

Women's Obligations in Tefillah

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Introduction

The Gemora [1] states that women are exempt from positive mitzvos linked to specific times. An explanation for this is found in the Rishonim [2]. Women are occupied with the needs of the house and family and with raising and educating children and so are freed from any mitzva required at a particular time.

Another reason given is that the spiritual quality of women is such that they can merit the world to come without the performance of positive time-bound mitzvos. [3]

Morning Blessings

Women are obligated to say the morning blessings since they are for constant, daily benefits and so are applicable equally to men and women [4].

The Mishna Brura [5] argues that the halacha will also depend on whether the morning blessings are to be recited only in the morning in which case they have a time limitation. Others [6] write that even though the morning blessings are restricted to the morning, women are nevertheless particular to recite them.

The Yaivetz [7] writes that women should say the blessing for not making her a gentile or a slave in the feminine form - "*shelo asani goya*" (instead of "goy") and "*shelo asani shifcha*" (instead of "eved"). However, since these forms of the blessings are not mentioned in the Gemora, she should omit Hashem's Name and the attribute of His Kingship from the blessing (i.e. "*Boruch shelo asani goya/shifcha*").

The Chido [8] argues and writes that she should say these blessings in full.

The Eshel Avrohom [9] writes that she should leave these blessings in the masculine form as they include the feminine.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe [10] writes that in this she should follow the local custom.

The Tur [11] states that in place of the blessing recited by men "*shelo asani isha*" (Who has not made me a woman), women have the custom to say "*she'asani kirtzono*" (Who has made me in accordance with His will).

The Yaivetz writes that this should be said without Hashem's name. However the Likutei Maharich writes that the custom is to say it with Hashem's name. He adds that "*Boruch shem...*" should be said after this brocho.

The Alter Rebbe wrote in his Shulchan Aruch [12] that women do recite the blessing "*she'asani kirtzono*". In his Siddur, however, he omitted this ruling. Hence R. Dvorkin [13] writes that in Chabad some women do recite it while noting that others do not. Perhaps here also the local custom should be followed (in accordance with the Rebbe's ruling mentioned above).

Blessings of the Torah

Women are obligated to say the blessings on the Torah [14] since they are obligated to learn those parts of Torah dealing with the mitzvos which they perform (eg. prayer, Shabbos, family purity). Moreover, women recite some sections from the Torah dealing with

the sacrifices as part of daily tefillos and the blessings on the Torah is required for these sections (see below). [15]

The Sections Dealing with Korbanos (Sacrifices)

The Mogen Avrohom [16] and the Mishna Brura [17] write that women are obligated to recite *Korbanos* - that is the sections on the burnt, daily and incense offerings.

The Alter Rebbe [18] writes that they are obligated only to say the section on the daily offering (*tamid*). [19]

P'sukei D'zimra

The Alter Rebbe [20] writes that *P'sukei d'zimra* is optional for women.

The Mishna Brura [21] argues that since *P'sukei d'zimra* were instituted as a preface to *Shmona Esrei*, which women are required to say, they should also be obligated in *P'sukei d'zimra*.

Shma and Its Blessings

Women are exempt from the *Shma* and its blessings since it is time bound (morning and night) [22]. However it is appropriate that they accept upon themselves the yoke of heaven by reciting the first verse of *Shma*.

There are various opinions [22a] that women should also recite "*Boruch shem*" etc., or the first paragraph, or all three paragraphs (as many women do). The Alter Rebbe [23] and Mishna Brura [24] rule in accordance with the view of the Mogen Avrohom [25] that the obligation to recall the exodus from Egypt is a constant one, both at day and at night, and so is not time bound. Hence the brocho after *Shma* beginning "*Emes v'yatziv*", which was instituted to recall the exodus from Egypt, is also recited by women.

In addition, *Shmona Esrei*, in which women are obligated, must be preceded immediately by redemption - "g'ulo" - the conclusion of the brocho "*Emes v'yatziv*". [26] It appears from the Alter Rebbe that the same applies to "*Emes v'emuna*" at night.

Shmona Esrei (Amida)

Women's obligation in *Shmona Esrei* is dependant on the status of prayer in general. According to the Rambam [27] praying is a Torah obligation

One is obligated each day by the Torah to praise Hashem, ask for one's needs and give thanks to Hashem. Since this is not time bound women are also obligated. How often one is required to pray the text of the prayers and the times of prayer, however, are all rabbinic enactments.

According to the Ramban [28] and most Poskim [29] prayer itself is a rabbinic obligation. The men of the Great Assembly instituted 18 blessings (the *Shmona Esrei*) to be prayed morning, afternoon and optionally at night. While it is time bound it was nevertheless instituted for women because *Shmona Esrei* is a request for one's needs and is therefore applicable also to women.

The Mogen Avrohom writes that most women do not pray the *Shmona Esrei* regularly on the basis of the view of the Rambam [27].

The Rambam states that with a short request to Hashem upon rising a woman has fulfilled her Torah obligation of prayer. The Mogen Avrohom therefore concludes that there is perhaps no additional rabbinic obligation upon her. However he rules, as do the Alter Rebbe [30] and the Mishna Brura [31], in accordance with the view of the Ramban, that women are obligated in *Shmona Esrei*.

Women, therefore, need to pray Shacharis and Mincha *Shmona Esrei*. Ma'ariv, however, was originally optional also for men; and women did not accept it upon themselves as an obligation (unlike men).

There are rabbis who are lenient in this regard with women who are greatly occupied with raising children. The son of the Chofetz Chaim relates [32] that his mother rarely prayed while they were young - the Chofetz Chaim had exempted her since she was occupied in raising children.

Similarly there are accounts that R. Kaminetzky exempted women raising children from prayer, comparing them to one occupied with caring for the sick, who is exempt. It is understood that one may not be lenient with oneself without obtaining a ruling from one's Rabbi.

Moreover, a woman who has been praying *Shmona Esrei* regularly and then due to difficulties obtains a ruling from a rabbi to exempt her needs to be released from a vow since her regular practice to pray has the force of a vow in this instance. [33]

A woman who prays the *Shmona Esrei* must observe laws pertaining to it: fixing a regular place to pray [34], washing her hands before prayer [35] and not doing housework before praying [36].

According to the Sha'arei Tshuva [37] if a child is distracting her while praying the *Shmona Esrei* she may signal to the child to stop. If this doesn't help she may distance herself from the child; she may not, however, speak.

Tachanun

The Machaze Eliyahu [38] writes that women are exempt from *Tachanun* on two accounts: (i) According to the Tur [39] a reason for saying *Tachanun* is in order to pray in the three different positions which Moshe Rabeinu prayed: *Shma* is recited seated, *Shmona Esrei* standing and *Tachanun* with one's head down. Since women are exempt from *Shma*, this reason doesn't apply to them. (ii) *Tachanun* is essentially optional in status [40] and it was not accepted as an obligation by women.

Ashrei and Uva L'tzion

The Machaze Eliyahu [38] writes that women are exempt from *Uva L'tzion*. One reason why *Uva L'tzion* is recited is that it contains verses from the Torah with their translation so that one should at least learn some Torah during the day [42]. Since women are essentially exempt from learning Torah this reason does not apply to them.

Uva L'tzion was moreover instituted during the time of a Roman decree against saying *K'dusha* which was omitted from earlier parts of the prayers because of spies in the synagogue. When the spies left they recited *Uva L'tzion*, which contains *K'dusha*, to compensate for the omission [43]. Since women are not obligated in *K'dusha* they are therefore exempt from reciting *Uva L'tzion*.

Ashrei is recited before *Uva L'tzion* in order to separate it from *Shmona Esrei* [44]. Since women don't recite *Uva L'tzion* they need not recite *Ashrei*.

Shir Shel Yom

Shir Shel Yom (the song of the day) is recited during the prayers just as it was recited during the time of offering the daily sacrifices [45]. Since women are obligated to recite the section of the daily sacrifice they are possibly obligated also to recite the *Shir Shel Yom*.

Aleinu

The Lvush [46] writes that *Aleinu* is praise to Hashem after *Shmona Esrei* just as *P'sukei d'zimra* is before. Since, according to the Alter Rebbe, women are exempt from *P'sukei d'zimra* they are perhaps likewise exempt from *Aleinu*.

Even according to the Mishna Brura who requires women to say *P'sukei d'zimra* perhaps *Aleinu* is not required since it was not instituted for the sake of the *Shmona Esrei* as were *P'sukei d'zimra*.

Summary

A woman's daily obligation in tefillah according to the Alter Rebbe consists of morning blessings, blessings on the Torah, the section relating to the daily sacrifice (*tamid*), the first verse of *Shma*, *Emes V'yatziv* followed immediately by the *Shmona Esrei* of Shacharis, and the *Shmona Esrei* of Mincha.

According to the Mishna Brura: morning blessings, blessings of the Torah, sections of the sacrifices (burnt (olah), daily (*tamid*), and incense (*ketores*)), *P'sukei d'zimra*, the first verse of *Shma*, *Emes V'yatziv* followed immediately by the *Shmona Esrei* of Shacharis, and the *Shmona Esrei* of Mincha.

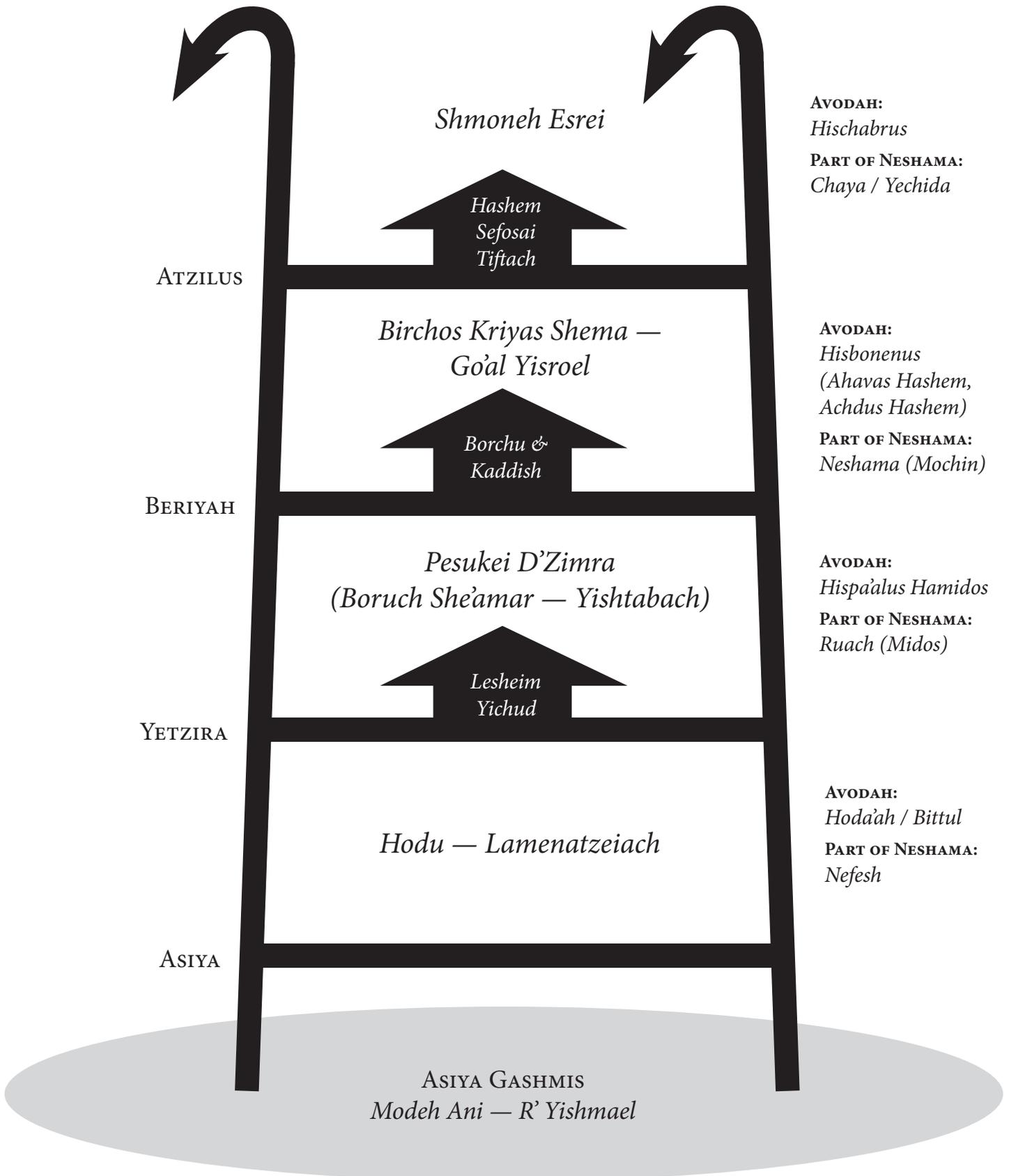
- | | |
|--|--|
| [1] Kiddushin 34a | 70:5; Magen Giborim, Mogen |
| [2] Avudraham - Seder Tefilos Shel Chol | Hotef 70:3 |
| [3] Be'er Hagola (Maharal) | [23] 70:1 |
| [4] Tur Orach Chayim 46 | [24] 70:1 |
| [5] 70:2 | [25] 70:1 |
| [6] see Sha'arei Halocho U'Minhag Vol.1 p.231 | [26] see Pri Chodosh Orach Chayim 67; Sha'agas Arye Ch.12; Oruch Hashulchan 70:4 |
| [7] in his Siddur | [27] Hilchos Tefillo 1:1,2 |
| [8] Keshar Agudel 5:22 | [28] Sefer HaMitzvos - Positive Mitzvah 5 |
| [9] Butchatch 46 | [29] see Mogen Avrohom 106:2 |
| [10] Likutei Sichos Vol.24 p.410 | [30] 106:2 |
| [11] Orach Chayim 46 [12] 46:4 | [31] 106:4 |
| [13] Kovetz Razash p.28 | [32] Sichos Chofetz Chaim Vol.1 Ch.27 |
| [14] Shulchan Oruch 47:14; Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch 47:10; Mishna Berurah 47 Noshim | [33] According to Pri Megodim end of "Preface to Laws of Prayer" |
| [15] Beis Yosef end of Orach Chayim 47; see also Likutei Sichos Vol.14 p.149 Chasan Sofer, Sha'ar Birchos Hashachar Ch.9 | [34] see Shulchan Oruch Orach Chayim 90 |
| [16] 47:14 | [35] ibid 90 |
| [17] 47, "Noshim" | [36] ibid 89 |
| [18] 47:10 | [37] 104:1 |
| [19] see also Pri Megodim on above Mogen Avrohom; Tehilla L'Dovid 47; Responsa Machaze Eliyohu 14 | [38] Ch.20 |
| [20] 70:1 | [39] Orach Chayim 131 |
| [21] 70:2 | [40] ibid, from Rav Neturoi Gaon [41] Ch.20 |
| [22] Shulchan Oruch 70:1 | [42] Rashi Sotah 49b "Akedusho" |
| [22a] See Lvush 70; Mishna Berurah | [43] Shiblei Leket Ch.43 |
| | [44] Levush 132 |
| | [45] Masechas Sofrim 18:1 |
| | [46] 133:1 |

The above is not intended to decide halachic questions, but rather to clarify them in a clear and concise form. Please refer all your practical questions to your local Rabbi.

For the full article, see <http://www.chabadtalk.com/go/ph/ph-5.htm>

SULAM HATEFILLAH

"והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה"



TEFILLAH FOR WOMEN

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

1. *Morning Brachos*
2. *Hareini*
3. *Vayedaber (Korban Tomid)*
4. *First line of Shema*
5. *Emes Veyatziv — Go'el Yisroel*
6. *Shmoneh Esrei*
7. *Ach Tzadikim*

Shmoneh Esrei of Mincha

WHAT DAVENING ACCOMPLISHES

ACCORDING TO CHASSIDUS

1. *Re-energize your connection to Hashem*
2. *Spread your neshama throughout your body*
3. *Refine nitzutzos (the daily nitzutz, and any you picked up along the way) — the inyan of Geulah protis*
4. *Tune into the new chayus of today*
5. *Make you more aidel*
6. *Ask for what Hashem needs (including the needs to accomplish your own shlichus)*
7. *Make general hachlatos for the day*