo*, he elaborates on the many difficulties and tragic occurrences that he experienced during his life. In 1571, when Rabbi Shlomo was four years old, his father decided to move to the land of Israel with his entire family. Tragically, on the journey there, his mother died. The family eventually arrived in Israel and settled in Tzfat. Following their arrival, they were unfortunately struck with more tragedies: Rabbi Shlomo’s sister, her two daughters, and his brother all died there as well, leaving him alone with his father. Rabbi Shlomo relates that they initially lived in great poverty, until his father’s reputation as a great Torah scholar spread, and their financial condition improved somewhat due to the support they received from others.

After a number of years, he and his father moved to Jerusalem, where his father died when Rabbi Shlomo was only fifteen years old. He describes how he essentially had no home for over two years: “For a number of nights, I slumbered and slept in the garbage heaps. And for numerous *Shabbatot*, when [the people of] Israel departed from the synagogue*,* I would go to hide outside of the city in the fields, because of the shame, that I should not appear before any homeowner with my face downcast.”

After some time, Rabbi Moshe Alchami adopted him and supported him for five years. During this time, he took care of all his needs and helped him arrange his wedding and get married. Even following his marriage, Rabbi Alchami still attended to his needs. During his time in Jerusalem, he studied Torah from its rabbis, primarily from Rabbi Chaim Vital and Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi, the author of the commentary on the Gemara known as *Shita Mekubbetzet.* He later moved back to Hevron, and unfortunately, terrible tragedy struck him again as his eleven children and wife all died due to various illnesses. Rabbi Shlomo Adeni himself later died in Hevron, and was buried in the ancient cemetery in the city.

1. **The Background to the Writing of His Commentary**

In the introduction to his commentary, Rabbi Shlomo writes that he began to compile his commentary on the Mishna when he was twenty-two years old, in the year 1589. A number of manuscripts and personal autographs which reflect the various stages of his life have been discovered. Professor Yehuda Ratzabi[[1]](#footnote-1) describes the various manuscripts from which it seems that the first edition of his commentary was completed in the year 1605, and the final edition was printed twenty-one years later, in the year 1626 (after his death).

The commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* was written at the same time as the *Tosefot Yom Tov*. However, before the commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* was printed, the *Tosefot Yom Tov* had already been published. As noted in the previous *shiur* of this series, the goals of the *Melekhet Shlomo* were in many ways identical to those of the *Tosefot Yom Tov.* Although the commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* is now considered a prominent and important one, it was first printed only in 1905, three hundred years after his writing. Due to the length of the commentary, the printers omitted material that the *Melekhet Shlomo* cited in the name of the *Tosefot Yom Tov* or which was similar to the *Tosefot Yom Tov* in an attempt to shorten it.

In his introduction, describing the various difficulties that were his lot in life, he writes that despite this, “I decided that the Torah would always be my profession.” Later in this passage, he describes the process of deciding to compose the commentary that he subsequently wrote:

Therefore, I, the lonesome and destitute, from the age of twenty-two, set my heart to expound, and with my little bit of intellect and brainpower, I set out to explore the wisdom of the sea of the Talmuds and the words of the *Ge’onim*, and the composition of the great eagle, the greatest of halakhic authorities [i.e., the Rambam]*,* and in the Hebrew language we must be expert and particular...

I will also place my eye upon all of the commentaries, at their head, Rashi, and *Tosafot*, and the *Tur*, because my primary intent is to search in order to understand the Mishna… and while I delved into my own method of study, I would write [things down] around the Mishna on the margins, to serve as reminders for any time that I could not access the books, crowns of glory… and I saw, and behold, the margins were filled and increased… and it was appropriate to place it in writing…

Afterward, here in Hevron, may it be built speedily in our days, an extremely wise and humble man, who was a known pious person in the gates [of the city] who pursued charity and kindness all of his days, saw me occupied with [the study of] Mishna. From when I was seven years old, he knew me, as in the celebrated city of Tzfat, may it be built speedily in our days, he raised me, is his name not Rabbi David Amarilio. And he said to me… your work is the work of heaven, allow it to spread over all of its banks like water. Listen to my voice, I will advise you, and you will not cease. Take a large scroll and ink, and write all of the words from all of the books. (Introduction to the Commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* on the Mishna)[[2]](#footnote-2)

Rabbi Shlomo continues to describe how initially he responded that he was not worthy, and felt that he had nothing novel to add beyond the existing commentaries, “as who is this that walks, who comes after the king.” However, Rabbi David ultimately convinced him, and Rabbi Shlomo committed himself to the project.

Later in his introduction to his commentary, Rabbi Shlomo mentions various Sages who lived in Israel that he quotes over the course of his commentary:

The ultimate Sage, Rabbi Shlomo Sirilio, [the author of a] commentary of the Jerusalem Talmud, written on *Seder Zera’im* and tractate *Eduyot…* also in a number of places [there are quotes] in the name of the Sage Rabbi Elazar Azkiri, and the Sage Rabbi Efraim Ashkenazi, the son-in-law of the Maharshal, and other Sages aside from them, I will add them according to the names of their books. Also the words of the ultimate Sage, Rabbi Solomon Ohana… (Introduction to the Commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* on the Mishna)

Yaakov Spiegel, in his work *Amudim Be-Toldot Ha-Sefer Ha-Ivri, Hagahot U-Magihim,* writes the following about the aforementioned comments of the *Melekhet Shlomo*:

We learn from the commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Adeni that a respected group of Sages existed in the land of Israel that engaged in the study of Mishna. And not only in the study of Mishna, but also in analyzing [it], and establishing the precise text of the Mishna, including the correct pronunciation of the Mishna.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In [*shiur* 3](http://etzion.org.il/en/commentaries-mishna-during-period-ge%E2%80%99onim-and-middle-ages), we saw that based on analysis of manuscripts of the Mishna as well as the fact that the three complete manuscripts of the Mishna that survived were from Southern Italy (a region that was closely connected to the land of Israel), Professor Yaakov Sussman proved that in Israel, Mishna continued to be studied as an independent realm of study. This was unlike Babylonia, where this was not the case.

The study of Mishna received an additional boost in this era from Kabbalistic connections as well: Rabbi Yosef Ashkenazi, who was immersed in Kabbalistic literature, is the sage that is mentioned most frequently throughout the commentary *Melekhet Shlomo.* This Torah sage, who lived in France in the sixteenth century, is mentioned in numerous other contemporary works as one who dealt extensively with Mishna, interpreting it as well as editing the text. The members of his generation referred to him as “the divine *tanna* from Tzfat who constantly recited *mishnayot* with a tune.”[[4]](#footnote-4)The basis for the engagement of Rabbi Yosef Ashkenazi with Mishna is that Kabbalistic belief links the recital of *mishnayot* to the revelation of the divine presence.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. **The Goals of his Commentary**

In the introduction to his commentary, Rabbi Shlomo Adeni lists no less than eighteen distinct goals. We will present the main goals from that list.

1. **Emendations of the Mishna**

The first goal mentioned is the editing of the Mishna. Indeed, the commentary of the *Melekhet Shlomo* is rich with discussions of the text of the Mishna and emendations to it. He explains the importance of this issue by saying: “And the reason for this investigation is that one must pay careful attention to the text of the Mishna, as it is second to the Torah.” In this context, he mentions Rabbi Yosef Ashkenazi, who studied Mishna and focused on grammatical issues and textual nuances as well. Professor Epstein[[6]](#footnote-6) writes about Rabbi Ashkenazi:

He was a researcher and critic, he plumbed the depths [of meaning] and was particular [about the text], [he was one] who had no parallels in his generation. He even emended letters and vowels, and even matters that were only relevant to the written word [not to the meaning], to the extent that Rabbi Shlomo Adeni was amazed at him in a number of instances. (R. Yaakov Nachum Epstein, *Mavo Le-Nusah Ha-Mishna,* Volume 2, p.1285)

Epstein also notes that he occasionally emended the text of the Mishna in a manner that was not in accordance with the text of the Gemara. Moreover, he sometimes even explained the Mishna in accordance with its simple meaning, against the implication of the Gemara.

Rabbi Ashkenazi’s emendations are not available today, except for those mentioned in quotes by other sages. One of the most prominent sources of these glosses is Rabbi Shlomo Adeni, who cites and discusses them on numerous occasions throughout his commentary. The significant interest of the *Melekhet Shlomo* in clarifying the correct text of the Mishna is also expressed at the end of his introduction. In this passage, he compares his own commentary to that of the *Tosefot Yom Tov,* which he obtained close to the time that he completed his own:

“And together is his heart to say it.” There is no coincidence that in one generation, one sits alone in a corner in the city of Hevron, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days,[[7]](#footnote-7) and one of his colleagues sits in the distant land of the cities of Ashkenaz.[[8]](#footnote-8) They agreed together to delve and toil within the toil of Torah, and to edit the Mishna and to explain it in nearly the same style. (*Melekhet Shlomo,* Introduction to the Mishna)

Here are a number of examples where the *Melekhet Shlomo* engages in a discussion of the text of the Mishna and attempts to determine the correct one.

1. **The Order of Plowing and Planting within the List of Prohibited Labors on Shabbat**

The Mishna in tractate *Shabbat* (7:2)lists thirty-nine *melakhot* (forbidden activities) of Shabbat, beginning with planting, and followed by plowing. The Gemara (73b) asks why planting appears before that of plowing on the list, as the chronological order of the process of planting and baking bread, which the Mishna follows with regard to the remainder of the *melakhot*, is reversed: One first plows the field, and only then plants the seeds. The response of the Gemara is that the *tanna* was referring to the process in the land of Israel (where he presumably lived), where one plants prior to plowing. Ironically, however, in the editions of the Mishna printed in the Jerusalem Talmud (Venice Edition), which was written in Israel, these two *melakhot* are actually placed in the opposite order: Plowing first, and then planting. This is also the order that appears in some of the manuscript versions of the Mishna, such as the Kaufman Manuscript. The *Melekhet Shlomo* makes the following comment on this issue:

However, Rabbi Yosef [Ashkenazi] emended his work [to read] “One who plows and one who plants.” And [he writes:] “this text I found in all of the *mishnayot,* ‘One who plows and one who plants.’” And it is true that this is also [the text found] in the Jerusalem Talmud. And it is a big question, since the *Talmud Bavli* says that the *tanna* referred to the land of Israel, and the *amora’im* of the land of Israel say that the *tanna* referred to [locales] outside the land of Israel. (*Melekhet Shlomo, Shabbat* 7:2)

The *Melekhet Shlomo* notes the fact that the Jerusalem Talmud specifically, as well as the manuscripts of the Mishna, which are known today to have originated from Israel, list plowing prior to planting. This, in turn, raises questions about the comment of the Gemara on the matter. Professor Yehuda Felix in his work *Ha-Hakla’ut Be-Eretz Yisrael Bi-Tekufat Ha-Mishna Ve-haTalmud* (p. 36-37) comments that no historical evidence that planting was performed prior to plowing in the land of Israel has been found, in which case the words of the Gemara are truly puzzling.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. **Bowing and Prostrating during the Confession of the High Priest**

On Yom Kippur, the High Priest confesses three separate times; two of these confessions were conducted over the bull, while one was performed over the scapegoat.[[10]](#footnote-10) The final confession is described in the Mishna quoted in the Gemara on Yoma 66b:

He came to the scapegoat, and placed his two hands on it, and he confesses. And this is what he says: Please, God! Your people, the house of Israel have sinned before you! Please God! Atone please, for the wrongdoings, and the transgressions, and the sins that your people, the house of Israel, have done wrong, have transgressed, and have sinned. As it is written in the Torah of Moshe, your servant, saying: “As on this day He will atone for you, to purify you from all of your sins, before God you shall be purified” (*Vayikra* 16:30).

And the priests and the people that were standing in the Courtyard, when they heard the ineffable Name emerging from the mouth of the High Priest, they would bow and prostrate and fall on their faces, and say: Blessed is the Name of the glory of His majesty forever. (Mishna, *Yoma* 6:2)

The Mishna concludes with the response of the people upon hearing the ineffable Name. However, in the Jerusalem Talmud, this line does not appear, as the *Melekhet Shlomo* notes:

And the entire [concluding line] does not appear in the text of the *Yerushalmi* here. Indeed, Rabbi Yosef erased it entirely [and wrote]: “Rather this is the [correct] reading [of the text]: ‘Before God you shall be purified, and they answer after him, Blessed is the Name of the glory of His majesty forever.’ And he wrote, “This is what I found in all of the books, that we do not read this here.” And so it seems to me, that we only read it with the mention of the first Name in chapter three, and no more is necessary. (*Melekhet Shlomo, Yoma* 6:2)

Rabbi Yosef Ashkenazi concludes that this line should appear in the Mishna in chapter three, in the description of the first confession, performed upon the bull, and not here in chapter 6. However, it should be noted that in all of the manuscript versions of the Mishna, this sentence does not appear in chapter three either, as noted by the author of *Dikdukei Sofrim.* In addition, it is clear from the comments of a number of *Rishonim* that they did not have this line in their text.

Professor Epstein suggests[[11]](#footnote-11) that this text was inserted into the Mishna from the text of the Yom Kippur sacrificial service, known as the *Avoda,* which is customarily recited in the synagogue during the *Mussaf* prayer on Yom Kippur. Nevertheless, the text that appears in the printed version did already appear in the versions of a number of *Rishonim,* such as the *Tosefot Yeshanim* (*Yoma* 66a), who even notes that not only did they bow here, but also did so each time that they heard the name of God, including the previous confessions.[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **Addendums and Expansions to the Commentary of the Bartenura**

Like the *Tosefot Yom Tov,* the *Melekhet Shlomo* viewed his commentary as an expansion of the commentary of the Bartenura, which was discussed at length in *shiur* 11 and *shiur* 12: “A number of instances where Rabbi Ovadya abbreviated his words, where my knowledge did not achieve understanding due to excessive brevity, I will expand the explanation and his sayings will be understood.” As we have seen previously, the commentary of the Bartenura is a relatively brief one, which focuses on specific issues in each Mishna, and generally does not elaborate with extensive questions and answers. The *Melekhet Shlomo,* like the *Tosefot Yom Tov,* viewed his commentary as a platform to expand and provide details on various issues related to the Mishna and corresponding Gemara. In this context, he notes, for example, that he will point out and discuss contradictions between various *mishnayot* as well as contradictions between *mishnayot* and *baraitot.*

1. **Quotations of Many Sources that Relate to the Mishna**

The *Melekhet Shlomo* notes that in his commentary, he will reference many works that are related to the Mishna. These include the commentary of the Bartenura to the *mishnayot* of tractate *Kilayim* andhis introduction to *Seder Taharot* that were not yet printed at the time, the commentary of Rabbi Shlomo of Sirilio to the Jerusalem Talmud of *Seder Zera’im,* the commentary of the Rosh to *Seder Taharot* and the shorter version, the comments of *Tosafot* and the Ran and other commentaries on the Gemara (even where their comments appear in another tractate), the Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah*, and the comments of the Jerusalem Talmud about the Mishna.

1. **References and Sources**

The *Melekhet Shlomo* comments that his work can serve as a reference guide for important sources, including the references to *mishnayot* that were cited in the Gemara from elsewhere in the Talmud, references to the *Mishneh Torah*, and references to the *Tur* and *Beit Yosef.*

1. Yehuda Ratzabi, “*R. Shlomo Ha-Adeni Ve-Hiburo Melekhet Shlomo,*” *Sinai* 106, 5750, p.243-251. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Although it is not entirely evident from the English translation, the *Melekhet Shlomo* writes in a very poetic style here. Many of the phrases rhyme in Hebrew, and there are many references to verses in the Tanakh. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yaakov Spiegel, *Amudim Be-Toldot Ha-Sefer Ha-Ivri, Hagahot U-Magihim*, Ramat Gan, 5765, p.382. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Sefer Korei Ha-Dorot* by Rabbi David Conforti, cited by R. Yaakov Nachum Epstein, *Mavo Le-Nusah Ha-Mishna,* Volume 2, p.1285. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In many sources, there is a link appears between the letters of the word *neshama* (*nun, shin, mem,* and *hey*) and the letters of the word *mishna* (*mem, shin, nun,* and *hey*), which are identical but in a different order. See, e.g., *Shenei Luchot Ha-Brit* (*Shelah*), at the beginning of tractate *Shevuot.* For additional references, see Aharon Arend’s article, “*Limud Mishna Va-Haburot Mishna Ba-Et Ha-Hadasha,*” JSIJ 2004, p.19-53; Hanan Gafni, *Peshuta shel Mishna*, Tel Aviv, 5771, p.43-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Mavo Le-Nusah Ha-Mishna,* Volume 2, p.1285. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is where the *Melekhet Shlomo* lived. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This refers to the *Tosafot Yom Tov.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In many Tannaitic sources, plowing is described as preceding planting. For example, the Tosefta (*Berakhot,* chapter 6) states: “How much did Adam Harishon toil and did not taste one mouthful before he planted and plowed and reaped and gathered and threshed and winnowed and selected and ground and sifted and kneaded and baked, and then he ate.” Alternatively, the Sifra (*Behukotai, parasha* 2) states: “But man who toiled, and plowed and planted and weeded and hoed and covered, and at the time of harvesting, blight came and divided it, behold his teeth are sharp.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See *Vayikra* chapter 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Mavo Le-Nusah Ha-Mishna*, Jerusalem 5708, p.972. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. However, see the *Tiferet Yisrael* here, who suggests that the onlookers prostrated themselves upon hearing the name of God only during the general confession for the entire people, but not during the other confessions.  [↑](#footnote-ref-12)