Women & Tefillah **–** Handout

# Introduction

# Bava Kama 87a

R' Chanina stated: Greater is the one who is commanded and does than one who is not commanded and does.

# Amidah

# Mishnah Berachot 3:3

Women, slaves and minors are exempt from reciting the Shma and tefillin, but are subject to the obligations of tefillah, mezuzah, and grace after meals.

# Bavli – Berachot 20b – Manuscript 1

Reciting the Shma and Tefillin – which are positive time-bound commandments, and for all positive time-bound commandments – women are exempt

Tefillah, Mezuzah and Grace after Meals – are positive commandments not bound by time, and all positive commandments not bound by time – women are obligated

# Bavli – Berachot 20b – Manuscript 2

What might you say? Since it says “Evening, morning and afternoon will I pour out my heart and moan” (Psalms 55:18), it is like a positive time-bound commandment - the Mishnah comes to teach us that women are obligated to pray.

# Bavli – Berachot 20b – Manuscript 3

“but are obligated in Tefillah” – because it is a supplication for Divine mercy

# Mishneh Torah – Hilchot Tefilah and Birkat Kohanim 1:1-6

1. It is a positive Torah commandment to pray every day, as [Exodus 23:25] states: "You shall serve God, your Lord." Tradition teaches us that this service is prayer, as [Deuteronomy 11:13] states: "And serve Him with all your heart" and our Sages said: Which is the service of the heart? This is prayer.  
   The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah, nor does it prescribe a specific formula for prayer. Also, according to Torah law, there are no fixed times for prayers.
2. Therefore, women and slaves are obligated to pray, since it is not a time-oriented commandment….
3. … This was the ongoing practice from Moshe Rabbenu until Ezra.
4. …Consequently, when someone would pray, he would be limited in his ability to request his needs or to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, in Hebrew, unless other languages were mixed in with it. When Ezra and his court saw this, they established eighteen blessings in sequence.
5. They also decreed that the number of prayers correspond to the number of sacrifices - i.e., two prayers every day, corresponding to the two daily sacrifices.
6. They also instituted a prayer to be recited at night…

# Mishneh Torah – Hilchot Tefillah and Birkat Kohanim 6:10

Women, slaves and children are obligated to pray. Anyone exempt from Kriat Shema is also exempt from the Amidah.

# Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 106:2

Women and slaves, even though they are exempt from reciting Shma, are obligated in prayer, because this is not a positive time bound mitzvah.

# Rashi on Berachot 20b

…because Tefillah is a supplication for Divine mercy and it is rabbinic and they also enacted it for women and for the education of children.

# Yerushalmi, Berachot 5

R. Aha in the name of R. Tanhuma son of R. Hiya in the name of R. Simlai: A city in which everyone is a Kohen, they raise their hands…and who responds “Amen” to them? The women and the children.

# Yerushalmi, Sotah 1:2

R. Yossi the son of R. Bun said: [a suspicious husband] who said to her “do not enter the synagogue”, she may enter with him…

# Bavli, Sotah 22a

The significance of receiving divine reward can be learned from a widow, as there was a certain widow in whose neighborhood there was a synagogue, and despite this every day she went and prayed in the study hall of Rabbi Yoḥanan. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to her: My daughter, is there not a synagogue in your neighborhood? She said to him: My teacher, don’t I attain a reward for all the steps I take while walking to pray in the distant study hall?

# Minyan

# Mishnah Megillah 4:3

They do not recite the Shma responsively, And they do not pass before the ark; And they do not lift up their hands; And they do not read the Torah; And they do not conclude with a haftarah from the prophets; And they do not make stops at funeral processions; And they do not say the blessing for mourners, or the comfort of mourners, or the blessing of bridegrooms; And they do not mention God’s name in the invitation; except in the presence of ten.

# Bavli – Megillah 23b

From where are these matters? — R. Hiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Yohanan: Because Scripture says: “But I will be sanctified among the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). Every act of sanctification requires not less than ten.

**וְלֹא תְחַלְּלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדִּשְׁכֶם**

How does the verse denote this? — As R. Hiyya taught: We explain the word ‘among’ here by reference to its use in another place. It is written here, “But I will be sanctified among the children of Israel”, and it is written elsewhere: “Separate yourselves from among this congregation” (Num. 16:21);

**הִבָּ֣דְל֔וּ מִתּ֖וֹךְ הָעֵדָ֣ה הַזֹּ֑את וַאַכַלֶּ֥ה אֹתָ֖ם כְּרָֽגַע**

and we further explain the word ‘congregation’ here by reference to what is written in another place: “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?” (Num. 14:27). Just as there ten are indicated, so here.

**עַד־מָתַ֗י לָעֵדָ֤ה הָֽרָעָה֙ הַזֹּ֔את…**

# Mishneh Torah – Hilchot Tefillah and Birkat Kohanim 8:4

**ואין עושין כן בפחות מעשרה גדולים ובני חורין**

What is implied by “communal prayer”? One prays aloud and all listen. This should not be done with fewer than ten adult free males.

# Shulchan Aruch – Orach Hayim 55:1

The say Kaddish, and it is not said with less than ten males, who are free and have grown two hairs, and this is the rule for Kedushah and Barchu that are not said with less than ten.

# Bavli – Berachot 45b

Come and hear: Women form a zimmun for themselves and slaves form a zimmun for themselves; however, women, slaves, and minors, even if they wish to form a zimmun together, they may not form a zimmun. One hundred women considered the equivalent of two men…

# Sheliach Tzibbur

# Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:8

A deaf-mute, a lunatic and a minor cannot cause others to fulfill their religious obligation. This is the general principle: one who is not personally obligated in the matter cannot perform it on behalf of others.

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