

לדעת רוב הפוסקים נשים שוות לגברים  
בחיוב תפילה, לפיכך חייבות להתפלל  
שמונה עשרה בשחרית ומנחה, וערבית  
היא תפילת רשות

According to most Poskim, women and men are equal regarding the obligation to pray, and therefore women are obligated to recite Shemoneh Esrei of Shacharit and Mincha, while Ma'ariv remains voluntary.

# WOMEN'S OBLIGATION TO PRAY: PENINEI HALACHA CHAPTER 2

## The story of Chana and the power of prayer:

Chana's story is one of a woman being recognised as a role model in prayer. This seems strange as in terms of formal prayer, men have more obligations than women; Men pray three times a day, and a man's involvement in prayer is far more regimented and public, yet the sages teach us that many of the halachot of prayer are derived from Chana – a woman.

The Torah tells of Chana that Hashem had "closed off her womb", yet she had a yearning to have a family in order to serve G-d by dedicating her offspring to Him. She davened and asked that "Hashem, Master of Legions, if you take note of the suffering of your maidservant... and give your maidservant male offspring, then I shall give to Hashem all the days of his life..." (I Samuel 1:11). In response, Hashem blessed Chana with a son Samuel (I Samuel 1:20), who would become a prophet compared to Moses and Aaron in greatness.

The details of Chana's prayer as well as her way of thanking G-d for a child (Samuel 2:1-10), teach us about the laws and philosophy of approaching the Divine. In addition, since many of the halachot of prayer are learned from Chana, we understand that a woman's prayer is as important as a man's. Chana's example indicates that, contrary to misperceptions, different obligations between men and women in prayer do not indicate female inferiority. We learn of our obligation to pray with focus and intention as we are told that Chana spoke with her heart. In addition, when Chana prayed, her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. From this, our sages tell us, comes our obligation to articulate our prayers, pronouncing each word clearly, but not too loudly.

## Other sources:

### Rambam

Women are only obligated to pray once daily because the mitzva of prayer is rooted in the biblical commandment to turn to God in prayer daily. Women are only exempt from time-bound positive mitzvot, but are required to fulfil mitzvot that are independent of time; Since this mitzva is not dependent on time, women are obligated to fulfil it.

### Mesechet Brachot 3<sup>rd</sup> Mishna:

נשים ועבדים וקטנים פטורין מקריאת שמע ומן התפילין, וחיבין בתפילה ובמזוזה, ונברכת המזון

Women, slaves and minors are exempt from reciting the Shema and putting on tefillin, but are obligated for tefillah, mezuzah, and Birkat Hamazon.

### Ramban

The obligation to pray is Rabbinic, so this Mishna can only obligate women in the mitzvah of the Shemonei Esrei, as there is no Torah obligated "Tefilla".

## Textual Questions:

- Why are women only obligated to recite two tefillot as opposed to 3?
- Why may it be that Maariv remains voluntary?
- Doesn't following what most Poskim say undermine individuality? If we resonate with one opinion more, why should we be forced to follow another?

## General Questions:

- Does davening at a set time truly allow us to have a connection with God if we are simply following a schedule?
- Is there value in having different mitzvot for men and women or is it indicative of inequality?

## Personal Questions:

- Would you prefer to daven at specified times in the day or only when you feel the need to talk to God?
- Do you feel that Judaism is a sexist religion due to focus on the different gender roles?
- Would you prefer to have a set text or to speak your mind? Is there any value in a set text?

## Interactive Resources:

### Youtube: Israel – In Jerusalem women fight for their right to pray freely

- Is there any Halachic issue with women wearing tefillin?
- Do you agree that people should have a right to protest?
- Why might religious Orthodox groups have an issue with the women of the wall, and more broadly partnership minyanim?
- Should we conserve the traditional role of men and women in tefilla or do you think that there is room for change?