**The Path of Moses:**

**A Scholarly Essay on the Case of Women in Religious Faith**

By

The youngest among the sages

the lowly Mózes Salamon of Khust

Rabbi of the Congregation of Thurdossin

in the County of Árva [May God protect her]

In the year Ata SeTeR Li] year 5660 *anno mundi*]

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My pamphlet,

Please go forth, for you are sent as a token of friendship, honor, and esteem to the beloved man, he whose stature is as tall as the cedars and who is as strong as the oaks

The learned rabbi, our teacher and rabbi Moses whose title is Dr. Bloch (may his light shine).

The teacher of teachers at the Rabbinical Seminary in the city of

Budapest the capital, may God protect her,

the seminary[[1]](#endnote-1) whose gates are as white as snow and whose stature is like that of a palm tree. Just as the palm tree is beautiful in all its appearance, and all its fruits are sweet and good, likewise etc. May it be God’s will to prolong his life, and to bless his path in the land together with his soul and the soul of his admirer, from the depth of his heart,

 The Author

A word to the readers

Neither the love of novelties nor the desire to make myself a name in the land caused me to take pen in hand to compose this pamphlet that I set before you today. For I have grown old and gray, and my love, my hatred, my jealousy have long since perished, and “Shem is the brother of Japheth, the elder."[[2]](#endnote-2) Rather, it is due to seeing the ruin of the daughter of my people. There she was, disheveled and unraveled before the eyes of her ostracizers, and the net was spread wide under her feet in every direction and every corner. They would curse her in her face and shame her like a harlot. In hiding they would prepare an ambush to trap her in their net, taunting her incessantly: “The daughters of Israel are as ownerless property, they are like beasts of the field. In the council of their people they are not counted. Even their God is disgusted with them; that is why He banished them and denied them admission into His community.” But women are not light-headed; rather, they justly commune with their heart, and indeed it is truly empty and beyond cure.Who can fathom where they will wander to find peace and quiet for their spirit, which beats within them like the [hammer] pounding on an anvil. That is why I thought in my heart to search in our literature for the source of Woman’s disgrace, where it came from, who has swept her away without justification, and why. Will I be able to restore things to their proper place, point by point, as they were in the beginning, or must she always be disgraced? And now, what I have found, I will humbly set before my brethren, may God protect them. I beg you, if only you would take heed of my words and then decide to go right or left, for I am not the sort who comes to hack away with a hatchet and pike. I only ask and beg, not as an inspired man—all my words are just a warning call. Since I desire goodness, not disgrace, those who hear me should not hastily slander me without thought. And this shall be peace.[[3]](#endnote-3)

This essay was completed here in Thurdossin, may God protect her, in the county of Árva, on the day of mourning of my honored mother, modest in her deeds, Madame Yenta, rest her soul, 4 Kislev in the year 660 ([*anno mundi*] excluding the thousands).[[4]](#endnote-4)

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The man said: the woman You put at my side—she gave me and I ate of the tree[[5]](#footnote-2) (Gen 3:12).[[6]](#endnote-5) “It was taught: R. Meir used to say,[[7]](#footnote-3) A man is bound to say the following three blessings daily: [Blessed are You] who has made me an Israelite, who has not made me a woman,[[8]](#footnote-4) who has not made me a boor” (b.Menaḥot43b).—

The woman that God gave us here in the world[[9]](#footnote-5) was created as a "[conjoined] twin," according to one of our ancient sages, rest their souls, on the day the Lord God created Adam on the earth; therefore, the same instruction and the same rule shall apply to her along with him.[[10]](#endnote-6) Even though ever since their separation they have been

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individuals, she has become his fitting helpmate[[11]](#footnote-6) to fill in the requisites that he lacks. While he has the greatness and the might, she has the majesty and the splendor, and against the wisdom and the knowledge that God put in him, she has the advantage of understanding.[[12]](#footnote-7) From both of them the whole world spread out ... And if this is a truly established fact and has been proven, it is truly beyond the understanding of everyone who seeks truth in their heart: why did our ancient sages of blessed memory decide to push her away with both hands from the Sanctuary of Faith, to the point that today she has almost no part in the worship of God, blessed be He? And who was responsible for this great evil? It seems that Man subdued her in a "permitted war" [*milḥemet reshut*] and made her his toiling serf[[13]](#footnote-8) after he had prevailed over her and slandered her by saying that it is not becoming for a woman to go out to battle towards calamities and the hazards of time[[14]](#footnote-9) because “all the glory of the daughter of a king is within” [Ps.35:14]. But surely, in an obligatory war [*milḥemet hovah*],[[15]](#endnote-7) who is she, the one whom he has pledged in his heart to banish from having a share in the inheritance of the Lord, before Whom all people are equal?[[16]](#footnote-10)

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And why did they do all this to the mistress of the house? Are not most of the acts of faith in her hands,[[17]](#footnote-11) and her heart is like malleable sealing-wax molding to the impressions of what is in the heavens above, in sacred awe…

Know, all those who honor God, and take it to heart, behold the whole land is before you, see for yourselves how a noble vine turned into a base, an alien vine, and learn to do good.[[18]](#endnote-8) Abraham had a daughter whose name was Ba-kol.[[19]](#footnote-12) One day she arose within her nation and stood upright, and after many days her hand prevailed. She, through an image, turned Man and God into three. She did this indeed through skillful craft. Women who seek the closeness of God have always surrounded her like a wall; the night has been for sentry-duty for them, for the guarding of her sanctuary, and in the day they have worked on everything pertaining to the altar, because she has never ignored them. Therefore, her prayer houses are full, from end to end, at all times and seasons, and their worshippers are not oppressed. And who holds the lead? Women are the ones who lead. Her faithful will gather at all times, the princes of men that neither the rain nor the snow will stop. Proudly will they advance, although they are captives, in irons. Like a reed they will bow their head before every man of faith, even if he has seven abominations in his heart.[[20]](#endnote-9) Whereas we call on the name of the Lord our God, but we are not heard. Our Lord is One and we will worship Him in pure heart, even if we do not know what to do in order to restore the Covenant that He made with us at Horev. Why do we bury our heads in the sand and say, “He does not see us” [Ezek 8:12]?

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God will surely search it out, for He knows the secrets of the heart, and He knows that Israel is like a swallow that flies away: thousands of them will be ready at any time to leave our camp, when all goes well with them, and to assimilate with the gentiles.[[21]](#footnote-13) —The place of their prayer is empty, no one leaves or enters. New moon and sabbath, or Torah reading will gather ten people at most, if there is no lion roaming in the streets, and there is no one in the city to say *Yishtabaḥ*.[[22]](#endnote-10) But here we are a large congregation of God[[23]](#footnote-14) and God is with us, because there are within us ten people who do not know how to do good and bad, and they are ready at every time and season to do the work of the duties of service for the sake of a monetary payment and a loaf of bread.[[24]](#footnote-15) All this has come upon us because Woman has been kept away from us and nobody has taken her into His house to take her part in sacred offerings that the people of Israel may consecrate to the Lord.[[25]](#endnote-11) —

Come, let us return to the subject of our investigation and pursue it to know its origin and reason. If we find its source, we will proceed slowly to the streambed from which it began to grow into rivers flowing into the sea of our times.

The Tannaim of blessed memory, who are like water-troughs for the flow of the true oral tradition by which we live, bequeathed to us three short statements, enigmatic and obscure. It is written in the Mishnah: a) “All obligations of the son upon the father, men are bound but women are exempt, but all obligations of the father upon the son, both men and women are bound.” b) “All affirmative [positive] precepts limited to time, men are bound but women are exempt;”[[26]](#endnote-12)

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c) “All negative precepts, whether limited to time or not limited to time, are binding upon both men and women excepting you shall not round off, and you shall not destroy, and he shall not defile himself to the dead.”[[27]](#footnote-16)

Lo our holy Rabbi [R. Judah haNasi], the editor of the Mishnah, taught statements without indicating their source and omitted the name of their originator, which is a reliable sign of their antiquity and oldness. Nevertheless, they too are “Gihon waters,”[[28]](#endnote-13) because their original source burst out from the *Tosefta* which is more ancient. And it says:[[29]](#endnote-14)

A. “A priest stands and makes offerings at the altar, which is not the case of a priest-girl;[[30]](#footnote-17)

B. A man has control over his daughter and has power to betroth her through money, a writ, or an act of sexual relations, and he controls what she finds, the produce of her labor and the abrogation of her vows, which is not the case of a woman;[[31]](#footnote-18)

C. A man is subject to [punishment for] the transgression of a commandment which has to be performed at a particular time, which is not the case with a woman;[[32]](#footnote-19)

D. A man is subject to the transgression of the commandment not to trim the beard and not to remove the beard and not to contract corpse-uncleanness,which is not the case with a woman;[[33]](#footnote-20)

E. A man is subject to trial as a rebellious son, but a woman is not subject to trial as a rebellious daughter;[[34]](#footnote-21)

F. A man wraps himself in a cloak and proclaims, but a woman does not wrap herself in a cloak and proclaim;[[35]](#footnote-22)

G. A man may be sold repeatedly, but a woman may not be sold repeatedly.[[36]](#footnote-23)

H. A man is sold as a Hebrew slave, but a woman is not sold as a Hebrew slave;[[37]](#footnote-24)

I. A man is subjected to the ceremony of the awl but a woman is not subjected to the ceremony of the awl;[[38]](#footnote-25)

J. A man acquires a Hebrew slave, and a woman does not acquire a Hebrew slave”[[39]](#footnote-26)

These are ten[[40]](#footnote-27) differences between Woman and Man, and all of them are in the *Tosefta*[[41]](#footnote-28) as one, attached to one another, but our Holy Rabbi [R. Judah haNasi] separated them and went and planted them in Eden, the garden of his Mishnah, one here and another there, finding satisfaction in his work of setting the Mishnah in order...[[42]](#endnote-15) When we look properly into what is in front of us with no blemish in our eyes, we will know the great difference between the language of the Toseftaand that of the Mishnah in the matter in which we are [engaged]. The Tosefta will teach us the right way to understand the mishnah [m. Kiddushin 1:7] and consequently it means that all positive precepts limited to time, men are liable (that is,

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they transgress if they do not fulfill them), while women are exempt (they do not transgress if they do not fulfill them),[[43]](#footnote-29) but the precepts were said to both of them here too. The tradition meant only to make things easier for her, to always leave her life in her hands to do or to desist, not to belittle her dignity, God forbid, for this does not increase God's glory …“Blessed be God, Blessed be He, before whom there is no injustice and whose mercy is great for males and females alike.”[[44]](#footnote-30) Also, He knows that Man has the means to uphold and to fulfill all the words of His holy Torah.[[45]](#footnote-31) Woman, on the other hand, lacks the means to fulfill them, because she is sick at times and she has menstrual periods; all the household needs are upon her, the livelihood of the husband and the hardships of parenthood. How would He, blessed be His name, deal imperiously with her and put the burden of precepts limited to time on her neck, while their weight is unbearable on her…We will study the Scriptures and see how Woman appears in them, whether she is innocent or guilty. First, without paying attention to the halakhah as it has been normatively established today, since we are of the opinion that this is a new garment to them [the Scriptures], and our predecessors, rest their souls, dressed them that way for some purpose.[[46]](#endnote-16) We will take this Book of the Torah and we will see that it begins with a statement of "procreation": "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it."[[47]](#footnote-32) Whether this verse is a commandment or a blessing,[[48]](#footnote-33) it was said to both of them, to the man and the woman, for "He did not create it a waste, but formed it for habitation" [Isa 45:18].[[49]](#footnote-34)

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The second saying is the one concerned with "eating and touching"[[50]](#endnote-17): "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat;[[51]](#footnote-35) but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it." Although according to the view that does not seek to investigate deeply into the matter, this was said to the man alone, almost the whole of the Torah was said in masculine language,[[52]](#footnote-36) [but] it meant females also,[[53]](#footnote-37) so here too Woman was included. For if the Giver of Commandments, Blessed be His name, commanded only him and not her, what would be her sin, and why would God wish to curse her because of the man? Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly, and bring His charge against all mankind? … Let us take a step further and see our matriarch Sarah, how honorable she was in the eyes of Abraham, her spouse[[54]](#endnote-18). He yielded to almost anything she said, at the command of the Lord.[[55]](#footnote-38) When he wanted to do something that concerned her too, he would ask her kindly to agree with his will.[[56]](#footnote-39) He even sent away his firstborn, who was just the son of Hagar the Egyptian, and “was mocking*”*[[57]](#footnote-40). . . Rebecca theMatriarch was the lady of the house. Thanks to her wisdom she succeeded in saving herself

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and freed her soul and the soul of her beloved son from being subjugated to a man who had a taste for game and whose face was turned away, Isaac, his father, who had already sown in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year.[[58]](#footnote-41) And God let it happen, because He loved him [Jacob] too.[[59]](#footnote-42) ... Rachel and Leah were very angry at their father, because he considered them as strangers and sold them, while Jacob called them to the field unto his flock to consult with them, whether he should set out on his way or stay, even though God had told him: “Return to the land of your fathers.”[[60]](#footnote-43) He did not order them as a master does to his handmaids … Righteous women in Egypt wrought real wonders, according to the faithful tradition. With their skills and diligence they did noble things when they shifted their husbands’ attention to redemption and reward so they did not lose hope and did not corrupt their ways in evildoing on the earth[[61]](#footnote-44) … Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, was standing at a distance to know what would happen to her brother.[[62]](#footnote-45) She had prophesied about him before he was born, that he would redeem Israel.[[63]](#footnote-46) And after seeing with her own eyes the great power that the Lord wielded in Egypt and on the sea, she then took the tambourine in her hand and responded to all the women coming after her with tambourines and in dance with “the victory song*.”*[[64]](#footnote-47) She became

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a well of spring water to her people,[[65]](#footnote-48) from which anyone who was thirsty for the words of God would draw, and her image would be precious to them until the end of times… At the special revelation at Mount Sinai, when God descended upon it in fire to teach His people Torah and commandments by the pursuit of which they shall live, He spoke first to the women,[[66]](#endnote-19) for the Lord said: “I cursed the woman in my wrath, but all are running after her.[[67]](#footnote-49) By the pleasantness of her words she will incline their hearts towards whatever she desires, therefore I will win her for Myself, so that she will follow Me, and the men will come after the women to take heed of My words and will always keep My laws and My rules.”[[68]](#footnote-50) … While men soon turned away from God and began seeking “a god who shall go before” them,[[69]](#footnote-51) women refused to give the rings in their ears; but they donated them with joy and gladness to the Tabernacle.[[70]](#footnote-52) For women will not choose a new god. They have one heart, and if they give it once, they will neither change their mind, nor trade lightly the bad for the good or the good for the bad.[[71]](#footnote-53) That is why the moon stood still on high and the new month has been dedicated to them to this day.[[72]](#footnote-54) ... Men complained about Moses

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when the spies returned from their scouting of the land and spread calumnies about it. Their hearts melted inside them. They said hastily: “Let us headback to Egypt,*”* and took the way that God warned them "You must not go back that way again."[[73]](#footnote-55) Whereas the women said to him: "Give us a

holding." [Num 27:4][[74]](#footnote-56) They did not reject the desirable land and they brought their case before the Lord. This time too they did not take part in the sin they [men] committed … At the gathering of the people on the occasion of the sabbatical year at the Feast of Tabernacles,[[75]](#footnote-57) God commanded to call for the women “so that they may hear and so learn to revere" [Deut 31:12] Him as well.[[76]](#footnote-58) The purpose of this is to make them fervent

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[in the task of] raising their sons in the lap of the Torah to always walk in a virtuous way so that their path will always be level. Since the sons are in their care, they will sow the seed of truth and righteousness in the furrows of their tender and delicate hearts and will yield a fruitful harvest ... Let us advance further on and enquire about the prophets. In their days too we find women shining with wisdom and all kinds of knowledge. Deborah the prophetess towers above all of them thanks to her fortitude and insight.[[77]](#footnote-59) She judged Israel fairly,[[78]](#footnote-60) when Pinḥas the priest was still standing before the Lord in Shiloh.[[79]](#footnote-61) She sat in Ramah like Samuel, who also would be the chosen of the Lord, after her.[[80]](#footnote-62) She herself charged into the battle leading the heroes, while Barak, the one from Kedesh Naftali, followed her only as her armor bearer.[[81]](#footnote-63) Into her hands the Lord delivered Sisera,[[82]](#footnote-64) and it would be his everlasting shame forever. The song of Deborah,[[83]](#footnote-65) which she sang after having defeated him, is the legacy of the congregation of Jacob, like the Song of Moses and the Children of Israel. And yet, she did not take the laurel crown of honor to herself, as she remained the wife of Lapidoth even after that and took pride in his honor. [[84]](#footnote-66)... “Most blessed of women be Yael, wife of Heber the Kenite.”[[85]](#footnote-67) She was the most righteous woman among women, although she heeded to her husband to behave like "natural soil" with the wicked

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evildoer. [[86]](#footnote-68) At her feet he sank, fell [Judg 5:27],[[87]](#endnote-20) an enemy of her people seeking its harm, while she had a mallet in her hand to crush his head.[[88]](#footnote-69) His arrogant heart deceived him and his sin brought death upon him ... Hannah, a deeply unhappy woman, whose rival, in order to make her angry, would taunt her.[[89]](#footnote-70) She kept on praying before the Lord in the bitterness of her soul. Indeed, she was praying in her heart,[[90]](#footnote-71) only her lips moved, while her voice could not be heard. Eli, who was then serving before the Lord at Shiloh, thought she was drunk, while [in fact] she was setting the eternal rules.[[91]](#footnote-72) She taught her people knowledge of how they too should worship the Lord, the worship of the heart.[[92]](#footnote-73) She has been the witness through all time, that the anointed priest may sin, bringing guilt on the people, and behaving as an ordinary man.[[93]](#footnote-74) What she prayed for happened to her, for she conceived and bore a son, who would always be a trustworthy prophet to the Lord.[[94]](#footnote-75) She bore Samuel, who was like Moses and Aaron among the priests, among those who called upon His name.[[95]](#footnote-76) She went on praying, and this prayer too would turn into an example for us, because the scribes took the order of the prayer that we hold and its form from her and did not change her words.[[96]](#footnote-77) ... Huldah was also a prophetess,

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in the days of the king Josiah.[[97]](#footnote-78) Her heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord like that of her sister and because of that she was slandered.[[98]](#footnote-79) However, because her soul was mourning the ruin of her people, the elders came to her to inquire of the Lord[[99]](#footnote-80) instead of turning to a man [Jeremiah], who only knew affliction under the rod of His wrath all the days that he lived on the land.[[100]](#footnote-81) ... Queen Esther saved her people from the sword.[[101]](#footnote-82) The story of her life and her acts were recorded in the book that was brought into the Sanctuary,[[102]](#footnote-83) counted as one of the twenty-four Holy Books. As a bride adorns herself with jewelry[[103]](#footnote-84) they are the adornment and pride of the people of Israel. This shall be an eternal memorial to her, a testimony and an everlasting sign that will not be destroyed.

After the gates of the Holy Scripture were sealed at the beginning of the days of the Tannaim, and no one could leave or enter there anymore,[[104]](#footnote-85) still the women of our people, known by their names, were not swept away completely. During the Hasmonean days, the maiden Judith[[105]](#footnote-86) ascended to the highest virtue. She was a virgin, and no man had known her, and she removed the veil of modesty[[106]](#endnote-21) from upon herself and risked

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her life for the sake of two: her people and her God. She descended to the lion’s pit, to the camp of the oppressing enemy outside her town. A fainthearted maiden, she chose the language of the crafty in order to spread the net under his feet. He got caught like a bird in a trap, because she made him drink bowlfuls of wine and his head was soaked with it. She approached him stealthily, cut off his head and put him to death. His men saw that their hero had died and they fled. The name of the cruel one was cut off from our mouths, but God remembered her in our midst, *Selah* ...The mother Hannah,[[107]](#endnote-22) she too was at that time, which was a time of trouble for Jacob, with enemies against him both within and without. The mother and her seven sons were all strong as oaks. The enemy wanted to incite them to idolatry, promised them wealth, honor, and all forms of treasures, if they would heed his words and leave the Lord. While she, the light-minded woman,[[108]](#footnote-87) sealed off her softheartedness,[[109]](#endnote-23) and did not show pity to her children. She built seven altars, she slaughtered her sacrifices and made them burnt-offerings to the Lord. She stiffened their spirit and hardened their heart[[110]](#footnote-88) so they did not heed the smooth speeches. Like sheep to the slaughter, they were all led before her eyes, and she herself went up to the roof and threw herself to the ground. To the sounds of her wailing people the ground split apart under them and the divine voice [*bat kol*] answered them: "A happy mother of children. Hallelujah” [Ps 113:9][[111]](#footnote-89)…

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There are many more women who have done noble things among Israel even afterwards, rising and growing in wisdom, piety, and good deeds. Some of them were even among the Tannaim,[[112]](#footnote-90) and some interpreted their sayings. They have a monument and a name [*yad vashem*],[[113]](#footnote-91) and they were present among the rabbis. And those who endured fire and water, and by their own hand sacrificed their children for the sanctification of the honored and awesome Name [*kiddush hashem*] with joy and happiness, we will stop counting them because their number is beyond count.[[114]](#footnote-92)

If we were searching in the bags of the history of our people, we would find that as long as the life of the nation was taking its natural flow, when Judah and Israel were on their land, the Holy Land, there was yet no separation screen between Man and Woman as there is nowadays. – Saul, the chosen of the Lord, who was like a one-year-old when he became king,[[115]](#footnote-93) turned to the young women to ask where the seer was, when he went to him to seek the Lord.[[116]](#footnote-94) He was not afraid to look at them and to see them, while they replied in a stream of words, in order for their eyes to behold his good looks and his stature.[[117]](#footnote-95)…

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If the prophets prophesied for the days of the longed-for Messiah, and they foretold from afar the joy of their people in the days to come, then [in the days of the Messiah] men will be compassionate to the wife of their bosom, and will not be jealous of [their] spouses to find in them iniquity or sin. Instead, they will shout together for joy and they will sing, and everlasting joy will crown their heads. They will wholeheartedly say: “The people is born.” “Then shall maidens dance gaily, young men and old alike,”[[118]](#footnote-96) joy and delight in their hearts, and within them the Lord’s presence … When the House of our Lord was still standing on its foundation, at the top of the mountains, twice a year the daughters of our People celebrated the “Festival of Joy" with joyful hearts. They turned it into a festive day [*yom tov*] in addition to the festivals, commanded by their faith, on the fifteenth day of the Fifth month and on the Day of Atonement.[[119]](#footnote-97) They dressed in white garments like a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys,[[120]](#footnote-98) and wrapped themselves like angels. All of them borrowed [garments] from each

other, both rich and poor, in order not to shame anyone who did not have.[[121]](#footnote-99) And every youth in Israel who had not yet married a woman went there to ask from God a fitting helpmate for himself.[[122]](#footnote-100) They joyously cried and welcomed him calling for his watchful eye upon them,[[123]](#footnote-101) one-by-one, in search of the reason of things, whether according to beauty, family or wealth,[[124]](#footnote-102) and that was the end of the matter.

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— Even in the days of the early commentators, youths and maidens still walked around together as they enjoyed pleasures, and there was none to put them to shame.[[125]](#footnote-103)

As for the Tannaim, although they were not particularly respectful of Woman, they nevertheless did not degrade her nor did they speak with insult and disgrace against her.[[126]](#footnote-104) Only at the end of their days, when the Apostate [*ben temurah*][[127]](#endnote-24) came and rebelled, women went over to him as well as the ignorant [*‘am haaretz*].[[128]](#footnote-105) They [women] were devoted to him when he was alive, and they testified that he was alive after he died—that he ascended to heaven and came down. — Women came to spread his light. This happened not many years before the eternal light was put out.[[129]](#endnote-25) It is then that they [the sages] turned into her enemies and began their work, in order "to terminate the transgression and to end the sin" [Dan 9:24]. They stripped her of her position as the mistress and pushed her far down the ladder [from the place] she occupied from ancient times. In their haste they did not distinguish between the sacred and the profane. They slandered her testimony,[[130]](#footnote-106) so that she could never again stand before God to affirm or deny anything, and they proclaimed her light-headed[[131]](#footnote-107) so that nobody would ever again believe her word or sing its praise. As much as our villifiers drew her towards them and embraced with both hands,[[132]](#footnote-108) they [the sages] pushed her

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to such an extent, that among those who came after them, one was praised for saying "women are a separate people."[[133]](#footnote-109) – Still, she was not yet prevented from joining their assembly. The seclusion [*yihud*] of men and women was forbidden from the Torah. In the case of the unwed woman, the court of King David decreed to prohibit this following a certain incident.[[134]](#footnote-110) Indeed, toward the end of the Second Temple Period a further important amendment was made in order to totally separate them during the Water Drawing Festival [*simḥat beit hasho’evah*] on Sukkot.[[135]](#footnote-111) Men were downstairs and women upstairs, in order not to mingle and come to sin, and their joy turned into grief. However, women still would be counted just like men for the quorum of ten to pray before the Lord always,[[136]](#footnote-112) and they also completed the quorum of those called to the Torah on festivals and Sabbaths,[[137]](#footnote-113) and the quorum of those summoned in the invitation [*zimmun*] of the grace after meals.[[138]](#footnote-114) – They were with men in the same court [‘*azarah*] when they came to pour their words

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into the Sanctuary, to the right and to the left in the house [of prayer] and not in the gallery, even in the days of the Geonim.[[139]](#footnote-115) Whenever the Ark set out and the Torah was taken out, the cantor of the congregation would take it in his hands. When he opened it, everybody to the last would get down on their knees.[[140]](#footnote-116) He displayed the holy Scripture here and there to the men and the women, so that they could see it and worship the Holy One of Jacob.[[141]](#footnote-117) Even at the end of the days of the Rishonim, women would sometimes descend from their gallery (where, in the future, they would be held as in a prison yard), to enter ‘*ezrat yisra’el*[[142]](#endnote-26) to bring in their bosom those who were entering the Covenant and to sit on the chair of the prophet, of blessed memory.[[143]](#footnote-118). . .

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But come let us render gratitude to our forebears, rest their souls, who have maintained for generations what the ancients had earlier taken upon themselves for a limited time: to separate those who cling, and to make a women-only gallery in the upper part of the house of prayer. [All this] because Woman’s eyes look forward, while Man’s gaze directs itself straight towards her: if the evil inclination is [always] awake in men, as the sages of blessed memory teach,[[144]](#footnote-119) it will neither slumber nor sleep in the synagogue. This way the river of pleasure streams from there and multiplies itself.[[145]](#footnote-120) Heaven forbid, we are the people of the God of Jacob! But why not bring some joy to women when it is in our power, without moving her into prison, as they themselves did?[[146]](#footnote-121)

Why not take care of our future so we will not be blinded by the light and will not grope in midday

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as a blind man gropes in the dark?[[147]](#footnote-122) We have eyes but cannot see that it is time to return along the way that we have traveled, to seek the path to the ascent of the ‘*Akrabbim* [Scorpions], to the highest peak, and to look out at the wasteland.[[148]](#endnote-27) If the path is narrow and there is no room to turn right or left without pressing our foot against the wall,[[149]](#endnote-28) then let us cross it safely to reach the place of rest and haven… Hear me, my brothers, my people, and make a plan of action here and now. What shall we do with our sisters to spare them from going down to the pit, to bring them back under the wings of the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*] as of old? For today their hearts are empty of anything holy, "a wife is for the sake of her beauty; for the sake of children."[[150]](#footnote-123) How will she not be affected when evildoers assail her?[[151]](#endnote-29) They will seduce her, and seduced she will be,

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and with her smooth talk she will take away all those who accompany her. Together they will follow worthless things and will become worthless. I beseech you, my brothers, do not do evil. Be not overly righteous nor overly wicked. It concerns all of us, therefore behold and loosen up. Do not hurt yourselves because of worthless things when an ambush is waiting in our room. If you want honorably and in good faith to hoist the flag of our holy faith on the wall of Zion, do your best to reinstate Woman to her proper place. She will be our befitting helpmate and we will improve our ways and will see the salvation of God.

END

Endnotes:

1. “‘The righteous person shall flourish like a palm tree’ [Psalm 92:13]: Just as the palm tree is beautiful in all its appearance, and all its fruits are sweet and good, likewise is the son of David in his appearance and in his glory, and all of his deeds are good and sweet before the Holy One, blessed be He” [Pirke de R. Eliezer 19] [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Salamon makes a pun here. The word *name* in Hebrew (*shem*) sounds like the biblical personal name Shem. He means to say that a name is just a name and in the final account one’s name does not really matter. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. In his flowery address to the readers Salamon explains that he decided to write his essay because he could not tolerate anymore the shameful attitude of traditional Judaism toward Jewish women. The address is a good example of Salamon's literary style: in less than twenty lines he uses over twenty biblical expressions and allusions. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. November 6, 1899. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. According to the literal meaning of this verse it seems that Adam wanted to save himself at the expense of the soul of his wife Eve. He rolled the stone off himself and placed it on the shoulder of his helpmate. And according to this, there is a difficulty: why do the sages not deduce from here that *we do not plead on behalf of an inciter* [*mesit*]. She should have said: “When the words of the teacher and those of the pupil [are contradictory], whose words should be hearkened to…” (see b. Sanhedrin 29b). [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon wonders why the sages blamed Eve for inciting Adam to commit a sin. Adam was responsible and should have been punished for his sin because of the halakhic rule *we do not plead* *on behalf of an inciter*: a person cannot blame someone else for inciting him to commit a crime. Eve, for her part, did not defend herself. When Adam blamed her for inciting him, she could have said: why did Adam not listen to his teacher (God), but instead listened to his pupil (Woman)? Salamon points out that this line of reasoning in the Talmud is applied to the snake, but not to Adam and Eve.] (One may say that it is not in the nature of Woman to save herself by sacrificing her husband or her children). The sages certainly were consistent in their approach when they said (Gen Rab 19:12) “Said R. Abba, "What is written [at Gen 3:12] is not, ‘and I did eat,’ but ‘I did eat and I will eat.'"[*va’okhel*]. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *Genesis Rabbah*, Transl. J. Neusner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) vol 1, 211.] They meant that Adam said: “I am not surprised by what I have done, but that I continue to eat.” And if it is so, he did not seek to defend himself. And this fits with what the sages said (b.Sanhedrin 38b): “Adam was a Sadducee”; see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *Sadducee* is understood by Rashi and earlier commentators as one who inclines towards idolatry. In other words, the sages came to the conclusion that Adam was not incited by Eve to sin but was a sinner in his own right.] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
6. Salamon interchanged the words at the end of the verse. It should be “The woman you put at my side – she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” (Gen 3:12) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
7. R. Meir was a disciple of R. Akiba and he lived after Woman had already been stripped of her dignity. There was also a bad incident concerning his wife (see b. ‘Avodah Zarah 18b). [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: When speaking of R. Meir’s wife, Salamon probably had in mind the “*Ma*‘*aseh de-Beruriah*” which is told by Rashi in his commentary on b. ‘Avodah Zarah 18b. The story of R. Meir’s strange wager and its tragic outcome has attracted considerable scholarly interest. See note 93 in the Introduction.] See also *Seder Hadorot*, letter *Mem*, which tells the terrible story that happened to R. Meir with his hostess, and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: It seems that Salamon has in mind the story of R. Meir’s seduction by his friend's wife. See Y. Halperin, *Seder Hadorot* (Warsaw, 1878), pt II, 264. The earlier version of the story appears in *Midrash Aseret Hadiberot* (Jerusalem, 1955), 40–41.] And all this was true in those olden days and at that time, when all people lived in darkness and gloom, when [even] the king and the queen did not know how to say the grace after meals (b. Berakhot 48a). [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: b. Berakhot 48a tells that King Yannai and Queen Salome could not say the grace after meals by themselves. The queen suggested calling for her brother Rabbi Simon ben Shetah for this purpose, but she set the condition that the king, known for his ruthless dealing with the sages, would not harm him.] Among the qualifications of a scholar was knowing how to write. Rashi, of blessed memory, explains that they had to know how to sign their name in order to sit as a judge or to testify (b. Ḥullin 9a). If such was the situation with men and scholars in those days, what could be said of Woman? But nowadays when the majority of women know how to pray and to recite blessings, to read, to write, and to sign their name, it is possible that even R. Meir, who ruled that “minority cases should be taken into consideration” (b. Hullin 6a), would admit that this is an unnecessary blessing; and a word to the wise is sufficient. ]TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: R. Meir’s legal principle, *minority cases should be taken into consideration*, means that although rulings are usually based on the majority of cases, rarer cases should also be taken into consideration in the legal process. Salamon seems to say that it is important not to make unequivocal statements based only on the obvious. Such statements do not take into consideration future possibilities.] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
8. See t. Berakhot, ch. 6[:18]. The version there reads: “‘R. Judah says, three blessings etc.’ A gentile [Cuti]—[as Scripture states], ‘All the Cutim are as nothing before Him’; a woman—[because] women are not obligated in commandments, a boor—because a boor is not afraid of sin and a boor is not pious.” [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta*, *Translated from the Hebrew*. (Ktav, (Hoboken, N.J.: 1986), Vol. 1., p. 40. Cutim – literally means Samaritans, but the sages use it as a synonym for gentiles.] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
9. See b. Berakhot61a: “R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: God created two countenances [*du-partzufin*] in the first man as it says (Ps 139:5) `Behind and before hast Thou formed me’”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
10. According to the midrash in b. Berakhot61a the First Man was created androgynous: male at the front, female - at the back. This proves, in Salamon's opinion, that they were meant to be equal. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
11. In the Book of Zoharon Genesis in the section of “The Lord God formed man” (Gen 2:7) two words were added to what is written in the Torah: “but for Adam no helpmate was found (but rather all of them ]*ella kulhu*] were) against him” (Gen 2:19); see there. This is a fine addition, for all the creatures are indeed Man's opponents and enemies because of his and their nature. By making an effort to overpower and to defeat them his strength will grow and he will become a true human being. The Holy One, blessed be He, later made for him a helpmate opposite to him. Thus, Woman is certainly his helper, even as she is his opposite to him, because he will find in her whatever he is lacking; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
12. b. Niddah 45b: “What is Rabbi’s reason? Because it is written in Scripture (Gen 2), ‘And the Lord God built the rib’ which teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, endowed the woman with more understanding than the man”; see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The midrash is based on a wordplay: builds [boneh] and understanding [binah] share the same consonants BNH.] [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
13. m. Ketubot 5:4: “The following are the kinds of work which a woman must perform for the husband: grinding corn, baking bread, washing clothes, cooking, suckling her child, making ready his bed and working in wool”; see there. Nowadays where is the maidservant that would be willing to do all these? She would be given a generous wage and enthroned in gold filigree. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
14. b. Yebamot 65b: “R. Ilea replied in the name of R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon: Scripture stated, 'And replenish the earth, and subdue it'—it is the nature of a man to subdue but it is not the nature of a woman to subdue.” And this is only a pretext, because “and subdue” (*vekivshuha*) is plural and it refers to Woman just as to Man. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE : The midrash interprets God's command to subdue the earth - "and subdue it" (Gen 1:28) [vekivshuha] as related to Woman. This reading turns Woman into the object of conquest instead of being a conqueror of Creation on equal par.] And when the sages of blessed memory said that it was not the nature of a woman to subdue in practice, that is, as it were, to go to war to confront a foe, they spoke only of what they actually witnessed. Nowadays Woman is the angel of peace, but before she was confined to the home to concoct, to cook, and to bake, she too would habitually subdue. So many women have confronted calamities and hazards of time to support their husbands who dedicated their life to the Torah and to tradition. See in t. Ketubotch. 4: “Joshua, the son of R. ‘Akiba married a woman and made an agreement with her that she maintain and support him and teach him Torah” [t. Ketubot 4:7]. See also b. Yebamot 65b, and see b. ‘Eruvin 22a: ”As was the case with R. Adda b. Mattenah. He was about to go away to a schoolhouse when his wife said to him, ‘What shall I do with your children?’—‘Are there’, he retorted: ‘no more herbs in the marsh?’” Rashi explained: “[*kurmi*]—vegetables; [another version]: [you can] pull out from the marsh wet reed that is still tender, grind it and make bread.”—This is heroes’ food, and she ate and wiped her mouth; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “Heroes’ food” [Ps 78:25] has a positive meaning and is usually understood as “angel’s food.” Salamon may use the phrase ironically here: bread made of weed is definitely not angel's food.] [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
15. In contrast to the War by Commandment (*milḥemet mitzvah*), *Permitted War* (*milḥemet reshut)* is an expansive war, serving the political and economical interests of its initiator. See Deut 21:10–14; *Sefer Haḥinukh* 527. It seems that Salamon is hinting at the unholy reasons behind the exclusion of women from most rituals. Since the passage in Deuteronom*y* deals with the case of the captive woman, Salamon may be hinting to the powerlessness of Jewish women against the rulings of the sages. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
16. *Eliahu Rabbah* pt 1 ch. 9 “…I call heaven and earth to witness that whether it be a heathen, or a Jew, whether it be a man or a woman, a manservant or a maidservant, the holy spirit will suffuse each of them in keeping with the deeds he or she performs.” [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *Tanna debe Eliyahu*, translated from the Hebrew by W.G. Braude and I.J. Kapstein, eds., (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), pt 1, 152–53.]How sublime these words are to those who have a true understanding. For if a man says: “Am I to be the loser because I am a male?” (b. Ketubot 108b), a woman also may say: “Is it because I am not a male that I have lost? Surely, my acts are pleasing, and it is said (at the end of the Book of Proverbs): ‘Extol her for the fruit of her hand, and let her works praise her in the gates.’” [Prov 31:31]. For how can she make her path good and submit to the yoke of the Torah and the commandments if we will not even accept her goodness? How many men have angered and defied God, and how many women did what was good in His eyes? But men are the mighty ones who set the rule and the law as it pleases them. God, blessed be He, goes along with their words, which are against them [the women], and He agrees to them [the men]; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
17. R. Nissim of Gerona[TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *Sefer Hidushei Haran on Tractate Hullin* (Jerusalem, 1973), 12 [Hebrew]]: “We say in the first chapter of the Tractate Pesaḥim concerning the removal of the leaven, that because it is a rabbinic commandment the rabbis trusted her, but if it were a commandment of the Torah they would not trust her. We stated the reason for that in the Jerusalem Talmud: because women are lazy, they barely check. In other words, since usually the leaven is not found there, they tend to say that there is no leaven there and they are lenient in this instance. If it were a commandment of the Torah, they would not be trusted. But in all other matters they are trusted, even if it is a commandment of the Torah. We rely upon them every day, as a matter of course, in salting and deveining meat etc.”; see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: It seems that Salamon either shortened the citation or had a shorter version of the passage before him. The passage deals with the ritual checking of the leaven (bedikat hametz) on the eve of Passover.] [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
18. The following passage deals in metaphorical terms with the rise of Christianity out of Judaism and its devious ways to attract believers. Salamon is very concerned about Christianity’s ability to attract Jewish women rejected by Judaism. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
19. b. Baba Batra 16b: “… there is a difference between Tannaim. [It is written,] ‘The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things [*ba-kol*]’ (Gen 2). What is meant by ‘in all things’? R. Meir said: ‘In the fact that he had no daughter.’” (R. Meir spoke in accordance with his view; and a word to the wise is sufficient.) “R. Judah said: ‘In the fact that he had a daughter. Others say that Abraham had a daughter whose name was *ba-kol*.’” Only *others* say that her name was Ba-kol, and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
20. The expression *Seven abominations* appears in Prov 6:16. It is the source of the Christian concept of *Seven Deadly Sins*. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
21. The sages said it beautifully (b. Ḥagigah 9b): “Elijah said to Bar He-He, and others say, to R. Eleazar: What is the meaning of the verse: ‘Behold I have refined you but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction’ (Isa 48:10)? It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, went through all the good qualities in order to give [them] to Israel, and He found only poverty. Samuel said, and others say, R. Joseph: This accords with the popular saying: Poverty befits Israel like a red bridle on a white horse.”—We see with our own eyes and not those of a stranger that unfortunately this is true. As long as our leaders go around the town with their pitchers on their shoulder, we turn our face towards them with humility and they are called by the name of Israel. But should they raise their head a little and feel like ordinary people, they will turn their back on us, and will not face us. “The earth is the Lord's,” they will say before the blessing, but after the blessing their mouth will speak lies: “the heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He gave over to man” (b. Berakhot 35a(. Even the scholars who grew up in our laps will desert us.—We have heard many say, “So what? Let them go wherever they want to go. Has not the prophet spoken thus in the name of the Lord: ‘I will leave in Israel only seven thousand—every knee that has not knelt to Baal etc.’ (I Kgs 19:18)?" However, these are not words of wisdom. Let it not be said among the nations, “here is only the God of the poor and the ignorant, not the God of the rich and the wise,” and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon depicts the sad reality that he is witnessing around him. As a result of an intensive modernization process the best and the brightest leave their religious communities to find self-realization elsewhere, while those who are good-for-nothing stay behind.] [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
22. *Yishtabaḥ* [God be praised] is a blessing that is said in the morning before the *Amidah* prayer. Salamon means that there are no truly dedicated members of the congregation who will bother to get to the synagogue early in the morning. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
23. m. Megillah 1:3: “What is reckoned a large town? One which has in it ten men of leisure. One that has fewer is reckoned a village.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
24. Ibid., Gemara [b. Megillah] 81b: “A Tanna taught: The ten unoccupied men who attend synagogue." Rashi of blessed memory explained: "These are men with no craft to exercise and they are supported by the community in order to be available for prayer in the synagogue. And Mar [amora - R. Johanan] says in b. Berakhot 6b: “Whenever the Holy One, blessed be He, comes into a Synagogue and does not find ten persons there etc.” see there. I wonder, how do we know that the men of leisure are fed by the community? Perhaps for this it is called a big city—because it is full of people, and at all times and in all seasons one easily finds among them ten that are not burdened by work, who will be able to come to the house of prayer; this deserves further investigation. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The sages recommend to use idlers to complete the prayer quorum.] [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
25. Salamon speaks ironically of the situation he witnesses, when in order to keep up religious life congregations pay idlers to complete the daily prayer quorum. Instead of that women should have been integrated in the prayer quorum. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
26. This part of the mishnah is quoted incorrectly in the original text. It is certainly a typographical error. I have taken the liberty of emending the text to fix the error, and the translation follows this emendation. "All affirmative [positive] precepts limited to time, men are bound but women are exempt" (m. Kiddushin 1:7) is the main source of the exemption of women from most of the religious practices. Salamon will claim later that the wording of the mishnah is understood as a ban, while in reality women are only given the choice to perform these precepts or to abstain. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
27. m. Kiddushin 1:7. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “You shall not round off the corner of your head, and you shall not destroy the edge of your beard” (Lev 19:27); “He shall not defile himself to the dead.” (Lev 21:11). These are the only negative precepts that women are exempt from.] [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
28. The Gihon spring, redirected by Hezekiah, was the main source of water for Jerusalem in ancient times. Hezekiah’s actions were viewed negatively by the sages (b. Berakhot 10b). Salamon probably means to say that the Mishnah diverted the original “flow” of the Law and of halakhic rationale of the Tosefta. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
29. Salamon’s point here is to show that the commandments that appear as a cluster in one beraita in the Tosefta (t. Sotah 2:8) are dispersed in several tractates of the Mishnah. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
30. A) m*.* Zevahim 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
31. B) m. Ketubot 4:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
32. C) m*.* Kiddushin 1:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
33. D) Ibid. and m. Sotah 3:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
34. E) m. Sanhedrin 8:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
35. F) m. Sotah 3:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
36. G) b. Kiddushin 18a. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
37. H) m. Sotah 3:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
38. I) b. Kiddushin 15a. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
39. J) b. Baba Meziah 71a. See ]Y. Karo], *Kesef Mishneh*, The Laws of Slaves 1:2, who did not cite this *Tosefta*; and this needs investigation. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
40. These ten sefirot are not here for nothingness, [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon makes a wordplay based on the opening of *The Book of Creation*] for if the Tanna [in the Tosefta] emphatically counted them, we certainly may not read them and leave. Therefore, you should keep them in your heart. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
41. t. Sotah 2:6–9. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: See Neusner, *Tosefta*, ad loc.] [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
42. Salamon humorously uses the biblical imagery of God creating the Garden of Eden to describe rabbi Ha-Nasi's authoritarian redaction of the Oral Law in the Mishnah. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
43. Based on this it is difficult to understand Rashi, of blessed memory, who explained inb. ‘Eruvin 96a and in b. Rosh Hashanah 33a that a woman transgresses “You shall not add*”* if she fulfills positive precepts limited to time; see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “You shall not add” is a negative commandment—not to add commandments to the Torah—based on Deut 13:1. Rashi was of the opinion that women performing positive precepts limited to time commit a transgression.] It seems that he, of blessed memory, relies on the *Pesikta* [*Pesikta Rabbati* 22] brought there by the Tosafists, which said in the name of R. Abahu that Jonah’s wife was turned back when she tried to make a festival pilgrimage, and about Michal the daughter of Saul, that the sages were opposed to her laying *tefillin*. Concerning the Tosefta, that of R. Abahu is certainly a beraita; although a woman does not transgress if she does not fulfill a positive precept limited to time, she certainly fulfils a precept if she performs it, and she should say the appropriate blessing upon its fulfillment. See there, and a word to the wise is sufficient. ]TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: it seems that when claiming that women can perform positive percepts limited to time, Salamon relies on the first part of the midrash in the *Pesikta Rabbati* which he calls a *beraita,* according to which Jonah’s wife did make a pilgrimage and Michal did lay *tefillin*.] [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
44. *Yalkut Shimoni* [Gen 15:8] Josh 15:27 [Num 27:73]: “When the daughters of Zelophehad heard that the Land had been divided among the Tribes, but not to the females, they gathered to hold a council. They said: ‘God’s mercy is not like the mercy of humans. Humans’ mercy is more on males than on females; God’s mercy is different, it is on men and women alike, and it is on everyone, as it is said: "Who gives food to every creature” (Ps 136:26), and it is said “who gives the beasts their food” (Ps 147:40), and it says, “God is good to all and his mercy is upon all his works.” [Ps 145:9]’”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
45. b. Kiddushin 34b [35a]; “A man who has the means to do this” is referred to, but [not a woman], seeing that “a woman lacks the means to do this”; see there. There are bundles of precepts that the man also does not have the means to fulfill, such as sending away the [mother bird from the] nest [*shiluaḥ haqen*] [Deut 22:6-7] and the like, such that the man is not obligated to fulfill them unless he happens to come across the opportunity. However, they are not similar to the positive precepts limited to time, because if he did not chance upon them, he is not obligated at all; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
46. In the following pages Salamon intends to show that the Torah's original message is an egalitarian one. He will claim that this is especially true in the case of the positive commandments limited to time. According to Salamon, women's exemption from these commandments, which are mostly related to the cultic part of Judaism, is against the spirit of the Torah and is nothing but a "garment" tailored by the sages to hide its original intention. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
47. Gen 1:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
48. This is what Bar Kafra reckoned in b. Ketubot 5a. See there, Rashi’s commentary beginning with the words “since on this [day] was pronounced the blessing for the man.” See also the Tosafists on b. Yebamot 65b beginning with the words “and not what said”; note this. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
49. We may say that for this reason “Be fertile and increase” was said to him, not to her, because “it is the way of a man to go in search of a woman, but it is not the way of a woman to go in search of a man” (see b. Kiddushin 2b). Since it is impossible for her to marry, she should not be obligated, as we learn from “and master her”—"it is the nature of a man to subdue but it is not the nature of a woman to subdue” (b. Yebamot 65b). If this is true, why did the sages of blessed memory obligate her in “He did not create it a waste, but formed it for habitation” [Isa 45:18]?; for it does obligate her (see b. Yebamot 62a and the Tosafists on b. Gittin 41b beginning with the words “did not create it a waste," and the Tosafists on b. Ḥagigah 2b beginning with "did not create it a waste") according to the halakhah, and “the words of the later Scriptures are on the same footing as those of the Torah*”* (see b. Rosh Hashanah 19a); and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “The words of the later Scriptures are on the same footing as those of the Torah”: This is a halakhic rule meaning that the precepts whose origin is in the books of the Prophets and the Writings have the same validity as the precepts of the Torah. Although Woman is not obligated to procreate from the Torah, she is obligated based on Isa 45:18. Salamon hints that Woman is obligated to procreate just like Man, but without the rights that he has.] [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
50. It seems that Salamon’s reference to “touching” is connected with *Yalkut Shimoni* Gen 25, which states that the Serpent convinced Eve to touch the Tree of Knowledge; see Gen 3:2 “You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.’” [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
51. Gen 2:16. I dare not say that “eat” was also said as a commandment, as Hezekiah taught in the Yerushalmi [y. Kiddushin ch. 4] in the chapter “Ten Marriage Classes,” [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: H.W. Guggenheimer (ed.), *The Jerusalem Talmud*: *Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, Tractate Qiddušin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).] and it also appears in *Yalkut* [*Shimoni*] on Ps 22: “Every person will have to justify himself for everything his eye saw and which he did not eat. Rabbi Eleazar took note of this statement and saved coins from which he ate every kind once a year," see there. Something similar appears in b. Ta‘anit 22b: “R. Jose's reason is because it is written ‘And became a living soul’: keep alive the soul which I gave you.” However, we do not agree with that, for there is no commandment to eat, except the matzah on Passover and sacrificial offerings, because eating is a bodily pleasure and it is a natural need, not a commandment; see *Siftei Cohen* 10 paragraph 341 number 7, note this. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
52. See the Tosafists on b. 'Arachin 2b beginning with the words “including the woman etc.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
53. b. Temurah 2b: “Since the whole context speaks only of the masculine gender, as it says: ‘He shall not alter it nor change it’ (Lev 27:10), whence do you derive that the same applies to a woman? The text therefore states: ‘And if he shall at all change’, in order to include a woman.” See Rashi, of blessed memory, who explained [there] “it is written ‘shall not exchange’ [*lo yaḥlifenu*], which is the masculine gender; it is not written ‘will not exchange’ [*lo taḥlifenu*], which is the feminine gender”; see there. I must object, that almost the entire Torah is said in the masculine gender and this needs investigation. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon is of the opinion that Rashi's halakhic views were more gender biased than those of the Tosafists.] [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
54. In the following pages Salamon praises outstanding Jewish women whom tradition cherishes as individuals who set moral examples for future generations. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
55. Gen 21:12 and see b. Megillah14a and b. Sanhedrin 69b. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
56. Gen 20:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
57. [Gen: 21:9] Zohar Vayera: “‘Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian’: She saw him through a contemptuous eye, eyeing him not as the son of Abraham but as the son of Hagar the Egyptian. So, 'Sarah saw.' Sarah saw him with that eye – not Abraham since in relation to Abraham it is not written: *son of Hagar the Egyptian*, but rather: *his son*,"and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: *The Zohar*, Pritzker Edition, Translation and Commentary by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press 2004): v. II, 185.] [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
58. There are four periods in the history of Man: the period of hunting, the period of pasturing and breeding of domestic animals, the period of agriculture, and the period of building towns and villages. Thus, Abraham lived at the end of the period of hunting and the beginning of the period of pasturing and he was a shepherd. Isaac lived at the end of the period of pasturing and the beginning of the period of [agricultural] work. Jacob already built a home. (Perhaps this is what the sages meant when they called Abraham “mountain,” Isaac “field,” and Jacob “home.” See b. Pesaḥim 88a.) As for Esau, after he had been a hunter and a man of the field, he went back [to hunting]. He trapped Isaac through his sense of taste, as his eyes were too dim to see, but Rebecca loved Jacob; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
59. Mal 1:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
60. Gen 31[:3]. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
61. b. Sotah11b: “R. ‘Awira expounded (in *Yalkut* [*Shimoni*] Gen ch. 1 –‘said R. Akiba‘): As the reward for the righteous women who lived in that generation were the Israelites delivered from Egypt.” In the *Yalkut* (ibid.) it is said in the name of *Midrash Abkir*: “And all kinds of labor in the fields” [Exod 1:14]. *Yalkut* [*Shimoni*] Exod [163]. In the field and not in the town, for they [the Egyptians] decreed that men would sleep in the field, while women – in the town, in order to decrease procreation. Then women boiled water and brought all kinds of food and drink to their husbands, and they [the women] consoled them by saying: “They will never enslave us, in the end God will redeem us etc.” See there. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Salamon alludes to the midrash according to which women did not let men despair of the future and transgress the prohibition of extracting semen in vain (Lev 15:16-18).] [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
62. Exod 2:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
63. b. Megillah 14a: “R. Naḥman said in the name of Rab: [She was so called] because she prophesied when she was the sister of Aaron [only] and said, ‘My mother is destined to bear a son who will save Israel.’” When he was born the whole house was filled with light, and her father arose and kissed her on the head, saying, ‘My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled.’ But when they threw him into the river her father arose and rapped her on the head, saying, ‘Daughter, where is your prophecy?’ So it is written, ‘And his sister stood afar off to know’ (Ibid) - to know what would come of her prophecy in the end”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
64. Exod 15:2. The sages of blessed memory said (b. Sanhedrin 104b): “‘All your enemies have opened their mouths against you’ (Lam 3:46).  Rabbah said in R. Johanan's name: Why did he place the [letter] *pe* before the [letter] *‘ayin*?  Because of the Spies who spoke with their mouths [*peh*] what they had not seen with their eyes [‘*ayin*].” [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: While all the chapters of the Lamentations are styled in alphabetical acrostic form, in ch. 3 the letter *pe* precedes the letter *'ayn*.] This is the order of things with women, but Miriam saw first and then took the tambourine, and all the women came after her with tambourines; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
65. b. Ta‘anit 9a: “Three good leaders had arisen for Israel; namely, Moses, Aaron and Miriam. And for their sake three good things were conferred [upon Israel]; namely, the Well, the Pillar of Cloud and the Manna: the Well, for the merit of Miriam; the Pillar of Cloud for the merit of Aaron; the Manna for the merit of Moses.” [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
66. The midrash on 'Moses ascended to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "So shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel' (Exod 19:3) explains that *house of Jacob* is a metaphor for women, while *sons of Israel* - for men (Exod Rabbah 28:2). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
67. b. Yoma 75a: “R. Jose said, Come and see how different the action of human beings is from that of the Holy One, blessed be He. If one of flesh and blood is angry with his neighbor, he persecutes him as far as depriving him of his livelihood, but it is different with the Holy One, blessed be He. Although He cursed the serpent, yet when he goes up to the roof, there is his food; if he goes down, there is his food. He cursed Canaan: yet he eats what his master eats, drinks what his master drinks. He cursed the woman, all are running after her etc.”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
68. Gen Rabbah, Yitro [Exod Rabbah 28:2]: ‘’‘So shall you say to the House of Jacob’ [Exod 19 :3]—these are the women [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The text of the *Maamar* reads “men,” which is probably a misprint.] He said to him: ‘Tell them the main points that they can understand’; ‘So shall you say to the House of Israel’—these are the men. He said to him: ‘Tell them the details that they can understand.’ Another explanation. Why were things said first to the women? Because they are diligent in fulfilling commandments. Another explanation. Because they groom their sons for the Torah. Rabbi Tachalifa of Caesarea said: ‘Said the Holy one, blessed be He: “When I created the world, I commanded the First Man, and only afterwards Eve. She transgressed and spoiled the world. This time if I do not call women first, they will abolish the Torah etc.’”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
69. Exod 32:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
70. Exod 35:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
71. *Yalkut* [*Shimoni*], 1 Sam [78]; 1 Sam 1:1, in the name of the preacher: “‘Hannah was praying in her heart’:Why were women joined together with minors and slaves with regard to commandments?  Because they only have one heart. As it is said: ‘And Hannah was speaking in her heart’; ‘I find Woman more bitter than death; she is all traps, her hands are fetters and her heart is snares’ (Eccl7*:*26); ‘And her husband arose and went after her, to speak to her heart’ (Judg 19:3). And also, ‘Folly settles in the heart of a child’ (Prov 22:15). Also, a slave’s heart is attached only to his master”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
72. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* ch. 25 [45]: “Aaron deliberated, saying to himself: If I say to them ‘give me your silver and gold’, they will immediately bring it to me. But if I say give me the rings of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, the whole project will fail, as it says, “And Aaron said: ‘Take off the gold rings [that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters . . .]”’ (Exod. 32:2). The women heard and refused, unwilling to give over their rings to their husband. Instead, they rebuked them, saying, ‘To make a calf and an abomination that has no power to save! No, we will not heed you.’ And the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them their reward in this world, for they are to observe the New Moon (celebrations) more than the men. And He gave them a reward in the World to Come, for they will be renewed in the future like the New Moons. See also Rashi on b.Megillah 22b, words beginning with "New months," and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 170–71.There is a tradition based on this midrash for women to take a day-off of household chores on the first day of each lunar month as a reward for their refusal to contribute their jewels to the building of the golden calf.] [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
73. Num 13 and 14, and Deut 17:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
74. Gen [Num] Rabbah, Pinḥas [10]: “‘The daughters of Zelophehad came forward’ [Num 27:1]: In that generationwomen mended what men had destroyed. Thus, one can see that Aaron told them: ‘Take off the golden earrings that your wives… are wearing’ [Exod 32:2], but the women did not want to and they protested, as it is said: ‘So all the people took off their earrings’ [Exod 32:3]. This means that women did not take part with them in the sin of the calf. Also in the case of the Spies, who had spread calumnies and ‘came back and caused the entire congregation to complain against him’ [Num 14:36], they were punished, for they said: ‘We cannot enter the Land,’ but the women did not participate with them in that counsel, as it is said prior to that passage: ‘For the Lord had said of them, “They shall die in the wilderness.”’ ‘Not one man of them survived, except Caleb son of Jephuneh’ [Num 26:65], ‘*man’* not woman. They were punished because they did not want to enter the Land, whereas women [the daughters of Zelophehad] came out to ask for a portion of the Land. This is the reason that this story is written close to the death of the generation of the desert, in which men destroyed and women mended.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
75. Deut 31:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
76. See b. Ḥagigah 3a: “Our Rabbis taught: Once R. Johanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma went to pay their respects to R. Joshua at Peki'in. Said he to them: ‘What new teaching was there at the *beit midrash* today?’ They replied: ‘We are thy disciples and thy waters do we drink.’ Said he to them: ‘Even so, it is impossible for a *beit midrash* session to pass without some novel teaching. Whose sabbath was it?’ — ‘It was the sabbath of R. Eleazar b. ‘Azariah, [they replied].’ ‘And what was the theme of his Haggadic discourse today?’ They answered: ‘The section, “Assemble.”’ ‘And what exposition did he give thereon?’ ‘“Assemble the people the men and the women and the children” [Deut 31:12]. If the men came to learn, the women came to hear, but wherefore have the little ones to come? In order to grant reward to those that bring them.’ Said he to them: ‘There was a fair jewel in your hand, and you sought to deprive me of it.’” We do not know what it was and for what reason R. Joshua praised so firmly R. Eleazar’s homily. However, if one wants to be accurate, he will find that R. Eleazar reversed the order, for in the Scripture it said: “that they may hear and so learn” [Deut 31:12]. He put the men before the women, which is not the order of the Torah, that spoke of the women first. Also, he gave them only the hearing and not the learning, which means that he wanted to belittle the value of the women. R. Joshua was satisfied with this, because by then the denigration of women had begun; and a word to the wise is sufficient. See also Rashi on b. Megillah 22b words beginning with "New months", [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The verse says, “Assemble the people: the men, and the women, and the children, and your stranger in your cities, in order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear the Lord, your God.” (Deut 31:12). Since men are mentioned first in this verse, either the verb “hear” should be related to them, or both “hear” and “listen” should be addressing men and women alike. However, the sages associated learning with men, while women were automatically allocated the passive hearing. Salamon’s words bring to mind one of the central claims of Jewish feminists, which deals with the exclusion of women from the learners’ community.] [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
77. Judg 4:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
78. A woman is qualified to judge as deduced from “that you shall set before them*”* [Exod 21:1]; see b. Kiddushin 35a: “…the School of R. Ishmael taught likewise. The verse says, ‘that you shall set before them’ (Exod 21:1). Scripture equalized Woman and Man in respect of all civil laws in Scripture.” Thus, Deborah judged Israel, but to testify—a woman is not qualified. See b. Niddah 49b, on the mishnah, “Whosoever is eligible to act as judge is eligible to act as witness.” Keep all this in your mind because it is significant, and see the Tosafists on b. Niddah at the beginning of page 50a; and a word to the wise is sufficient. And see the Tosafists on b. Baba Kamma 15a, beginning with the words “you shall set before them.” And see the Tosafists on b*.* Yebamot 45b, beginning with the words “Did she not bathe.” But the Jerusalem Talmud [y. Yoma32a ch. 6 halakhah 1] does not say the same, but [says rather that] after she had been disqualified from testifying they disqualified her for judging as well. This is turning one's back on [God]; note this. And see the Tosafists on b. Sanhedrin 24b beginning with the words “and these”; but the old version speaks about slaves, not Woman. Rabbi Moses [Maimonides] of blessed memory completely omitted the halakhah [in the Mishneh Torah] and this needs investigation. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon is annoyed by the rabbinic ruling that created a nexus between judging and testifying in the case of women. Not only women were unfairly banned from serving as witnesses, their right to judge was retroactively taken from them on the bases of this rather arbitrary rabbinic ruling. The question of women’s judging and testifying has been one of the most discussed topics in connection with women’s place in Judaism. See Introduction 33-37.] [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
79. *Tanna debe Eliyahu* [Braude and Kapstein, eds., 1:152]: “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidot…judged Israel at that time. … Pinḥas, the son of Eleazar, was still serving Israel in Deborah's time as judge and prophet. Hence it may be asked: What was the special character of Deborah that she, too, judged Israel and prophesied concerning them etc.”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
80. Ibid. “And she sat under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth el [Judg. 4:5]. The sages said: As Samuel, sat in Ramah, so Deborah sat in Ramah.” [Braude and Kapstein, eds., 1:155] [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
81. Judg 4:8: “If you go with me, I will go.” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
82. Ibid. 4:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
83. Ibid. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
84. *Tanna debe Eliyahu* [Braude and Kapstein, eds., 1: 153]: “…Deborah's husband was completely illiterate. So his wife said to him: ‘Come on, {I will} make wicks {for you}, and take them to the Holy Place in Shiloh. Your portion may thus be with men of worth, and you will have life in the world-to-come etc.’”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
85. [Judg] ibid. [5:24]. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
86. *Tanna debe Eliyahu* [Braude and Kapstein, eds.; ch. 9, 1:157]. Thus said the sages: “Yael was a woman of worth who did her husband’s will. Indeed it is well said that no woman is to be regarded as worthy unless she does her husband's will.”—But God forbid, that a woman who is considered to be of worth would be one that would do her husband's will by committing adultery (for our days are not like former days). But Esther and Yael made themselves [as] “natural soil” [*karka‘ ‘olam*] [passive participant in the intercourse] in order to save their people’s life from the hands of the foe (See b. Ketuboth 3b, in the Tosafists, beginning with "and to explain"), and they did so only with the consent of the husband, for if they did it without his consent, they would have been called “unfaithful to her husband,” and the husbands would have been allowed to divorce them even according to the House of Shammai (b. Gittin 90a). This is, I think, also the opinion of Rabbenu Tam (Tosafists on b. Sanhedrin 74a). [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Some commentators understood from Rabbenu Tam's words that having intercourse with a gentile man is not adultery, because of Ezek 23:20, but Salamon does not think that this was his opinion.] And in that case there is no problem with the question in the Jerusalem Talmud (Tosafists on b. Gittin, ibid., beginning with the words “What is further” [*mah lehalan*]); one needs the verse “the first husband who divorced her etc.” [Deut 24:4] for a case in which she made herself “natural soil” without her husband’s consent and he divorced her. She is not forbidden to him on account of [the prohibition of] a wayward wife [sotah] because “the All Merciful declared their children to be legally fatherless.” [b. Yebamot 98a] [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Since the sages consider the children of the gentile men fatherless, some rabbinic authorities rule that having intercourse with a gentile halakhically is not considered an adultery. It is possible that the rabbis meant to protect this way Jewish women against a divorce in case of a rape by a gentile.] In any case he is permitted to divorce her. A word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
87. Following the midrash (b. Nazir 23b; Yalkut Shimoni Judg ch. 5) the commentators understood the verse 'At her feet he sank, fell, lay; at her feet he sank' [Judg 5:27] as alluding to the "method" Yael used to overpower Sisera. According to this exegesis, prior to piercing his temple with a tent peg, she exhausted him by having intercourse with him seven times (seven is the number of words between two appearances of the word *feet*). This exegesis invites a lengthy halakhic debate over the question whether Yael technically committed an adultery or just fulfilled her husband's [patriotic] request. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
88. Judg 4:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
89. 1 Sam 1:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
90. Ibid. 1:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
91. b. Berakhot 31a: “R. Hamnuna said: ‘How many most important laws can be learnt from these verses relating to Hannah!’ etc.”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
92. b.Ta‘anit 2a: “… to serve Him with all your heart. What is service of the heart? You must need say, prayer” see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Prayer is called *the worship of the heart.* Hannah, Samuel's mother, is held as the one who established the tradition of praying (I Sam 12:1-10).] [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
93. b. Berakhot 31b: “‘And Hannah answered and said, “No, my lord.”’ Ulla, or as some say R. Jose b. Hanina, said: ‘She said to him: “You are no lord in this matter, nor does the Holy spirit rest on you, that you suspect me of this thing.”’” [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
94. 1 Sam 3:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
95. b. Berakhot ibid.: “R. Johanan said: Seed that will be equal to two men, namely, Moses and Aaron”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
96. *Yalkut* [*Shimoni*] 1 Sam [61]: “We learn from this that women are obligated to pray one daily prayer, because Hannah said Eighteen Blessings.” See there, because he quotes all the blessings as they are arranged before us in the prayer (only the blessing “and to Jerusalem*”* is missing) and it contains even the blessing [against] the *minim* [heretics] that was introduced at the end of the Second Temple, may it be rebuilt soon. See b. Berakhot28b where the sages said: “To what do these Eighteen Benedictions correspond? R. Hillel the son of Samuel b. Naḥmani said: To the eighteen times that David mentioned the Divine Name etc.”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
97. 2 Kgs 22:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
98. b. Megillah 14b: “R. Naḥman said: Haughtiness does not befit women. There were two haughty women, and their names are hateful, one being called a hornet and the other a weasel. Of the hornet it is written [Judg 4:6] ‘And she sent and called Barak, instead of going to him.’ Of the weasel it is written (2 Kgs 22): ‘Say to the man’, instead of ‘say to the king.’”—How did R. Naḥman dare speak in irreverent language about two prophetesses who saw the vision from the Almighty? This is a sign of the times, and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon finds it inappropriate that R. Naḥman ridiculed Deborah and Huldah by alluding to the literal meaning of their names: *devorah* means a bee, *ḥuldah* – a rat.] [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
99. 2 Kgs 22:14. b. Megillah ibid.: “But if Jeremiah was there, how could she prophesy? — It was said in the school of Rab in the name of Rab: Huldah was a near relative of Jeremiah, and he did not object to her doing so. But how could Josiah himself pass over Jeremiah and send to her? — The members of the school of R. Shila replied, because women are tender-hearted”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
100. Lam 3:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
101. Esth [9:32]. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
102. b. Megillah 7a: “Esther sent to the sages saying: ‘Write an account of me for posterity.’ They sent back answer, ‘Have I not written for you three times’ (Prov 22:20), three times and not four?’ [And they refused] until they found a verse written in the Torah etc.”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
103. Exod Rab 41: “Said Rabbi Levi, said Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish: Just as this bride adorns herself with twenty-four kinds of jewellery (Isa 3), the students of wisdom should be diligent with the twenty-four Books”; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
104. b. Shabbat 13b and 30b. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
105. She was mentioned in the book of Judith*,* the fifth of the eleven apocryphal books which are not accepted by us as holy. It tells the story of the deliverance wrought by a maiden by the name of Judith during the war of the Jews against the Greeks in the days of the Hasmoneans. See that she is mentioned by her name in the *krovetz* for the first Sabbath of Hanukkah, but in the *krovetz* for the second Sabbath the entire *piyyut* revolves around Hannah’s name; only at the end does it also bring up the name of Judith. It seems that the author confused the two women, and he was inconsistent there. A word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *krovetz* [*krovot*] are *piyyutim*—liturgical poems—written for the repetition of the Prayer Leader. See both *piyyutim* in *Seder* ‘*Avodat* *Israel* (Rodelheim, 1901), 629–39.] [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
106. The text reads *tza‘if kelimah* (a veil of shame) which does not fit the context. Since Salamon speaks of Judith as a virgin, it is probably a typographical error. He may have in mind *tza‘if kallah* [bridal veil]. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
107. The story of Hanna and her seven sons appears in many different sources. See II Macc ch. 7; Yosifon pt 4 ch. 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
108. b. Kiddushin 80b: “Tanna debe Eliyahu [states]: Because women are temperamentally light-headed.” See b. Shabbat 33b where R. Simeon said: “Women are temperamentally light-headed, she [R. Simeon's wife] may be put to the torture and expose us”; see there. This is difficult to understand. For this is not light-headedness if they cannot withstand torture. The sages said in b. Ketubot 33b: “If they had lashed Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, they would have worshipped the [golden] image”; see there. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon protests against the sages' sweeping rejection of women on the ground of their "light-headedness." In his opinion it is based on their lack of understanding of human nature.] Concerning R. Simeon bar Yohai see b. Berakhot 28a and b. Pesaḥim 112b. You will see there that the words of the Torah are poor in one place and rich in another; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “The words of the Torah are poor in one place and rich in another”– a halakhic exegetical tool meaning that certain facts are withheld until later. Salamon's reference to R. Simeon bar Yohai here is not clear. It is possible that he means here that while the texts in b. Kiddushin and b. Shabbat tell one part of a story—women’s susceptibility to torture—the text from b. Ketubot fills in a gap and describe men’s susceptibility to torture.] [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
109. The literal translation of the expression should be “she sealed her womb”, which does not fit the context. Since the word softheartedness (*raḥamim)* is derived from the same root as womb (*reḥem*) it is more appropriate to translate it as, “she sealed her softheartedness.” However, Salamon certainly alludes to the tragic irony of the expression: Hannah is exhorting the children of her womb to martyrdom.] [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
110. Eicha Rabbati 8 [Eicha Rabbah 1:50]. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
111. *Eicha Rabbati*, ibid. The *Yefeh Anaf* raised a question concerning Hannah’s saying “Kill me first!” And these are his words: “If this [suicide] is forbidden by the Torah, how was she permitted to put herself to death by her own will?” [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: *Yefeh Anaf* is a commentary on *Eicha Rabbah* by Shmuel ben Yitzchak Yafeh HaAshkenazi (1525-1595)] He suggested that perhaps life was more bitter to her than death, so she was permitted to kill herself. He also raised a question about Zedekiah of whom it is said that “he did not think to knock his head against a wall until he died” [*Eicha Rabbah* 1: 51]. How could he have been permitted to injure himself in order to be spared the gouging of his eyes? He explained in a usual way, but he could have explained like [in the case of] Saul, that it was permitted to the king to injure himself in order to spare himself abuse; see there. See also the Tosafists on b. Ketubot 103b beginning with the words “destined to the life of the world to come,” who raise a query: Is it not true that all Israel have a portion in the world to come? One can reply to their wondering: Do all Israel injure themselves like that fuller? [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: b. Ketubot 103b tells the story of a fuller who threw himself from the roof, hoping to get to the world to come as soon as possible, after hearing that all Israel had a portion in the world to come. Although he misunderstood the heavenly message, he was still granted a portion in the world to come.] This needs investigation. — The main reason for the prohibition against deliberate suicide comes from the beraita in b. Baba Kamma 91b: “We learn ‘But your blood, of your souls I will demand’ (Gen 9:5), [upon which] R. Eleazar remarked [that] it meant, ‘I will demand your blood’”; see there. It seems that R. Eleazar’s colleagues disagreed with him, because it is said in the mishnah (ibid., 90b): “They taught: Where one injures oneself, though forbidden, he is exempt.” It seems that this is not necessarily “injures,” for ‘’what difference can there be whether one was slain completely or partially?” [b. Hullin 35b[ [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon seems to be writing ironically here: Why the sages use the word "injures" when the result is anyway death?] (The Tosafists’ queries there [b. Baba Kamma 91b] begin with the words “the injurer”. This is not difficult: if one is exempted, it means that he is exempted even from the judgement of Heaven. A word to the wise is sufficient). As the *Yefeh Anaf* said, and as is also clear from *Tanna debe Eliyahu* [Braude and Kapstein, eds., ch. 29; 1:339]: “Thus also David said: Had not words of Torah reconciled me to my lot when affliction came upon me, I would have rooted myself out of the world, as it says: ‘Unless Thy Torah had been my delight, I should then have perished because of mine affliction (Ps 119:92)’”; see there. Still, R. Hanina b. Teradion in b. ‘Avodah Zara 18a said: “Let Him who gave me [my soul] take it away.” He did not want to injure himself, and he said this out of the measure of piety [*midat haḥasidut*], because according to the majority opinion one is not allowed [to injure oneself]; and a word to the wise is sufficient. See ibid., the Tosafists on the words beginning with “should not injure." From their answer it seems that one is allowed to injure oneself, as it seems from b. ‘Avodah Zarah 17a, from the story of R. Eleazar b. Dordai. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: It is not clear why Salamon attributes R. Eleazar b. Dordai’s death to suicide.] See also [?] [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: It seems that Salamon mistakenly sends his readers to *Shitah Mekubetset* on b. Ketubot, end of ch. *Hanose* for the opinion of Ravad (Rabbi Abraham ben David).] And this is strange. I wrote all this according to the halakhah, but perhaps one should rely in extreme cases on the minority opinion, in contradiction to the *Shulḥan Arukh* [Yoreh De‘ah] 345 which is based on thetractate Semaḥot[Mishnah]. In today’s reality, many injure themselves even among the righteous and important people, and sometimes it is somewhat blasphemous to prevent them from [doing so], even if it is said so in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. A word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
112. Beruriah, the daughter of R. Hanina ben Teradion and the wife of R. Meir, in t. Baba Kamma ch. 4. See b. Pesaḥim 62b. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
113. Yaltha, the wife of R. Naḥman. See b. Berakhot 51b. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
114. See *Shem HaGedolim* under the word *Rabbanit* in which he [R.Haim Yosef David Azulai – Hida 1724-1806] names a number of women who were remarkable in their knowledge of the Torah. He spoke at length, as usual in sweet words and pleasant sayings. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Hida, *Shem HaGedolim* (Podgorze, 1905–1930), 1:172. Indeed, Hida mentions there three women in early modern times who contributed to the study of the Torah.] [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
115. b. Yoma 22b: "‘Saul was a year old when he began to reign’ (I Sam 13:1). R. Huna said: Like an infant of one year, who had not tasted the taste of sin.” [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
116. I Sam 9: 11. [ The printed text erroneously reads l Sam 1:11]. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
117. b. Berakhot 48b: “As soon as you come into the city you shall straightway find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat; for the people will not eat until he comes, because he does bless the sacrifice, and afterwards they eat that be bidden (I Sam 9:13). Why did they make such a long story of it? Because women are fond of talking. Samuel, however, says that it was so that they might feast their eyes on Saul's good looks etc.”; and in the anthology by the name *Aggadat Shmuel* it says in the following words: “Why such a long story? They were staring at Saul’s good looks and could not have enough of him, etc.” [Midrash Shmuel (Vilna, 1925), portion 13, p. 44]; see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
118. Jer 31:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
119. b.Ta‘anit26b in the mishnah: “There never were in Israel greater days of joy than the fifteenth of Ab and the Day of Atonement.” [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
120. Ibid.: "On these days the daughters of Jerusalem used to walk out in white garments which they borrowed in order not to put to shame anyone who had none.” I compared the white to the lily, like the opinion cited by R. Abraham ben Ezra as “some say,” on the Song of Songs 2:1. See there. The sages compared it to blood which is red, in Song of Songs Rabbah [7:3]: “Said Rabbi Levy :’It is customary that a man will marry when he is thirty, when he is forty. If he had intercourse [for the first time] and he wants to have it again, but she tells him: “I saw a red rose,” he will withdraw from her immediately. Who made him withdraw from her, was that an iron wall or an iron post, or was he bitten by a snake, or a scorpion stung him so he would not approach her? The words of the Torah, which are tender like a lily’”; see there. See also b. Sanhedrin 37a. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
121. See Rashi on b. Kiddushin 72a, commentary beginning with “they resemble” [*domin*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
122. b. Ta‘anit, ibid., and at the end of the tractate. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
123. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
124. Ibid. And the *Kol Bo* in the Laws of the Ninth of Ab cited the Gemara and wrote, "Some wonder: how was it possible that this tradition was good in the eyes of the sages, that a man would kidnap his wife, as if, God forbid, the maidens of Israel were unclaimed property [*hefker*]? Well, one should not wonder, because someone who had means to give away his daughter would not send her there, for if she was a minor, what good would come from kidnapping, for she could not be betrothed without her father's consent. If she was a maiden or an adult and he [the father] worried about it, he would not let her go out; if he did let her, he would warn her to get betrothed only to someone who was worthy of her, and it is known that she could be betrothed only of her will. But the custom was for the maidens whose fathers did not have the means to marry them off, and there was a chance that without that custom they would have waited till their hair turned white." [*Kol Bo* (Venice, 1547), 68] – He [the author of *Kol Bo*], bless his memory, was lengthy in his words and, with all due respect, he was wrong, because he himself already went astray from the natural order of things and turned his back on it; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon seems to disagree with the *Kol Bo* who explains this custom as the last resort for poor girls to find a husband. In Salamon’s opinion, this was an opportunity for youths of all social strata to mingle and freely choose their spouses.] [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
125. It seems that already in those days they [men] had wealth on their mind and things turned around. They [maidens] gave a dowry as the prophet had predicted (Ezek 16:33), instead of receiving a high bride-price [*mohar*] and a gift as they had in the past. It has remained like that until now. In fact, it seems that our predecessors were uncomfortable with this situation, and that is why they called it [the dowry] *nadan* [literally: prostitute's fee] in a derogatory sense and not out of praise. A word to the wise is sufficient. See the responsum of *Beit Yosef*. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The concept of the dowry does not appear explicitly in the Torah. It is deduced from it by the sages based on Jer 29:10. See m. Ketubot 6:5; Yosef Karo, *Responsa of Beit Yosef* (Mantua, 1730). It is difficult to know which responsum Salamon has in mind, because many of his responsa deal with the dowry.] [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
126. b. Baba Batra 91b. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
127. Salamon, prone to playing with words, calls Jesus *ben temurah*, although *ben temurah* is a halakhic concept that has nothing to do with Christianity. The only connection is grammatical: the noun *temurah* )exchange) shares the same root *mor* with the verb *lehamir* *(*to convert). Originally, *ben temurah* is a halakhic concept indicating a child conceived by his father when he was certain that he was having intercourse with one woman, while in reality he was with another. Thus Reuven may be considered *ben temurah*, because he was conceived by Jacob when the latter was certain that he was with Rachel, while in reality he was with Leah. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
128. For this reason they too [‘*am ha’aretz*] took their share [of the punishment], because at that same time it was ruled that their testimony was not valid; see b. Pesaḥim 49b and see b. Ḥagigah 22a. See also [?], Laws of Testimony 9:2. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: It is not clear what book Salamon has in mind. It seems that there is a typographical error in the acronym of the book. He may have had in mind Yosef Karo, *Kesef Mishneh*, Laws of Testimony, ch. 9. Karo wonders there why Maimonides ruled against the testimony of women on the basis of the grammatical gender of the commandment in Deut 19, since all of the Torah is written in masculine language.] – The Rav of blessed memory reckoned that this inference [*gezerah shavah*] was certainly not valid, because if it were valid, the editor of the *Shas* [Mishnah] would not have abandoned the inference and learnt it as God’s categorical prohibition [*isuro isur ‘olam*] [?] and note this. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The inference in question is in Deut 19:15 – “two witnesses” and Deut 19:17 – “two men.” Since both verses contain the word “two” (*shenei*) the sages deduce from it that the witnesses should be male. However, R. Judah haNasi, does not make use of this inference. Instead, he makes a categorical statement: “The oath of the testimony applies to men and not to women” (m. Shevu‘ot 4:1). It seems that Salamon’s reference to “the Rav” is a reference to Maimonides, who also does not use the above-mentioned inference in the *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Testimony 9:2.] See also m. Baba Kamma 1:3: “on the testimony of witnesses who are free and Jews [*benei brit*]” — it does not mention men, and this is a mishnah of old like all the mishnayot in our chapter, which is obvious from their language. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
129. The story of Jesus’ ascension to heaven was spread a few years before the destruction of the Second Temple. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
130. I tried to look as far as I could in the *Shas* [the Mishnah] and the midrashim for denigrating speech against women and I did not find anything up to the end of the days of the Tannaim. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
131. m. Shevuot 4:1: "The oath of testimony applies to men and not to women". We learn in the Gemara ]b. Shevuot 30a] that a woman is ineligible to testify, as if there were {no} question of two men standing as witnesses [Deut 19:17]; see there. How tortuous and strained these words are! Scripture spoke only of the more common, because it is the way of the world that men quarrel and go to court, not women. It seems that the sages themselves were not satisfied with their homily, because they raised objections and gave a great number of explanations. And after all these lengthy speeches they still were not satisfied [with the legal pretexts they had put forth] so in order to prove their words from another standpoint, they learned from “Sara lied” (Gen 18:15) that women are unqualified to testify (*Yalkut Hilamdenu* [Tanhuma] and *Yalkut Hadash* 83 [I. b. R. Binyamin of Belzitz, *Yalkut Chadash* (Pressburg, 1858), 8a:93.]). From all this, we can know for certain only that “great edicts were taught here*.”* [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “Great edicts were taught here*”* is a halakhic expression that means: these rabbinic rulings are so important that they stand above the words of the Torah (b. Baba Metzia 103b). Salamon seems to speak ironically about the sages’ arbitrary gender-biased rulings which contradict, in his opinion, the Torah.] A word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
132. b. Kiddushin 80b: “Tanna debe Eliyahu: … women are temperamentally light-headed.” Anyone who reads non-canonical books will know what is omitted. A word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
133. b. Shabbat 62a: “Ulla said: ‘And it is the reverse in the case of a man.’ Thus we see that Ulla holds that whatever is fit for a man is not fit for a woman, and whatever is fit for a woman is not fit for a man. R. Joseph objected: ‘shepherds may go out [on the Sabbath] with sack cloths; and not only of shepherds did they [the sages] say [thus], but of all men, but that it is the practice of shepherds to go out with sacks.’ Rather R. Joseph said: ‘Ulla holds that women are a separate people.’” – He said an important thing in a quiet manner, and this is a shocking statement that is unmatched in world literature. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The concept of “world literature” (*Weltliteratur*), introduced originally by Goethe, made its way into the Wissenschaft des Judentums, where it was opposed to the corpus of Jewish sources, termed “Jewish literature,” that is, a national literature.] It helps us understand why he [Ulla], of blessed memory, was unwilling to pass the blessing cup to Yaltha (b. Berakhot 51b), and what was the reason for her great wrath, to the point of hurting his honor by saying, “Gossip comes from peddlers and vermin from rags,” and a word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: In the Jewish feminist scholarship the confrontation between Yaltha and R. Ulla has become one of the more salient examples of female resistance in ancient times.] [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
134. b. ‘Avodah Zarah 36b and b. Sanhedrin 21a. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: By *a certain incident* Salamon means the rape of Tamar by Amnon (II Samuel 13:1-20.] [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
135. b. Sukkah 51b-52a: “Is it not, they said, an *a fortiori* [*kal vaḥomer*] argument? If in the future, when they will be engaged in mourning and the evil inclination will have no power over them, the Torah nevertheless says, men separately and women separately, how much more so now, when they are engaged in rejoicing and the evil inclination has sway over them.” – This is not a real *a fortiori* argument, for the sages said: “[But the Rabbis hold with R. Isaac] …Even in a man's grief, his lusts prevail against him” (b. Kiddushin 80b). This [b. Sukkah 51b–52a] is an anonymous saying [*gemara*], but the rabbis followed R. Isaac; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
136. The author in [Y. Karo, *Shulhan Aruch*] Oraḥ Ḥayyim 55:1 wrote: “The kaddish is recited, and it is not recited with less than ten free males etc.” The source of his, of blessed memory, words are the Tosafists on b. Berakhot 45b, beginning with the words “And one hundred women,” which deals with the gathering for prayer and anything that requires a quorum of ten; see there. Indeed, Maimonides, of blessed memory, wrote [in the *Mishneh Torah*] in the Laws of Prayer 8:4: “This should not be done with fewer than ten free adults.” He did not mean males; see there. It seems that he, of blessed memory, intended to rule like R. Eliezer in b. Berakhot 47b who freed his slave in order to complete the prayer quorum and not like R. Yehoshua bar Levi. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: R. Yehoshua bar Levi was a third-century amora of the land of Israel. It is said in b. Berakhot 47b: “R. Joshua b. Levi said: Although it was laid down that an infant in a cradle cannot be counted for *zimmun*, yet he can be counted to make up ten. R. Joshua b. Levi also said: Nine and a slave may be joined [to make up ten].” Salamon thinks that what is important for the quorum of ten is the number, not the age, the gender, or the social status of the person who completes it.] We learn that ten are necessary for anything holy from [the words] “among,” “among,” in, “I will be hallowed among the children of Israel” [Lev 22:32] (b. Berakhot 21b). [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon explains the source of the requirement of the number ten for “anything holy.” (“Anything holy” is a halakhic concept with gender exclusive repercussions.) The requirement for ten is learned from inference, from the word “among” (*betokh*) which appears both in Lev 22:32 and in Num 16:21. Since in Num 22:32 the text speaks of the ten spies, the number ten was established as the quorum for prayer (b. Megillah 23b).] The slave is not part of Israel, while the woman is part of Israel and she should be included to complete the count, for “the children of Israel” does not in every case exclude the daughters of Israel. This is my humble opinion. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Lev 22:32 says “I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel.” R. Eliezer in b. Berakhot 47b freed a Canaanite slave in order to complete the prayer quorum. By doing so he transgressed a positive commandment. It is said that his act is “a religious act which is carried out by means of a transgression.”] [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
137. b. Megilah 23a: “All are qualified to be among the seven [who read], even a minor and a woman, only the sages said that a woman should not read in the Torah out of respect for the

     congregation.” In our situation, since we do not read [as it was in ancient times], the woman is certainly to be counted [for the quorum] according to the law; see [Yosef Karo[, *Beit Yosef* [Oraḥ Ḥayyim] 282 at the top of the paragraph. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Karo in the *Beit Yosef* does not object to women’s reading the Torah. The issue of the completion of the prayer quorum of ten and especially of the quorum of seven is one of the most debated ones in Jewish feminist scholarship and in the media. The explanation of the prohibition “out of respect for the congregation” is judged especially hurtful.] [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
138. According to Rab, who is of the opinion that there is no need [to mention] Covenant and Torah [in the grace after meals, because it does not apply to women] (b. Berakhot49a), they [women] say grace for themselves and for others. Even according to R. Sheshet, who disagrees with him—he would agree that now when everyone says grace for himself it is permitted by law to have women join the count for completing the quorum [for the *zimmun*] and perhaps even to let them recite the *zimmun*. See also the students of R. Yonah on Alfasi who explain the opinion of Rashi, of blessed memory, that “women do not say the *zimmu*n because their company is not appropriate.” (See the beginning of [b. Berakhot ch. 7] — “Three who have eaten”). Now, in the Gemara, ibid. 20b, they asked: “Come and hear: ‘In truth they did say: A son may say grace on behalf of his father and a slave may say grace on behalf of his master and a woman may say grace on behalf of her husband. But the sages said: “A curse light on the man whose wife or children have to say grace for him,” and they established it [only] for the case where he ate “a quantity for which he is only rabbinically bound [to say grace]”’”; see there. And this is problematic – why this curse? After all, he did not do anything [forbidden], and what should he do if he is an ignoramus and cannot say grace? Indeed, in the Tosefta there is no curse whatsoever, but it is plainly written that they said it “in truth”, and “every ‘in truth’ is the halakhah.*”* [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE “Every ‘in truth’ is the halakhah” is a halakhic rule which means that every statement of the sages beginning with “in truth” is a Law given to Moses at Sinai – b. Shabbat 92a]; see there in the Tosefta ch. 4 [t. Berakhot 5:18]; and a word to the wise is sufficient. See also the Ḥatam Sofer on Oraḥ Ḥayyim 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
139. In tractate *Soferim* (which, according to the testimony of the Rosh [Rabbi Asher] of blessed memory, was written during the later generations and is not part of the Talmud), in the *Laws of the Torah* 14:13–14: “Afterwards he shall raise the Torah and say etc., he immediately unrolls the Torah scroll to [a space of] three columns and raises it to show its writing to the people standing to his right and to his left and he turns towards the front and the back (the *bimah* was already in the middle of the synagogue), because it is a *mitzvah* for all men and women to see the Scripture, to bend their knees and to say ‘and this is the Torah, etc.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
140. The custom to bend the knees still existed in the days of *Kol Bo* and these are his words in the *Laws of the Blessing of the Priests*: “When they start blessing (the Blessing of the Priests) the congregation bends their knees.” See there. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
141. And these are the words of *Kol Bo*,in the Laws of the Reading of the Torah: “The Cantor [*sheliaḥ hatzibbur*] on the pulpit shall open the Book and show the Scripture to the men and women, and everyone shall say: ‘This is the Torah etc.’” Up to here he copied from the *Tractate Soferim*, but further on he added in his own words after “raise it”: “This is the origin of the custom of women crowding up to see the Book without knowing the reason for it,” because in his days they [women] were already separated from the house [of prayer]; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
142. ‘E*zrat Yisra’el:* the main prayer hall, usually reserved to men. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
143. I will copy here the words of Maharam ben Baruch [Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, 13th century] which appear in the responsum of Shabaz [Shimshon ben Zadok] in the Laws *of Circumcision*, for those who do not have [the text], and these are his words: “I do not find halakhically right at all the custom established in most places, when the woman sits in the synagogue among men and the baby is circumcised in her lap, even if the circumciser is her husband, her father, or her son, because it is not appropriate that she gets smartly dressed among men and before the Divine Presence [*Shekhinah*]. And we see a similar objection raised in the chapter ‘A man can betroth’ [b. Kiddushin ch. 2] 52b: ‘How then does a woman come to be in the Temple Court?’ What if priestly novitiates become inflamed through her? (Said Mózes [Salamon]: this is not the same, because there the Court was solely for the priests; note this.) Moreover, she is not even obligated to circumcise at all, not even her son, for it is said: ‘God commanded him’ [Gen 21:4]—‘him’ and not her. If this is so, why do we need all this, that he is circumcised in her lap and a commandment is snatched from men? Those who can protest, should protest, and the one who is stricter, bless him and give him peace. Meir ben Baruch, may he be blessed for the world to come.” – Later, the following addition was printed: “As our teacher wrote, I cried out for many days, but nobody took notice. For this looks very ugly; although ‘he is busy with his work’ [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: “When one is busy with his work” is a Talmudic expression: when someone deals with forbidden matters, we assume that he does not have sinful thoughts, because he is busy with his professional work.] and does not have sinful thoughts, those who look at them have suspicions, even if these are man and wife. Moreover, not everyone knows that she is his wife. Furthermore, was the women’s gallery put apart for nothing? This [a woman holding the baby during the circumcision] looks like ‘a religious act which is carried out by means of a transgression’ [b. Berakhot47b], for it is written: ‘Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice’ [1 Sam 15:22]. Anyone who fears God's words should leave the synagogue, in order not to look like they are assisting a transgressor in his act. My teacher R. Yekutiel bar Moshe of blessed memory, may he be blessed for the world to come, warned against this. As the rabbi wrote and I myself think too. I will add to his words, ‘Let one walk behind a lion but not behind a woman’ [b. ‘Eruvin 18b] and even if his own wife comes in front of him he should sweep her sideways [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: In b. Pesaḥim 55b the expression ‘should sweep sideways’ is said in connection with manure.] And this is what is said in the chapter “One may place strips” (b. ‘Eruvin 18b), “Manoah was an ignorant man, since it is said: ‘And Manoah arose, and went after his wife [Judg 13:11].’” Not even in the market, let alone in the synagogue, ]with the baby] in her lap. Peace on Meir bar Baruch, may he and his memory be blessed for the world to come.” [*Sefer Minhagim debei Maharam* (New York, 1938), 80.] End of quote. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
144. b. Kiddushin 80b: “Even as the story of a certain woman: It once happened that she took him out.” The Tosafists tell there, in the name of our sages, the story of a woman who was crying and lamenting at her husband’s grave. There was a man there who was guarding a hanged corpse, by the king’s order. The guard went to the woman and seduced her, and she gave in to him. When the guard returned to the hanged corpse, he did not find him. The guard was very agitated, fearing the king. The woman told him: “Do not worry, take my husband out of his grave and hang him instead. The guard took out the husband and hanged him etc.” I copied the text because it has been taken from a certain Greek author who wrote the play *The Widow from Ephesus*, and it does not derive from a holy source. A word to the wise is sufficient. [TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: Salamon alludes here to *The Widow from Ephesus* by the first-century author Petronius Arbiter. The non-Jewish origin of the story told in the name of the sages in b. Kiddushin 80b was known to nineteenth-century scholars. See: Saul Lieberman, *Greek and Hellenism in* *Jewish Palestine* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1984), 117 n. 56.] [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
145. This is the daily sight in the prayer houses of the others. Unfortunately, nowadays there is licentiousness within our society, too, and neither the synagogue nor the women’s gallery will help, because evil forces get stronger every day and we are unable to protest; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
146. b. Hagigah 16b: " R. Jose said: Abba Eleazar told me: Once we had a calf which was a peace-sacrifice, and we brought it to the Women's Court,30 and women laid the hands on it — not that the laying on of the hands has to be done by women, but in order to gratify the women." " – If they in their days went out of their way to do something exceptional to gratify women, why should not we nowadays strive to do like them in order to tie women with bonds of love to their people and their God, and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
147. b. Megillah 24b: “R. Jose said: I was long perplexed by this verse (Deut 28:29): “And you shall grope at noonday as the blind gropes in darkness.” Now what difference [I asked] does it make to a blind man whether it is dark or light? [Nor did I find the answer] until the following incident occurred. I was once walking on a pitch-black night when I saw a blind man walking in the road with a torch in his hand. I said to him, ‘My son, why do you carry this torch?’ He replied: ‘As long as I have this torch in my hand, people see me and save me from the holes and the thorns and briars’”; and a word to the wise is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
148. The imagery of the passage is based on various verses of the Book of Numbers (21:20, 22:25–26, 34:4). By using the imagery of the people of Israel on their way to the Promised Land, Salamon probably means that it is time to return to the origins, that is, to the egalitarian Judaism of the biblical time. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
149. The metaphor is based on the verse "she pressed Balaam's leg against the wall" (Num 22:25). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
150. b. Ketubot 59b: “For R. Hiyya taught: ‘A wife is for the sake of her beauty; for the sake of children.’ And R. Hiyya further taught: ‘A wife is for the wearing of a woman's finery etc.’”; see there. – Fair maiden Judah is clothed in glory and majesty, everything has been given by the pawnbroker against a pledge and she looks to the future cheerfully, because he will be paid his dues or she will sell herself without gain, expensive garments are her price and the eyes of the nations will see and long for her. They say, the daughters of Israel are perfect in beauty like a royal princess clothed in honor and glory. They [the nations] gather riches but not by right and our skin is peeled off. They [the daughters] do not know that their end will be bitter, beauty will leave them in the middle of their life and will turn into insult and disgrace. Behold, daughters of my people, return to the stronghold; and a word to the wise is sufficient.

     In order to show the struggling of the leading Kabbalists with the problem that we discuss, I will copy here the words of R. Bahya ben Asher on the portion Beshalaḥ, on the verse “Miriam the prophetess …took the timbrel” [Exod 15:20]. This is what he wrote: “One should not wonder that the prophecy rests upon the woman because she was created from man and she is called *man* (!) because it is said in Gen 5:2 ‘and called them man.’ Because of that it is said that Sarah was a prophetess like Miriam or greater than her, because she is called Yiscah for she bathes in the Holy Spirit. [[TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: According to the midrash Sarah's second name was Yiscah (Gen 11:29). The sages taught that the name Yiscah was derived from the root SCH- to bathe (b. Megillah 14a)].The sages learned from Gen 21:12 that Abraham was secondary in prophecy to Sarah, but Scripture did not mention a prophetess before Miriam, either because of the midrash that I mentioned or because it wanted to wait until the revelation of the *Shekhinah* [at the sea] when the sages said: ‘The slave girl saw on the sea what Ezekiel did not see.’ It teaches us that Miriam the prophetess praised the *Shekhinah* and all the women after her, and she herself said the canticle, like Moses and the People of Israel. You will also find that great principles of the Torah were explained by women – the issue of the world to come called ‘the bundle of life’ by Abigail, and the issue of the additional prayer [Musaf prayer], and the form of the private prayer [*teḥinah*] by Hannah, and the issue of reincarnation by the woman of Tekoa - all this shows that the woman is not unimportant, that she has an essence (!) and the sages taught in tractate *Megillah* [14a] : ‘There were seven prophetess etc.’” See there – how abundant is His good. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
151. Toward the end of his essay Salamon warns once more against the danger of Jewish women being enticed by Christianity. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)