that it has been embraced already by the maskilim and as a result, it falls into the catagory of a "strange woman".

35. This is a hint to the serpent of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. See *Genesis* 3:9 and *Mishnah Berakhot* 5:1.
36. *Or Torah*, p. 16.
37. See *ibid.*, p. 17, where R. Avraham quoted "the philosophers" and R. Yiẓḥak Isaac quoted the "scholars of nature."
38. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
39. This is a reference to the story in *Ḥagigah* 14b of the four who entered the orchard. Interestingly enough, R. Yiẓḥak Isaac is explaining it the same way as did R. Jacob Moses (see above, n. 24).
40. See his *Magen ve-Ẓinah* (Bnei Brak, 1985), 6b-7a.
41. Interestingly enough, R. Yiẓḥak Kahana of Jerusalem, a student of R. Yiẓḥak Isaac, writes in favor of secular studies in contrast to his mentor's approach, continuing the path of R. Israel of Shklov of Safed. See his *Toledot Yiẓḥak* 2 (Vilna, 1882), 5b.

Avraham Weiss

Women and the Reading of the Megillah

May women read the Megillah for other women, and for that matter, may women read the Megillah for men?

I. Tana'itic Texts

Two primary Tana'itic texts deal with this issue, texts which on the surface seem contradictory. The Mishnah states (*Megillah* 19b), "*Ha-kol kesherim likrot ha-Megillah*," "all are qualified to read the Megillah." Commenting on this Mishnah, the Talmud (*'Arakhin* 2b-3a) states: "*La-atuyei mai? La-atuyei nashim, u-khe-de-Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi, de-amar Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi, nashim ḥayyavot be-mikra Megillah she-af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes.*" "What is the word *'ha-kol'* meant to include? It is meant to include women, in accordance with the view of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Women are obliged to read the Megillah because they, too, were included in that miracle."

From this text it would appear that women are mandated to read the Megillah. Based on the principle that one can fulfill the responsibility for another if they are on the same level of *ḥiyyuv*, it would seem that women can also fulfill the obligation for men.[1] Since women are duty bound to read the Megillah, they can fulfill the

I am deeply indebted to my son, Dov Weiss, with whom I had the great joy and *zekhut* to learn this issue. Many of the insights and creative elements are his. While acknowledging Dov's contribution, I assume complete responsibility for all aspects of this article.

obligation for males who are similarly obliged to read the Megillah.

There is an alternative Tana'itic source which seems to maintain the reverse. The Tosefta states (*Megillah* 2:4): "*Ha-kol ḥayyavin bi-keriyat Megillah, Kohanim, Levi'im, Yisraelim . . . kulan ḥayyavin u-moẓi'in et ha-rabbim yedei ḥovatan. Androginus moẓi mino ve-lo et she-eno mino; tumtum eno moẓi lo et mino ve-lo et she-eno mino. Nashim ve-'avadim u-ketanim peturin, ve-en moẓi'in et ha-rabbim yedei ḥovatan.*" "All are obligated in the reading of the Megillah, Priests, Levites, Israelites . . . all are obligated and fulfill the obligation of others. [An] *androginus* (a person with both male and female characteristics) fulfills the obligation for another *androginus*, but not of a non-*androginus*; a *tumtum* (a person either male or female, but it is not clear which) does not fulfill the obligation for another *tumtum* or a non-*tumtum*. . . . Women, *'avadim*,[2] and minors are exempt and cannot fulfill the obligation for others."

The simple reading of the last sentence of the Tosefta is that women, unlike all of those previously mentioned, are exempt from reading the Megillah, and, therefore, cannot fulfill the obligation for their male counterparts who are mandated to read.

The contradiction is obvious. The Mishnah seems to proclaim that women are obliged to read the Megillah and can therefore do so for men, while the Tosefta says that women are exempt from reading and therefore can not fulfill the obligation for men.

II. Rishonim

1. Pre-eminence of the Mishnah

Rishonim deal with this question in different ways. Some insist that while the contradiction remains, the Mishnah has pre-eminence. In the words of *Or Zarua'* (R. Isaac of Vienna, 13c., Vienna): "It seems to me since the Tosefta is not mentioned in our Talmud, we do not rely on it."[3] Meiri (R. Menaḥem ben Shlomoh, late 13c., Provence) concurs: "And the essential position is not to push aside our well-thought-out talmudic [discussion] because of a Beraita [i.e, the Tosefta]."[4]

From this perspective, *Or Zarua'* and Meiri definitively maintain that women can read the Megillah for men. *Or Zarua'* writes "concerning Megillah, it appears to me that the practical halakhah (*halakhah le-ma'aseh*) is that women are obligated to read the Megillah and can fulfill the obligation for males." Meiri consents: " Let us rely on the well known principle, all who are obligated in the matter may fulfill the obligation for others."

Both *Or Zarua'* and Meiri agree with Rashi's position in his commentary on the *'Arakhin* passage that: "[Women] are obligated to read the Megillah, and they may read it and fulfill the obligation for men."[5] In fact, *Or Zarua'* says explicitly "it seems to me that the essential view is that of Rashi. ['*Ha-kol*'] is meant to include women who are obligated in reading Megillah and are qualified to fulfill the obligation for men."[6]

Other Rishonim, while not dealing with the Tosefta, explicitly state that women can fulfill the Megillah obligation for men. *Sefer ha-Mikhtam* (R. David ben Levi, 13c., Provence) writes: "And if a woman knows how to read, she fulfills the obligation for men."[7] Rid (R. Yishayahu of Trani ha-Zaken, early 13c., Italy) and Riaz (R. Yishayahu Aharon ben Eliyahu of Trani, 13c., Italy) state: "Women . . . are obligated in its [Megillah] reading. And it seems to me that they fulfill the obligation of the many."[8] *Nimukei Yosef* (R. Yosef Ḥaviva, 15c., Spain) adds: "Women recite a blessing on reading Megillah, and they fulfill the obligation of men."[9]

There are other Rishonim who, while not explicitly stating that women can fulfill the obligation for men, seem to agree. Rambam writes: "Everyone is obligated in its reading [of the Megillah], men, women . . . ," not making any differentiation between the two. He then adds, "Both the reader and listener fulfill their obligation as long as it is heard from one who is obligated."[10] Here, *Maggid Mishneh* (R. Vidal of Tolosa,14c., Spain) states: "From our rabbi [Rambam] it can be deduced that she fulfills the obligation of others, and this is the essential view."[11]

Similarly, *Sefer Yere'im* (R. Eliezer ben Shmuel of Metz, 12c., France) states, "all are qualified to read the Megillah. . . ." Here, again, no distinction is made between men and women. *Sefer Yere'im* then concludes: "This is the principle. Whoever is not obligated in the matter cannot fulfill the obligation of others."[12]

Sefer ha-Manhig (R. Avraham ben Nathan ha-Yarḥi, 12c., Provence) follows a similar approach when stating that "women are obligated in the reading of the Megillah . . . and so are they obligated in Hanukkah candles."[13] It follows that as women can light Hanukkah candles for men[14] so can they read Megillah for their male counterparts.[15]

2. Reconciling the Mishnah and Tosefta

A. "External Reasons"

There are other Rishonim who fundamentally believe that women can read the Megillah for men, but for external reasons are enjoined from doing so. These external reasons include *kol ishah, zila milta* and *kevod ha-ẓibbur*.

Sefer ha-Me'orot was the first to attribute to *'Aseret ha-Dibbrot*

(Ba'al ha-'Ittur—R.Yiẓḥak ben Abba Mari, 12c., Provence) the idea that women cannot fulfill the obligation for men through their reading because of *kol ishah 'ervah*, the voice of a woman is licentious.[16] *Orḥot Ḥayyim* (R. Aharon ben Ya'akov ha-Kohen mi-Lunel, 14c., Provence) and *Kol Bo* (authorship unknown) follow in his footsteps by similarly attributing to Ba'al ha-'Ittur the position that women may not read for men because of *kol ishah*.[17] This position, however, does not appear in our editions of the *'Ittur*.[18]

Tosafot explains the position of Bahag (Ba'al Halakhot Gedolot) that women cannot read the Megillah for men, because it is considered "*zila milta*," a process which results in a diminution of dignity.[19]

Semag (*Sefer Miẓvot Gadol* of R. Moshe of Coucy, 13c., France) associates the external inability of women to read the Megillah for men with *keriyat ha-Torah*.[20] This seems to relate to the Talmudic passage which states that women cannot read the Torah for men because of *kevod ẓibbur* (*Megillah* 23a). In fact, Ritva (R. Yom Tov ben Avraham Ibn Asevilli, 14c., Spain) explicitly states that since women are "obligated [in reading the Megillah] they also can fulfill the obligation [of men] but this is not *kavod* to the *ẓibbur*."[21]

However, assuming this approach, i.e., that were it not for other considerations, women *could* fundamentally read the Megillah for men, how is one to understand the Tosefta which explicitly concludes "women are exempt from Megillah?"

Alternative versions of the Tosefta resolve the problem. *Semag* insists that the Tosefta's last sentence "women are exempt" does not appear in the original text. However, he adds that from the inability of a *tumtum* to read the Megillah for another *tumtum*, we can deduce that women cannot read the Megillah for men because of external considerations. His reasoning is as follows: In principle, even if the *tumtum* is a female, she should be able to read the Megillah for a *tumtum* who is male, because both of them are on the same level of reading obligation. This, however, is not done for external reasons. In the words of *Semag*, "The reading of the Megillah is to be compared to *keriyat ha-Torah*" where women do not read for men because of *kevod ha-ẓibbur*.[22]

Alternatively, the Meiri,[23] Rashba[24], Ran[25] (R. Nissim ben Reuven, 14c., Spain) and others quote a different ending of the Tosefta. For them, the concluding statement reads "women are obligated but still cannot fulfill the obligation of men." One can understand this alternative version to mean that women, like men, are indeed obligated to read the Megillah but still cannot fulfill the obligation for men for external reasons.

Given these alternate readings, one can reconcile the Tosefta with the Bavli by insisting that the Bavli reflects a post facto (*be-de'avad*) rule. Optimally (*le-khathila*), it is best that women not read for men for any of the external reasons cited above. The Bavli, however, says, if they do read for men, post facto, the men have thereby fulfilled their obligation. Alternatively, the Gemara of "*le-atuyei nashim*" means that women can read the Megillah for other women. For other women—but, for "external" reasons, they cannot read the Megillah for men.

B. Reading vs. Hearing

There are other Rishonim who believe that women cannot fulfill the obligation for men not for external reasons but because they are on different levels of obligation. This inability of women is fundamental, rather than external, in nature. While men are obligated to *read* the Megillah, women are only obligated to *hear* the Megillah. This is the position of Ba'al Halakhot Gedolot (Bahag) as quoted by Tosafot.[26]

There are other Rishonim who agree with the view of Tosafot. Rabbenu Ḥannanel (ben Ḥushiel, 11c., Tunisia) maintains that "women are obligated to listen to the reading of the Megillah."[27] Roke'aḥ (R. Elazar of Worms, 12c., Germany) concurs: "Women . . . are obligated to listen [to the Megillah]."[28] Similarly, Ba'al ha-'Ittur states: "Women . . . are obligated to listen to the reading of the Megillah . . . but they are not obligated to read [the Megillah]."[29] Rabbenu Simḥah (R. Simḥah ben Shmuel of Speyer, 12c., Germany) also states "and they [women] are not obligated to read [the Megillah] but only to hear."[30] Rabbenu Ḥannanel, Roke'aḥ, 'Ittur and Rabbenu Simḥah do not deal with whether women can fulfill the Megillah obligation for others. Ran, however, after presenting the view that women are only obligated to hear, states that women "fulfill the obligation [in Megillah] for other women, even though they do not fulfill the obligation for men."[31]

Accordingly, the Tosefta and the Bavli can be reconciled in the following fashion. The final phrase of the Tosefta is understood to mean that "women are exempt [from *reading* the Megillah]." As such, they cannot fulfill the obligation for men. However, according to this reading of the Tosefta, women are obligated to *hear* the Megillah and thus may read for other women. This, in fact, is the position of the Bahag according to Tosafot,[32] Rosh[33] (R. Asher ben Yeḥiel, 13c., Spain) and Ran.[34]

The Bavli can be explained in a similar fashion. The inclusion of women in Megillah does not refer to women reading the Megillah for men; rather it refers to women reading the Megillah for other women. This, in accordance with the opinion of R. Yehoshua ben Levi, that women are obligated—and this is what Tosafot adds—to *listen* to the reading of the Megillah.[35]

3. Blessing, "Lishmoa'" or "Al Mikra?"

Separate from the issue of whether women should read or hear the Megillah, is the question, which blessing should women recite? According to the school of Rashi, that women are obligated to read and can fulfill the obligation of men, it would seem that they would recite the blessing "*'al mikra Megillah*" for *reading* the Megillah.

Even according to those like *Semag* who declare that women cannot read for men because of external reasons, since they are fundamentally obligated in "*kri'ah*," when reading for women it would seem that they would still recite the blessing "*'al mikra Megillah*."

The text of the *berakhah* becomes less clear according to the view of Tosafot and others who believe that women cannot read for men because they are obligated to *hear* Megillah, while men have the higher obligation of *reading*. On the one hand, it can be argued that if women are obligated to listen to the Megillah, they should recite the blessing of "*li-shmoa'*" when reading for other women. On the other hand, although the fulfillment of the *miẓvah* (*kiyyum ha-miẓvah*) is accomplished through *shmi'ah*, the reality is that this "*kiyyum*" can only be achieved through the act of reading. Hence "*'al mikra*" should still be recited.[36]

Ra'avyah (R. Eliezer ben Rabbenu Yoel Halevi, 12c., Germany) who is in agreement with the position that women are fundamentally obligated only in hearing Megillah, is the first Rishon to declare definitively that when reading for other women, a women must recite "*li-shmoa'*." This is the case, Ra'avyah adds, even ("*afilu*") when a woman reads for herself. One would have thought otherwise. It is one thing to recite "*li-shmoa'*" when others are listening. It is more difficult to say the blessing "*li-shmoa'*" when the only listener is the reader. Notwithstanding this concern, Ra'avyah writes, "and it seems to me that women recite the blessing of listening to the Megillah even if they read for themselves."[37]

This reading of Ra'avyah is supported by Mordekhai (R. Mordekhai ben Hillel, 13c., Germany). In explaining the Bavli and Tosefta as relating to a woman's obligation to hear the Megillah, Mordekhai explicitly states that women can "fulfill [the obligation] for other women like them." It is here that Mordekhai quotes Ra'avyah verbatim. [38]

III. *Shulḥan 'Arukh* and Rama

With this background, we can understand the different views on this issue as presented in the *Shulḥan 'Arukh* (R. Yosef Karo, 16c., Erez Yisrael) and Rama (R. Moshe ben Yisrael Isserles, 16c., Poland). R.

Yosef Karo writes, "All are obligated in the reading of the Megillah, men, women. . . .The reader and the one who listens to the reader fulfill their obligation with the proviso that the listener is on the same level of obligation as the reader. . . . *Ve-yesh omrim*, and there are those who say, that women cannot fulfill the obligation for men." The Rama adds, "*Ve-yesh omrim*, and there are those who say, if a woman reads for herself, she recites the blessing 'to hear the Megillah' (*li-shmoa'*) as she is not obligated in reading the Megillah."[39]

Based on our review of the Rishonim, the *Shulḥan 'Arukh* and Rama can be clearly understood. The first view of the Meḥaber is that of the school of Rashi, that women can read for men. The second view, the Meḥaber's "*ve-yesh omrim*" that women cannot read for men, is, according to *Magen Avraham* (R. Avraham Gombiner, 17c., Poland) referring to the school of *Semag*, that women cannot read for men because of external reasons.[40] Alternatively, Gaon of Vilna (R. Eliyahu of Vilna, 18c., Shklov) postulates that the Meḥaber's "*ve-yesh omrim*" is the view of Tosafot that women cannot read for men as women are obligated in "*shmi'ah*" while men are obligated in "*kri'ah*."[41]

According to Meḥaber's "*ve-yesh omrim*," it is unclear whether women would recite the blessing of "*kri'ah*" or "*shmi'ah*." It is here that Rama, in his "*ve-yesh omrim*," quotes Mordekhai who, in his commentary, had quoted Ra'avyah who said that when a woman reads the Megillah for other women, she would recite the blessing "*li-shmoa'*."[42] In fact, the language of Rama is almost identical with Mordekhai's quote of Ra'avyah. Note the similiarity: Mordekhai quoting Ra'avyah writes "*de-nashim mevarkhot 'al mishma' Megillah ve-afilu* (the Aramaic equivalent of *im*) *kar'u le-aẓman*," "women recite the blessing to hear Megillah and even if they read for themselves." Rama writes "*Im ha-ishah kar'ah le-aẓmah, mevarekhet li-shmoa' Megillah*," "if a woman reads for herself she recites the blessing *li-shmoa' Megillah*." The major difference between the two formulations is that Rama inverts the sentence and skips the word "*ve-afilu*" when quoting Mordekhai in the name of Ra'avyah. But it is common to understand "*im*, if" as implicitly meaning "*ve-afilu im*, even if." In other words, not only when a woman reads for other women, but even if she reads for herself, the blessing of "*li-shmoa'*" is recited.

It is important to note that Rama, in his *Darkhei Moshe* commentary on the *Tur* (R. Ya'akov Ba'al ha-Turim, 14c., Spain), cites Mordekhai as supporting Bahag's ruling that women cannot fulfill the obligation for men.[43] It is, therefore, not suprising that Mordekhai is also cited in the brackets following the Rama's statement, indicating that Mordekhai was the source upon which Rama based his comment.[44]

IV. *Aḥronim*

During the period of the late authorities (Aḥronim), both permissive and restrictive approaches took hold.

1. Permissive Approach

On the permissive side, some Aḥronim argued that the view of Rishonim that women cannot read for men because women are obligated to hear while men are obligated to read, may apply only to the day, not the night. This reasoning flows from various approaches used to understand the distinction between hearing and reading.

Some Aḥronim argue that hearing the Megillah is a function of the obligation to publicize the Purim reading, *pirsumei nisa*.[45] Here, women and men are equally obligated since *pirsumei nisa* applies equally to both. This is the obligation at night. Reading, however, is an added obligation during the day. While the nature of the added obligation is a matter of dispute, they have a common denominator - the exemption of women.

Marḥeshet suggests that the added obligation is linked to the *miẓvah* of reading Hallel; praise is, of course, due God on Purim.[46] Alternatively, *Ḥedvat Hashem* connects the reading of the Megillah to the *miẓvah* of remembering and obliterating Amalek since Haman was an Amalakite.[47] *Kehillat Ya'akov* relates it to the *miẓvah* of *sho'alin ve-dorshin*, i.e., the *miẓvah* of Talmud Torah. In other words, the obligation to read the Megillah parallels and, indeed, intersects with the obligation to study the laws of Purim.[48] Let us now examine each of these positions.

Concerning the added dimension in Megillah to recite Hallel, *Marḥeshet* notes that "women are exempt from Hallel."[49] He then writes: "even according to the view of Bahag, [the inability of women to be *moẓi* men] would only apply during the day [as they, unlike men, are exempt from Hallel]. But concerning the reading of the Megillah at night, at which time there is no obligation in Hallel as the obligation to recite Hallel only applies to the day . . . and the Megillah is read at night only for *pirsumei nisa*, women can fulfill the obligation for men, as their obligation is equal."[50]

Ḥedvat Hashem makes a similar comment concerning the connection between Megillah reading and Amalek. He cites *Marḥeshet* who argues that there is no obligation even for men to remember Amalek at night. This is based on the *Sefer ha-Ḥinukh*, who links going to war against Amalek to remembering Amalek.[51] Therefore, just as there is no *miẓvah* to destroy Amalek at night as there is no judgment then (*de-en danin ba-laylah*), so is there no *miẓvah* to mention Amalek at night. *Ḥedvat Hashem* then writes: "Therefore, concerning the [Megillah] reading at night, even men do not fulfill the *miẓvah* of remembering Amalek. Hence, men are also only obligated at night from the perspective of *shmi'ah* like women, and, therefore, at night women can be *moẓi* men as their obligation is equal."[52] During the day, however, a woman may not read the Megillah for men as reading it is a function of remembering Amalek. Since women, unlike men, are exempt from destroying Amalek, so are they exempt from remembering Amalek. [53]

The view of *Kehillat Ya'akov*, that Megillah includes the added dimension of Talmud Torah, is also mentioned by *Ḥedvat Hashem*. *Ḥedvat Hashem* explains that women may read the Megillah for men at night since ritualized forms of Talmud Torah are only applicable during the day. He writes: "From the perspective that everyone is obligated to read [the Megillah] in its proper time, [an obligation] which is based on our mandate [to be involved] in Talmud Torah, [it ought be remembered that] that obligation only applies to the day, like the public reading of the Torah on every holiday which is limited to the day. It follows that when men read the Megillah at night, it is not a function of *sho'alin ve-dorshin*. Hence, for both [men and women] there is only the law of *pirsumei nisa*, and the obligation of men and women are equal, and they, therefore, can fulfill each others' obligation."[54]

Additionally, *Turei Even* (R. Aryeh Leib Gunzberg, 18c., Frankfurt on the Oder) introduces a new understanding of Bahag. The reason why women cannot read for men is not a function of *shmi'ah* and *kri'ah*, but rather it is because the source of their obligations are different. Women are obligated in Megillah *mi-de-rabbanan* since they too were part of the miracle.[55] Men, on the other hand, are obligated in Megillah *mi-divrei kabbalah*, in this case, from the Megillah itself. The status of obligation *mi-divrei kabbalah* is more than *mi-de-rabanan* although it is not quite on the level of a Biblical obligation.[56] Basing himself on *Turei Even*, *Ḥedvat Hashem* writes, "The upshot is, that at night women may fulfill a man's obligation, because at night they are both on the same level [of obligation] as even men are only obligated [to hear Megillah] rabbinically and are not obligated *mi-divrei kabbalah*. And when Bahag writes that a woman may not fulfill the obligation of a man, this applies only during the day when his obligation is greater." [57]

The distinction between day and night may resolve the contradiction between the Tosefta and the Bavli, as the Tosefta which states that a woman does not fulfill a man's obligation refers to the day, while the Bavli which speaks of a woman being able to fulfill a man's obligation refers to the night.[58]

2. Restrictive Approach

A more restrictive attitude also emerged amongst some Aḥronim. This attitude is found both within the position that women cannot read for men because of external reasons as well as the position that women cannot read for men because their level of obligation is less (*shmi'ah* vs. *kri'ah*).

Concerning the position that women cannot read for men because of external reasons, *Korban Netanel* (R. Netanel ben Naftali Ẓevi Weil, 17c., Germany) insists that Tosafot's understanding of Bahag, that women cannot read for men because of *zila milta*, extends also to reading for women. In other words, not only is it *zila milta* if a woman reads for men, it is also *zila milta* if a woman reads for a number of other women. However, a woman reading for one woman is not *zila milta*.[59]

Concerning the position that women cannot read for men because their level of obligation is less, *Magen Avraham* quotes *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on Rut (which is part of the *Zohar*) as stating that a woman cannot read the Megillah for women, and not even for herself.[60] *Ḥayyei Adam* (R. Avraham Danzig, late 18c., Vilna) disagrees, insisting that the correct reading of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on Rut indicates that a woman has a right to read for herself, but not for other women.[61]

Both the positions of *Korban Netanel* and *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, as understood by *Magen Avraham* and *Ḥayyei Adam*, need further clarification.

Korban Netanel is difficult because the Tosafot which speaks of *zila milta* refers to the case of a woman leading *zimmun* or reading Megillah for men. Extending *zila milta* to a woman reading for other women is a forced reading of Tosafot.[62] Moreover, Bahag, which Tosafot sets out to explain, speaks of whether or not women can fulfill the Megillah obligation for men. In the words of *Ḥedvat Hashem*: "However, this view [*Korban Netanel*] is very difficult. Because Bahag, and, indeed, all Rishonim who quote Bahag only speak of a woman fulfilling the obligation for men [in Megillah], and not of women fulfilling the obligation [of Megillah] for other women. How then can Tosafot quote this law that women are unable to fulfill the obligation for other women [in Megillah] in the name of Bahag?"[63]

The restrictive explanation of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* is similarly difficult since it runs contrary to the total text. *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* states: "And Rabbi Abba said, 'women . . . are obligated in the reading of Megillah. But they do not read for others (*le-aḥerim*).'"[64] From the context it seems clear that "*le-aḥerim*" means for men—coming as it does on the heels of the comment of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* that women should not recite Grace After Meals for men.[65] Additionally, the phrase in *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, "*aval hen enan ko'rot le-aḥerim*," "but they do not read for others," could easily mean the following: "They, the women, do not read for others," that is, for men.[66] Finally, even if *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* presents a position that a woman cannot read for other women, it must be pointed out that this is a statement found in the *Zohar*, a non-halakhically binding text, one which runs contrary to the view of every Rishon. [67]

3. Mishnah Brurah, 'Arukh ha-Shulḥan *and other* Poskim

Notwithstanding these difficulties, *Mishnah Brurah* (R. Israel Meir ha-Kohen [Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim], late 19c-early 20c., Poland) utilizes these positions to explain the *yesh omrim* of the Meḥaber and the *yesh omrim* of the Rama. The *yesh omrim* of the Meḥaber denying a woman the right to read for men is, according to *Mishnah Brurah*, either based on *kevod ha-ẓibbur*[68] or on her lesser level of obligation, i.e. *shmi'ah* vs. *kri'ah*.[69] Either understanding of this denial, *Mishnah Brurah* argues, would even apply to a woman reading for one man.[70] *Mishnah Brurah* concludes his understanding of the *yesh omrim* of the Meḥaber by stating that a woman may read for "*ḥavertah*"—which, *Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim* in his *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* citing *Korban Netanel* explains to mean for one woman. Only in that case does *zila milta* not apply.[71]

Mishnah Brurah then explains Rama by first citing *Magen Avraham*'s understanding of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* that a woman should not even read for herself. He then continues, basing himself on *Ḥayyei Adam*'s understanding of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, that if no man is there to read for her, a woman may read the Megillah for herself, reciting the blessing "*lishmoa' mikra Megillah*."[72]

As we have already pointed out, explaining Meḥaber's *yesh omrim* with *Korban Netanel* is difficult because it would have the Meḥaber agree with a forced reading of Tosafot and Rosh. Indeed, R. Yosef Karo makes no mention of this forced ruling in his *Bet Yosef* commentary on the Tur.[73] Similarly, identifying Rama's position as being based on an understanding of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, that a woman cannot read for other women, would have the Rama depending on a position found in the *Zohar* that seems to run contrary to every other Rishon.[74] In fact, Rama himself, in his *Darkhei Moshe*, states that a position of the *Zohar* should be given no greater halakhic weight than the *da'at yaḥid* of R. Shimon.[75] Rama goes on to cite Rabbi Yosef Karo who maintaines that we do not rule in accordance with the *Zohar* when it runs contrary to the way the talmudic text is generally understood.[76] It is, therefore, not surprising that Rama makes no mention of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* in discussing Megillah reading in his *Darkhei Mosheh*.[77]

'Arukh ha-Shulḥan (R. Yeḥiel Mikhel Epstein, 19c., Belorussia) explains the Meḥaber and Rama based upon the mainstream of the positions of the Rishonim. The second opinion of Meḥaber denying women the right to read for men is based, according to *'Arukh ha-Shulḥan*, on *kavod ha-ẓibbur*. This would apply to women reading for men, not to women reading for women (even more than one woman). Rama, according to *'Arukh ha-Shulḥan*, then states that women cannot read for men because they are only obligated to hear while men are obligated to read. It is here that *'Arukh ha-Shulḥan* offers a novel interpretation of this view suggesting that women have a lesser *ḥiyyuv* because a woman's obligation in *pirsumei nisa* is less than that of a man. "However," *'Arukh ha-Shulḥan* concludes, "women can fulfill the obligation for other women since they are on the same level of obligation."[78]

Today there are authorities who object to a woman reading the Megillah for others. For example, Rabbi Hershel Schachter prohibits groups of women from hearing the Megillah from one another.[79] Other Torah scholars permit a woman to read the Megillah for other women.[80] For example, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein gave his imprimatur to such a reading at Midreshet Lindenbaum in Israel.[81]

In fact, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef extends this right even to women reading the Megillah for men. He writes: "In truth, we follow the halakhah that even regarding reading the Megillah, women can fulfill the obligation of men. [This is] in accordance with the view of Rambam, Rashi, *Or Zarua'*. . . . And this is the decision of our teacher the *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* in the general opinion (*stam*) he puts forth. Except that he concludes: 'and there are those who say that women cannot fulfill the obligation of their male counterparts.' And the principle is well known that when [*Shulḥan 'Arukh* presents two opinions, one] a '*stam*' opinion and a '*yesh omrim*,' the law is like the '*stam*' view."[82]

V. Megillah and Minyan

There is another issue that must be considered relative to a woman's right to read Megillah for someone else. Does Megillah reading require a minyan, and, if so, may women be counted in that minyan? Tangentially, does a group of women reading the Megillah run contrary to the preference that the Megillah be read in the largest assemblage possible—in the spirit of "*be-rov 'am hadrat melekh*?"

The Talmud (*Megillah* 5a) states: "Rav said: 'On the actual day of Purim, the Megillah may be read even by an individual, but on the alternative days [lit., not in its proper time][83] it should be read only in a company of ten.' Rav Assi, however, said: 'Whether on the actual day or on the alternative days, it should be read only in a company of ten.' In an actual case, Rav gave weight to the opinion of Rav Assi [and extended himself to assemble ten persons]."

Rif concludes: "Even though Rav gave weight to the view of R. Assi, we follow the view of Rav, because Rav Yoḥanan follows this position."[84] On the day of Purim, therefore, one may read the Megillah individually, although it is preferable that it be read with a minyan. On alternative days it should only be read in a company of ten.

Rabbenu Tam states that one need not pursue a minyan to read the Megillah even *le-khatḥilla*.[85] This applies to the fourteenth (or fifteenth), the day of Purim itself. However, Bahag concludes that the Megillah must always be read before ten people.[86] *Baḥ* notes that Bahag follows the view of Rav Assi that ten are required at all times, even *bi-de'avad*.[87]

Shulḥan 'Arukh concludes: "On the fourteenth or fifteenth day [the fifteenth is the proper time to read the Megillah in a city surrounded by walls from the time of Joshua], one must seek out ten [before whom the Megillah should be read], and if ten were not found, an individual may [nevertheless] read the Megillah."[88]

Assuming that women are obligated to read the Megillah, and that a minyan is necessary or at least preferable, the question is whether women may be counted toward such a minyan. There are three approaches to this question.[89]

The first approach clearly restricts participation in a minyan to men alone. The exclusion may be based on the talmudic statement (*Berakhot* 45b), *"ve-ha me'ah nashei kitrei gavrei damyan,"* a hundred women are compared (from this legal perspective) to two men. Rashi understands this phrase to refer exclusively to the obligation of *zimmun*, the quorum needed to introduce the Grace After Meals. In his words: "They are not obligated to participate in *zimmun*, but if they wish they may."[90] Tosafot, on the other hand, associates the phrase with *"le-'inyan kibbuẓ tefillah u-le-'inyan kol davar she-be-'asarah,"* indicating that women are not counted as part of a minyan for "public prayer and everything that requires ten." From the perspective of Tosafot, women are excluded, in all circumstances, from being counted into a minyan for prayer, or for that matter, for any other purpose that "requires ten" according to Jewish law.[91]

Beyond the legal exclusion of women from being counted for a minyan,[92] there emerged a school of thought which defined a minyan as a group of ten people united by a common obligation. From this perspective, there is no absolute declaration that women are neces-

sarily ineligible for a minyan. Participants in a minyan must share a mutual obligation. If women share the obligation equally, they are counted; if not, they are excluded. Indeed, in matters concerning a minyan, Meiri points out: "There are those who say that in cases where women are equally obligated as men, they are counted toward the ten."[93]

From this perspective it would follow that if women are mandated to read the Megillah, they may be counted toward a Megillah minyan. So declares Meiri[94] and Ran. In the words of Ran: "How is it possible that women can fulfill the obligation of men to read the Megillah and not be counted with them as part of the [Megillah] minyan? Certainly they can be counted."[95]

Rama leaves the question of including women in the Megillah minyan unresolved as it would depend upon the degree of obligation that women have with respect to that *miẓvah*. If a woman's obligation is on the same level as that of a man (i.e., *kri'ah*), they are counted into the minyan. If not (and their obligation is only *shmi'ah*), they may not be part of the minyan.[96]

Rabbi Aryeh Frimer suggests that there is a third approach to minyan. He writes: "It is necessary to differentiate between two types of minyanim. Normally, the Sages required ten male adults as a prerequisite for the performance of particular rituals, generally communal in nature. However, in certain cases, the minyan is not intrinsic to the performance of the *miẓvah*, for the obligation is essentially the individual's. Rather, the minyan is needed only to give 'publicity' to the performance. In such a case, women are counted even if their obligation is not equivalent to that of men."[97]

Separate from the issue of whether women can be counted with men to make up a Megillah minyan is the question of whether women can make up the necessary quorum of ten by themselves for a women's Megillah reading. R. Ẓevi Pesaḥ Frank,[98] R. Yehudah Eliezer Waldenberg[99] and R. Ovadiah Yosef[100] agree that they can. For a women's Megillah minyan, women can be counted for one of two reasons: either because they are all on an equal level of obligation, or because the public reading of Megillah is based on the principle of *pirsumei nisa* where women can be equally included. In the words of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef: "We reject that which R. Menasheh Klein wrote in *Mishneh Halakhot* against the custom of women to make a minyan for themselves to read the Megillah. His arguments are not clear. On the contrary, we should encourage such activities, provided the reader is an expert able to read correctly."[101]

VI. Conclusion

The issue of women reading Megillah for others touches the very core of the process of *pesak*. There has emerged in contemporary times a popular pattern of *pesak halakhah* which places almost exclusive reliance on the *Mishnah Brurah*. According to those who follow this position, women should not read Megillah even for other women.[102]

By contrast there is no Rishon who explicitly states that a woman may not read the Megillah for other women. Moreover, many Aḥronim support the position that women are permitted to read the Megillah for other women. This is not only the dominant position throughout Jewish history, but also the position in greatest conformity to the talmudic *sugya*, as we have seen.

Our analysis further indicates that while many authorities did not demand a minyan for Megillah reading (certainly when Megillah is read on Purim day), even if deemed necessary, women can make up that quorum for themselves.

The issue of women reading Megillah for men is more complex. Here, even the early authorities are divided. Later authorities seem more inclined to permit this kind of reading at night rather than during the day.[103]

Whether women can be counted with men to make up a Megillah minyan–if a minyan for Megillah is necessary–is a subject of considerable debate. Of course, if ten men are present, there would be no need to even deal with the question, as a minyan would already be present.

It would be difficult to prohibit women's Megillah reading based on the *rov 'am* principle as there are countless examples of many Megillah readings sponsored by individual shuls. It is precisely because *rov 'am* is not mandatory that some *Poskim* have even suggested that women hear the Megillah at home, arguing that it is often difficult to hear the Megillah in the women's section as it is being read.[104]

While rabbis are within their right to rely on the minority opinion of halakhic authorities who prohibit women's Megillah reading, they fall short if, in this process, they do not give credence to those who, basing themselves on sources clearly rooted in Halakhah, permit a woman to read the Megillah for other women.[105]

It is important–especially at a time when *ahavat Yisrael* is so desperately needed–that every one involved in this intense debate realize that the Halakhah on this matter is not monolithic. Within clear guidelines there can often be two legitimate opposite opinions–and

both may be correct in the spirit of "*elu ve-elu divrei Elokim ḥayyim*" (*'Eruvin* 13b). All sides in this debate should heed the words of Dr. David Berger: "Controversies over women's issues have lately created a particularly great danger of fragmentation, and we must beware of making disagreements which do not touch upon fundamentals of the faith the cause of schism within Modern Orthodoxy itself."[106]

One other point needs to be made. The argument that women asking to read Megillah are motivated by insincere feminist quests is particularly unfortunate.[107] Having met countless numbers of women in my synagogue, in my Torah classes at Stern College of Yeshiva University,[108] in our Torat Miriam fellowship, and in communities around the world who are seeking to participate in women's Megillah reading, I know first hand of their sincere motivation.

The right of women to read the Megillah has a clear basis in Halakhah. Their quest through this experience to reach higher religious levels of learning and spiritual striving is exemplary and should be applauded.

Notes

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1. In general, women can fulfill the obligation for men only if they share the same level of obligation. For example, since women and men are equally obligated to light Hanukkah candles, a woman may light Hanukkah candles for a man. See *Shulḥan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 675:3, and *Taz, ibid,* 675:4, s.v. *she-af bi ḥayyevet.*
2. I have not followed the common practice of translating *'avadim* as "slaves." The concept of slavery as understood in contemporary times is foreign to Jewish thought, and "slaves," therefore, would be a misleading and inappropriate English translation.

   There are several terms in the Torah that have no suitable English equivalent. Such terms should not be translated. Leaving them in the original Hebrew makes the reader understand that a more detailed analysis of the word is necessary. See my "Women and Sifrei Torah," *Tradition* 20:2 (Summer 1982):106-18, where the term "*tum'ah*" is also not translated for this reason.
3. *Or Zaru'a, Hil. Megillah* 2:368.
4. *Bet ha-Beḥirah, Megillah* 4a. Meiri adds, "or from the Jerusalem Talmud." Meiri is here referring to the statement in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Megillah* 2:5) that R. Yehoshua b. Levi gathered his children and family together and read the Megillah for them. Some commentators suggest that this proves that women cannot read for others. However, argues Meiri, positions in the Bavli take precedence over those found in the Yerushalmi. It could also be added that it is not necessarily the case that the Jerusalem Talmud is positing that women cannot read for others, for it may simply be recording a particular incident where a man read for his children and family, not precluding the possibility of women reading for others as well. The statement of Bar Kapparah in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Megillah* 2:5) that one must read the Megillah before women and minors may mean that women are also obligated in Megillah.
5. Rashi, *'Arakhin* 3a, s.v. *la-atuyei.*
6. Rashba (R. Shlomo ben Avraham Ibn Adret, late 13c., Spain), *Megillah* 4a, presents a similar position. After quoting the Bavli as the source for the view that women are obligated to read the Megillah and can, therefore, fulfill the obligation for men, he quotes the Tosefta as the source supporting the position that women are obligated only to hear the Megillah and can therefore not fulfill the obligation for men. Rashba then declares that the Tosefta is an erroneous text (*shabeshta hi*). Hence, R. Ovadiah Yosef in *Sefer She'elot u-Teshuvot Yeḥaveh Da'at* 3:51, lists Rashba as supporting the position that women can fulfill the Megillah obligation for men.
7. *Sefer ha-Mikhtam, Megillah* 4a.
8. *Pisket ha-Rid, Megillah* 2:3; Riaz quoted in *Shiltei Gibborim* on R. Alfasi's commentary to *Megillah* 4a, n. 2.
9. *Nimukei Yosef, Megillah* 4a, s.v. *she-af,* 9a. *Sefer ha-Me'orot* (R. Meir ben Shimon mi-Narbonne ha-Me'ili, 13c., Provence), *Megillah* 4a, also states that women can read for men. However, in his commentary to *Megillah* 19a, he is more stringent.

   Note also *Baḥ* (R. Yoel Sirkes, 16c., Poland) to *Tur Shulḥan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689, s.v. *u-Ba'al ha-'Ittur katav,* who quotes the *'Ittur* (R. Yiẓḥak ben Abba Mari, 12c., Provence) permitting women to read for men. However, a reading of the *'Ittur* indicates that women cannot read for men. See *'Aseret ha-Dibbrot, Hilkhot Megillah,* 110a, 113b.
10. Rambam, *Hil. Megillah* 1:1.
11. *Maggid Mishneh* in his commentary to Rambam, *ibid,* 1:2. See also *Shiltei Gibborim* to *Megillah* 4a, n. 2, who concurs.
12. *Sefer Yere'im, 'amud vav, issurim na'asim ve-adam na'aseh ra la-shamaim ve-lo la-briyot,* p. 124a.
13. *Sefer ha-Manhig, Hilkhot Megillah, siman* 25-28, p. 249. *Sefer ha-Manhig* links these cases, as Esther in the Purim story and Yehudit in the Chanukkah story were each involved in bringing about the miracle.
14. *Shulḥan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim,* 675:3.
15. The position that women can fulfill the obligation of men is implicit in other Rishonim who do not distinguish between men and women in Megillah reading. See *Rif* (R. Alfasi, 11c., N. Africa), *Megillah* 4a. See also *Ez ha-Ḥayyim* by R. Ya'akov Ḥazzan mi-Lundritz (13c., England), *Hilkhot Megillah,* beginning of the second perek; *Perush Rabbenu Yehonatan me-Lunel* (12c., Provence), *Megillah* 2b; *Shibbolei ha-Leket* (R. Binyamin ben Avraham ha-Rofe, 13c., Italy), siman 195, p. 75.
16. *Sefer ha-Meorot, Megillah* 19b.
17. See *Orḥot Ḥayyim, Hilkhot Megillah u-Purim,* siman 2 and *Kol Bo* to *Megillah* 103. Cf. R. Ovadia Yosef, *Sefer She'elot u-Teshuvot Yeḥaveh Da'at* 3:51 who quotes *Ḥiddushei ha-Rashba, Berakhot* 24a, that "The law of *kol ishah ervah* only applies to songs or greetings of an endearing nature, but words alone (*kol devarim be-'alma*) are permitted." In a conversation I had with R. Ovadiah Yosef he told me that a woman reading the Megillah is not a violation of *kol ishah.* Also see R. Saul J. Berman, "Kol Ishah," in *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume,* ed. R. Leo Landman (New York, 1980), 45-66.
18. See also Auerbach's edition of *Sefer ha-Eshkol* (R. Avraham Av Bet-Din, 12c., Provence), *Hil. Ḥanukkah u-Purim,* siman 9, which also states that women may

not read Megillah for men because of *kol ishah*. However, the Auerbach edition of the *'Ittur* is known to have questionable veracity. See Israel Ta-Shema, *R. Zeraḥyah ha-Levi Ba'al ha-Ma'or u-Veney Ḥugo* (Jerusalem, 1992), 40-41; see also Hanokh Albeck, in his introduction to *Sefer ha-Eshkol. Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2:147 concludes: "Although there are no grounds for accusing Auerbach of willfully tampering with the manuscript, the version of the Eshkol that Albeck had in hand is undoubtedly the authentic one."

19. *Tosafot*, *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *be-emet amru*. This is the first of many different ways to understand the Bahag's position, as will be explained later on.
20. *Semag*, *Miẓvat 'Aseh* n. 4 of *Divrei Sofrim*.
21. *Ritva*, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *ve-amar R. Yehoshua b. Levi*. Ritva states that if women read Megillah for men "it is not *kevod le-ẓibbur* and falls into the category of *me'erah* ('shame')." Note *Semak* (*Sefer Miẓvot Katan* of R. Isaac of Corbeil, 13c., France), Yom Shlishi, 299, who writes that while women are obligated to read Megillah, they cannot fulfill the obligation of men. However, *Semak* does not say which external reason prevents women from fulfilling the Megillah obligation for men.
22. See above, n. 20.
23. *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Megillah* 4a. Meiri argues that if the text reads "*nashim peturin*," women are exempt, why is there a need for the Tosefta to then say "*she-ein moẓi'in*," that they cannot fulfill the obligation [of others].
24. *Ḥiddushei ha-Rashba*, *Megillah* 4a.
25. *Ḥiddushei ha-Ran*, *Megillah* 4a.
26. See *Tosafot*, *'Arakhin* 3a, s.v. *le-atuyei*.
27. Rabbenu Ḥannanel, *Megillah* 4:1, s.v. *ve-amar R. Yehoshua [ben Levi]*.
28. *Roke'aḥ*, *Hilkhot Purim*, n. 236.
29. *'Aseret ha-Dibrot*, *Hilkhot Megillah*, s.v. *mi kore*, p. 226.
30. Rabbenu Simḥah is quoted in *Haggahot Maimoniyot* to Rambam, *Hil. Megillah* 1:1. See also *Leket Yosher* (R. Yosef b. Moshe, 15c, Germany) (Jerusalem, 1964), 156. He argues that since women are only obligated in *shmi'ah*, they need not hear a clear enunciation of every letter of the Megillah, "*ḥitukh ha-otiyot*." It should be noted that in *Leket Yosher*, R. Yosef b. Moshe was presenting many of the customs and laws of R. Israel Isserlein, the *Terumat ha-Deshen* (15c., Germany).
31. *Ḥiddushei ha-Ran* to *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *nashim ḥayavot*. See Ran to Rif, *Megillah* 4a, who after quoting the Tosefta states that it is not correct, "*eno meḥaver*." In the end, however, Ran states "it is proper to be concerned with his [Bahag] words and, therefore, be stringent." Here it appears that Ran is less enthusiastic in his support of Bahag, although he concludes that it is best to "be stringent."
32. *Tosafot*, *'Arakhin* 3a, s.v. *le-atuyei*, writes that the Tosefta ends with the words "women... are exempt from reading Megillah." *Tosafot* then adds: "And Halakhot Gedolot [Bahag] adds, 'but they [the women] are obligated to hear.'"

    It should be noted that the *Tosafot* in *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *nashim ḥayyavot be-mikra Megillah*, has an alternative version of the Tosefta that does not include the final phrase of "women are exempt." From *androginus*, however, one can deduce that women cannot read the Megillah for men. If an *androginus*, whose status is "female plus" cannot fulfill the reading obligation of a male, certainly a woman cannot. It follows that while women cannot read for men, they can read for other women as their obligation is the same, to *hear* the Megillah.
33. Rosh, *Megillah* 4a.
34. *Ḥiddushei ha-Ran*, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *nashim ḥayyavot*.
35. Note *Shittah Mekubeẓet* (R. Beẓalel Ashkenazi, 16c., Ereẓ Yisrael), s.v. *Tosafot le-atuyei*, who cites a text of the Bavli that reads "*le-atuyei mai? Le-atuyei katan*." "What does the word '*ha-kol*' mean to include? It is meant to include a minor." Accordingly, the Bavli would not be in conflict with the Tosefta.
36. Perhaps this relates to the general question Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, of

blessed memory, often raised of whether the *nusaḥ ha-berakhah* describes the *ma'aseh ha-miẓvah* or the *kiyyum ha-miẓvah*.

37. Ra'avyah, *Masekhet Megillah*, n. 569. Ra'avyah also writes: "It is obvious (*davar pashut*) that women can read for themselves (*le-azman*)."
38. Mordekhai to *Megillah* 4a. It must be noted that many later Rishonim, mostly German, quoted both Bahag and Rashi without taking a position on the issue. For example, see Rosh (R. Asher ben Yeḥiel, 13c., Germany/Spain) to *Megillah* 4a; *Haggahot Maimoniyot* (R. Meir ben Yekutiel ha-Kohen, 13c., Germany) to Rambam, *Hil. Megillah* 1:1; *Sefer ha-Aguddah* (R. Alexandria Zusslan ha-Kohen, 14c., Germany) to *'Arakhin* 3a, s.v. *ha-kol*; *Ha-Agur* (R. Yaakov Landau, 15c., Germany), *Hil. Ḥannukah*, *siman* 43, p. 164; Rabbenu Yeruḥem (ben Meshulam, 14c., Northern France and later Spain —a major pupil of the Rosh whose roots were in Germany), *Toledot Adam ve-Ḥavah*, *Netiv 'Asiri*, *Ḥelek bet*, p. 63.
39. *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:1,2. Note *Shakh* (R. Shabtai b. Meir ha-Kohen, 17c., Moravia), *Yoreh De'ah* 94:3, who rules that whenever *Shulḥan 'Arukh* quotes an opinion and then states "*yesh mi she-omer*," the Halakhah always follows the first opinion. It is likely that this applies to "*yesh omrim*" as well.
40. *Magen Avraham* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:5 quotes the Re'em (R. Eliyahu ben Avraham Mizraḥi, 16c., Turkey) who argues that this would apply to a woman reading even for one man. The principle of *lo plug*, making no distinctions, applies in this case. Just as she cannot read for many men, she cannot read even for one man.
41. Gaon of Vilna, *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689, s.v. *ve-yesh omrin she-ha-nashim*.
42. Having never seen Ra'avyah's commentary in the original, Rama quotes Mordekhai in Ra'avyah's name. From this perspective, the Rama is not offering a new opinion concerning a woman's reading Megillah for others. What he states is that if one follows the *yesh omrim*, the blessing *lishmoa'* should be recited.
43. See *Darkhei Moshe* to *Tur*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:1. While *Darkhei Moshe* also cites *Rosh* and *Ran*, *Megillah* 4a, as supporting Bahag's view, it must be emphasized that these Rishonim make no reference to a woman's inability to read for other women.
44. See brackets at end of Rama to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:2.
45. See, for example, *Avnei Nezer* (R. Avraham ben Zev Naḥum Bornstein, 19c., Germany), n. 511; *Marḥeshet* (R. Ḥanoch Eiges, 20c., Vilna), n.22; *Kehillat Ya'akov* (R. Ya'akov Kanefsky, 20c., Israel), in his "Likutim" 5:50.
46. *Marḥeshet*, above. See also *Kehillat Ya'akov*, above. *Marḥeshet* quotes R. Naḥman's comment that "the reading of the Megillah is equivalent to Hallel" (*Megillah* 14a).
47. *Ḥedvat Hashem* (R. Shmuel Grunberger, 20c., United States), "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," 5:3. See also *Marḥeshet* and *Avnei Nezer*, above.
48. *Kehillat Ya'akov*, above.
49. The reason is because the recital of Hallel is a positive commandment fixed by time. See *Bi'ur Halakhah* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 422, s.v. *Hallel*, end, who concludes that although women are exempt from Hallel, they may recite Hallel with a *berakhah*. However, women from Sephardic communities recite Hallel without a berakhah. See Rabbi Dovid Auerbach (20c., Israel), *Halikhot Betah* 8:2, p. 54.
50. *Marḥeshet* 22:9. As pointed out in n. 46, *Marḥeshet* cites R. Naḥman's opinion that reading the Megillah is equivalent to Hallel (*Megillah* 14a). Therefore, just as the obligation to recite Hallel applies only to the daytime, so the obligation to read the Megillah as Hallel applies only during the day.

    Note *'Emek ha-Berakhah* who disagrees with *Marḥeshet*, claiming women are obligated in the recital of Hallel of Purim. He reasons that this Hallel is a spontaneous Hallel rather than the classic Hallel recited on Yom Tov concerning which women are exempt. Since women are equally obligated in Hallel on Purim, they may read Megillah for men during the day. See *'Emek ha-Berakhah*,

Hil. Keriyat ha-Megillah, 3; see also *Ḥedvat Hashem*, above, for an extensive analysis of this position.

51. *Sefer ha-Ḥinukh* # 603-605.
52. *Ḥedvat Hashem*, "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," 5:3.
53. See, for example, *Sefer ha-Ḥinukh* # 603, who writes: "and this *miẓvah* (of remembering Amalek) applies... to men... and not women." There are authorities who maintain that women are obligated in *zekhirat 'Amalek*. See, for example, *Minḥat Ḥinukh* (R. Yosef Babad, 19c, Poland), *ibid.*
54. "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," *Ḥedvat Hashem*, 6:2; see also "*Likkutim*," *Kehillat Ya'akov*, 5:50.
55. Rashi, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *she-af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*, suggests that women were involved in the Purim miracle in the sense that Haman had decreed the murder of women as well as men (Esther 3:13). *Tosafot*, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *she-af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*, cites two positions: that of Rashbam, who states that the miracle of Purim was brought about because of the merit of Esther and the women of that time, and also the view of Rashi, with which *Tosafot* concurs.

    Rashi and Rashbam (R. Shmuel ben Meir, 12c., France), *Pesaḥim* 108b, s.v. *she-af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*, explain "*she-af*" to mean that the Purim miracle occurred as a result of righteous women, including Esther. *Tosafot*, *ibid.*, s.v. *hayu be-oto ha-nes*, citing a passage in the Yerushalmi, states that women were also included in Haman's decree of extinction.
56. *Turei Even*, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *nashim ḥayyavot*. See also R. Daniel Shreiber, "Purim—A Halakhic Overview," *'Alei 'Eẓion* (Shevat 5757): 67.
57. "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," *Ḥedvat Hashem* 4:8.

    See *Or Same'aḥ*, *Hil. Megillah* 1:1, who argues that both men and women are obligated in Megillah *mi-divrei kabbalah*. However, men are obligated on a higher level as they are mandated to read the text from the scroll while women are only obligated to read it from any text, even by rote. Therefore, during the day when the *divrei kabbalah* obligation is operative, women cannot read for men. Rabbinically, however, both men and women are equally obligated to read the Megillah from a scroll. It would seem, therefore, that at night, when there is only a rabbinic obligation to read, women could do it for men.

    Note also that *Ḥedvat Hashem* cites the opinion that [even at night] women cannot be *moẓi* men since their obligation is a double *de-rabbanan* (i.e. Megillah reading for a woman is *de-rabbanan*, based on *she-af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*, and Megillah reading itself is a *de-rabbanan*), while a man's obligation is a single *de-rabbanan*, and one obligated in a two *de-rabbanan miẓvah* cannot fulfill the *miẓvah* for one obligated in a single *de-rabbanan*. *Ḥedvat Hashem*, however, notes the opinion that two *de-rabbanans* can be *moẓi* one *de-rabbanan*. See "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," *Ḥedvat Hashem*, 4:7.
58. See "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," *Ḥedvat Hashem*, 4:8; 6:2.
59. See *Korban Netanel*, n. 60 to Rosh on *Megillah*, *siman* 4.
60. *Magen Avraham* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:6. It is possible that *Magen Avraham* understands *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on Rut to mean that women—even if only obligated in *shmi'ah*—must hear the Megillah from someone who is mandated in *kri'ah*. See *Midrash Rut ha-Ḥadash* (which is also called *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*), *Parshah gimmel*.
61. See "*Hilkhot Megillah*," *Ḥayyei Adam* 155:11.
62. See *Tosafot* to *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *be-emet amru*. There *Tosafot* asks, is not the Tosefta which states that women cannot fulfill the obligation of men in Grace After Meals proof that women are not obligated biblically (*mi-de-oraita*) in that *miẓvah*? To this *Tosafot* responds in his second answer that it is possible that women, like men, have a biblical obligation, but they cannot fulfill a man's obligation because of the external reason of *zila milta*. *Tosafot* notes that this is similar to Megillah where women may be on the same level of obligation as men but cannot read for them because of *zila milta*.

63. See "*Be-'Inyanei Purim*," *Ḥedvat Hashem*, 4:8. Note also that *Korban Netanel* makes his point, about *Tosafot*'s understanding of Bahag, on Rosh's comment that a woman can read "*le-ḥavertah*" (see Rosh, *Megillah* 4a, s.v. *amar R. Yehoshua b. Levi*). Rather than understand "*le-ḥavertah*" generically, *Korban Netanel* deduces from "*le-ḥavertah*" that a woman may read for one woman, but not for more than one, i.e., a case which would be "*le-ḥaverotehah*." But Rosh writes "*le-ḥavertah*" in his analysis that women cannot read for men because their *ḥiyyuv* is less, i.e., one of *shmi'ah* vs. *kri'ah*. To argue that the obligation of *shmi'ah* would only allow a woman to read for one woman but not more is extremely difficult.

    Apparently, *Korban Netanel* understands the lesser obligation of *shmi'ah* as being a function of *zila milta*. In other words, the internal deficiency (*shmi'ah* vs. *kri'ah*) is caused by an external flaw (*zila milta*). Given this perspective of *Korban Netanel*, it seems that he did not see the *Tosafot ha-Rosh*, *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *be-emet amru* (written by Rosh himself), who says that *zila milta* is confined to a woman reading for men. See R. Yehudah Herzl Henkin who makes this very point in *She'elot u-Teshuvot Benei Vanim* 2:10. Moreover, in the *Kizur Piskei ha-Rosh* (written by the son of the Rosh, R. Ya'akov b. Asher, 14 c., Germany/Spain; *Megillah* 1:4) which summarizes the rulings of the Rosh, it is clear that a woman can read for more than one woman.
64. *Midrash Rut ha-Ḥadash*, *Parshah gimmel*.
65. Rabbi Abba's comment follows the words: " We learnt, 'woe to a man whose wife or children say a blessing [Grace After Meals] for him.'"
66. Note a similar phrase in *Tosefta Megillah* 2:4, "*ve-en moẓi'in et ha-rabbim yedei ḥovatan*," which means that [for Megillah reading] a woman cannot fulfill the obligation for men. Just as the word "*rabbim*" in the Tosefta refers to men, so could the word "*aḥerim*" in *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* refer to men.

    Note also that Vilna Gaon in his commentary to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:2, quotes the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* in his discussion of the second view of the Meḥaber in which the Meḥaber states that women cannot fulfill the Megillah obligation of men. See *Biur Ha-Gra* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689, s.v. *en moẓe'ot*.

    See furthermore the Gaon's commentary to *Midrash Rut ha-Ḥadash* where it is not clear that he understands the text to mean that a woman cannot read for other women. When the Gra, commenting on the *Midrash Rut* writes, "*me-lashon zeh mashma' de-le-azman yekholim likrot*," he may very well mean that from this formulation it would appear that a woman may read for other women. "*Le-azman*" does not mean "for herself" (in the singular), but rather "for themselves," that is, for other women.
67. The only deflection would be the forced reading of *Tosafot* in *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *be-emet amru* and *Rosh* to *Megillah* 4a according to *Korban Netanel*.
68. This is the opinion of *Semag* quoted by *Magen Avraham* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:15. See *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:13.
69. This is the opinion of *Tosafot* to *'Arakhin* 3a, s.v. *le-atuyei*, quoted by *Biur ha-Gra*, *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689, s.v. *ve-yesh omrim she-ha-nashim*. See *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:14.
70. *Mishnah Brurah* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:7. In the case of *kevod ha-ẓibbur*, the principle of *lo plug* is applied. If a woman cannot read for many men, she cannot read for even one man.
71. *Mishnah Brurah* 689:7; *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* 689:15. Here, *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* introduces *zila milta*, which *Mishnah Brurah* does not explicitly mention.
72. *Mishnah Brurah* 689:8. See also *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun*, n. 16 who disputes *Magen Avraham*'s reading of *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* that a woman cannot read for herself. Citing Gra's reading in the name of the *Zohar* of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, and *Ḥayyei Adam*'s reading of the Midrash (*Hil. Megillah* 155:11), *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun*

concludes that a woman can read for herself. Certainly this would be the case if there is no one else to read for her. Cf. above, n. 66.

73. See *Bet Yosef*, *Tur*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689.
74. Note also that although having taken a restrictive position in explaining Rama, *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* states that the "first opinion [in Meḥaber] that women are obligated to read is the essential one (*'ikarit*)." See *Sha'ar ha-Ẓiyun* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:16.
75. *Darkhei Moshe*, *Yoreh De'ah* 65:12.
76. See *Bet Yosef*, *Tur Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, *siman* 25, s.v. *ve-yevarekh*. See also the following *poskim* who concur with this position: *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ḥakham Ẓevi* (R. Ẓevi Ashkenazi, 17-18c.), # 36, s.v. *ve-ẓarikh*; *She'ilat Ya'veẓ* (R. Yaakov Emden, 18c., Germany), 1:47; *Noda' bi-Yehudah* (R. Yeḥezkel Landau, 18c., Prague), *Mahadura Kama*, *Yoreh De'ah* # 74, s.v. *u-me'atah*; *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* # 36; Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Iggrot Moshe*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 5:24; R. Ovadiah Yosef, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Yabia' Omer* 6, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, # 2, s.v. *ve-'adayin* and *Sefer She'elot u-Teshuvot Yeḥaveh Da'at*, 3:70, s.v. *amnam*.
77. See *Darkhei Moshe*, *Tur*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:1
78. *'Arukh ha-Shulḥan* to *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:5
79. See his "Ẓe'i Lakh be-'Ikvei ha-Ẓon," *Bet Yiẓḥak* 17 (5745):118.
80. In recent years, great halakhists have been quoted on both sides of the issue. For an extensive list of the views of modern day posekim regarding this subject, see R. Aryeh Avraham Frimer and R. Dov Frimer, "Women's Prayer Services – Theory and Practice," *Tradition* 32:2 (Winter, 1998): nn. 44, 78, 79, 106, 220, 221.
81. Rabbi Lichtenstein asked that when Purim is a *nidḥeh* (pushed to another date), a woman should not read for other women.
82. R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Sefer She'elot u-Teshuvot Yeḥaveh Da'at* 3:51. See also R. Yiẓḥak Yosef (son of R. Ovadiah Yosef), *Sefer Yalkut Yosef*, *Hilkhot Mikra Megillah*, n. 12, who states that the essential view is that women can fulfill the Megillah obligation for men, but one should be stringent unless an urgent situation arises. See *Shakh* quoted above, n. 39.
83. See *Mishnah Megillah* 1:1.
84. Rif to *Megillah* 5a.
85. Rabbenu Tam as quoted in *Tur*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 690. See *Tosafot*, *Megillah* 5a, s.v. *havah 'uvda*.
86. Quoted in *Tur*, *ibid*.
87. See *Baḥ* to *Tur*, *ibid*, s.v. *u-Babag*.
88. *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 690:18.
89. For a general discussion of this subject, see my *Women at Prayer* (Hoboken, 1990), 43-56.
90. Rashi, *Berakhot* 45b, s.v. *de-afilu me'ah ke-trei gavrei damyan*.
91. *Tosafot*, *ibid*., s.v. *ve-ha me'ah nashei ke-trei gavrei damyan*.
92. See my *Women at Prayer*, p. 46, n. 15.
93. *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Megillah* 5a. R. Aryeh Avraham Frimer, "Ma'amad ha-Ishah be-Halakhah - Nashim u-Minyan," *Or ha-Mizraḥ* 34 (Tishrei 5746):69-86, suggests that this may be the position of Rashi recorded above. For Rashi, the absolute exclusion relates only to *zimmun*. In all other areas, it would depend on the correlation principle. If women are equally obligated, they count toward the minyan; if not, they do not.
94. *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Berakhot* 47b.
95. Ran to *Megillah*, chap. 2, end, s.v. *ha-kol kesherim likrot ha-Megillah*.
96. See Rama to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 690:18. From here there may be support for the position that Rama does not offer a definitive pesak concerning women reading Megillah for men (*Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:2). If his position was that women cannot read for men (and, for that matter, for other women), he would unequivocally state that women cannot be counted in a Megillah minyan. This is true unless Rama's position is that the Megillah minyan is needed only for *pirsuma nisa*, in which case women can count even if they are not on the same level of obligation as men. See my discussion of this Rama in my *Women at Prayer*, p. 51, n. 30. See also *ibid*, pp. 53-56, where I argue that equality of obligation may be necessary even in a minyan needed for publicity (*pirsuma*).

97. See R. Aryeh Avraham Frimer (above, n. 93), p. 63. Still, in most cases of minyan needed for publicity (*pirsuma*), the connection between equality of obligation and the right to be counted among the ten is evident. See the examples cited in my *Women at Prayer*, pp. 54-55.
98. R. Ẓevi Pesaḥ Frank, *Mikra'ei Kodesh: Hanukkah/Purim* (Jerusalem, 1982), 131-32, n. 29.
99. R. Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg, *Ẓiẓ Eliezer* 13 (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 145, n. 73.
100. R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Yabia' Omer* 8 (Jerusalem, 1995), *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, p. 246, n. 56.
101. *Ibid*. See also Joel B. Wolowelsky, *Women, Jewish Law, and Modernity*, (Hoboken, 1997), 94-98.
102. It is difficult to understand why *Magen Avraham*, *Ḥayyei Adam* and *Mishnah Brurah* disagreed with virtually every Rishon and were so restrictive. It should be noted that *Magen Avraham* whose view was adopted by *Ḥayyei Adam* and *Mishnah Brurah*, and, indeed, was the first to understand the Rama as being the position of the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*, often quotes the *Zohar* as being the definitive *pesak*, even if it is contrary to the view of the poskim. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 7:776: "He [*Magen Avraham*] also thought highly of the *Zohar* and of the Kabbalists, R. Isaac Luria, and R. Isaiah Horowitz, occasionally accepting their decision against that of the codifiers." The position of *Korban Netanel* in his understanding of *zila milta*, as preventing a woman from reading the Megillah for other women, is equally difficult to understand. Perhaps the simple reality that women were not reading Megillah for others prompted the development of this more restrictive school.
103. It ought be pointed out that *Ḥedvat Hashem*, *Kehillat Ya'akov* and *Marḥeshet* quoted earlier were not necessarily offering a *pesak halakhah*. Rather, they were making a theoretical point in which they distinguished between Megillah reading at night and during the day.
104. See *Mishnah Brurah* to *Shulḥan 'Arukh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 689:1.
105. On January 14, 1997, the Vaad Harabonim of Queens issued a resolution prohibiting women Megillah readings, amongst other practices. In their statement they declared that "these practices are *'porez geder bi-mesorat Yisrael*.'"
106. "The Sea Change in American Orthodox Judaism: A Symposium," *Tradition* 32:4 (Summer, 1998): 30.
107. See my *Women at Prayer*, pp. 112-15.
108. In Purim of 5757-1997, 175 students (or almost twenty-five percent) of Stern College, Yeshiva University, petitioned to be able to have a women's Megillah reading.

[For other articles on this subject, see R. Zevulun Sacks, "Kri'at ha-Megillah 'al Yedei Nashim," *Teḥumin* 18 (5758): 357-60; R. Ariel Pikar, "Kri'at ha-Megillah 'al Yedei Ishah Lifnei Nashim," *Teḥumin* 18 (5758): 361-68; R. Alfred S. Cohen, "Women and the Reading of the Megilla," *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 30 (Fall 1995): 25-41.—ED.]

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