Part 1: Theory

R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik has described prayer as "a basic experiential category in Judaism," one through which our forefathers achieved a covenant with God and through which we expect eventually to realize that covenant. The people of Israel is "a prayerful nation."  

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that both men and women are enjoined by Jewish law to pray daily, though there is some difference of opinion as to the extent of the obligation. Yet, despite this basic requirement to pray, women need not fulfill their obligation within the context of communal services—tefilla be-tsibbur. Moreover, ten women who join together in prayer—as opposed to ten men—cannot constitute the minimum quorum of ten individuals, a minyan, necessary by law to recite certain passages and texts generally reserved for public worship, including, inter alia, the kaddish, kedusha, barekh or the thirteen attributes of God, the repetition of the amida, and the reading of the Torah and the haftara with their attendant blessings. While there are occasions within Jewish practice where women do count towards a minyan, public prayer is not among them. As a result, the synagogue service has historically remained almost exclusively male-oriented.

In the early 1970's, however, the Women's Liberation Movement stimulated within traditional Jewish student circles a re-examination of the role of women in Judaism. This coincided with an accelerating growth of higher-education opportunities for women in all areas of Jewish studies, including Talmud, halakha, Tanakh, and Jewish thought. The combined effects of this religious and educational exploration were...
eventually felt in the general, more established Jewish community as well. One manifestation of this trend was the development of women’s prayer services. Women would join in all-female groups on a particular Shabbat or Rosh Hodesh morning or afternoon in order to recite together the Shacharit or Minha prayers. Similarly, these women would gather on Purim for a women’s reading of Megillat Ester or rejoice together on Simhat Torah, separate from the men, often dancing the hakafot with their own Torah scrolls.3*

Two different groups supported these women’s services. For some participants, a women’s tefilla was an act of rebellion against the traditional male-oriented ritual. Such individuals or groups were not terribly concerned with the halakhic propriety or parameters of their prayer forms. On the other hand, numerous other women, who articulated a commitment to the halakhic process, at the same time expressed their desire for a more active and meaningful involvement in the spiritual moments of public prayer. In addition, they argued, the prayer group could serve for them as a learning experience—an opportunity to study the relevant laws, to act as gabbai, read the Torah and the haftara, lead the services as hazzan, lift and roll the Torah (hagbahah and gelilah), etc.—affording them a greater appreciation of the symphony communal prayer is meant to be. These women further explained that their identification with Orthodox Judaism prevented them from joining Conservative shuls or egalitarian minyanim. An all-women’s prayer group was consequently an attractive alternative.

This latter group turned to members of the Orthodox rabbinate for rulings and guidance on the halakhic permissibility of such women’s services. Some rabbis, while sympathetic to the religious sentiments expressed by these women, objected to the very idea of separate women’s prayer services, citing various halakhic and sociological arguments to support their position. Other rabbis, though, advised these women that they could have their service provided they forgo saying all those texts which required a minyan quorum; they were, after all, a women’s prayer group, not a women’s minyan.

In our extensive discussions with participants in such services, we have found that a significant percentage report the experience enriching, moving, and edifying, despite the halakhic limitations. Many testify to davening (praying) with greater kavvanah (religious devotion) or to discovering new meaning in their prayers. Satisfying what is perceived by the members as a real spiritual need, women’s prayer groups have continued to meet in various communities on a regular basis for close to 25 years.
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The recognition that women's prayer services are not a passing fad has compelled rabbinic scholars to confront and address the issue with increased earnestness. Yet, the years have not brought the halakhic authorities any closer to unanimity; if anything, the opposite is true. Essentially, three fundamental halakhic approaches to the subject have emerged. The first and most lenient position maintains that women may carry out a full service, including all those rituals and texts which normally require a minyan quorum. The second school is more stringent and openly opposes women's prayer groups on a host of halakhic and sociological grounds. The final approach argues that women's prayer services, if properly performed and religiously motivated, can be halakhically sanctioned, although some question their advisability on hashkafic and public-policy grounds.

Our survey and in-depth analysis of the responsa on this subject will be divided into two sections. In the first part of this paper (entitled "Theory") we will explore the basic question of the halakhic permissibility of women's tefilla groups. However, even if one should conclude that women's tefilla groups are fundamentally permissible, a host of practical issues arise that must be faced if such services are to be carried out within the guidelines of Jewish law. We discuss these latter issues in the second section of this paper (entitled "Practice"), which will be published in the future. Needless to say, the views presented in this work are those of the authorities cited by the authors, and not necessarily those of Tradition or the Rabbinical Council of America. Let us turn now to the responsa themselves and the threshold question of whether women's prayer groups can be, in principle, halakhically permitted.4

A. THE LENIENT SCHOOL

The most lenient responsum on the permissibility of women's services was penned in 1974 by Israel's late Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, R. Shlomo Goren.5 After reaffirming that ten women do not constitute a quorum for communal public prayer, R. Goren proceeds to contend that ten women may nevertheless carry out a full service, including all those rituals and texts which normally require a minyan. The gist of his argument is as follows: Jewish law generally frees women from those positive commandments which, like sukka, shofar and lulav, are not continual obligations but are, rather, time-determined—mitsvot asei she-ha-zeman geramman.6 However, while a woman is exempt from such commandments,
she may nonetheless perform them on a voluntary basis, as a petura ve-
osa (one who is exempted, yet performs the commandment). The ques-
tion arises, though, whether she may also recite the attendant blessings
along with her voluntary performance of the time-determined mitsvah.
While the “unnecessary” performance of a mitsvah usually does not clash
with any direct prohibition, pronouncing a berakha she-eina tserikha (an
unnecessary benediction) is normally proscribed on the grounds that it is
essentially taking God’s name in vain. Furthermore, the text of the
blessing is troublesome. After all, the traditional form of these benedic-
tions reads: “Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who has sanctified us with Thy commandments, and commanded us (ve-
tsivanu) . . . .” Since women are not commanded to perform mitsvot asei
she-ha-zeman geramman, how can they honestly proclaim that the
Almighty has “commanded us”? Nevertheless, the noted Tosafist, R.
Jacob Tam, rules that petura ve-osa me-varekhet: women voluntarily
performing mitsvot asei she-ha-zeman geramman may also recite the
attendant benediction. He argues that the prohibition of a berakha she-
eina tserikha is actually rabbinic in origin, not biblical. As such, the
Sages were free to carve out an exception for women, allowing them to
make these “unnecessary” and seemingly improper benedictions when
performing time-dependent mitsvot.

The crux of R. Goren’s argument is that the petura ve-osa me-
varekhet principle enunciated by Rabbeinu Tam is a special dispensation,
unique to women and granted to them in order to give them spiritual
satisfaction (“bi-khdei la-asot nahat ru’ah la-nashim”). It should be
pointed out that this concept actually appears in the halakhic literature as
the rationale behind another rabbinic dispensation for women. When
one brings a sacrifice, he is obligated in semikha, namely, to place his
hands on the animal’s head and press down. Although women are freed
from this obligation of semikha, because of the above principle they may
do so should they desire, though unnecessary contact with a sacrificial
animal is usually rabbinically forbidden. R. Goren suggests that similarly,
in the case of the recitation of unnecessary benedictions, it was the ratio-
nale of “bi-khdei la-asot nahat ru’ah la-nashim” which allowed Rabbeinu
Tam to formulate his petura ve-osa me-varekhet principle, thereby setting
aside the rabbinic prohibition of taking God’s name in vain.

R. Goren further suggests that Rabbeinu Tam’s approach, as just
delineated, may be likewise extended to allow women to carry out a
complete public prayer service without fear of taking God’s name in
vain, even when reciting those texts which normally require the pres-
ence of a bona fide minyan. The late Chief Rabbi does, however, forbid
men from praying in such a service or from responding to the recitation of kaddish, kedusha, barekhu, etc., since men have no such dispensation, and as far as they are concerned, the requisite quorum is lacking.

R. Goren's argument is unquestionably intriguing. It is, however, equally problematic. As noted above, his conclusion rests upon the view of Rabbeinu Tam and the thesis that women have a special dispensation to recite sacred texts normally requiring a minyan even when this quorum is absent. One potential challenge to this thesis is raised by R. Goren himself, and deals with the traditional introduction to the grace after meals, the "birkat ha-zimmun." The birkat ha-zimmun must be recited when three or more adult males eat bread together. When a minyan is present, the text of the birkat ha-zimmun is amended so as to invoke God's name by adding the word "Elokeinu," and is then referred to as "zimmun beShem." Although three women, too, have the option of forming a quorum for birkat ha-zimmun, Maimonides explicitly precludes ten women from zimmun beShem. But if R. Goren's thesis were correct, why should ten women be precluded—why could they not say zimmun beShem on a voluntary basis, as peturot ve-osot?

R. Goren is not bothered by this seeming contradiction. He notes that the aforementioned petura ve-osa me-varekhet principle enunciated by Rabbeinu Tam is not universally accepted. Indeed, Maimonides disagrees with Rabbeinu Tam, maintaining instead that women may not pronounce benedictions which they are not halakhically bound to pronounce. Accordingly, Rambam rules—that women are forbidden to recite berakhot (benedictions) when performing time-dependent commandments. Consequently, when Maimonides proscribes ten women from reciting birkat ha-zimmun beShem, he is simply being consistent. Inasmuch as Ashkenazic practice has adopted Rabbeinu Tam's view, however, R. Goren rejects any challenge to his thesis from the ruling of Rambam.

Surprisingly, R. Goren neglects to mention that even among those rishonim and aharonim who agree with Rabbeinu Tam's ruling regarding women's permission to recite blessings over time-dependent commandments, there is almost unanimous endorsement of Rambam's exclusion of women from zimmun beShem. Apparently, then, Rabbeinu Tam's ruling is not to be so liberally expanded as to include permission to pronounce God's name "unnecessarily" when the "unnecessary" character results from the absence of a properly constituted minyan.

This brings us to a second problem. As R. Goren himself notes, although Rabbeinu Tam's opinion is indeed the accepted Ashkenazic ruling, it is not the only view on the matter. Maimonides, R. Joseph
Caro, and, in fact, a majority of Sephardic authorities down to the modern period—most notably R. Ovadiah Yosef, R. Goren’s Sephardic counterpart when the two jointly shared the position of Chief Rabbi of Israel—take strong exception to the Ashkenazic custom. These posekim strictly forbid Sephardic women from reciting berakhot when performing mitsvot from which they are exempted. Thus, R. Goren’s solution would not apply to Sephardic women.

One also wonders why R. Goren insists at all on the presence of ten women. If, as R. Goren contends, Rabbeinu Tam’s principle can be applied to public prayer rituals so as to obviate the need for a properly constituted minyan, even a lone woman should be able to say any of the prayer texts without being deemed to have taken the Lord’s name improperly.

More fundamentally, the late Chief Rabbi interprets Rabbeinu Tam’s ruling as a special dispensation for women, based on the nahat ru’ah (spiritual satisfaction) rationale. This novel interpretation radically departs from the way in which Rabbeinu Tam’s ruling was understood by the earlier authorities. None of the rishonim who cite Rabbeinu Tam use the notion of nahat ru’ah as a justification for this leniency; rather, they cite explanations applicable to both genders. For example, Tosafot explain that “the blessing [of a patur ve-ose] is not in vain since he is reciting the (appropriate) benediction for a mitsvah which he is performing, although he is exempt.” Furthermore, notes R. Nissim Gerondi (Ran), the text, “... commanded us,” is not improper either; after all, the Talmud’s conclusion—“greater is (the reward of) one who is obligated and fulfills the commandment, than (that of) one who is not obligated and yet fulfills the commandment”—clearly implies that the latter, too, receives at least some reward. If so, then even an eino me-tsuve ve-ose must share in the commandment. Since men are fully obligated and, as just noted, women receive reward for their actions, women may recite the berakha, the phrase “and commanded us” notwithstanding.

As further clarified by R. Ben-Zion Hai Uziel and R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the mitsvot were issued to the nation of Israel as a whole, men and women alike. Accordingly, both men and women possess an equal degree of “kedushat Yisrael,” Jewish sanctity. But despite sharing the general obligations of Kelal Yisrael (corporate Israel), women were granted a particular and individual exemption from the performance of time-determined commandments. This is not to say that time-determined commandments are irrelevant to women; there is a vast dif-
ference between one who is fundamentally subject to an obligation but exempt from its performance (e.g., a woman), and one who is not obligated altogether ab initio (e.g., a gentile).28 The former still falls under the umbrella of the general obligation of Kelal Yisrael, despite the exemption.29 A woman, therefore, may—should she so wish—join together with the rest of Kelal Yisrael and perform that ritual from which she is exempt.30 Rabbeinu Tam and the Ashkenazic posekim further maintain that women may also opt to recite the applicable blessing,31 including the word “ve-tsivanu.” The phrase, “Who has sanctified us and commanded us,” refers not to individual Jews, but to the people of Israel as a singular entity, of which women are an integral part.32

Rabbeinu Tam no doubt intended these guidelines to be applied broadly, so that anyone—man or woman—who is exempt and yet performs a mitzvah may also make the relevant blessing.33 In fact, Rabbeinu Tam supports his ruling, inter alia, from the pleasure expressed by the famous blind amora, R. Joseph,34 at hearing R. Judah’s opinion that the blind are freed from the obligation to fulfill positive commandments. R. Joseph erroneously believed that, as one who would be performing such mitzvot on a voluntary basis, he would be worthy of greater spiritual reward than one who is obligated. From R. Joseph’s expression of joy, Rabbeinu Tam deduces that when fulfilling a non-obligatory commandment, nothing is altered in its performance—including the recitation of the attendant benedictions. Were this not the case, argues Rabbeinu Tam, why would R. Joseph have been so happy? As a patur ve-ose, he would have been precluded from reciting these benedictions and, hence, from obtaining the concomitant reward! By invoking the blind, male R. Joseph as precedent, Rabbeinu Tam manifestly indicates that his principle is gender-neutral; we are not, as R. Goren assumes, dealing with a special dispensation. Indeed, the halakhic literature is replete with applications of Rabbeinu Tam’s patur ve-ose me-vareikh principle to cases not specifically involving women.35

It is apparent, then, that Rabbeinu Tam’s principle is equally effective for men and women. Yet, in a case where fewer than ten males are available, R. Goren would acknowledge that Jewish law and tradition prohibit the males assembled from reciting the public prayer texts even on a voluntary basis. Absent the requisite ten men, those praying are not merely exempt from reciting the public prayer texts—no obligation exists, ab initio. Under such circumstances, even R. Goren would agree that the patur ve-ose principle would not apply. Why, then, should it be any different for women?36
Thus, Rabbeinu Tam’s *heter* (permissive ruling) to allow reciting a benediction over the voluntary performance of a commandment is broad in that it applies to both men and women alike. At the same time, however, it is apparently narrow in that it does not apply to those cases where the lack of obligation stems from the absence of a required *minyan*.

Further investigation, however, demonstrates that the matter is not so simple. While the above analysis indeed reflects the view of the vast majority of scholars, argumentation similar to that of R. Goren has been posited by isolated halakhic authorities in permitting to the individual certain religious practices which are normally communal. The first instance is the custom of reading *Hallel* on Rosh Hodesh with its attendant blessings. According to many *geonim* and *rishonim*, since the recitation of this particular *Hallel* is a custom, its benedictions can be said only together with a *minyan*. Rabbeinu Tam dissents, however, allowing individuals to recite the *Rosh Hodesh Hallel* with its *berakhot*, even in the absence of a *minyan*—its *minhag* character notwithstanding. Yet a third position is held by the 13th century French Tosafist, R. Samson ben Samson of Coucy (called “*HaSar miCoucy*”). Invoking the *patur ve-ose me-vareikh* principle, he argues that even if a *minyan* is required to recite the *Rosh Hodesh Hallel* with its *berakhot*, an individual can do so voluntarily, “similar to *lulav* and *tefillin*,” where women make blessings even though they are not obligated.

The second case concerns the reading of the Book (or *Megilla*) of Esther. While the *Megilla* is generally read on the fourteenth of Adar and on the fifteenth in walled cities, there are circumstances where the *Megilla* is read as early as the eleventh day of the month. Although some difference of opinion exists on the matter, the general halakhic consensus is that the presence of a *minyan* is only preferable—but not an absolute requirement—when the *Megilla* is read on its designated date, *i.e.*, on the fourteenth of Adar generally, and on the fifteenth in walled cities. But when the *Megilla* is read at any other time (*she-lo bimzamo*), the presence of a *minyan* becomes a prerequisite for the reading and its attendant blessings (three before and one after). Whenever a *minyan* is required but unavailable, one is perforce freed from the obligation of reading *Megillat Esther*. Nevertheless, applying Rabbeinu Tam’s *patur ve-ose me-vareikh* principle, R. David Ibn Zimra (Radbaz) and R. Israel Jacob Algazi argue that an individual should still have the option to read the *Megilla* with its attendant *berakhot*, despite the absence of a *minyan*.

These two examples seem to indicate that a few authorities maintain that Rabbeinu Tam’s principle can be used to allow the recitation
even of texts carrying a minyan prerequisite. If so, why, according to these authorities, can't the patur ve-ose me-vareikh principle be extended still further—to permit the recitation of public prayer texts in the absence of ten men, as R. Goren contends?

The answer lies in a careful review of the Mishna in the tractate of Megilla which lists those rituals requiring a quorum of ten participants:

When fewer than ten are present, one may not recite the shema (including kaddish and barekhu) and its attendant blessings in an abbreviated form; nor appoint a hazzan (to repeat the amida with kedusha); nor do the priests bless the congregation; nor do we read the Torah or the haftara (in public with benedictions); nor practice the funeral halts; nor pronounce the mourner's benediction, the mourner's consolation (after burial), or the nuptial blessings; nor introduce the blessing after meals using the name of God (zimmun beShem).

As Nahmanides notes, not all practices requiring a minyan are included in the Mishna's list. The rituals mentioned are only those communal obligations (hovot ha-tsibbur) for which the halakha requires a minyan because of their special sanctity or public character. For example, the Mishna includes those prayer rituals designated as “devarim she-bi-kdusha”—public acts or declarations of the sanctification of the Holy One, such as kaddish, kedusha, barekhu, the priestly blessing, the repetition of the amida, and the reading of the Torah or the haftara with their attendant berakhot. Not included, however, are those rituals which are inherently personal obligations (hovot ha-yahid) but which are performed—for reasons of pirsumei nisa (publicizing the miracle) or the like—within a community setting (e.g., reading the Megilla).

From the unequivocal and forceful language of the Mishna: “Ein ... [osin] pahot mei-asara”—“One may not ... [perform these] when fewer than ten are present,” it is eminently clear that under no circumstances may the texts enumerated in the Mishna be recited when a properly constituted minyan is absent. The Talmud underscores this point even further when it states,

How do we know that an individual may not recite kedusha? Because it is written, “And I shall be sanctified amongst the children of Israel”—no act of sanctification (davar she-bi-kdusha) may take place when fewer than ten are present.

In such cases, the presence of a minyan is both the trigger and an integral ingredient of these communal obligations. This requirement has
little to do with unnecessary benedictions. Thus, without a minyan it is forbidden for anyone—man or woman—to say kaddish even though God’s name is nowhere mentioned!

The reading of Hallel or Megillat Esther, by contrast, are not mentioned in the Mishna in Megilla, since they are essentially personal obligations. One may therefore argue, as did the Sar miCoucy and Radbaz, that perhaps in these cases the presence of a minyan is not, in fact, a prerequisite. But when dealing with those practices and prayers mentioned in the Mishna, all authorities concur that a minyan must be there; without one, the ritual simply cannot be performed. Rabbeinu Tam’s patur ve-ose me-vareikh principle may allow the recitation of hovot ha-yahid, personal berakhot, but it cannot allow the recitation of devarim she-bi-kdusha nor any other hovot ha-tsibbur, communal berakhot, such as those listed in the Mishna in Megilla.

In summary, then, R. Goren’s position allowing women to perform—on a voluntary basis—a complete public prayer service, leaves much room for serious challenge. While his fundamental logic and analysis are creative and insightful, his conclusions—at least as to the extent that they apply to those public rituals and texts which constitute devarim she-bi-kdusha—appear untenable. When it comes to the latter, the Sages of the Talmud have ruled unambiguously: no act of sanctification (davar she-bi-kdusha) may take place absent of a properly constituted minyan, and, as already noted at the beginning of this paper, in the specific case of public prayer rituals, this must be a minyan of males.

We close this section by noting that in 1989, R. Goren wrote a clarification of his 1974 responsum. In a lengthy letter to former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, R. Goren reiterates that his 1974 correspondence was a personal one, which was publicized against his specific instructions. The original letter contained some purely speculative material, which he certainly never intended to serve as the basis of action (halakha le-ma’ase). On the contrary, it is clear that women cannot form a minyan for public prayer and, hence, cannot alone perform those rituals requiring such a quorum. In light of this retraction, there is apparently no acknowledged moreHora’—recognized halakhic authority—who condones the recitation of devarim she-bi-kdusha at women’s services. It is noteworthy, however, that at issue in R. Goren’s retraction is the recitation of devarim she-bi-kdusha; the late Chief Rabbi does not withdraw his fundamental support from those women’s prayer groups which refrain from reciting devarim she-bi-kdusha. We will return to this point in Section C below.
B. THE STRINGENT SCHOOL

The next school of thought on women’s prayer groups maintains that the entire institution is “forbidden by law.” This position was adopted by a group of five Rashei Yeshiva from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (Yeshiva University)—Rabbis Nissan Lipa Alpert, Abba Bronspigel, Mordechai Willig, Yehuda Parnes, and Zvi (Hershel) Schachter—in a one-page 1985 responsum on the subject, addressed to the president of the Rabbinical Council of America (R.C.A.), R. Louis Bernstein. To this responsum was appended a two-page addendum by R. Bronspigel, fleshing out some of the points raised in the responsum and indicating that a fuller presentation would soon be forthcoming. Indeed, a few months later, there appeared a rather lengthy piece by R. Zvi (Hershel) Schachter, assiduously explaining and clarifying the halakhic thinking which underpins the opposition to women’s prayer groups as expressed by the above-mentioned RIETS Rashei Yeshiva. Shortly thereafter, within the context of an article on the synagogue and its sanctity, R. Schachter took the opportunity to once again condemn the practice of women’s services, but withdrew his personal criticism of the women, which had appeared in the earlier piece. It is this body of literature, in particular R. Schachter’s works, which constitutes the most detailed critique of the innovation to have been published to date. Rabbis Moshe Meiselman and J. David Bleich have also addressed this subject in a similar spirit.

R. Menashe Klein, R. David Cohen, R. David Feinstein, Jerusalem Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shalom Messas, R. Leib Baron, and the Va’ad HaRabonim of Queens have also expressed their objection to women’s prayer services, and their responsa echo many of the same issues and arguments put forward by R. Schachter. R. Judah haLevi Amihai (responding at the request of Israeli Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau) and R. Efraim Greenblatt have challenged women’s hakafot. Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Zalman Nehemiah Goldberg have penned related prohibitive opinions in reaction to “The Women of the Wall” (Neshot haKotel) controversy.

Briefly summarizing, the stringent school’s opposition to women’s services is predicated on six major grounds: 1) in such services, mitsvah actions cannot be fulfilled in their most complete form; 2) the very existence of such services is a misrepresentation of Torah; 3) they contribute to divisiveness within a prayer community; 4) women’s prayer groups are a serious, intentional departure from Jewish tradition; 5)
these services are foreign to Judaism and violate the biblical prohibition against following non-Jewish religious practices and immodest mores (be-hukoteihem lo te-leikhu); and finally 6) women’s prayer services (as well as women’s Megilla readings and Simhat Torah hakafot) run counter to the traditionally more private and modest role of the Jewish woman. Let us now turn to each of these points respectively, examining their soundness and cogency.

1. **Incomplete Fulfillment of Mitzvot:** The RIETS Rashei Yeshiva and R. Messas begin their responsa by noting that even women who participate in truly halakhic women’s prayer groups have missed out on the opportunity to take part in the various rabbinic mitzvot connected with a bona fide public prayer service. In particular, by praying in the absence of a minyan, they have forfeited the opportunity of tefilla be-tsibbur (reciting the amida together with a halakhically defined community) and of answering to kaddish, barekhu and the repetition of the amida (hazarat ha-shats) with kedusha or reciting the thirteen attributes. Without these important segments of the service, the prayers of the women’s groups are lacking and incomplete.\(^5\) What is more, argues R. Schachter, women are actually rabbinically obligated, in the opinion of Magen Avraham,\(^76\) to hear the weekly reading of the Torah (keriat haTorah). The latter can be properly performed only with the recitation of barekhu and the berakhot, which, in turn, require a male minyan.\(^77\)

Similarly, contends R. Schachter, the reading of Ester on Purim, which is incumbent upon both men and women, cannot be properly fulfilled in a service composed solely of women. In support of this contention, R. Schachter cites the ruling that Megillat Ester should preferably be read with a minyan;\(^78\) furthermore, for the recitation of the concluding benediction, “Ha-rav et riveinu,” such a quorum, according to many views, is indispensable.\(^79\) Rama expresses doubt as to whether women can be counted towards a minyan for these purposes.\(^80\) Consequently, concludes R. Schachter, a woman can properly fulfill her obligation of hearing the Megilla only in the presence of a male minyan.\(^81\)

Lastly, R. Schachter points to the mandatory Torah reading of Parshat Zakhor (Deuteronomy 25:17-19), traditionally read on the Shabbat before Purim. He argues that “in the opinion of some of the great latter-day authorities,” women, like men, are obligated to hear the reading of this portion of the Torah. In addition, according to some views, this reading carries a biblical requirement for a minyan.\(^82\) Furthermore, other halakhic authorities maintain that the attendant blessings are an integral part of the mitsvah.\(^83\) Since the reading of Parshat Zakhor with a
minyan and its attendant blessings requires the presence of ten adult males, women cannot fulfill their obligation of keriat Parshat Zakhor in its fullest sense in an all-women service.84

The Rashei Teshiva are indubitably correct that by not praying with men, women forgo reciting those sections of the tefilla reserved for a minyan. It must be emphasized, however, that women, though obligated in private prayer, are freed from any requirement of public worship, tefilla be-tsibbur.85 Furthermore, there is even a minority opinion of several leading posekim who maintain that women sitting in the Ezrat Nashim (a separate women’s section or balcony) never fulfill tefilla be-tsibbur.86 Hence, women are equally freed from any need to answer to barekhu, kaddish, kedusha, etc. Similarly, the vast majority of posekim, both rishonim and aharonim,87 totally reject the opinion of Magen Avraham and exempt women from any requirement to hear the Torah reading.

Indeed, actual practice as sanctioned by leading halakhic authorities runs counter to the “incomplete fulfillment” argument as applied to women in these cases. Thus, Magen Avraham88 himself records that, contrary to his aforementioned view, the prevalent custom of the women in his very own community was actually to walk out during the Torah reading. The permissibility of this practice has been reaffirmed in the contemporary period by the noted posek, R. Bezalel Stern.89 In addition, it is well known that the famed R. Elijah of Vilna advised the women of his family not to attend the synagogue altogether.90 Finally, tefilla is part of the regular school day at yeshiva day schools and high schools for women, yet rarely are arrangements made for a male minyan to be present at these times to enable tefilla be-tsibbur and keriat haTorah.

Clearly, women cannot be censured for their non-fulfillment of optional mitsvot. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that most authorities maintain that women who purposely perform time-determined commandments in an incorrect manner do not violate the biblical injunction, “Every matter which I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it.”91 This requires some elaboration.

As noted earlier, women are exempt from the performance of time-determined commandments.92 Should a woman wish to perform such a mitsvah, she is free to do so and will receive the appropriate heavenly reward.93 But what if a woman deliberately decides to perform a time-determined commandment in an incorrect fashion? Certainly, she will accrue no divine credit for her actions, but will she thereby violate any biblical injunction? Let us imagine, for example, a woman who,
on Sukkot, takes in her hand only three of the requisite four species with
the intention of thereby performing the prescribed religious ritual. A
man doing the very same act at the very same time would be viewed as
transgressing the above injunction of "... nor diminish from it," but
most scholars rule that a woman does not violate any injunction and
cannot be charged with an "incomplete" fulfillment of the mitsvah. As a
general rule, no one—male or female—can be criticized for having per-
formed the mitsvah incorrectly when he or she was under no obligation
to perform the ritual in the first place.

Consequently, a woman who fails to say one of the requisite addi-
tions (me-ein ha-meJora, e.g., yaJale ve-yavo on festivals) to the amida
service, which (according to various opinions) she had no obligation to
pray, need not repeat the amida correctly; had a man omitted the very
same section, he would certainly be required to recite the amida prop-
erly. Having had no obligation to pray the amida altogether, the
woman's omission of the addition is arguably not a critical flaw—it is
not an incomplete fulfillment of the mitsvah.

The same would hold true, therefore, for women who prefer pray-
ing in a women's prayer group rather than with a male minyan. Since
women are not obligated in tefilla be-tsibbur to begin with, their pray-
er—even absent those sections of the service reserved for a minyan—
can in no way be deemed flawed.

It should also be noted that inasmuch as tefilla be-tsibbur is not
mandatory for women, it is at best a hiddur mitsvah, i.e., a more prefer-
able manner of fulfilling their prayer obligation. But praying with
greater concentration, understanding and personal meaning—"kav-
vana"—is also an enhanced and elevated mode of prayer. For those
women who find that women's prayer groups enable them to pray with
increased kavvana, the question then arises: which form of hiddur mitsvah takes priority, tefilla be-tsibbur or kavvana? This question is not
unique to women and has been debated with regard to properly constitu-
ted male minyanim as well. Many authorities have squarely ruled that
praying with increased kavvana takes precedence over tefilla be-tsibbur
even for men. Thus, these scholars permit one to pray alone in the pri-
vacy of his home, or individually, at his own pace, in the syna-
gogue, rather than with the community at large, if such allows for
greater concentration. In addition, among those posekim who maintain
otherwise, namely that tefilla be-tsibbur is to be preferred, some do so
on the assumption that communal prayer for men is an obligation,
while increased kavvana is merely a hiddur mitsvah. Were communal
prayer not a bona fide obligation, but simply a meritorious performance
of the commandment, then they too might well agree that enhanced *kavvana* would take priority. It follows that those women who find that their “service of the heart” is of a superior quality when “davening” with an all-women’s prayer group can muster significant halakhic authority in support of their forgoing a normative public prayer service in favor of a women’s service.  

Turning now to the reading of Megillat Ester, many noted halakhists rule that women, unlike men, are not required to hear a public reading of the Megilla. Moreover, contrary to the conclusion drawn by R. Schachter, the consensus of leading *aharonim* is that ten women alone do indeed constitute a proper *minyan* for both the reading of the Megilla and reciting of “Ha-rav et riveinu” benediction which follows it. As a result of the above two halakhic rulings, it is a prevalent custom worldwide to have a second Megilla reading for women, where no provisions are made to have present a *minyan* of ten men. It would appear, therefore, that the majority of *posekim* would find no strictly halakhic imperfection in an exclusively women’s Megilla reading.

R. Schachter’s final argument, concerning Parshat Zakhor, while clearly rooted in the sources, appears to be constructed from minority opinions. First, most authorities rule that only men were commanded to remember the wanton attack on the Israelites by the Amalekite armies; women have no obligation whatsoever to participate in the yearly reading of Parshat Zakhor. Moreover, even if women are required to recall the battle with Amalek, it does not necessarily follow that they must fulfill their obligation through a Torah scroll reading, with the usual benedictions, and in the presence of a *minyan*. Most latter-day scholars reject the idea that a *minyan* for Parshat Zakhor is biblically mandated and, consequently, that the attendant blessings are an integral part of the fulfillment of the mitsvah. Accordingly, many leading *posekim* allow women to read Parshat Zakhor from a printed *Humash* or even to recite it by heart in the privacy of their own home. The common rationale behind these leniencies is that the requirements of a Torah scroll, *minyan* and benedictions are all part of the general Torah reading obligation, which is rabbinic in origin and from which women are exempted, as noted above. Consistent with this view is the prevalent custom of a second reading of Parshat Zakhor for women without the appropriate benedictions or the presence of a *minyan* of men. While the precentor for these second readings is commonly male, R. Moses Shternbuch, Vice President of the Rabbinical Court of the *Eida ha-Haredit*, states explicitly that women may read this portion themselves from the *sefer Torah*.  

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Interestingly, one of R. Shternbuch's colleagues on the Rabbinical Court of the Eida haHareidit, R. Abraham David Horowitz, forcefully contends that if women are indeed obligated to hear Parshat Zakhor, they too, can constitute a minyan for the reading, certainly by themselves and perhaps even with men. Although not cited by R. Horowitz, this position already finds expression in the works of R. Moses Sofer.

In summary, the stringent school's first criticism of women's services would seem, upon analysis, to boil down essentially to "a call to saintliness." Women are summoned to fulfill all those observances from which Jewish law has specifically exempted them and/or to fulfill the requirements imposed by even minor opinions. Such a halakhic prescription may suit the self-selected spiritual elite, but it is certainly not binding—nor perhaps even advisable—for Jewish women as a group.

The arguments of the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva lead them to conclude that women may not pray in their own groups; in order for women to fulfill their prayer obligation in a complete fashion, they must pray together with men in a minyan. This line of reasoning, however, equally leads to the conclusion that women should not pray alone at home, but only with men at shul. Nonetheless, we have seen no similarly argued responsum requiring—or even encouraging—women to participate regularly in communal synagogue services, and criticizing women's preference for private prayer. Even on Purim, when there is a special mitsvah of pirsumei nisa (publicizing the miracle), the common custom was for women not to come to the synagogue for Megilla reading, but rather to hear the Megilla in the privacy of their homes. In light of the traditions of the past, it is difficult to take issue with the newer women's prayer groups on the grounds of incompleteness.

One final remark before concluding this section of our paper. In his addendum to the responsum by the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva, R. Abba Bronspigel asserts that absent a minyan, "there is no fulfillment of communal prayer (tefilla be-tsibbur) whatsoever." With all due respect, this claim is inaccurate. As a number of halakhic authorities have noted, there are two basic forms of public worship: 1) individuals collectively praying individually, i.e., in one place at the same time; 2) individuals praying together as a community. While the latter form is by far the more preferred (and therefore required for reciting all devarim she-bi-ka'asha), the former, too, has some value over private individual prayer. In addition, while "a community" for purposes of the second form requires a minyan, "in community" for the first form does not. Consequently, while a women's prayer group may not constitute tefilla be-tsibbur of the higher order, that does not mean that "there is no ful-

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fillment of public prayer whatsoever.” Women’s prayer groups would certainly qualify as public worship in line with the first form. Halakhic logic would thus compel one to conclude that for a woman, praying in a women’s prayer group is superior to praying alone in the privacy of her own home.

2. MISREPRESENTATION OF THE TORAH (ZIYTUF HATORAH): The second claim of the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva is that women’s services misrepresent Jewish law and tradition. They note that some prayer groups aim to demonstrate that women, like men, are capable of carrying out a full public prayer service. They thereby mislead the general public into believing that women may halakhically constitute a minyan and fulfill the obligations normally limited to bona fide tefilla be-tsibbur. Based upon the writings of R. Solomon Luria (Maharshal), R. Schachter and his colleagues argue that such misrepresentation (ziyyuf haTorah) is biblically forbidden. Clearly, lying is generally prohibited. What is unique about ziyyuf haTorah is the severity of the violation, which, according to Maharshal, is grounds for martyrdom.

R. David Bleich concurs, though his target is the innovation of a pseudo-keriat haTorah at the women’s service. According to R. Bleich, “the use of a Torah scroll by women who candidly acknowledge that they do not thereby fulfill the rabbinic requirements [for a bona fide keriat haTorah] borders on the farcical.” Moreover, “in instituting keriat haTorah, complete with aliyyot (although without recitation of blessings), there is manifest a clear desire to establish a formal, innovative, liturgical ritual.” R. Bleich bases his objection on Maimonides’ ruling forbidding non-Jews to develop religious practices of their own. As R. Bleich explains, the reason for this prohibition is that such an innovative “practice acquires the characteristics and overtones of a divinely mandated ritual and as such itself becomes ziyyuf haTorah—a falsification of the mesora (divine tradition).” This prohibition binds Jews as well, and in his view, the women’s service Torah reading, as presently practiced, comes “dangerously close” to violating it.

Before commenting on these charges, it should be noted that contrary to R. Schachter’s basic assumption that women never count for a minyan, many rishonim and aharonim indicate that women may constitute a minyan—alone or with men—in a variety of instances, although public prayer is not one of them. As we have demonstrated in a previous article, practically speaking (halakha le-ma’ase), these rituals include: 1) Megilla reading and the “Ha-rav et riveinu” benediction which follows it; 2) public martyrdom (kiddush Hashem be-rabim);
3) recitation of the *Ha-gomel* blessing; 4) circumcision; 5) *Hanukka* candle lighting in the synagogue. Hence, referring to ten women as a *minyan* in certain cases is not as strange or as misrepresentative as it might seem.

Let us return to the charge of *ziyyuf haTorah*. R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin argues that the comments of Maharash refer only to a misrepresentation of the Torah, *i.e.*, of biblical commandments, but not of rabbinic injunctions like public prayer or Torah reading. Hence, even if women’s prayer groups were misleading, they would not violate Maharash’s prohibition of *ziyyuf haTorah*. The late Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog indicates that the prohibition applies specifically to cases where someone (a non-Jew) questions a point of Jewish law, but not when the information is volunteered.

A more fundamental issue, however, is raised by R. Moses Feinstein, who explains that *ziyyuf haTorah* is prohibited according to Maharash because it is comparable to denying the validity and immutability of the Torah (*ke-koftr beTorat Moshe*). As such, this prohibition is limited to those cases in which one explicitly misstates Jewish law, *e.g.*, one states that a particular forbidden action is halakhically permitted, or that non-Jews have the same status in torts as Jews. But where one does not misstate the halakha, this would not constitute *ziyyuf haTorah*, even if someone could draw an incorrect halakhic conclusion from his behavior. Hence, if women’s services do not violate any specific halakha and are cautious not to declare—even implicitly—that ten women make a *minyan*, they cannot possibly be guilty of *ziyyuf haTorah*. Indeed, such groups refrain from saying *kaddish*, *kedusha*, *barekhu* or other *devarim she-bi-kdusha* and repeatedly reaffirm their commitment and subservience to halakha. They call themselves “women’s prayer (or *tefilla*) groups” or “women’s services,” and not “women’s *minyanim*.” Forbidding such services because some non-halakhic prayer groups act improperly would be comparable to forbidding public prayer in every synagogue because some errant congregations have mixed pews.

In closing, it should be noted that R. Moses Feinstein, R. Isaac Herzog, and R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin have all indicated that normative halakha clearly does not follow Maharash. R. Feinstein points to the fact that for hundreds of years, editions of the Talmud, codes, responsa, and other assorted religious texts opened with a disclaimer distinguishing between the halakhic status of the idolaters mentioned in the Talmud and the status of present-day gentiles. The purpose of this disclaimer was to appease the censor, but it was, nevertheless, patently false. Similarly, R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin cites several examples where
halakhot were distorted to appease the censor, yet no rabbinic authority objected.\textsuperscript{136}

We turn now to R. Bleich's characterization\textsuperscript{137} of the keriat ha-Torah at women's prayer groups as "farcical." Such an analysis assumes that the women's reading of the Torah is devoid of religious value. Proponents have argued, on the other hand, that such readings serve as a vehicle for limud haTorah (Torah study).\textsuperscript{137} The vast majority of posekim concur that even in the absence of a minyan, there is no prohibition for anyone to learn from a Torah scroll, provided that the keriat haTorah benedictions are not recited.\textsuperscript{138,139} What is more, R. David Ibn Zimra (Radbaz) and a host of other posekim who cite him\textsuperscript{140} maintain that because of its greater sanctity, private Torah study from a Torah scroll is actually preferred, provided one reads the words properly accompanied by the ta'améi ha-mikra [intonations].

R. Bleich's citation from Maimonides\textsuperscript{141} forbidding all religious innovations should not serve as an obstacle for this practice. Rambam certainly could not have intended to forbid religious innovations such as minhagim (customs) or rabbinic ritual. Indeed, it is obvious from a reading of this entire passage that Rambam's intention was to forbid only those religious innovations about which it is falsely claimed that they are divinely binding.\textsuperscript{142}

Thus, this selection from Maimonides' Code is inapplicable for several reasons. First, this practice could not "acquire the characteristics and overtones of a divinely mandated ritual," to use R. Bleich's own words, since keriat ha-Torah itself is a rabbinic, not biblical, enactment. Second, there is no false claim or misrepresentation if the women "candidly acknowledge that they do not thereby fulfill the rabbinic requirement," as R. Bleich accurately observes. Certainly, halakhic women's services, in which the Torah is read without the introductory barekhu or the usual keriat ha-Torah benedictions before and after each aliyaa, are making a clear statement that this reading is most definitely not a fulfillment of the rabbinic obligation of keriat ha-Torah. Such a Torah reading may be unnecessary, but it is not misrepresentation.

3. SPLITTING A PRAYER COMMUNITY AND BE-ROV AM HADRAT MELEKH: R. Schachter's third major criticism of women's services is based on the verse, "Be-rov am hadrat Melekh"—"In the multitude of people is the King's glory."\textsuperscript{143} From this passage, the rabbis derived that it is preferable to perform commandments and rituals together with or in the presence of large numbers of people.\textsuperscript{144} This principle has been invoked by several posekim to prevent existing minyanim from splitting
into smaller groups over petty differences; because of be-rov am, the larger, undivided prayer community is clearly preferred. The posekim were willing to entertain approving a split only when the dispute was insoluble (such as differing customs or nusah) or when the rift had already become so deep that the factions were irreconcilable. Since the desire to pray with other women is not of fundamental halakhic importance, it is not a valid reason, argues R. Schachter, for condoning a break-away women's service.

We note, however, that be-rov am is only one of many possible forms of hiddur mitsvah, of which some forms may be preferred over others. For example, doing a mitsvah at the earliest possible opportunity (zerizin ma-kdimin le-mitsvot) takes precedence over be-rov am. For this reason, davening at sunrise (ke-vatikin) even in a small minyan is deemed much preferable to davening later in the day with a much larger congregaton.

Other, more relevant considerations also set aside be-rov am. The responsa literature points out repeatedly that one may daven where he has greater kavvana or where there is greater decorum. Posekim argue very poignantly that the decision of where one has greater kavvana is very personal and highly subjective. In the words of R. Judah Greenwald:

“If they know in their soul that somewhere else they will daven with greater kavvana, no matter what the reason should be, it is obvious that they can gather elsewhere . . . .”

Many generations earlier, R. Samuel de Modina likewise stated:

“Therefore, it is obvious . . . that one may leave his community to pray with kavvana and . . . the community has no power to force individuals to pray except where they prefer.”

Hence, the fact that participants in the women’s prayer groups testify that their greater involvement heightens their concentration and kavvana has important halakhic ramifications regarding setting aside be-rov am.

Regarding decorum, posekim have repeatedly lamented about the noise in the women’s section of many synagogues. In particular, they note that it is so noisy during Megilla reading that they seriously doubt whether women fulfill their obligation. The women’s services, on the other hand, are generally very quiet, with little unnecessary talking.

More importantly, since women are exempted from the obliga-
tions of public prayer and from even coming to the synagogue, they ought not be faulted should they decide not to contribute to the synagogue’s be-rov am. With respect to the be-rov am of the male participants, there should be no difference whether the women stay home altogether or gather in someone else’s home to pray together. Of relevance is Magen Avraham’s comment, cited above, that the women of his community actually used to exit during the reading of the Torah. Why did Magen Avraham and the other distinguished rabbis of his community condone such behavior? After all, these were not women who stayed home, but those who came to shul and then walked out. Why wasn’t the rabbinic leadership of Magen Avraham’s community concerned with be-rov am? The answer is simple: if you are not obligated in keriat haTorah and do not have to be present in the first place, there is nothing wrong with deciding not to contribute to the be-rov am of that ritual. Moreover, there is even room to contend that only those who are obligated in a ritual can contribute to the be-rov am quality of that ritual. If so, the presence of women has no effect on the be-rov am quality of tefilla be-tsibbur or its associated rituals because Hazal exempted women from public prayer.

Finally, there is substantial evidence in the posekim that women as a rule are not at all obligated in be-rov am. For example, R. Abraham Hayyim Na’eh forbids six men who have dined together from splitting into two zimmun units of three each, because of be-rov am; nevertheless, he and Mishna Berura allow three women to break off from three men in order to make their own zimmun. Megilla reading for women is another case in point. As noted above, be-rov am dictates that Megilla should be read in the largest community possible. Nevertheless, it was common practice for women to absent themselves from the public synagogue reading and hear it instead in the privacy of their homes. This suggests to many leading aharonim that women are not obligated in be-rov am.

4. DEPARTURE FROM NORMATIVE JUDAISM: The fourth argument raised by nearly all those opposed to women’s services is that they are an innovation, unknown prior to the last half of the twentieth century. They are a striking departure from what has been normative practice in the halakhic Jewish community for millennia. Jewish law clearly recognizes the binding force of minhag, accepted custom and usage. Furthermore, admonishes the stringent school, one must be extremely careful about introducing new rituals, lest they weaken the fabric of traditional Jewish observance. This danger is compounded when the innovations
are not purely personal in nature, but affect synagogue ritual and/or a large segment of the prayer community. In addition, vigilance is required where the innovations are not instituted by the righteous and scholarly of the generation, as with women’s services.

R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin sidesteps R. Schachter’s argument in part by noting that most tefilla groups meet in halls, side rooms of synagogues, or private homes, and not in the main shul sanctuary. Thus, one cannot argue that the customs of the shuls have been changed.

R. Eliezer Berkovits and Justice Menahem Elon question the very premise, namely, that the absence of women’s tefilla groups, hakafot or Megilla readings in previous generations establishes a minhag that they are prohibited. The lack of such practices over the past centuries was not the result of any deliberate determination; rather, it merely demonstrates that there was no social need for them. The situation would be analogous to the institution of Bat Mitzvah celebrations, which were unheard of in Orthodox Jewish circles several decades ago, yet now enjoy the approval of leading posekim.

This argument requires further explanation. There is a major debate among aharonim regarding a situation in which a community regularly and consistently (ragil u-matsui) refrains from acting in a certain manner—although the action is essentially halakhically permissible. Does such passive behavior, in and of itself, in the absence of a pre-existing pesak halakha le-issur (a restrictive halakhic ruling), constitute a communally binding prohibitive custom (lo ra’inux ra’aya be-minhag), or perhaps not (lo ra’inux eino ra’aya)? Even according to those who answer in the affirmative, the community’s passive behavior creates a minhag only when such inaction resulted from a deliberate and conscious decision. It is not sufficient that the community simply did not act; it had to have decided not to act. Moreover, the reason for the decision to refrain from a particular activity must be rooted in the desire for greater halakhic scrupulousness.

In light of these principles, the lack of women’s prayer groups in previous generations cannot serve as the basis for a binding minhag. While the non-appearance of women’s tefilla groups in previous generations is obviously passive behavior, there is no evidence—or even a claim—that it resulted from any form of halakhic ruling. Similarly, it was not the consequence of any deliberate or conscious decision to refrain from establishing women-only tefillot—it was simply not done. And finally, the absence of women’s services in the past had little to do with halakhic stringency, especially in light of the reality that most women rarely attended shul at all!
The fact is, however, that women’s prayer groups, in which one woman leads many others in prayer, have been around in one form or another ever since the Jews crossed the Red Sea. On the verse, “. . . And Miriam sang unto them . . .”, the Mekhilta states that just as Moses led the men in song and praise of God, Miriam, his sister, led the women. Midrash Or ha-Aftila posits that with the words recited first by Miriam and then her female entourage, “Sing ye to the Lord, for He is highly exalted,” Jewish women accepted upon themselves the obligation of daily prayer. Finally, a commentary attributed to R. Sa’adya Gaon notes that Miriam sang the 18 verses of the Red Sea song and the women repeated them, just as the hazzan recites the 18 benedictions of the shemone esrei to which the community answers amen. All the above texts suggest that women’s praying together—even with a female precentor—has clear roots in Jewish tradition.

Records show that throughout the Middle Ages, certain women were noted because they led groups of women in prayer. This institution continued in Europe, and the female precentor later became known as the firzogerin (foresayer), foreleiner (forereader) or zogerke (female sayer). The latter were generally educated and highly literate women who chanted or sang aloud prayers, Psalms and tehinot (supplications), some of which were original compositions. Among Sephardic Jews, on the other hand, there are traditions of a regular women’s service with a hazzanit and keriat haTorah. Thus, the late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Haifa, R. Joseph Messas, writes:

The wont of righteous women is to rise earlier than their husbands and prepare them coffee, then wake them up to worship their Creator and hand them the coffee to restitute their minds, to have kavvana in their prayer. . . . And I saw in a book that in some places in Spain, the “kosher” and learned women used to rise very early to [go to] their synagogue (beit ha-keneset she-la-hen), and pray together (mit-pallelot be-tsibbur), and appoint one of them as shelihat tsibbur, and take out a sefer Torah; and some of them used to don tefillin, and everyone was wrapped in a tallit, and they used to do so on the Sabbath and Holidays, too. And afterwards they used to return to their homes and wake up their husbands and their sons to get up and pray. And this they used to do as a stringency which they undertook, since women are exempt from time-bound mitzvot, so they will have time to prepare their husbands’ needs. And that is why they used to rise early for prayer while their husbands were still asleep. And this settles the correct meaning of the verse, “A nation that rises as a lioness and as a lion” (Numbers 23:24); the female is mentioned
first, before the male, for as we have said, both the man and the woman used to rise to worship their Creator, but the woman before the man.\[180^*\]

In the modern period, with the establishment of yeshiva day schools and summer camps for girls, we find—even in the hareidi school system—the natural development of hazzaniyyot who lead their classmates and friends in prayer.\[181^*\] Hence, women praying together in prayer groups cannot be deemed a departure from normative Judaism.

With regard to a women’s Megilla reading as well, the element of innovation is minimal. We have already noted above\[182^*\] that it is a prevalent custom worldwide to have a second Megilla reading for women. In these special readings, the only man present is the ba’al korei; hence, it is not the presence of exclusively women that is the innovation. The new element in contemporary women’s Megilla readings is that now women read for other women. This, however, should present no halakhic problem, since women are also obligated in the mitsvah of Megilla. Until recently, it was rare for women to know how to cantillate the Megilla, but the obstacle was not halakhic. Women were often illiterate and rarely attended services at all.\[182^*\] Furthermore, since they could not serve as ba’alot keria for a normative Torah reading, they simply had little practical use or reason to learn trop (the traditional cantillations). Finally, in light of the long list of posekim who permit a women’s Megilla reading,\[183^*\] whatever innovative elements there may be in such a practice come with substantial rabbinic approval.

The lightning rod for the charge of innovation focuses, to a large extent, on the pseudo-keriat haTorah at the women’s services.\[183^*\] Nevertheless, the earlier quote from R. Messas would seem to indicate that such Torah readings are not completely without precedent. Furthermore, as noted in section B.2 above, the private reading from a Torah scroll with trop by a woman is not prohibited per se. As in the case of the reading of the Megilla, the fact that women rarely, if ever, did so stemmed from lack of education and related sociological issues rather than halakhic ones. In such a case, too, one can well argue lo ra’inu eino ra’aya.

5. FOLLOWING IN THE WAYS OF THE GENTILES: The fifth argument of the stringent school\[184^*\] is that women’s services violate the biblical injunction, “U-be-hukoteihem lo te-leikhu”—“After the doings of the land of Egypt . . . and the land of Cana’an . . . shall you not do; nor shall you walk in their statutes.”\[185^*\] As understood by the codifiers, this verse admonishes Jews against emulating not only the religious ways of non-
Jews, but also their immodest mores. Women's prayer services, argues the stringent school, are prohibited on both grounds. First, women's prayer services run counter to normative Jewish religious practice, since women do not lead public ritual. Unfortunately, lament these scholars, non-Jewish influence has had its effect on the Reform and Conservative movements, and from there it has passed to these Orthodox women's groups. What is worse, however, is that the clamor for such women's services is a direct result of the influence of "Women's Lib," a movement based on non-Jewish values and priorities foreign to halakhic Judaism. The primary goals of the Women's Liberation movement are immodest, for it attempts to obfuscate, if not obliterate, male-female sex roles.

On the other hand, as R. Y. Henkin has noted, the prohibition of "U-be-hukoteihem lo te-leikhu" is directed towards actions and modes of behavior which imitate established non-Jewish patterns, not merely ideas which have parallels in gentile circles. In R. Henkin's words: "The Torah does not forbid movements, but actions" (pun intended). Significantly, we would note, the very language of the biblical verse refers explicitly to gentile doings ("ma'ase") and statutes ("hukot"). The tana'im of Torat Kohanim underscore this very point when they write, "And in their statutes you shall not walk"—I refer only to statutes which were legislated for them and for their fathers and for their fathers' fathers." Only once it has been clearly determined that the practice under scrutiny is a well-established and long-standing gentile custom could it be prohibited for Jews as a violation of "U-be-hukoteihem."

Not surprisingly, therefore, all of the sources mustered by R. Schachter discuss immodest behavior or religious modes with direct parallels in non-Jewish custom or practice. However, non-Jews have no long-standing custom of women's prayer groups. Gentile female laity rarely, if ever, prays as a group without the presence of males. Consequently, Jewish women's services cannot be considered imitation of gentile ways. Absent a clear non-Jewish parallel, women's prayer groups do not—by definition—constitute a transgression of "U-be-hukoteihem lo te-leikhu." Furthermore, even were we to admit for argument's sake that the women's dissatisfaction with the usual services resulted from gentile influences, their response is inherently Jewish. Thus, the practice of women's prayer groups is particularly Jewish.

Moreover, even when dealing with accepted gentile custom, most halakhic authorities hold that such practice is not prohibited for Jews unless its adoption results from an intention to imitate gentile ways. If,
however, Jews intend to derive direct benefit from the custom, independent of the fact that gentiles also behave in a similar manner, the practice would not fall within the ambit of the prohibition of “U-be-hukoteihem.”192

It was this latter principle that served as the critical basis upon which the noted Torah personalities, R. Yehiel Jacob Weinberg193 and R. Ovadiah Yosef,194 permitted the celebration of a bat-mitsvah. There, too, the new practice was challenged and criticized as a violation of “U-be-hukoteihem.”195 However, after a lengthy and scholarly analysis of the nature and limits of “U-be-hukoteihem,” R. Weinberg rejects the charge:

For even the Reform of our people do not do so in order to imitate them [i.e., the gentiles], but rather as a family celebration and rejoicing that their children have reached majority. And those of our brethren [i.e., Orthodox Jews] who have newly instituted the custom of bat mitsvah celebration claim that they are doing so to strengthen within the daughter, who has attained an age where the commandments are now incumbent upon her, a feeling of love for Judaism and her mitsvot, and to awaken within her a feeling of pride regarding her Jewishness and regarding her status as a daughter of a great and holy nation (am gadol ve-kadosh). It makes no difference to us that the gentiles as well celebrate confirmation both for boys and girls; they are with their ways and we are with ours. They pray and kneel in their churches and we kneel, bow and give thanksgiving to the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.196

Concurring with R. Weinberg’s analysis and conclusion, R. Ovadiah Yosef adds strikingly:

And in truth, the prevention of bat-mitsvah celebrations enables criminals to denounce the sages of Israel, as if they deprive the daughters of Israel and discriminate between sons and daughters.197

Those Orthodox women who participate in women’s prayer groups similarly maintain that their desire to join such groups has nothing to do with gentile practice; on the contrary, it stems from a wish to strengthen their active involvement in Judaism and its mitsvot. These women report that the experience of praying together in an all-women’s service truly enhances their Jewish pride; rather than sow dissatisfaction with Jewish tradition, it heightens their awareness that they are indeed members of an am gadol ve-kadosh.197* Assuming these claims are true—and we have no reason to doubt their veracity—the remarks of Rabbis Weinberg and
Yosef regarding *bat-mitsvah* should be equally valid when applied to women’s services, *mutatis mutandis*. Here, too, women’s prayer groups would not constitute a violation of “*U-be-hukoteihem,*” for the intention of the participants is not to imitate or resemble comparable groups or practices among the gentiles, but rather to obtain an experience that is wholly Jewish.

6. **VIOLATION OF “*KOL KEVUDA BAT MELEKH PENIMA*”:** The final issue raised by both Rabbis Schachter and Klein relates to the traditional role of the Jewish woman. As suggested by the verse, “*All glorious is the king’s daughter within [the palace],*” and as widely reflected in Jewish law and lore, this role is private and home-oriented. For example, based upon *kol kevuda*, the Talmud and codes indicate that women should not make a habit of going frequently to the marketplace. They also record special dispensations made for women in instances where they had to be interviewed by a court. Rabbis Schachter and Klein argue that women’s prayer groups and *hakafot*, which build religious ritual around women and place them at the center of attention, run counter to the traditional private role of the Jewish woman.

This criticism, like the previous ones, is not unequivocal. Thus, R. Yehuda Henkin argues that *kol kevuda*, even according to the stringent formulation of Maimonides, bars only unnecessary exposure to public life. However, the fulfillment of mitzvot (e.g., visiting parents, aiding the sick and needy, comforting mourners, rejoicing with the bride, etc.) is a perfectly legitimate reason for venturing into the marketplace. If so, going out to pray, be it in *shul* or at a prayer service, should be no different than fulfilling any other mitzvah. Other posekim make it clear that *kol kevuda* does not apply to an activity which is carried out away from the public thoroughfare and which is all-female or where the sexes are separated. Clearly, women’s *tefila* groups conform to these criteria.

Finally, many posekim maintain that *kol kevuda* is a relative concept, depending on local habits. In this regard, the noted halakhist, R. Sha’ul Yisraeli, states:

It would also seem that the boundaries of *kol kevuda bat Melekh penima* depend on local custom, and only in communities where women never leave their homes is behavior to the contrary to be considered improper. However, in our generation, religious women work in various offices, hospitals, kindergartens, and schools, and yet no one objects.
Certainly, from the perspective of *kol kevuda*, a woman’s participation in a prayer group should be no different than her involvement or even leadership role in any other women’s organization. In light of twentieth century realities and the unchallenged integration of religious women—*hareidi*, modern Orthodox or otherwise—into all walks of life, the charge of *kol kevuda* simply does not ring true.

The above analysis leads one to the conclusion that, with all due respect, the halakhic arguments put forward by the stringent school are less than compelling. This school’s claim—that women’s *tefilla* groups *per se* violate Jewish law—seems neither firmly based nor absolutely convincing. This says nothing, of course, about whether such prayer groups are advisable or “a good idea” in the long run. Indeed, many of the issues raised by the stringent school could well be reformulated as Torah-value concerns. We will have more to say later in this paper about such public-policy and *hashkafic* considerations.

C. THE MIDDLE POSITION

As noted in our introductory comments, there also exists a middle position on this issue which argues that, in theory at least, assuming that all *devarim she-bi-kdusha* are omitted, women’s prayer groups can be run in accordance with *halakha*. This school includes R. Moshe Feinstein, America’s preeminent *posek*; R. Avraham Elkana Shapiro, former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Merkaz haRav*, Jerusalem; former British Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, together with the London *Beit Din*; and, as noted at the end of Section A, the late Israeli Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren. R. Nachum L. Rabino-vitch, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Hesder Birkat Moshe*, Israel, has also ruled in accordance with this view. These rabbis express no difficulty with the objections raised in the previous section by R. Schachter and his colleagues.

R. Feinstein’s position finds expression in a series of responsa and letters spanning a decade. The first of these was a responsum written on 18 *Elul* 5736 (August 25, 1975) to R. Yehuda Kelemer, then rabbi of the Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts. R. Kelemer has shared with us that his question, as posed to R. Feinstein dealt, in reality, with women’s *hakafot*. R. Kelemer had initially turned to R. Soloveitchik, but after expressing his own negative opinion on the subject, R. Soloveitchik encouraged R. Kelemer to discuss the matter with R. Fein-
stein as well. In their conversation, R. Feinstein related specifically to women’s *hakafot*, clearly discouraging R. Kelemer from allowing the practice in his synagogue. In his written—and later published—responsum, however, R. Feinstein chose to address the broader issue of the Women’s Liberation movement. *Inter alia*, R. Feinstein writes:

Indeed, all women are permitted to perform even those commandments which the Torah did not obligate them [to do], and they have fulfilled a mitsvah and [receive] reward for the performance of these commandments. . . . Nevertheless, it is obvious that this is so only if her soul desires to fulfill *mitsvot* even though she is not commanded [to do so]. However, since her intention is not such, but rather, she is motivated by her grievance with God and His Torah, her deed is not to be considered a mitsvah-action at all, but on the contrary, a forbidden action. For she is violating the prohibition of heresy—since she thinks that the laws of the Torah are subject to change—[not only in thought, but] also in deed, which is [all the more] serious.

Although this responsum was written in 1975, as noted above, it appeared in print only in 1982. It did not take long thereafter for various rabbis to request that R. Feinstein further clarify his position. The first such clarification was, unfortunately, not written by R. Feinstein himself, but by his secretary and grandson, R. Mordechai Tendler, on R. Moshe Feinstein’s stationery. The May 1983 *teshuva*, though, is based upon R. Tendler’s discussions with his grandfather. A full translation of this unpublished—although by now famous—responsum follows:

14 Sivan 5743

To my friend, Rabbi Meir Fund Shlita,

My grandfather’s position, as published in *Iggerot Moshe* O.H., IV, sec. 49, is well known, and I cite it here for emphasis only: “However, since her intention is not such, but rather, she is motivated by her grievance with God and His Torah, her deed is not to be considered a mitsvah-action at all, but on the contrary, a forbidden action. For she is violating the prohibition of heresy—since she thinks that the laws of the Torah are subject to change—also in deed, which is serious.”

*De facto*, it is hard to find an instance where this fault will not be present, and, hence, it is difficult to say about any “women’s *minyan*” that there is no problem with them. Only theoretically speaking can one say
that if there exists a group of pious women whose considerations are solely for the sake of Heaven and are without questioning of God’s Torah and Jewish custom—why should we prevent them from praying together?

They may also read from the Torah, though they should be careful not to do so in such a manner as to create the erroneous impression that this constitutes *keriat haTorah*. Thus, for example, they should not recite the Torah benedictions aloud, but should either rely on the benedictions recited earlier [in *birkhot ha-shahar*] or, in a case where they have not yet made these blessings, should recite them privately.

And, of course, there are other details about which one has to be wary, and all those responsible for halakhic decisions (*ba’al bora’a*) should act in this matter in accordance with this viewpoint.

Allow me to conclude with wishes that your rabbinate will be for the sake of Heaven and shed glory on God and his Torah.

In friendship,
Mordechai Tendler

P.S. Nor is there any real prohibition for a menstruant to look at or touch the Torah, even though it is proper to be stringent; nevertheless, it has become widespread that women are lenient in this regard.

In a recent conversation, R. Tendler explained that his grandfather regularly utilized the term “*ba’alei bora’a*” to designate those rabbis who were of a stature to serve as *posekim* in the more intricate areas of Jewish law, such as the laws of *nidda* (family purity) and *Hoshen Mishpat* (monetary matters). Only such rabbis were of the caliber necessary to rule on halakhic issues with far-reaching communal ramifications.217 A few months after the above responsum appeared, a subsequent, undated, English clarification was issued, again penned by R. Mordechai Tendler on R. Feinstein’s stationery. It reads as follows:

In the last few months, there have been numerous requests of *rabbanim* [rabbis], *rashei kehillot* [community leaders], and members of women’s organizations for clarification of the letter written in my Grandfather’s *shlitah* name to Rabbi Fund. Upon consultation with my Grandfather *shlitah* the following clarification is being offered. As stated in my letter, the detailed discussion was purely in a theoretical
sense. My grandfather pragmatically feels that the possibility of a group of women, or for that matter men, existing in any one community which will fulfill the lengthy philosophical criteria mentioned in his printed teshuvah is extremely remote. Therefore, realistically speaking, he doesn’t commend or actually condone the establishment of women’s prayer groups.

Rav Mordechai Tendler
Segan le-Mori Savi ha-Gaon Rav Moshe Feinstein Shlit”a

R. Feinstein’s final teshuva was given orally in October 1985 and was quite unequivocal. R. Chaim Spring requested that R. Mordechai Tendler discuss with his grandfather the propriety of a women’s Megilla reading held yearly in Rehovot, Israel. R. Tendler answered that R. Feinstein had no objections to such a reading. It must be acknowledged, though, that inasmuch as women are fundamentally halakhically obligated in hearing the Megilla, the notion of a women’s Megilla reading poses less of a problem for rabbinic authorities than does the idea of a women’s prayer group. As a result, many posekim—including some who oppose women’s prayer groups—concur that there is no halakhic problem with women reading Megilla for themselves, individually or in a large group.

As already noted, a similar approach to women’s services has been adopted across the Atlantic as the official policy of the office of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain in consultation with the London Beit Din. The text of their ruling reads as follows:

In principle, there is no objection to women organizing a prayer group along the lines described in your letter [i.e., the service would be held in the city’s synagogue and the kaddish, kedusha and blessing on the Torah would be omitted]. Nevertheless, women ought not exclude themselves from attendance at services at which they can hear and respond to those parts for which a minyan of men is required, i.e., borchu, kaddish, kedusha, and reading of the Torah with berachot. In practice, therefore women’s prayer group should preferably be limited to the recitation of such prayers as are not compromised by the absence of a minyan, such as the kabbalat shabbat service before borchu on Friday nights, or hallel when applicable.

The most important consideration, however is the motive underlying the request. If this is genuinely put forward by observant students seeking, as you write, “a religiously fulfilling experience,” it is one thing and
the above guidelines could be applied. But if the true intention is to challenge the accepted by symbolic reforms, then clearly greater caution is called for. As a protest action, what begins with relatively minor modifications may well end with far more serious violations of accepted practices. . . .

On the question of women using a sefer Torah, the consideration you mention [the halakhot of nidda] can be disregarded. But since the usual Torah blessings cannot be recited, they might as well use a Humash for Torah readings.222

The practical aspects of the approach of this middle school will be discussed at length in the second part of this paper.223 However, there is a proviso, stipulated by these scholars, which deserves special attention. Namely, they require that such services must be spiritually and sincerely motivated; they cannot be sanctioned if they are inspired by a desire to rebel against halakha. Although R. Jakobovits clearly assumes that this condition can realistically be fulfilled, R. Feinstein is quite skeptical and, hence, never endorsed women’s prayer groups in practice. Nevertheless, R. Feinstein, as cited by R. Tendler in his May 1983 responsum, leaves the door open for acknowledged halakhic decisors (ba’alei hora’ah) to make the final determination as to whether this motivational condition can and will be met.224 Indeed, R. Nachum Rabinovitch, while sharing R. Feinstein’s hesitations, nonetheless maintains that there are women’s groups which meet R. Feinstein’s criterion of le-shem shamayim (for the sake of Heaven). Each case, emphasizes R. Rabinovitch, must be examined on its own merits.

Former Deputy President of the Israeli Supreme Court, Justice Menachem Elon, in his noted “The Women of the Wall” decision, underscores the significance of this motivational element:

A well-established principle in the world of Halakha—when enacting legislation, establishing custom, or introducing changes in them—is that the observance of a ritual must be performed with the intent and purpose of fulfilling the mitsvah and not out of a motivation to disregard a halakhic rule (din) because of “extraneous considerations.” [Such “extraneous considerations”] include the fundamental objection to, and offense taken from, women’s essential exemption [from certain commandments and rituals]. . . . This requirement is counted among the value-based precepts of the halakhic system, which serves as a major factor in determining the judicial policy of the Halakha in general, and in sensitive and unique issues, such as the one before us, in particular.225
R. Rabinovitch suggests an additional proviso for the institution of women's tefilla groups. One must acknowledge that these prayer groups are novel, emanating from the fundamental societal change that has occurred in the role of contemporary women. However, circumstances and needs may vary from community to community. As such, women's tefilot and hakafor should be held only if and when the women of a particular community themselves express a need for them and initiate the matter. The community rabbi, in this regard, should be responsive—not innovative.225

For R. Avraham Shapiro, the above-mentioned proper motivation is a necessary, though insufficient, precondition; the mara de-atra (community rabbinical authority) must also be certain that the innovation poses no danger to the integrity of halakha and mesoret Yisrael (Jewish tradition). Should there exist any real concern that such a change might perhaps serve as a springboard for greater, non-halakhic reform, then even inherently permissible modifications are prohibited.225** Like R. Feinstein, R. Shapiro maintains that these determinations, by their very nature, should be made only by those rabbinic authorities to whom one entrusts serious halakhic issues, such as nidda and igun. All relevant factors need to be considered, including, inter alia: the reasons for and circumstances of the request; the petitioners; the character and constitution of the particular community; and the atmosphere of the times. Only one who knows all of the pertinent facts and is sensitive to all the impacting elements can issue the necessary pesak.

R. Shapiro's remarks raise a number of critical topics which will be explored more fully in the remaining chapters of this paper. At this juncture, however, we can simply summarize the position of the middle school as follows: a women's prayer service can be performed within the guidelines of halakha. Nevertheless, the issues of motivation and halakhic integrity must be of primary and paramount concern to the rabbinic authorities in considering, on a case by case basis, whether to allow such services in practice.

D. LE-MI-GDAR MILTA: HALAKHA AND PUBLIC POLICY

As should be clear from our analysis thus far, the purely halakhic points raised by the "stringent school" do not seem adequate grounds upon which to prohibit women's prayer groups. Perhaps the true issue at the heart of the imbroglio is one of hashkafa and public policy. In reality, the basic question might be: "Are women's tefilla groups good for the Jews
or bad for the Jews?” Put somewhat differently, are women’s prayer groups the appropriate Jewish response to women’s desire for greater religious involvement? If this is indeed the pivotal issue, then a variety of subsidiary questions need to be pondered, which relate to both the community and the individual. For example, concerning the former, one might ask: how do such services affect the sense of kehilla created by sharing common experiences? Do we undermine a community’s commitment to tradition by allowing practices and prayer forms that are perceived as radically new and not authentically Jewish? Are we blurring the distinctions between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox movements within Judaism? Regarding the individual, one might inquire: do women’s prayer groups push the horizons out so far that they create unfulfillable expectations? Will those women “spoiled” by a tefilla group experience be able to return to a normative public prayer situation? Are we in fact merely making it easier for marginally halakhic women to rebel?

We do not mean to imply that tefilla groups are unaware of or insensitive to these public policy issues. Indeed, for fear of splitting the community, many groups have agreed to meet only at times when women do not normally come to shul—on a Sunday morning, Erev Rosh Hodesh, or Shabbat afternoon. Other groups have consciously attempted to play down the innovative element of their meetings, placing greater emphasis on communal learning. Nearly all have a local Orthodox rabbi or some other rabbinic personality to guide and advise them. Nevertheless, most of the aforementioned queries have no easy or “right” answers. It may require decades before the long-term effects of this innovation can be accurately measured.

Jewish law clearly empowers rabbinic decisors to forbid otherwise permissible actions or innovations because of public policy considerations. Such prohibitions commonly appear in the halakhic literature under the general rubric of le-mi-gdar milta (protective ordinances). Thus, a posek may have some concern that a lenient ruling will harm the unity of his community or weaken his congregants’ commitment to tradition. Alternatively, the rabbi may fear that his balabatim (community members) will misunderstand, misuse, or abuse a theoretical leniency and as a consequence will ultimately come to violate actual prohibitions. Regarding the issue at hand, our conversations with community rabbis confirm that the furor surrounding the institution of novel practices within the women’s services, and the fear that more radical changes are in the offing, have prevented many from supporting or even cooperating with these groups.
Two caveats regarding public-policy-based prohibitions are in order. First, it is imperative to note that the consensus of codifiers maintain that public policy considerations, no matter how justified, do not entitle the rabbinic authority to misrepresent halakha. A posek need not give a rationale for his ruling, but if he feels it necessary to outline some or all of the reasons behind a non-permissive ruling, he must be halakhically accurate in his presentation. For example, a posek has to be careful not to 'upgrade' a public-policy consideration by claiming that it is rabbinically or biblically forbidden; nor should a rabbinic authority even suggest one source for the prohibition when he is fully aware that it is not applicable, and is in fact another. Depending on the case, misrepresenting halakha and/or giving an erroneous reason for a prohibition may well involve violation of one or more of the following injunctions: adding to the Torah (bal tosif); lying; and ziyyuf haTorah. In addition, misrepresentation often results in unlawful leniencies in other areas, needless gossip and hate, as well as hillul Hashem (desecration of God’s name) and a total loss of trust in rabbinic authority should the truth become known.

Our second caveat relates to the ease with which such public-policy prohibitions may be invoked. While there do not seem to be strict guidelines, it is clear that this authority to be stringent must be used sparingly. Halakha clearly warns against unnecessary and unwarranted prohibitions, suggesting that posekim must be lenient wherever Jewish law allows. And, as has been so insightfully noted by R. Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook, this is all the more required in the modern period:

The wont of our saintly rabbinic scholars . . . was not to lean towards stringency in all matters where there was room to be lenient. . . . For it should suffice us if we are meticulous in following those traditions already enacted by our teachers and posekim. But regarding issues for which there are arguments on either side, certainly [the posek] who is inclined to be lenient, to be wise and beneficent, is to be praised—this provided that his decision is based firmly on halakha and sound logic. . . .

And I have already written you, honorable Torah scholars, that I know well the nature of our generation. For only if they see that all that which is permissible by law we [rabbis] permit, will they come to learn that that which we prohibit is indeed not permissible by true Torah law. . . .

The take-home message would seem to be that a contemporary posek who feels that an action which is halakhically permissible would
TRADITION

nevertheless be ill-advised, might be wise to convince his congregants of the wisdom of his position or use the weight of his person and his office to dissuade them from the proposed action. Prohibition should not be used loosely.

E. WOMEN'S SERVICES: HASHKAIFIC AND PUBLIC-POLICY CONCERNS

In the light of this introduction, we would like to turn now to one final position espoused independently by several outstanding Torah personalities: R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, his brother, R. Ahron Soloveichik, and R. Gedalia Dov Schwartz. The opinion of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, reverentially known among his students and admirers as "the Rav," has been the subject of much discussion and speculation; hence, it requires special attention and elucidation. The following remarks are based upon numerous interviews and conversations with members of the Rav's family and many of his closest friends and talmidim who had direct, personal discussions with the Rav over the years 1971-1986 on these sensitive matters. The position which emerged from these interviews was extremely consistent, with only minor variations—usually in tenor and emphasis rather than substance.

R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, like R. Feinstein, was of the view that a women's prayer service, if properly structured, could be conducted in accordance with halakha. Nonetheless, the Rav was most hesitant about women's tefilla groups as a general practice and felt that they should not be encouraged. Consistently, he would recommend to his students not to hold such services. R. Soloveitchik's negative attitude towards women's services emanated not only from his doubts as to whether the halakic guidelines would be scrupulously followed. He also expressed concern regarding numerous other hashkafic and public-policy issues which relate to the fundamental nature of religious practice and community.

As a rule, R. Soloveitchik gave great credence to established Jewish custom and tradition, especially in the area of prayer and the synagogue. Consequently, the Rav was quite conservative when it came to changing minhagim. Minhag beit ha-keneset (synagogue custom) constituted proper Jewish shul etiquette, and its modification was to be allowed only with the utmost caution. Women's prayer groups with Torah reading, hakafot, etc. was, for the Rav, a clear deviation from Jewish prayer forms. That alone was sufficient reason for the Rav to withhold his support for the emerging practice.
On a pragmatic level, the Rav feared for what he termed “brinkmanship.” He was worried that if the rabbis gave in on those matters of synagogue practice where there was admittedly some room for flexibility, it might well lay the ground for a call for change in other areas of halakha as well—areas where there was little or perhaps no room for maneuvering. How would the rabbis respond then? And, should the rabbis indeed resist further attempts for change, how would the women cope with the heightened sense of frustration they would most likely experience?240

But more importantly, the Rav was uncertain as to what precisely the women participating in these services were seeking: greater spirituality resulting from increased kiyyum ha-mitsvot (fulfillment of the commandments), or—consciously or not—something else, perhaps public peer approbation, conspicuous religious performance, or a sense of equality with men. If the real motivating factor was any of the latter, it was likely that a women’s tefilla group would not truly satisfy their religious needs; on the contrary, the women’s services would merely foster increasingly unfulfillable expectations, resulting in greater frustration and perhaps even a break with halakha.

R. Soloveitchik believed he had good reason to doubt that greater fulfillment of mitsvot motivated many of these women, as illustrated in the following story, related to us by R. Yehuda Kelemer, former Rabbi of the Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts. During the mid 1970’s, one of R. Kelemer’s woman congregants at the Young Israel of Brookline was interested in wearing a tallit and tsitsit during the prayer services. After R. Kelemer had expressed to her his hesitations about the matter,241 she approached R. Soloveitchik—who lived in Brookline—on the matter. The Rav explained that in light of the novelty of the action, it needed to be adopted gradually. Accordingly, he suggested that she first try wearing a tallit without tsitsit (which is, of course, allowed for women.) The Rav asked the woman to return to him after three months, at which time they would discuss the matter further. When the two met once again, she described to R. Soloveitchik the magnificent nature of her religious experience in wearing the tallit. The Rav pointed out to the woman that wearing a tallit without tsitsit lacked any halakhically authentic element of mitsvah. It was obvious, therefore, that what generated her sense of “religious high” was not an enhanced kiyyum ha-mitsvah, but something else. Under such circumstances, the Rav maintained, wearing a tallit was an inappropriate use of the mitsvah. Consequently, the Rav forbade the woman from wearing a tallit with tsitsit.
The Rav’s motivational concern extended to the entire phenomenon of women’s prayer groups. After all, the women engaged in a women’s service were missing out on tefilla be-tsibbur, the recitation of various devarim she-bi-kdusha, and a proper, halakhic Torah reading—available to them only if they attended a regular minyan. Granted, women are exempt from the obligations of public prayer, but the Rav was deeply disturbed that women who had consciously chosen not to stay and pray at home, but rather to participate in a women’s tefilla group, were actively and deliberately opting for the inauthentic in place of the authentic.\(^{242}\) Under such circumstances, the Rav found it difficult to accept the assertion that it was the desire for enhanced kiyum ha-mitsvot which was propelling these women.\(^{243,244}\)

At the same time, the Rav was equally perturbed by the attitude of the many women who viewed women’s prayer groups as an authentic, alternative form of tefilla be-tsibbur (public prayer), or at least an authentic, valid alternative to tefilla be-tsibbur. Thus, the hashkama minyan, the main shul minyan, the beginners’ minyan, the teenage minyan and the women’s service were all being perceived as equally halakhically valid choices in the spectrum of tefilla be-tsibbur. This was clearly not the case, and the Rav charged that those rabbis who gave the women’s prayer groups the “go ahead” were misleading them.

In later years, the Rav grew increasingly distraught with the direction the women’s prayer groups were taking and their possible impact on Jewish life. While recognizing that many of the women involved in the groups were sincerely motivated by their desire for greater spirituality and kavvana, he expressed regrets that other women were co-opting the services for their own non-halakhic social agendas. He further articulated his concern as to the confusion women’s services might generate in light of the general egalitarian movement within Conservative and Reform Jewry. He was also wary that allowing maximal diversity in religious experience might weaken the fabric and cohesiveness of the community. And in practice, he instructed his students to avoid any formal affiliation between synagogues and the women’s prayer groups.

Yet, the Rav repeatedly emphasized to those who discussed with him the subject of women’s prayer groups that his objections were predicated primarily on hashkafa and public policy, not strict halakha. It is for this reason that R. Soloveitchik declined to sign his name to the aforementioned responsum of the five RIETS Rashei Yeshiva\(^{245}\) opposing women’s tefilla groups—despite numerous attempts to get the Rav to do so.\(^{246}\) What is more, R. Soloveitchik instructed his shamash at the time, R. Kenneth Brander, that if anyone should ever assert that he did,
in fact, sign the responsum, then R. Brander should publicize the falsity of the claim. The explanation the Rav gave for this refusal was that the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva had based their objections on supposedly halakhic grounds, while his overriding concerns were of a hashkafic and public-policy nature. The Rav felt strongly that the line between strict halakha and public policy must not be blurred. This does mean that the Rav’s opposition to women’s prayer groups was in any way weaker; any practice which runs counter to a Torah-based hashkafa or public policy is, in the Rav’s view, wrong. Nonetheless, the character of R. Soloveitchik’s objection to these groups was substantively different from that of the objections raised by the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva.

As just noted, the focus of the various considerations cited above is on the community level and the public-policy wisdom of allowing a women’s tefilla group as an alternative to regular communal prayer. However, many of the issues enunciated above are less applicable when the prayer group in question is to take place in an educational setting, such as a school. Consequently, in 1972, the Rav initially supported the establishment of a women’s tefilla at the Maimonides School in Brookline, Massachusetts, provided that the devarim she-bi-kdusha were omitted. R. Soloveitchik even suggested that, following the amida, in lieu of these devarim she-bi-kdusha, the women should recite the traditional replacements said by those who have prayed in the absence of a minyan. He had no hesitation about women reading from the sefer Torah, but insisted that they not recite any form of birkhot haTorah (limud or keria) in any pseudo-keriat haTorah. (On a separate occasion in a related matter, the Rav emphasized that no men at all should be present at a women’s service at any time, lest it turn into a spectator event.)

Upon further reflection, though, the Rav withdrew his support for a women’s tefilla group, even in an educational framework, for fear that his halakhic ruling would be misunderstood, misused and misapplied—that people would fail to distinguish between educational settings and communal ones. Interestingly, the issue arose at Maimonides a second time in 1974. The Rav again informed the teachers and administration that the services were permitted on strictly halakhic grounds—he even gave them the aforementioned guidelines—but indicated that he was not happy with the entire idea. Thus, the move never gained momentum and died.

R. Soloveitchik’s view on women’s hakafot was in keeping with his general position on women’s prayer groups. Here, too, the Rav did not, as a rule, find clear halakhic objections to the practice. He did forbid
taking the Torah scrolls outside the synagogue because of the prohibition of *tiltul sefer Torah*—the halakhically unnecessary transfer of a Torah scroll outside the synagogue or to another building. However, as R. Aharon Lichtenstein has noted, if the women’s *hakafot* were in the synagogue, but in the women’s section, *tiltul sefer Torah per se* would not be of issue. The Rav also stated that there was no problem with women’s holding a *sefer Torah*, even when they were *niddot* (menstruants). Yet, for all the *hashkafic* and public-policy reasons indicated above, the Rav was clearly not in favor of the practice—whether the *hakafot* took place in the synagogue or some other venue. To a certain extent, R. Soloveitchik was more opposed to women’s *hakafot* than he was to women’s services. After all, women were obligated in prayer—and, according to R. Soloveitchik, they were obligated thrice daily. Therefore, the Rav was more understanding of the desire to enhance the experience of *tefilla*. There is, however, no such parallel obligation or mitsvah of *hakafot* for women; consequently, the Rav saw little reason to be accommodating in this area.

It appears that during the early 1970’s, R. Soloveitchik was less emphatic about his objection to women’s *hakafot*, despite his displeasure with them. Nonetheless, as the years passed and the Rav’s discomfort with the direction things were taking grew, he would unequivocally express his opposition to women’s *hakafot*, even in an educational setting, to anyone who came to ask his opinion on the subject. In fact, in one instance, the Rav even volunteered to appear before a *shul* board to personally convey his objections to such *hakafot*. R. Soloveitchik often expressed his extreme annoyance at being cited as the authority who had supposedly sanctioned women’s *hakafot*. The Rav would acknowledge that women’s *hakafot* violate no strictly halakhic prohibition; nonetheless, he consistently recommended against them. That, for the Rav, was not a *heter*. On the contrary, in the mid 1970’s R. Soloveitchik indicated to his nephew, R. Moshe Meiselman, that he viewed women’s *hakafot* as a breach of proper synagogue etiquette.

R. Soloveitchik also ruled on numerous occasions against having a women’s *Megilla* reading. Here, however, the Rav’s considerations were rooted in halakha. As noted above, the reading of *Megillat Ester* should preferably be carried out in the presence of a *minyan*; also, many *posekim* hold that a *minyan* is indispensable for reciting the concluding benediction, *Ha-rav et riveinu*. While most authorities agree that ten women constitute a *minyan* for both *mikra Megilla* and for the recitation of *Ha-rav et riveinu*, a significant minority dissent. Because the Rav preferred
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that women fulfill their Megilla obligation according to all views (la-tseit kol ha-de'ot le-kha-tehila), he strongly advised women to be stringent to hear mikra Megilla in the presence of an all-male minyan.\textsuperscript{267}

For the Rav, neither life nor halakha was simplistic; not every "shaila" could be answered with a superficial response of "mutar" (it is allowed) or "assur" (it is forbidden). The "ish ha-halakha" (halakhic man) does not live in a theoretical vacuum; he must also be sensitive to the need for a public policy. The possible impact of a pesak upon the Jewish community is a critical factor which the posek has to take into account before he renders his decision. Yet, at the same time, intellectual and analytical integrity has to be preserved. The Rav's approach to women's prayer groups is a delicate balance between these various halakhic considerations, recognizing their distinct character and, consequently, their relative weight. Thus, the Rav could forthrightly state that a particular action violated no halakhic prohibition, while at the same time counsel against its performance on hashkafic and public-policy grounds. Unfortunately, many of his talmidim apparently failed to appreciate this fine balance—some pulling too far le-heter (towards permissibility), others pulling too far le-humra (towards stringency). But the Rav himself adamantly refused to be drawn to extremes.

As already mentioned above, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik was not the only gadol baTorah who objected to women's prayer groups on the grounds of hashkafa and public policy. Although the two never discussed the matter, this view is also shared by the Rav's younger brother, R. Ahron Soloveichik.\textsuperscript{268} In short, he too maintains that, in principle ("mei-ikar ha-din"), women's tefilla groups are, in and of themselves, permissible ("mutarot mi-tsad atsman"), provided that devarim she-bi-kdusha and berakhot for a public Torah reading are not recited. Nonetheless, R. Ahron Soloveichik, as well, strongly recommends against such groups based on hashkafic and public-policy considerations.

Not surprisingly, almost all of the specific concerns expressed by R. Ahron Soloveichik overlap with those articulated by the Rav, although at times their precise formulations vary. Thus, like the Rav, R. Ahron Soloveichik is especially concerned lest the women who participate in such groups are motivated not by a greater desire for the service of God, but by the social values and agenda of the Women's Liberation movement. In R. Ahron Soloveichik's opinion, the woman's role as reflected in feminist values runs counter to that of Jewish law and tradition. Consequently, new religious forms which result from these values are not likely to be beneficial to Judaism. In light of the communal ramifications of women's prayer groups, and in contradistinction to the
Rabbis of the “middle school” described above, R. Ahron Soloveichik contends that the posek cannot simply review the motivation of each particular tefilla group on an individual basis. Rather, he must be concerned with a generational perspective—examining the motivation of the majority of Orthodox women who desire to participate in these prayer groups. R. Ahron Soloveichik openly acknowledges that, were he convinced that the motivation of this majority was le-shem shamayyim (for the sake of heaven), he would find no fault with women’s prayer groups. However, in R. Ahron Soloveichik’s estimation, the facts today are otherwise, and he therefore strongly advises against their establishment.

R. A. Soloveichik further expressed his fear that the feminist overtones of the tefilla groups might lead to two additional halakhically undesirable results. The first is the mistaken impression that ten women can indeed constitute a proper minyan for tefilla be-tsibbur or devarim she-bi-kdusha. R. Soloveichik is well aware that the members of most of the prayer groups are careful not to call themselves a minyan, nor do they recite devarim she-bi-kdusha. Yet, notes R. Soloveichik, there is a deliberate attempt to construct and conduct the women’s tefilla so that it approximates and conforms as closely as possible to the structure and content of a regular minyan, including a pseudo-hazarat ha-shats, reading from a sefer Torah, birkhot ha-Torah, aliyyot, maftir, etc. While these practices may technically be halakhically permissible, their designed mimicry of a regular minyan service is potentially deceptive and misleading (geneivat da’at ha-beriyot).

Moreover, R. Soloveichik is troubled by the prospect that rabbinic approval for women’s tefilla groups might be interpreted as an implicit validation of the claims and principles of feminism, thus leading to hillul Hashem (a desecration of God’s name). This hillul Hashem would be aggravated were the rabbinic approval for women’s prayer groups viewed incorrectly as an acknowledgment that women can constitute a proper minyan, contrary to the halakhic rulings and practice of the past.

These same considerations have prevented R. Ahron Soloveichik from allowing women’s hakafot with a sefer Torah or Megilla readings. In practice, however, he has counseled his students to refrain from either encouraging or discouraging these latter practices, especially where the local rabbi’s active opposition would cause controversy in the community and possibly lead to a split in the congregation.

The Av Beit haDin of the Rabbinical Council of America, R. Gedalia Schwartz, has also adopted a position very similar to that of the Rav and R. Ahron Soloveichik. R. Schwartz expresses some hesitation
regarding various specific practices of the women’s prayer groups, particularly the removal of a sefer Torah from the Ark for a non-obligatory function, which may entail zilzul (disrespect) for the Torah Scroll. Nevertheless, he candidly acknowledges that most of the issues involved do not constitute clear violations of halakha (issur gamur), provided devarim she-bi-kdusha and berakhot for a public Torah reading are omitted.

Still, like many of the other halakhic authorities cited above, R. Schwartz has serious concerns regarding the motivation of those women who prefer a women’s tefilla group to a regular minyan. Equally disturbing to R. Schwartz is his fear, based on more than three and a half decades of experience in the American pulpit rabbinate, that the development of women’s prayer groups will generate fragmentation and bitter dispute within the Jewish community. The Av Beit haDin also emphasizes that the issues of motivation and divisiveness are critical considerations within the parameters of Jewish Law. The responsible ba'al hora'ah cannot ignore their significance, and they remain integral elements of any halakhic decision—all the more when dealing with synagogue custom. Moreover, he notes, these factors must be examined not merely as they pertain to any specific group of women; the posek must take into account their possible impact upon the Jewish world as a whole. At the same time, the weight given to any one element may vary from generation to generation and situation to situation. On balance, R. Schwartz believes that today’s communal conditions suggest firm restraint on the creation of women’s prayer groups.

A careful reading of the positions of the Rav, R. Ahron Soloveitchik, and R. Gedalia Dov Schwartz reveals that they, too, are sensitive to many of the same aspects raised by the “stringent school”: motivation, misrepresentation, the continuity of established Jewish custom and tradition, and the maintenance of Torah values. But they do not perceive these issues as matters of strict halakha per se, but rather of hashkafa and public policy. Moreover, it must be emphasized that they all were careful and deliberate in refraining from formally invoking the category of le-mi-gdar milta, despite ample opportunity to do so. They preferred instead to use the force of their personalities and standing with their talmidim and colleagues to “strongly recommend” against women’s prayer groups, without explicitly declaring them assur. Within the broad framework of the halakhic system, the classification of the rationale is not merely technical; it has significant ramifications and implications as to their mutability and flexibility in reaction to time and place, as will be further expounded in our concluding chapter.
At least one conclusion is evident from the above lengthy analysis: while women's tefilla groups may well be halakhically permissible, the question of their desirability within the contemporary Jewish experience has no easy answer. There are clearly two sides to this issue which must be weighed be-koved rosh (with due deliberation). Rabbinic authorities who have qualms as to the advisability of this innovation cannot be simply waved off as callous or insensitive to the needs of women; the hashkafic and public-policy concerns delineated above are very real, and should not be made light of. On the other hand, those rabbis who are amenable to the formation of women's prayer services, evaluating each instance on a case by case basis, are on solid halakhic ground as well. The question which must be seriously and deliberately confronted, therefore, is whether or not the advantages accrued by their implementation well outweigh the risks. As noted earlier, a proper response must address and analyze not only halakha, but Torah values and policy considerations as well. The important joint role of law and values in formulating a balanced Torah position concerning women's prayer groups has been articulated by Justice Menachem Elon in his “The Women of the Wall” decision:

In the clash of opinions and approaches regarding this important, complex and sensitive topic, arguments have not been limited solely to clarifying the law. Attention has also been focused on the values of the world of Halakha—which are also part of the law in its broader sense—and the manner in which these values should be applied to the issue at hand. There has been particular concern with both the “is” and the “ought,” with the formulation of proper judicial-halakhic policy based on the foundations of the past, in light of the reality of the present, and in view of the aspirations of the future. These are accepted and legitimate considerations in the world of Halakha in general, and they hold an especially critical position in a sensitive issue such as that before us. . . .”

While the purely legal component—based upon objective and reasoned halakhic analysis—will remain more or less constant, the public-policy element calls for continuous review and reexamination by the Torah giants of each generation. After all, needs, sensitivities and public-policy concerns change with time and location. What may have been a valid concern in 1970 may no longer be substantive as we approach the year 2000; and what may not have been of concern three decades ago, may today be critical.
Perhaps there is no better example of the fluxional nature of hash-kafa and public policy than the question of women mourners saying kaddish. While the general tendency of scholars for many centuries has been to dissuade women from saying kaddish, the modern period has heard a substantially different tone. Thus, in his discussion of this topic, R. Ahron Soloveichik argues:

Nowadays, when there are Jews fighting for equality for men and women in matters such as aliyyot, if Orthodox rabbis prevent women from saying kaddish when there is a possibility for allowing it, it will strengthen the influence of Reform and Conservative rabbis. It is therefore forbidden to prevent women from saying kaddish.

In a similar spirit, R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin writes in connection with the lenient ruling of his grandfather, the outstanding American posek, R. Joseph Elijah Henkin:

We are left where we started; at issue is essentially a question of policy and not issur ve-heter. In this context, my grandfather’s words are worth repeating: “It is known that were it not for kaddish, many would refrain from teaching prayer to their sons and would not come to synagogue. When they come because of kaddish, they also come a bit closer to Judaism the rest of the year; and for that reason itself, one should not rebuff the na’arot either, since it fosters closeness to Judaism.” On questions of policy, others may legitimately disagree. We should support any rabbi who declares, “While such a practice may be technically according to Halakha, in my opinion it would have dangerous consequences in my community and so I will not permit it”—although I would urge careful consideration of my grandfather’s approach even in the white heat of current controversy; also see Benei Vanim, I, no. 37, sec. 12. What must be avoided is the confusion of Halakha with polemics.

In the same vein, the door always remains open for a public-policy reevaluation of women’s prayer groups by Torah authorities. The significance of the reality that the majority of prominent Torah personalities have to date opposed women’s prayer groups for one reason or another cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, a significant number of community rabbis—those who have ongoing direct contact with the members of women’s tefilla groups—contend that greater rabbinic involvement and direction can serve to allay the legitimate motivational, hashkafic, Torah-value and public policy concerns articulated by the gedolei Yisrael cited above.
How our generation, or any of the generations of the future, may ultimately decide in this important issue is uncertain.\footnote{285} Indeed, a half a century ago, the great halakhic authority, R. Jehiel Jacob Weinberg, wisely observed that in questions regarding the role of women in society, time is often the final arbiter.\footnote{286} Yet, until that time when a clear consensus is reached, and in light of the growth and apparent vitality of women’s prayer groups, the Torah community as a whole must openly and honestly address the real issues—both halakhic and public policy—raised in this article. We pray that our Torah leadership will be blessed with divine guidance, inspiration and Solomonic wisdom to find the appropriate answers for our generation. And we pray as well that the community will allow itself to be led.

\section*{ADDENDUM}

\textbf{PART 1: GENERAL APPLICATIONS OF RABBEINU TAM’S \textit{PATUR VE-OSE ME-VAREIKH} PRINCIPLE.}

As mentioned above, text at note 35, the halakhic literature is replete with applications of Rabbeinu Tam’s \textit{patur ve-ose me-vareikh} principle to cases not specifically involving women. The following are several examples:

(a) One is freed from any obligation to attach \textit{tsitsit} to a \textit{talit she’ula} (a borrowed four-cornered garment) for the first thirty days. Nevertheless, should one desire to attach \textit{tsitsit} within the first month, based on Rabbeinu Tam’s principle he may do so and even recite the appropriate benediction. See \textit{Tosafot} (s.v. “\textit{Talit she’ula}”), \textit{Rosh} (Chapter 8, sec 26; see also \textit{Ma’adanei Yom Tov}, \textit{ad loc.} note 20) and \textit{Tosafot haRosh} to \textit{Hullin} 110b; \textit{Piskei Tosafot} (no. 160) and \textit{Nimukei Yosef} (\textit{Hilkhot Tsitsit}, s.v. “\textit{Talit she’ula}”) to \textit{Menahot} 44a; \textit{Semak} 31, gloss 20 of \textit{Rabbeinu Perets} (in the name of \textit{Tosafot Shunts}); \textit{Haggahot Maimoniyyot}, \textit{Hilkhot Tsitsit} 3:4, no. 4; \textit{Semag}, end of Ase 26; \textit{Beit Yosef}, \textit{Darkei Moshe haArokh}, \textit{Magen Avraham} (no. 5), \textit{Be’er Heitev} (no. 5), \textit{Shulhan Arukh} (no. 5), \textit{Mishna Berura} (no. 9), \textit{Arukh haShulhan} (no. 8) and \textit{Shulhan Arukh haRav} (sec. 5) to O.H. no. 14; R. Jacob of Lisa, \textit{Derekh haHayyim}, \textit{Din tsitsit she-asan eino yehudi, ve-isha ve-katan, ve-din talit she’ula}, no. 4; R. Abraham Danzig, \textit{Hayyei Adam}, sec. 11, no. 21; R. Mordechai Eliyahu, \textit{Sefer Halakha}, 1:7 sec. 18; R. Jehiel A. Zilber, \textit{Birur Halakha}, \textit{Y.D.} sec. 286, pp. 253-268; R. Aaron Aryeh Schechter and R. Uri Aurbach, \textit{Pithei She’arim}, \textit{Y.D.} sec. 286, no. 267; \textit{Birkhot haMitsvah keTikunot}, p. 55, no. 7. In light of the discussion above at notes 19 and 20, several \textit{posekim} have raised a
caveat regarding use by Sephardic Jews of Rabbeinu Tam’s position to allow reciting a berakha in the case of talit she’ula within thirty days. See R. Mordechai Carmi, Ma’amor Mordekhai, O.H. sec. 14, note 14; R. Joseph Hayyim, Od Yosef Hai, Lekh Lekha, 1; R. Judah Ayash, Resp. Beit Yehuda, Y.D. sec. 19; Yalkut Yosef, She’eirit Yosef, Part 1, sec. 14, Din Talit She’ula, no. 1, note 1. See also section 1b below.

(b) One is freed from any obligation to affix a mezuza to the doorpost of an apartment rented in the Diaspora for the first thirty days. Nevertheless, should one desire to affix a mezuza within the first month, he may do so and even recite the appropriate benediction. See R. Abraham Oppenheim of Butchatch, Eishel Avraham, O.H. sec. 14, no. 2; Pithei Teshuva, Y.D. sec. 286, no. 17; Hayyei Adam, kelal 15, no. 22 and R. Benjamin Jehiel Zilber, Beit Barukh, ad loco no. 34 (see also appendix Kunteres haMezuza 286:22, sec. 192); R. Hayyim Hezkiah Medini, Sedei Hemed, Kelalim, Mem, 112-115; Resp. Igrot Moshe, Y.D. sec. 179; R. Yaakov Y. Blau, Horay baDar, sec. 7, no. 7; Birur Halakha, Y.D. sec. 286, pp. 253-268; Birkhot haMitsvah keTikunan, p. 305, no. 5, sec. 2. Tosafot, Hullin 110b, s.v. “Talit she’ula,” question whether the application of Rabbeinu Tam’s principle to talit she’ula (and by analogy, mezuza before thirty days) is appropriate. After all, despite the exemption of the women, the men are still obligated; hence, the deficiency is in personam (ba-gavra). In the case of talit she’ula and mezuza, however, no one under such circumstances is obligated before thirty days, hence the deficiency would seem to be in rem (ba-heftsa). Despite this possible distinction, Tosafot and other posekim (in this and the previous section, section 1a) conclude with “ha-meikil lo hifid” (he who is lenient and permits recitation of the berakhot has lost nothing). R. David Zvi Solomon Eibeschutz, Levush Yerushalayim, Peri Megadim, Eishel Avraham (on Magen Avraham, O.H. sec. 14, no. 5), and Torah Temima, Deut. 22:12, note 125, explain Tosafot’s lenient conclusion by noting that the owner of the talit or the dwelling remains obligated; hence, the deficiency in these cases, too, is in personam as it is with women. Cf. R. Zvi [Hershel] Schachter, Nefesh baRav (Jerusalem: Reishit Yerushalayim, 1994), p. 104; R. Hayyim Dov Altuski, Hidushei Batra—Haga beMishna Berura, O.H. sec. 14, note 9.

(c) and (d) R. Samson of Coucy, supra, text and note 41, and Radbaz, supra, text and note 45, extend Rabbeinu Tam’s principle to the recitation of Hallel on Rosh Hodesh and the reading of the Megilla with its attendant benedictions, respectively, in situations where no minyan is present. R. Joseph Engel, Gilyonei haShas, Megilla 5a, finds difficulty with these attempts to extend Rabbeinu Tam’s principle. The
Torah exempted women from *mitsvot asei she-ha-zeman geramman*; nevertheless, women have the option to perform these commandments, and, according to Rabbeinu Tam, even to say the appropriate benedictions, should they so desire. In the cases of *Hallel* and *Megilla*, on the other hand, the individual is fully obligated whether or not there is a *minyan* present. The *minyan*, however, is a precondition to the fulfillment of these rituals; in its absence, these rituals simply cannot be performed as prescribed. In order to resolve this difficulty, we would like to suggest a different understanding of Radbaz’s responsum. In our opinion, Radbaz is not discussing whether or not one could read the *Megilla* with the blessing of “*al mikra Megilla*” absent a *minyan*. Rather, Radbaz’s question merely addressed the issue of whether one could recite the other two benedictions of “*she-asah nissim*” and “*she-hehiyyanu*.” These latter two *berakhot*, argues Radbaz, were not composed as blessings over the *Megilla*, but rather in recognition of the miracle of Purim. Consequently, these benedictions theoretically could and should be recited even if no properly mandated *Megilla* reading were available (—due to the lack of a *minyan*—according to those authorities whose opinion Radbaz is analyzing). However, writes Radbaz, since these two benedictions were enacted to be said—along with “*al mikra Megilla*”—together with the *Megilla* reading, when there is no required *Megilla* reading, one is exempt from reciting them. In accordance with Rabbeinu Tam’s principle, though, Radbaz argues that one may nevertheless recite these *berakhot* optionally. As for the benediction of “*al mikra Megilla*,” here R. Engel is absolutely correct: where there is no *minyan*, there can be no properly mandated *Megilla* reading and therefore no “*al mikra Megilla*” either. One is not merely exempt from “*al mikra Megilla*”; there is no place for the *berakha*, *ab initio*. Rabbeinu Tam’s principle is, in this case, irrelevant. Accordingly, as a proper reading of Radbaz’s responsum will reveal, Radbaz never even entertained its application to the *berakha* of “*al mikra Megilla*.”

(e) An *onen* (note 30) is normally freed from fulfilling all positive commandments. Nevertheless, the noted halakhist, R. Joseph Te’omim, *Peri Megadim*, O.H. sec. 71, *Mishbetsot Zahav* 3 and *Rosh Yosef*, *Berakhot* 17b, *s.v.* “*Mishna. Mi she-meito*,” allows the optional recitation of *Shema* with its benedictions by an *onen* (provided he has someone to take care of all the burial arrangements).

(f) Maharah Or Zaru’a, responsum no. 183, maintains that *yeshiva* students dorming with their teachers are freed of fulfilling all positive commandments. Nevertheless, they may recite the appropriate benediction before performing the *mitsvot* of their choice.
(g) R. Hayyim D. S. Zorapa, Resp. Sha’ar Shelomo, T.D. sec. 109, p. 109 column 3, permits non-relatives to tear keria with a berakha.

(h) R. David Samuel haLevi, Turei Zahav (Taz), O.H. sec. 46, no. 7, invokes Rabbeinu Tam’s principle in his discussion of birkat ha-noten la-ya’eif ko’ah.

(i) R. Aaron Worms, Me’orei Or, V, Be’er Sheva (published 1790), hashmatot to Berakhot 46a, p. 65a, raises the possibility of an optional two-man zimmun based on R. Tam’s ruling.

(j) R. Moses Shternbuch, Mo’adim uZemanim, IV, sec. 288, p. 53, argues that one who became Bar Mitsvah during the counting of the Omer may continue counting because of Rabbeinu Tam’s principle.

(k) R. Menashe Klein, Haggada Magid Mishne, p. 168, indicates that only kohanim are obligated in the ritual slaughtering of sacrifices, although non-kohanim are permitted to do so. Nevertheless, an Israelite who ritually slaughters a sacrifice may make the appropriate benediction.

(l) R. Samuel Elimelekh Turk, Resp. Kerem Tsvi, sec. 43, invokes Rabbeinu Tam’s principle in his discussion of keriat haTorah in a minyan on a day not ordained by Hazal.

(m) For additional examples and discussion, see Resp. Yabia Omer, O.H. I, sec. 28, nos. 5,6; I, sec. 39, no. 12 ff.; and V, sec. 43.

PART 2: THE PROHIBITION OF HANUEA—SYPHOPHANTIC MISREPRESENTATION OF JEWISH LAW.

Related to the issue of misrepresentation in halakha (text at note 123) is the general prohibition of hanufa—currying favor by flattering a wicked individual or his/her halakhically improper actions. Mishna Sota 7:8 (41a) recounts that King Agrippas was publicly encouraged by his Jewish subjects to continue as king despite his non-Jewish lineage. The Talmud criticizes their behavior by stating that for such sycophancy, they were worthy of destruction. Tosařot, Sota 41a, s.v. “Kol ha-ma-hanif,” argues that they were worthy of punishment not because they misrepresented halakha, for that (based on the incident of Ula, note 131) is permitted in cases of mortal danger—but because there was no compelling reason for them to say anything at all! Many other posekim, rishonim and aharonim, agree with the above Tosařot and permit hanufa in cases of danger. See Yerei’im haShalem, 248 [58]; Magen Avraham and Pit’hei Olam uMatamei haShulhan, O.H., end of sec. 196; Shulhan Arukh haRav, O.H. sec. 196, no. 18, Mishna Berura, O.H., end of sec. 196; Yad haKetana (unknown aharon), Hilkhot De’ot, sec. 10, nos. 13 and 14, Minhat Ani, notes 15 and 16.

The above posekim clearly take issue with Rabbeinu Jonah Geron-
di, Sha'arei Teshuva, Gate III, secs. 187-188, who derives from the asperity of the Talmud’s censure (Sota 41b) that one is forbidden to praise non-halakhic actions even if it means placing oneself in “danger” (generally understood to mean “mortal danger”). Furthermore, in light of the incident of Ula (note 131), several later authorities who cite R. Jonah or agree with his position feel it necessary to make several important distinctions which have the effect of attenuating R. Jonah’s ruling: 1) In Menorat haMa'or, ner 2, kelal 3, helak 1, perakim 1 and 2, secs. 44 and 45, R. Isaac Abuhav permits praising a wicked individual in a life-and-death situation, provided he does not justify his wicked actions. 2) Others go one step further and differentiate between public approbation of wicked actions, which is forbidden even in life-threatening situations, and private hanufa. See Orhot Tsadikim (unknown rishon), Gate 24, Sha’ar haHanifot, helak 1 (this section is a restatement of Sha’arei Teshuva, ibid.); Yad haKetana, Hil. De’ot, sec. 10, no. 14 and Minhat Ani, note 16; R. Moses Bezalel Sinai, Torat haI(etaJot, Sota 41b, s.v. “Kol ha-ma-hanif”; R. Hayyim Judah Segal Deutsch, commentary to Sefer HaReidim, Lo ta’ase min haTorah ha-teluyyot ha-pe bakane ve-eshar le-shamran be-khol yom, sec. 4, no. 48—Be’er Tzehuda, note 8, s.v. “Od katav haTosafot.” 3) Yad haKetana, ibid., sec. 13, Minhat Ani, note 15, suggests one further possibility, namely that hanufa is forbidden in cases where there is “only a slight chance” (hashash rahok) of mortal danger but permitted in cases of clear and imminent threat. 4) Finally, R. Moses Bezalel Sinai, ibid., and R. Eliyahu Rot, Sha’arei Teshuva ha-meFurash, sec. 188, HaRotse biTshuva, s.v. “Li-msor” and “she-he-benifu,” argue that hanufa is forbidden in cases of “financial danger” (sakanat mamon)—and this is the “danger” referred to by R. Jonah—but is certainly permitted in cases of “mortal danger.” The view of R. Jonah is also cited by R. Israel Meir haKohen Kagan, Hafeits Hayyim, Petiha, la’avin 16 and Be’er Mayyim Hayyim ad loc. This seems to contradict what he writes in Mishna Berura, O.H. end of sec. 196, where he permits praising even murder in cases of danger—unless he maintains one of the above distinctions. For a general discussion of hanufa, see Encyclopedia Talmudit, XVI, “Hanufa,” p. 375.

It is unlikely that Rabbeinu Jonah agrees with Maharshal’s position on ziyyuf haTorah (see discussion at note 123), since R. Jonah writes in Sha’arei Teshuva, Gate III sec. 52, that teaching Jewish law wrongly and incorrectly (“she-lo ka-dat ve-she-lo ke-halakha”) violates “. . . before a blind individual, thou shalt not place a stumbling block” (Lev. 19:14). Nothing else is mentioned. See also Addendum, Part 4b.
PART 3: VIEWS AND CASES DEMONSTRATING THAT ZITYUF HA'TORAH DOES NOT REQUIRE MARTYRDOM.

As mentioned above, text at note 133, Rabbis Feinstein, Herzog and Henkin opine that Maharash’s position on zityuf ha’Torah is quite problematic and/or is certainly not reflected by normative Jewish Law. The following represents a partial list of views and cases we have collected which apparently demonstrate that misrepresenting halakha is merely another form of lying, which may be permitted under certain conditions (see Addendum Part 6; see also note 132 regarding double-talk) and is by no means grounds for martyrdom. [This list does not take into account the aforementioned distinctions suggested by Rabbis Henkin and Herzog (note 129) according to the view of Maharashal.]

(a) R. Jonathan haKohen of Lund, cited in Shita Mekubetset to Bava Kama 38a, s.v. “Shor shel Yisrael,” clearly states that when necessary, halakha may be distorted in order to make it more acceptable to non-Jews.

(b) Rashi, Berakhot 43b, s.v. “ve-lo hi,” indicates that the noted amora, Rav Papa, was embarrassed by an erroneous halakhic ruling he had made. In order to cover up his shame, he consciously fabricated a legal decision by his mentor Rava in support of his position, which he knew to be wrong (Cf. Tosafot, Rosh and Nimukei Yosef, s.v. “Garsinan,” ad loc.). Rashi, Avoda Zara 58a, s.v. “demei” (cf. Tosafot, ad. loc., s.v. “Ikla”) indicates that Rava, too, presumably lied about a previous ruling to cover his shame. R. Levi Ibn Haviv, Resp. Maharalbah, sec. 147, s.v. “u-bar min dein” [Lemberg, 1865; p. 59 column 4], citing Rashi, suggests that such misrepresentations of halakha are permitted, to avoid shame. See also R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Birkei Yosef, H.M. sec. 12, no. 12; R. Malachi haKohen, Yad Malakhi, Kelal 663, pp. 168b-169b; Sedei Hemed, Kelalim, Khaf, no. 8; and Shin, no. 28; Sefer Beit Aharon, III (Brooklyn NY: Deutsch Printing and Publishing, 1955), kelal “Omer Davar beShem Omro,” siman 17, pp. 416ff. Interestingly, R. Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook, Iqrot haRe’iya, II, no. 694 (28 Sivan 5674), suggests a creative explanation, such that no misrepresentation of halakha was involved. See also R. Abraham David Horowitz, Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha, VII, Y.D. sec. 74, no. 3.

(c) Likewise, the Talmud in Berakhot 27b records that R. Joshua lied about his position regarding the obligation to recite ma’ariv so as not to publicly contradict R. Gamliel, the Nasi. A similar situation occurred between R. Nahman and Ula (Bava Kama 12a). R. David haKohen Sakali, Resp. Kiryat Hana David, I, Hiddushim veLikutim,
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sec. 37, no. 2, and R. Ezekiel Landau, *Tsiyyun leNefesh Haya*, *Berakhot* 27b, end of s.v. “Amad,” record such misrepresentations as perfectly legitimate—even though there was little more than a bit of unpleasantness and honor at stake. See, however, R. Joseph Hayyim, *Ben Yehoyada*, *Berakhot* 27b and *Resp. Aderet Tiferet*, note 123. As to why the issue of lying per se (“mi-dvar sheker tirhak”) is not an issur, see R. Chaim Kanievsky, *Masekhet Kutim* 1:14, *Me-taber* note 30. See also infra, Addendum, Part 6.

(d) The Talmud in *Berakhot* 63a further recounts that the Israeli court, in an attempt to reassert its sole authority in determining the calendar, sent two young scholars to Babylonia to R. Hanina, who persisted in fixing the length of years and months. To undermine the authority of R. Hanina, these young colleagues forbade that which he permitted and permitted that which he forbade. Many authorities maintain that the young scholars *paskened* falsely and purposely misrepresented halakha to this end. See R. Menahem Azarya de Fano, *Resp. Rama miFano*, end of sec. 108, s.v. “ve-anahnu”; R. Samuel Eliezer Edels, *Hidushei haMaharscha*, ad loc.; R. Hayyim Palagi, *Hafeits Hayyim*, sec. 19, no. 22; R. Hayyim ben Atar, *Heifets Hashem*, ad loc. Other commentators argue, however, that the rulings of the pair were in the category of *horaYat shaYa* (a temporary abrogation or change of the law), presumably effected by the authority of the *Sanhedrin* or the leading scholar of the generation; hence, their rulings cannot be considered misrepresentations of Jewish law. See R. Jonathan Shteiff, *Hadashim Gam Yeshanim*, ad loc., first interpretation; R. Jacob Schor, *Mishnat Ya’akov*, *Birkat Ya’akov* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1990) ad loc.; see also Addendum, Part 41. Finally, some commentators posit that the rulings of the young scholars were indeed accurate, though normally they should not have challenged R. Hanina publicly. See *ad loc.* the following commentaries: R. Elijah of Vilna, *Imrei Noam*, s.v. “Ki heikha”; R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, *Petakh Einayyim*; R. Jonathan Shteiff, *Hadashim Gam Yeshanim*, second interpretation; R. Joseph Hayyim, *Ben Yehoyada*; R. Jacob Emden (gloss, *ad loc.); R. Joseph Saul Nathanson, *Yad Sha’ul*, sec 242, no. 23.

(e) The Talmud in *Eruvin* 13a indicates that for pedagogic reasons, R. Akiva lied in declaring that the halakha follows the view of the disciple of R. Yishmael. Similarly, in *Zevahim* 13a, R. Huna made up a non-existent *kal va-homer*—also for pedagogic reasons. In *Yoma* 23a/b we are told that R. Zadok misrepresented the laws of *egla arufa* in order to heighten the sense of mourning and re-sensitize the people to the value of life. (Regarding the latter case, see *Meiri, Yoma* 23a; R.
(f) Megilla 9a records that the seventy sages sequestered by King Talmai for the purpose of translating the Torah deviated in several instances from the literal meaning of the text for fear of offending the king. Maharsha himself suggests that the action of the seventy sages was divinely inspired, or alternatively that they changed only words, not the intent. R. Elijah Rogeler, Resp. Yad Eliyahu, sec. 48, is unsatisfied with these answers and derives from this incident that ziyyuf haTorah is not grounds for martyrdom. He further argues that even Maharsha could be referring only to instances where there is a mere “doubt” (hashash) of danger.

(g) The Talmud in Yevamot 106a recounts the story of a childless widow (yevama) who was hesitant to undergo levirate marriage to her brother-in-law (yavam) for fear that he was interested only in her money. In order to outsmart the brother-in-law, R. Hiyya bar Abba told the yavam: “Halots la, u-vekhakh ata konesa (perform levirate divorce, and thereby you will marry her).” While R. Hiyya’s reasons for lying were noble, even laudatory, this was a willful misrepresentation of halakha. Interestingly, Yam Shel Shelomo, Yevamot, sec. 12, nos. 30 and 31, discusses this story, including the issue of lying, but does not raise the question of ziyyuf haTorah. Note, however, that Maharsha may distinguish between misrepresenting the permissibility or prohibition of an action, and misrepresenting the result and/or effect of a given action. There was nothing prohibited in R. Hiyya’s advising the yavam to do halitsa; the only ziyyuf here was about its consequence, i.e., whether halitsa can effect marriage.

(h) In the famous story recorded in Gittin 56a, Bar Kamtsa, in vengeful spite, maimed an animal sent to the Temple by the Caesar of Rome, rendering it forbidden to sacrifice. For fear of retribution from the Roman Empire, the rabbis wanted to sacrifice the animal anyway. R. Zekhariah ben Abkulas, however, prevented this by arguing that such an action might lead people to conclude that maimed animals are eligible as sacrifices. The rabbis then wanted to kill Bar Kamtsa as a pursuer (rodef); however, again R. Zekhariah cautioned that people might say that anyone who maims a sacrifice is liable for the death penalty. The Talmud closes with the words of R. Yohanan: that R. Zekhariah’s overly pious concerns resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple.
Contrary to the view of R. J. D. Bleich, note 123, nearly all the commentaries (vide infra) on this story indicate that life and death considerations should have guided the rabbis to both sacrifice the maimed animal and/or kill Bar Kamtsa—irrespective of any misrepresentation of halakha that might have occurred as a result. On Gittin 56a, see the following commentaries: R. Jacob Emden; R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes; R. Meir Schiff; R. Samuel Eliezer Edels (Maharsha); R. Jacob Reisher, Iyyun Ya’akov; R. Moses Sofer, Hiddushei Hatam Sofer; R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Petakh Einayyim; R. Joseph Hayyim, Ben Tehayyada. In addition, see R. Elijah of Vilna, Divrei Eliyahu, Parshat Mishpatim, s.v. “Lo tihye”; R. Zev Einhorn, Pirush Maharzu, Eikha Rabba 4:3; Resp. Benei Vanim, I, Ma’amor 5.

(i) Gittin 62a indicates that in order to prevent an am ha-arets from defiling the ritual purity of halla, one is permitted to lie to the am ha-arets and state, “See here, if you touch the halla, your dough will return to a status of tevel.”

(j) Bava Kama 30b discusses instances where someone causes damage with belongings left in a public thoroughfare. According to one view, these effects are legally forfeit, and whoever takes physical possession of them first can take legal ownership. Nevertheless, the Jewish court, if asked, will counsel against such action, “because of theft” (halakha ve-ein morin kein mi-shum gezel). Meiri understands the latter to mean that the court forbids such seizures—though actually permitted in the present case—because they might be viewed as giving license to theft (mi-shum tikun olam). Rashi (s.v. “be-halakha”), however, indicates that the court counsels against such action “by stating that it is forbidden because it constitutes theft.” Prima facie, this seems to be a clear violation of ziyyuf haTorah.

(k) According to Rivan, cited by Tosafot, Bava Metsia 109b, s.v. “Me-salkinan” (the relevant talmudic discussion is actually found on 109a) and Tosafot baRosh, Bava Metsia 109a, s.v. “Me-salki le-hu,” R. Yosef lied regarding the rights of a gardener’s heirs to a share in capital gains in order to force them to accept his “generous” settlement offer without objection. See also R. Samuel Shtarshon, ad loc.; Be’ur haGra to H.M. sec. 329, no. 1.

(l) The Mishna in Keritut (1:7; 8a) records that R. Simeon ben Gamliel knowingly misrepresented the law by ruling incorrectly and leniently in order to lower the market price of sacrificial turtledoves. R. Israel Yacov Fisher, comment 10 of his approbation to R. Jacob Yehizkiyah Fisch, Titen Emet leYa’akov (Jerusalem, 1982), indicates that such misrepresentation was permitted since its purpose was to prevent future
violations. It should be noted, however, that the classic commentaries 
ad loc., Rashi and Rabbis Ovadiah Bartenura, Yisrael Lipschitz (Tiferet 
Yisrael) and Pinhas Kehati, all suggest that this was a 
hora'at sha'a (a temporary abrogation or change of the law), 
effect by the authority of the leading scholar of the generation, 
and, hence was not misrepresentation. Vide infra, Addendum, Part 4i.

(m) Nahmanides records his stating during the disputation at 
Barcelona that one is not bound by comments and interpretations found in 
Aggada and Midra'sh, see Moses ben Nahman, 
Viku'ah haRamban, in 
Kol Kitvei haRamban, R. Chaim D. Chavel, ed. (Jerusalem: Mossad 
haRav Kook, 1963), I, pp. 302-320). The late nineteenth century 
Russian Rabbi, Moses Eliasberg, 
Shevil haZahav, p. 27 (cited in R. 
Chavel's notes to Kol Kitvei haRamban, ibid., p. 308, s.v. "sheAdam 
magid le-haveiro") suggests that Ramban consciously lied under pres- 
sure. Whether he did or not is a topic of much heated discussion (see 
Marvin Fox, "Nahmanides on the Status of Aggadot," 
J. of Jewish 
Studies 40:1, Spring 1989, pp. 95-109, and sources cited therein). In 
any case, according to R. Eliasberg's view, Ramban clearly misrepresent- 
ed Jewish tradition, which, according to Maharshal, should have been 
grounds for martyrdom.

(n) Napoleon Bonaparte placed twelve queries before The As- 
sembly of Jewish Notables, which included the outstanding talmudic 
scholar, R. David Sinzheim. Their responses, particularly regarding 
usury and intermarriage, were conscious misrepresentations of Jewish 
law, perpetrated because of the fear of reprisals. See Tama Diogene, 
"Collection des Ecris et des Actes Relatifs au Dernier Etat des Individus 
Professant la Religion Hebraique," Contemporary English Translation 
and edition by F.D. Kirwan, 1807; Barukh Mevorakh, "Napoleon 
ukufato," (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 5728), p. 77 ff. In particular, 
compare the halakhic answers of R. Ishmael of Modena (ibid., p. 103 
ff) with those of the Assembly. See also R. Natan Raphael Auerbach, 
"Toledot haRid Sinzheim," which appears in the introduction to R. 
Sinzheim's "Minhat Ani" (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 5748), I.

(o) In Resp. Tsits Eliezer, XIV, sec. 99, R. Eliezer Waldenberg per- 
mits a judge to willfully distort halakha and rule improperly in order to 
save his life ("mutar le-hatot et ha-din bi-mkom piku'ah nefesh"). Sur- 
prisingly, R. Waldenberg makes no mention of the view of Yam Shel 
Shelomo. See, however, R. Abraham Drori and R. Judah David Bleich, 
note 123.

(p) As discussed above, Addendum, Part 2, it is unlikely that 
Rabbeinu Jonah agrees with Maharshal's position on ziyuf haTorah.
PART 4: EXAMPLES OF PROHIBITIONS BASED ON PUBLIC POLICY CONSIDERATIONS.

As discussed above, text at note 226, rabbinic authorities are empowered to forbid otherwise permitted actions or innovations because of public policy considerations. Such prohibitions commonly appear in the halakhic literature under the general rubric of le-mi-gdar milta (protective ordinances). Several leading references are cited in note 226. The following is a list of examples culled from the Talmud, codes and responsa literature.

(a) Brief citations from Talmud and codes: Hullin 15a (where Rav was publicly stringent regarding food cooked on Shabbat but lenient for his students); Shabbat 139a (where the rabbis refused to reveal grounds for leniency in spreading a bed canopy—see R. Hananel ad loc.); Shabbat 153b (where the rabbis were publicly stringent regarding carrying in a public domain in segments of less than 4 cubits); Bava Kama 30b (where the court, if consulted, counsels against taking possession of a forfeit object on the grounds of theft—see Addendum, Part 3j); and Avoda Zara 59a (where R. Yohanan forbade the unlearned to eat lupines [turmisin] cooked by non-Jews). Similarly, Rama, O.H. sec. 317, no. 3, forbids opening a non-permanent stitch in front of the unlearned. See also Rama, Y.D. sec. 160, no. 16; Shakh, ad loc., no. 22; Resp. Rashba, I, sec. 98.

(b) In a lengthy letter to his relative, Rabbeinu Jonah of Gerondi, Nahmanides (Teshuvot ha-meYuhasot leRamban, no. 184) argues in favor of the permissibility of concubines. Nevertheless, he concludes his responsum by admonishing Rabbeinu Jonah not to permit the practice for fear that the laws of Nidda would not be observed and promiscuity would be encouraged. Cf R. Jacob Emden, She'eilat Ta'aveits, II, sec. 15, and Getssel Ellinson, Non-Halachic Marriage (Tel-Aviv: The Dvir Co. Ltd., 1975), pp. 72-79, who questions the authenticity of this concluding reservation.

(c) R. Yair Bachrach, Resp. Havvot Ya'ir, no. 222, ruled against the recitation of kaddish by a daughter, lest it weaken the customs of Israel. See also text and notes 280-283, supra.

(d) In a letter appearing in the introduction to Yalkut Yosef, VII, R. Ovadiah Yosef suggests that although a mourner is permitted to dance at his own wedding, R. Jacob Ettlinger, Binyan Tsiyyon, sec. 139, forbade dancing, lest mixed dancing would result. A similar understanding is suggested by R. Gavriel Zinner, Nitei Gavriel—Hilkhot Aveilut: Dinei uMinhagei Hishtatfut beSimha, page 29, note 21. See discussion, Addendum, Part 6.
(e) R. Yehezkel Abramsky, HaPardes 30:1 (5716), pp. 1-4, reprinted in the introduction to Resp. Tiit Eliezer, IV, and again in his Sefer Hazon Yehezkel, III, Responsa, sec. 5, in a letter to the then President of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (Agudath HaRabbonim), R. Israel haLevi Rosenberg, demonstrates that gelatin is permitted. He nevertheless maintains that it should be publicly prohibited since its non-kosher origins will confuse the unlearned.

(f) Late Chief Rabbi Isaac haLevi Herzog, Resp. Heikhal Yitshak, O.H. sec. 4, rpt. in Pesakim uKhtavim I, She’eilot uTshuvot beDinei O.H., sec. 14, urged the South African community not to change its Hebrew pronunciation—despite solid halakhic grounds to do so—for fear of playing into the hands of Reform Jewry.

(g) The late Chief Rabbi of Rehovot, R. Elimelekh Bar-Shaul, indicates that a Torah reading with berakhot is halakhically permissible on Yom haAtsma’ut. He nevertheless opposes it lest some view the new holiday as a bona fide Yom Tov and not put on tefillin. See R. Elimelekh Bar-Sha’ul, in Hilkhot Yom haAtsma’ut veYom Yerushalayyim, Nahum Rakover, ed. (Jerusalem: Misrad haDatot, 5733), p. 310.

(h) Taz, O.H. sec. 585, no. 5, Y.D. sec. 117, no. 1, and H.M. sec. 2 (at end) maintains that one cannot forbid that which the Torah has explicitly permitted. See also R. David Cohen, Gevul Ta’aveits (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 1986), “Kuntres Heter Me-furash baKature,” pp. 70-111. Nevertheless, R. Aron Maged, Sefer Beit Aharon, VIII, s.v. “Ein le-ha-hakhamim la-asor davar ha-me-furash ba-Torah,” sec. 27, pp. 158-160, cites many sources demonstrating that even where the Torah explicitly permits an action, the rabbis can forbid it le-mi-gdar milta ve-tsorekh ha-sha’at.

(i) According to R. Israel Yacov Fisher, in comment 10 of his approbation to Titen Emet leYa’akov, the incident of Keritut 8a (see Addendum, Part 3l) suggests that in extreme situations, one may rule leniently against accepted halakha for the purpose of preventing future violations (le-mi-gdar milta le-heteira). This also seems to be the view of several commentators regarding the incident of R. Hanina and the two young Babylonian scholars (Berakhot 63a; see Addendum, Part 3d). See R. Menahem Azariah De Fano, Resp. Rama miFano, end of sec. 108, s.v. “ve-anahnu”; R. Samuel Eliezer Edels, Hidushei haMaharsha Berakhot 63a; R. Hayyim Palagi, Hafeits Hayyim, sec. 19, no. 22; R. Hayyim ben Atar, Heifts Hashem, Berakhot 63a; and R. Jonathan Shteiff, Hadashim Gam Yeshanim, Berakhot 63a, second interpretation. Rosh, cited in Shita Mekubetset to Bava Batra 166b, seems to differ. R.
Joel Teitelbaum (of Satmar), *Resp. Divrei Yoel*, Y.D. sec. 35, no. 4, argues that today we do not have the power of *le-mi-gdar milta le-he-teiva*. R. Fisher does not take note of the fact that, regarding both the cases of *Berakhot* and *Keritut*, some commentaries, *ad loc.*, indicate that these were examples of *hora'at sha'ata* (a temporary abrogation or change of the law) presumably effected by the authority of the *Sanhedrin* or the leading scholar of the generation and, hence, cannot serve as precedents for normative halakhic procedure. See, for example, R. Jonathan Shteiff, *Hadashim Gam Yesanim*, *Berakhot* 63a, first interpretation; R. Jacob Schor, *Mishnat Ya'akov, Birkat Ya'akov, Berakhot* 63a; Rashi, *Keritut* 8a, *s.v.* "Nikhnas le-beit din"; Rabbis Ovadiah Bartenura, Yisrael Lipschitz (*Tiferet Yisrael*) and Pinhas Kehati, *Mishna Keritut* 1:7; R. Moses Ibn Habib, *Kapot Temarim*, *Sukka* 34b, *s.v.* "Tosafot, d''h ve-li-drosh"; R. Avigdor Kohen Zedek, cited by R. Zidkiyahu ben Abraham, *Shibbolei haLeket*, *Hilkhot Lulav*, sec. 355; and *Sefer Beit Aharon*, supra, Addendum, Part 3b, sec. 26, pp. 438ff. A similar approach is suggested by R. Barukh Frankel Te'omim, *Resp. Ateret Hakhamim*, E.H. sec. 29, in explaining *Seder Eliyahu Rabba* of *Tanna deVei Eliyahu* 4:1, where Moses attributes the command to kill the worshipers of the Golden Calf to God (*Exodus* 32:27), when in fact it was his own idea. (Regarding *Tanna deVei Eliyahu*, see also R. Reuben Margaliot, *Margaliyyot haYam*, *Sanhedrin* 89a, sec. 23.) Moreover, R. Jacob Ettlinger, *Arukh leNer*, *Sukkot* 34b, *s.v.* "Sham, d''h ve-li-drosh," indicates that such a *hora'at sha'ata*—permitting the forbidden in order to prevent future violations—may be invoked only if the possible future violations are extremely serious, like those punishable by *karet*. R. Jacob Schor, *Mishnat Ya'akov, Birkat Ya'akov* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1990), *Berakhot* 63a (see Addendum, Part 3d), allows such a *hora'at sha'ata* only where the unity of *kelal Yisrael* is seriously threatened.

(j) An interesting example is the requirement to locate the *bima* in the center of the *shul*. R. Moses Feinstein, *Resp. Igrot Moshe*, O.H., II, sec. 42, argues that R. Moses Sofer's stringency in this matter stemmed from his fear of Reform influences and was a case of *le-mi-gdar milta*. Where the desire to move the *bima* stems from other practical considerations (e.g., acoustics), it is permitted. In other words, where the concern is no longer valid, the *geder* is no longer applicable.

(k) The Late Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, *Pesakim uKhtavim I, She'eilot uTshuvot beDinei Orah Hayyim*, sec 32, argues that in theory, there are grounds to permit accepting a bequest from an apostate towards the construction of a synagogue. Nevertheless, R. Herzog leaves it up to the discretion of the local rabbi to forbid it in practice

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PART 5: RULING THAT SOMETHING IS BIBLICALLY FORBIDDEN, WHEN IT IS NOT, MAY VIOLATE BAL TOSIF (ADDING TO THE TORAH).

As mentioned in note 227, based on bal tosif, Maimonides forbids claiming that something is biblically forbidden when it is actually rabbinic in origin. In M.T., Hilkhot Mamrim, 2:9, he writes: “If the [court] forbids fowl [seethed in milk], claiming that it is included in “goat” and is forbidden biblically, this is an addition. However, if it said that goat flesh is biblically permitted, but we forbid it and we notify the people that it is a [rabbinic] edict . . . this is not an addition . . . .” Ra’avad, ad loc., dissents, arguing that biblical verses are often cited in the Talmud as source texts for rabbinic prohibitions. See Kesef Mishne and Lehem Mishne. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Reshimot Shiurim, R. Zvi Joseph Reichman, ed. [New York, 5749], Sukka 31b, p. 144, no. 8, s.v. “beIsur” and Reshimot Shiurim, R. Zvi Joseph Reichman, ed. [New York, 5753], Nedarim, p. 182, no. 5, s.v. “veHinei aleinu,” and R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Resp. Benei Vanim, I, sec. 37, no. 12, suggest that Maimonides’ prohibition applies exclusively to the Jewish court or Sanhedrin, but not to the individual posek. The vast majority of commentators who discuss Rambam’s view seem to disagree, however. For example, Hinukh, Commandment 454 (465 in the Chavel edition), cites Maimonides’ ruling as referring to any teacher or decisor of Jewish law (“more”), not just the court. [R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin (personal communication, June 5, 1997) has suggested that the above decision of Hinukh may be connected with his subsequent ruling (Commandment 496) that the biblical obligation to heed rabbinic edicts (lo tasur) applies to rulings of the great scholars of any generation, not just those of the Sanhedrin; see Resp. Benei Vanim, II, sec. 23, no 5, pp. 90-91.] Similarly, R. Elijah Zev Rosenberg, Kiryat Sefer, Mamrim, Chapter 2, Azbara 345, paraphrases Maimonides ruling using the singular (while the plural is used in the previous paragraph, which deals with the Sanhedrin). Other scholars agree with this latter understanding of Maimonides; see R. Jacob Ibn Forno, cited in Birkei Yosef, O.H. sec. 243 at end; R. Zevi Hirsch Chajes, Darkei Hor’a’a, sec. 6, first footnote, and in greater detail in Torat haNevi’im, Ma’amor Bal Tosif; R. Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, cited in Nefesh haRav, p. 177; R. Joseph Babad, Minhat Hinukh, 454, end of no. 1; R. Joseph Elijah Henkin,
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Teshuvt Ivra, sec. 52, no. 3 (in Kitvei haGri Henkin, II); R. Joshua Menahem Mendel Ehrenberg; Resp. Devar Yehoshua, I, sec. 19, no. 6; and R. David Cohen, conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer, March 20, 1995. Interestingly, R. Chaim Soloveitchik, ibid., maintains that according to Rambam, ba'al tosif would forbid a posek even from treating a custom or rabbinic injunction with the same stringency as one would a biblical prohibition.

R. Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides), end of commentary to Deut. 4:2, and R. Hizkiyah ben Manoah, Hizkuni, Genesis 3:3, while not referring to Maimonides explicitly, clearly apply bal tosif to an individual who claims that an action was commanded by God (in the Torah) when it was not. Nahmanides writes [Chavel translation]: “In my opinion, even if someone devised an independent commandment . . . he transgresses . . . . [The prohibition of not adding to the Torah does not forbid] whatever [laws] the sages have established in the way of a fence around the Torah, such as the secondary degrees of forbidden marriages—that activity of [establishing fences] is itself a requirement of the Torah, provided only that one realizes that these [laws] are a result of a particular fence and that they are not expressly from the mouth of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the Torah.” Cf., however, Nahmanides’ comments on Maimonides’ Sefer haMitsvot, Shoresh Rishon, s.v. “baRishona,” where he states, “First, because it is customary for rabbis to refer to rabbinic matters as ‘Torah’ and strengthen them with biblical citations.” Nevertheless, this may have been done only when it was common knowledge that the ordinances were in fact rabbinic. See also the related comments of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, supra.

R. Hizkiyah ben Manoah, Hizkuni, ibid., commenting on Eve’s statement that God forbade even touching the tree of knowledge, cites the Talmud, Sanhedrin 29a, which describes this incident as an example of “he who adds detracts” (kol ha-mosif gore’a). R. Hizkiyah is troubled by the Talmud’s criticism: after all, in what way is Eve’s safeguard any different from subsequent rabbinic gezeirot? He suggests that Eve sinned in falsely attributing the source of the prohibition to the divine. This approach is, of course, in consonance with the view of Maimonides cited above. In fact, R. Joseph Babad, Minhat Hinukh, ibid., actually cites Sanhedrin 29a as proof to the view of Maimonides. R. Reuven Margoliot, Margaliyyot haYam, Sanhedrin 29a, no. 29 also suggests that Sanhedrin 29a supports Maimonides’ position, but cites Avot deRabi Natan, chap. I, sec. 5 which indicates that it was Adam—not Eve—who erred. See also R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Kisei Ra-

Additional *posekim* argue that it is forbidden to call a rabbinic edict a biblical prohibition because it violates *bal tosif*. See R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes, *ibid.*; R. Jacob Ibn Forno, *ibid.*; and R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, *ibid.* In *Darkei Hora'a*, *ibid.*, R. Chajes specifically takes issue with the contention of R. Moses Sofer (responsum to R. Chajes published in *Darkei Hora'a*, *ibid.* and surprisingly absent from *Resp. Hatam Sofer*) that one may “strengthen” a biblical prohibition which is based only upon a negative commandment by claiming that it also violates a positive commandment. Other authorities, though, agree with Hatam Sofer provided there will be no practical halakhic consequence (e.g., no new obligation of lashes). Under such conditions, these scholars maintain that one may even upgrade a rabbinic prohibition to a biblical one. See *Resp. Rashba*, I, sec. 43; the commentary of R. Elijah Mizrahi to *Exodus* 12:16, s.v. “Afilu at yedei aherim” at end; R. Moses haKohen Ashkenazi, cited in *Birkei Yosef*, *ibid.*; *Taharat haMayyim*, *Ma'areket Hesh*, no. 42; R. Aron Maged, *Sefer Beit Aharon*, VII, s.v. “Ein la-asor hamutar,” sec. 4, pp. 576-577. However, should a new obligation of lashes result from the upgrading, then *bal tosif* has been violated. See *Sedei Hemed*, *Pe'at haSade*, *Ma'arekhet haAleph*, no. 75. We note in passing that R. Sofer’s position is somewhat surprising in light of his own strong stance elsewhere against all forms of lying. See *Resp. Hatam Sofer*, VI, sec. 59. Even in cases where the lying is permitted to maintain peace (“me-shanim mi-penei ha-shalom,” *Yevamot* 65b), R. Sofer, citing the commentary of Nahmanides to *Genesis* 18:13, allows only ‘halving’ truths, not outright lying. Cf. Addendum, Part 6.

**PART 6: MISREPRESENTING HALAKHA MAY VIOLATE THE PROHIBITION OF LYING.**


We turn now to the particular issue raised in the text at note 228, namely, does misrepresenting halakha and/or giving an erroneous reason or source for a prohibition involve violation of the prohibition against lying? R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes, Darkei Hora’a, siman 6, first footnote, argues that it is forbidden to call a rabbinic edict a biblical prohibition because it violates not only bal tosif (see Addendum, Part 5) but also “mi-dvar sheker tirhak”—“From untruthfulness, distance thyself” (Exodus 23:7). This is also the opinion of R. Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, cited in Nefesh haRav, p.178. R. Soloveitchik maintains that even Ra’avad (note 227 and Addendum, Part 5) agrees that “mi-dvar sheker tirhak” forbids the rabbis to claim that a rabbinic injunction is biblical. Accordingly, Rambam and Ra’avad disagree only whether it is permitted to be as stringent when dealing with a custom or rabbinic injunction as one would be were the prohibition biblical. R. Jacob Israel Kanievsky, Keraina delggarta, letter 203, pp. 219-220, refuting the suggestion that it is forbidden to take part in elections in the secular State of Israel, writes: “. . . And your Honor should know that even to be zealous, it is forbidden to teach Torah not according to the halakha (Avot V:8), and that which is not true will not succeed at all.” (Regarding the citation from
Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer

Avot V:8, see note 232.) In an as-yet unpublished responsum to Aryeh A. Frimer, dated 7 Shevar 5756, Rabbi Haim David Halevy prohibits a posek from misrepresenting halakha and/or giving an erroneous reason for a prohibition for two basic reasons: (1) the biblical prohibition of "mi-dvar sheker tirhak" and (2) a total loss of trust in rabbinic authority would result should the truth become known (see note 231). See also the related opinions of Rabbis Ehrenberg, Rogeler and Sobel cited below.

Several posekim dissent, arguing, on various grounds, that "mi-dvar sheker tirhak" is not applicable to cases where halakha is misrepresented so as to prevent future violations of Jewish law. Some argue that the dispensation to modify the truth in order to maintain peace (meshanim mi-penei ha-shalom, Ye'amot 65b) also applies to misrepresenting halakha in order to maintain peace between kelal Yisrael and the Almighty (cf. end of Addendum, Part 5 and note 231). See R. Solomon Ephraim, Keli Takar, Deut. 17:11, s.v. "Lo tasur" at end; R. Samuel Kalai, Resp. Mishpetei Shemuel, sec. 120, p. 157—cited by R. Hayyim Palagi, HeHafeitz Hayyim, sec. 19, no. 30; R. Barukh Frankel Te'omim, Resp. Ateret Hakkhamim, E.H. sec. 29; Resp. Torah liShma, sec. 371; R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Resp. Benei Vanim I, sec. 37, no. 12; Niv Sefatayyim, part 1, helek 3, sec. 3 and part 2, helek 3, sec. 3, citing Gitin 62a (see Addendum, Part 3i); R. Israel Yacov Fisher (Addendum, Part 31 and Part 41). In a conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer and Noach Dear (March 8, 1996), Rabbi Zelig Epstein indicated that mi-dvar sheker tirhak refers to lying in court. Similarly, R. Chaim Kanievsky, Masekhet Kutim, 1:14, Me-taher, note 30, and conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer (February 20, 1995), maintains that if a posek believes an action should be prohibited because of mi-gdar milta, he may misrepresent the reason for or source of a prohibition; since there will be no change in the legal outcome, mi-dvar sheker tirhak does not apply. This may also be the opinion of R. Ovadiah Yosef, introduction to Yalkut Yosef, VII, and R. Gavriel Zinner, Nitei Gavriel—Hilkhot Aveilut: Dinei uminbagei Hishtatfut beSimha, p. 29, note 21 (see also Addendum Part 4d), who argue that R. Jacob Ettlinger, Binyan Tsiyyon, sec. 139, forbade a mourner to dance at his own wedding—even though it was after sheloshim and clearly permitted—lest mixed dancing result. According to R. Yosef and R. Zinner, R. Ettlinger purposely gave the wrong reason for the prohibition because people tend to be much more careful about the laws of mourning than they are regarding mixed dancing.

R. Joshua Menahem Mendel Ehrenberg, Resp. Devar Yehoshua, I, addendum to sec. 19, no. 6 (see also V, Y.D. sec 12), demonstrates, however, that the consensus of posekim is that mi-dvar sheker tirhak ap-
plies in all cases, even if it is intended to promote a religious purpose (ve-afilu li-dvar mitsvah). See also Niv Sefatayim, ibid., ketav 1. Similarly, R. Elijah Rogeler, Resp. Yad Eliyahu, sec. 61 and 62, chastises a colleague for lying in a decision, even though his intentions were noble. R. Solomon Sobel, Salma Hadasha, Mahadura Tinyana, Haftarat Toldot (cited in Titen Emet leYaakov, ibid., sec. 5, no. 36), explicitly states that me-shanim mi-penei ha-shalom only allows one to change the facts, not the halakha. Both R. Jacob Ettlinger, Arukh leNer, Yevamot 65b, s.v. “she-Ne’emar avikha tsiva” and “I(o tomeru leYosef,” and R. Reuben Margaliot, Kunteres Hasdei Olam, sec. 1061, at the end of his edition of Sefer Hasidim (Mossad baRav Kook: Jerusalem, 5724), maintain that me-shanim mi-penei ha-shalom allows one only to obfuscate by using language which can be understood in different ways, but not to lie; hence, misrepresenting halakhic reasons or sources would also be forbidden.

Relevant to our discussion is the case recorded in the Talmud in Sukka 34b. In an attempt to drive down prices on whole hadasim, the amora Samuel threatened to publicize as accepted law the lenient ruling of R. Tarfon, who allowed the use of hadasim ketumim (myrtles whose tops had been chopped off). This, despite the fact that in reality Samuel maintained that R. Tarfon’s opinion was not the halakha. Ritva, ad loc., s.v. “Mai ta’ama” (authorship is sometimes erroneously attributed to Rashba) reinterprets the case because he refuses to accept that Samuel would lie, even though it was clearly li-dvar mitsvah. Regarding the misrepresentations of halakha described in Berakhot 63a and Keritut 8a, see Addendum, Part 4i. See also Hiddushei Hatam Soler, Sukka, ad loc., who equates the case in Sukka 34b with that in Keritut 8a, suggesting that both were bara’ot sha’a and, hence not normative Judaism.

Another interesting example of misrepresentation is described by the Talmud, Menahot 36b. Rav Ashi is reported to have worn tefillin at night, contrary to normative halakha. When his student, Ravina, asked whether the rationale for this action was Rav Ashi’s interest in keeping the tefillin safe, the latter responded in the affirmative. Nevertheless, Ravina indicates that this was in fact not Rav Ashi’s true rationale, but rather that the mitsvah of tefillin continues into the night. Be’ur Halakha to O.H. sec. 30, no. 2, s.v. “ve-ni-mtse’u,” indicates that this is an example of halakha ve-ein morin kein. Rav Ashi’s misrepresentation was halakhically mandated, lest others follow his actions, put on tefillin, and fall asleep with them on. Note, however, that the above case is not a clear precedent for misrepresenting the rationale in cases of mi-gdar milta, for while Rav Ashi misrepresented the true reason for his action, the false reason was also valid and applicable.
Our final example appears in *Mishna Avoda Zara* (II:5; 29b; see also discussion on 35a). On being questioned by R. Ishmael as to the grounds for the prohibition on non-Jewish cheeses, R. Joshua presented several reasons which proved untenable upon analysis. The commentators ad loc. make clear that R. Joshua was attempting to hide the true reason for the edict. From the talmudic discussion (*ibid.*, 35a), it would seem that R. Joshua’s misrepresentation was halakhically mandated, lest the rabbinic decree become undermined. Interestingly, R. Solomon ben Aderet, *Resp. Rashba*, I, sec. 43 argues that R. Joshua knowingly suggested that non-Jewish cheeses were biblically forbidden when he knew full well that they were prohibited merely by rabbinic decree. This case might well serve, then, as a precedent for misrepresenting the rationale, even upgrading the prohibition, in cases of mi-gdar milta. Nevertheless, R. Moses Sofer, *Hiddushei Hatam Sofer* (Makhon Hatam Sofer, Jerusalem: 5736), *Avoda Zara* 29b, s.v. “Amar R. Yehuda” (also appears in *Derashot Hatam Sofer*, I, 78a, s.v. “Ita baMishna”) notes that the aforementioned *Mishna* surprisingly informs us that this discussion between R. Ishmael and R. Joshua occurred on the road. R. Sofer argues that R. Joshua misrepresented the rationale, specifically citing a biblical source, in order to cut highway discussion short and thereby prevent a potentially dangerous situation.

Some codifiers have suggested that in order to assure the acceptance of his decision, a decisor may falsely attribute his ruling to someone greater than he, provided he is absolutely convinced of its correctness. This is known in the halakhic literature as “le-hi-talot be-ilan gadol” (*Eruvin* 51a; *Pesahim* 112a). See *Magen Avraham*, O.H. sec. 156, no. 2; *Tosafot* Yom Tov and Tiferet Yisrael, Boaz, no. 2 to *Avot* 5:2 s.v. “veAl ma she-lo shama shamati”; *Birkei Yosef*, Y.D. sec. 242, no. 29; *Sefer Beit Aharon*, IX, “Im bikashta lei-hanek, hi-tale be-ilan gadol,” pp. 606-607, and *supra*, Addendum, Part 3b; *Niv Sefatayyim*, kelal 7; R. Abraham David Horowitz, *Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha*, VII, Y.D. sec. 74; R. Ovadia Yosef, *Me’or Yisrael*, II, *Eruvin* 51a; R. Aryeh Kaplan, “The Structure of Jewish Law,” *The Aryeh Kaplan Reader* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1983), pp. 211-224—see especially p. 217 and footnote 105. R. Moses Jehiel Weiss, *Beit Yechezkel*, p. 75, suggests that this is permitted only to prevent others from sinning. In any case, this does not necessarily mean that it is permitted to lie about the reasons for the ruling, merely its attribution. (This distinction is, of course, rejected by the posekim cited above who argue that the dispensation to modify the truth in order to maintain peace applies to misrepresenting halakha).
NOTES

1. Portions of this paper were presented by Aryeh A. Frimer at the eighth and ninth annual Purim Frimer celebrations (21 Adar 5745 and 5746), which commemorate the release of Avinu Moreinu haRav Dr. Norman E. Frimer zt"l, together with one hundred others, from the hands of the Hanafi terrorists after 39 hours of captivity in the B'nai Brith Building, Washington, D.C., 1977. This paper is dedicated to his memory and that of our beloved mother, Imeinu Morateinu haRabbanit Esther Miriam Frimer a"h.

The authors wish to publicly thank (in alphabetical order) R. Shadi i. Frimer, R. Dov Green, R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein, Dr. Joel B. Wolowelsky, and R. Ari Zivotofsky for reviewing the manuscript and for their many valuable and insightful comments. The authors bear sole responsibility for the final product. We would like to bring to the reader's attention that in the hope of making the paper more readable, we have deferred some of the more lengthy discussions to an "Addendum" section.


3. For documentation of the various points raised in this paragraph, see Aryeh A. Frimer, "Women and Minyan," Tradition 23:4 (Summer 1988), pp. 54-77; Aryeh A. Frimer, "Ma'amad haIsha beHalakha—Nashim uMinyan," Or haMizrah 34:1, 2 (Tishrei 5746), pp. 69-86. Regarding women's exemption from tefilla be-tsibbur, see as well infra, note 85. For examples where women do count for a minyan, see text, infra, at note 128.

3*Regarding the growth of Torah-learning opportunities for women in the recent period, see Shoshana Pantel Zolty, "And All Your Children Shall Be Learned: Women and the Study of Torah in Jewish Law and History" (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1993), pp. 301-309. Two sociological studies of women's tefilla groups have appeared recently. See Sylvia Barack Fishman, "A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community" (New York: Free Press/Division of Macmillan, 1993), pp. 158-170; Sylvia Barack Fishman, "Negotiating Both Sides of the Hyphen: Coalescence, Compartmentalization and American Jewish Values" (Cincinnati, OH: Judaic Studies Program, University of Cincinnati, 1996), pp. 21-27. Unfortunately, no comparable in-depth historical study of women's prayer groups has yet appeared in print. Much of the material in this section is based on our own discussions over the past 25 years with literally hundreds of women and many rabbis throughout the United States actively involved in or associated with Orthodox women's tefilla groups; see also note 235, infra. The collection, Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue, Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, eds. (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992), includes several articles and personal vignettes written by Orthodox women involved in tefilla groups which shed light on the question of motivation. See also Norma Baumel Joseph, "Reflections on Observing Rosh Chodesh with my Women's Tefilla Group," in "Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Antho-

4. This paper has consciously avoided a discussion of the various additional halakhic and legal issues raised by the attempt of several women’s groups to hold prayer services at the Western Wall. These issues, while germane to prayer services at the Kotel, are not necessarily relevant to women’s prayer services in general, inasmuch as they result, in large part, from the specific language of the Israeli Statute under discussion, Rule 2(a)(1a) of the Regulations for the Preservation of Jewish Holy Places (Amendment), 5750-1989 (K.T. [1989] no. 5237, pp. 190-191). The halakhic and legal aspects of “The Women of the Wall” (Neshot haKotel) issue have been reviewed at length by Israeli Supreme Court Deputy President, Justice R. Menahem Elon, in the High Court’s recently published decision; see Hoffman et al. vs. The Custodian of the Western Wall; Alter et al. vs. The Minister of Religious Affairs et al.” (1994), 48 (ii) Piskei Din 265. See also Eliav Shochetman, “Minyanei Nashim baKotel,” Tehumin 15 (5755), pp. 161-184; Shmuel Shiloh, “Tefillat Nashim beTsavta beRahavat haKotel,” Tehumin 17 (5757), pp. 160-164; Rivkah Luvitch, “At Tefillat Nashim,” Tehumin 17 (5757), pp. 165-167; Eliav Shochetman, “Od liShe’eilot Minyanei Nashim,” Tehumin 17 (5757), pp. 168-174. The articles of Professors Shiloh and Shochetman are based on the expert opinions they filed with the Israeli Supreme Court in the above-mentioned case on behalf of the plaintiffs and respondents, respectively. For a discussion of the events from the perspective of an Orthodox feminist, see, inter alia: Bonna Devorah Haberman, “Neshot HaKotel: Women in Jerusalem Celebrate Rosh Hodesh,” in “Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology,” Susan Berrin, ed. (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), pp. 66-77; Bonna Devorah Haberman, “Women Beyond the Wall: From Text to Praxis,” Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 13:1 (Spring 1997), pp. 5-34.

5. R. Shlomo Goren, responsum to Prof. Aron Siegman, dated 11 Kislev 5735 (November 25, 1974). The unsigned letter was typed on the official stationery of the Chief Rabbi but carries the handwritten addition at the top of the first page: ushar, lo le-pirsum (approved, not for publication). A position similar to that of R. Goren was proposed more than a decade earlier by R. Shalom Rubin-Halberstam and rejected both by R. Menashe Klein, Resp. Mishne Halakhot IV, sec. 78, in a responsum dated 29 Heshvan 5723 (November 26, 1962), and by R. Isaac Jacob Weiss, Resp. Minhat Yishak, IX, sec. 11, no. a, in a responsum dated 2 Tevet 5723 (December 31, 1962).
7. Our use of the terminology *petura ve-osa* (exempted, yet performs), rather than *eina me-tsuva ve-osa* (not commanded, yet performs), is based on Rabbeinu Tam’s own formulation; see note 10, *infra*. The phraseology, “*eina me-tsuva ve-osa*” with regard to women was presumably introduced by Rabbeinu Nissim of Gerondi (Ran); see *infra*, note 24. For an analysis of the nature of women’s exemption from time-bound commandments and the quality of their voluntary performance of such mitzvot, see note 23 *infra* and references cited therein.
8. Regarding *bal tosif*, see *Eruvin* 96a and commentaries ad loc.
10. For leading references, see Tosafot, *Rosh haShana* 33a, s.v. “ha”; *Rosh*, *Ran* to *Rif*, and *Rashba* to *Rosh haShana* 33a; Tosafot, *Eruvin* 96a-b, s.v. “*dilma*”; Tosafot, *Kiddushin* 31a, s.v. “*de-lo*”; *Ritva*, *Kiddushin* 31a; R. Menahem Meiri, *Beit haBeira* (henceforth *Meiri*), *Hagiga* 17b.
11. This is provided that the benediction is recited as an expression of heavenly praise. If the recitation is totally for naught, then a biblical violation may be violated; see R. Moses Sofer, *Hiddushei Hatam Sofer*, *Ketubot* 24. Cf. Maimonides, *Teshuvot haRambam* (ed. Blau), sec. 164, who explicitly states that the prohibition of *berakha she-eina tserikha* is biblical. See at length R. Isaac Arieli, *Einayyim laMishpat*, *Berakhot* 14a (s.v. “*de-hani*”) and 33a, no. 50; R. Nachum L. Rabinovitch, *Yad Peshuta*, *Hilkhot Berakhot*, 1:15.
12. *Sifra*, *Parsheta* 2; *Hagiga* 16b.
15* R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin (personal communication, June 5, 1997) has brought to our attention that the 13th century commentator, R. Meir haMe’ili of Narvonna, *Sefer haMe‘brot*, *Berakhot* 45a (first answer), also links women’s exclusion from zimmun beShem with their prohibition of reciting berakhot when performing mitzvot asei she-ha-zeman geramman. As demonstrated in the next paragraph, there is no evidence from this, however, that the converse would be true, as R. Goren suggests.
17. Rama, gloss to *O.H.* sec. 589, no. 6.
6; V, sec. 43; VIII, sec. 8 and sec. 23, no. 30; R. Isaac Yosef, *Talkut Yosef, She'elot Yosef*, part 1, p. 495, sec. 4; R. Ovadiah Yosef in his Letter of Approval to R. David S. Cohen's *Succat David*.

20. For leading references, see R. David Auerbach, *Halikhot Beita, Petakh haBayyit*, sec 18; R. Jehiel Abraham Zilber, *Birur Halakha, Tinyana, O.H.* secs. 589 and 640; R. Eliezer Judah Waldenberg, *Resp. Tsits Eliezer*, IX, sec. 2 and XVII, sec. 64; R. Isaac Nissim, *Resp. Yein haTov*, 28; R. Moses Malka, *Resp. Mikve haMayyim*, III, sec. 16, IV, sec. 62, and V, secs. 28-29; R. Yosef Kafah in his commentary to *M.T., Hilkhot Tsitsit* 3:9, no. 28; R. David S. Cohen, *Succat David*, sec. 2, 8, p. 105. See also the Addendum section of this paper, Part 1a. In line with the view of R. Ovadia Yosef (*supra*, note 19), former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu [in his unpublished responsa, dated 19 Kislev 5750 (Dec. 17, 1989), regarding women's prayer services at the Western Wall; cited by Eliav Shochetman (*supra*, note 4, addendum 2 thereto)] states explicitly that Sephardic women are prohibited from reciting benedictions on commandments from which they are exempted—even in cases where women have accepted upon themselves the obligation to perform these *mitsvot* regularly as do men. Cf., however, R. David Hayyim Chelouche, *Resp. Hemda Genuza* 12, who takes strong issue with this view and in particular with R. Yosef's ruling. Moreover, Jerusalem's Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shalom Messas records that many Sephardic women in fact follow the practice of reciting blessings upon the performance of time-determined *mitsvot*, contrary to the view of R. Ovadia Yosef and his own view. R. Messas rules that these women should not be reprimanded. See *Resp. Shemesh uMagen*, II, sec. 55, no. 4 and sec. 72, no. 3.

21. This very point is mentioned by R. Goren in his retraction/clarification cited in note 57 below. R. Abraham Abele haLevi Gombiner, *Magen Avraham*, O.H. sec. 296, no. 11, suggests that even according to Rabbeinu Tam, women are allowed to pronounce unnecessary *berakhot* which contain the word "ve-tsivanu" ("and has commanded us") only where the blessing accompanies the performance of an action commandment. On the other hand, where the very prayer itself is the fulfillment of the mitsvah, Rabbeinu Tam will concur with Maimonides that women are not permitted to voluntarily undertake to pronounce the Almighty's name where they are not so obliged. According to this view, Ashkenazic women, like their Sephardic sisters, could not rely upon Rabbeinu Tam's ruling (as understood by R. Goren) to recite public prayer texts in the absence of a *minyan*. Here, the mitsvah is purely the prayers themselves, which therefore do not fall within the ambit of Rabbeinu Tam's *heter*. The majority of authorities, however, disagree with *Magen Avraham's* distinction. See at length *Resp. Tabia Omer*, II, O.H. sec. 6 and sources cited therein.

Conversely, there is room to claim that even Sephardic women may rely on Rabbeinu Tam in our case, since none of the texts involved contain the problematic phrase "ve-tsivanu." See *Rosh, Kiddushin*, chapter 1, sec. 49; *Magen Avraham*, *ibid.*; R. Ezekiel Landau, *Tsheyyun leNefesh Hayya*, *Berakhot* 26a; R. Judah Leib Graubart, *Resp. Havalim baNe'imim*, III, O.H. sec. 8; *Halikhot Beita, Petah haBayyit*, no. 21 and sec. 5, n. 11;
R. Jacob Bezalel Zolty, *Sefer haZikaron leMaran haGriv Zolty*, *Mishnat Ta'aveits*, *Hilkhot Tsitis* 3:9, p. 58; R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited by R. Yehoshua Yeshayahu Neuwirth, *Shemirat Shabbat k'Hilkhota*, II, sec. 61, no. 24, note 69. It is most notable that this is the view of Rosh *Yeshivat Porat Yosef* (Jerusalem), R. Ben-Zion Abba Shaul, in “*Hiyyuv Nashim biTfilla*,” *Tsfunot* 1:2 (*Tevet* 5749), p. 52, and in *Resp. Or leTsiyyon*, II, sec. 4, no. 1 and sec. 5, no. 3. R. Ben-Zion Abba Shaul also notes that his predecessor, R. Ezra Atiya, concurred. Cf., however, R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Resp. Yabia Omer* I, *O.H.*, sec. 28, nos. 1-8; II, *O.H.*, sec. 6, nos. 1, 7 and 8; VIII, *O.H.*, sec. 8 and *Yalkut Yosef*, *She'ehirit Yosef*, part 1, p. 486, who argues that this distinction of Rosh was not accepted.

21. R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin (personal communication, June 5, 1997) maintains that this particular argument is not a strong challenge to R. Goren's position, since it is unlikely that *Hazar* would permit more to a woman than to an equivalent male. Besides, permitting fewer than ten women to recite public prayer rituals might mislead people into thinking that fewer than ten men could also constitute a *minyan* (*dilma ati le-ahlulei*; cf. *Yevamot* 52a and *Gittin* 16b). Nonetheless, this simply begs the question; for if R. Goren were correct—that a properly constituted *minyan* is not required, due to the *patir ve-ose me-vareikh* principal, then indeed, ten individuals should not be required, whether for women or for men, as indicated in the text following note 38, infra.


24. *Kiddushin*, 31a; *Bava Kama*, 38a, 87a; *Avoda Zara*, 3a. It would appear from the talmudic sources that the phrase “*eino me-tsue ve-ose*” as originally used by the first generation *amora*, Rabbi Hanina, implied a gentile, who lacks *kedushat Yisrael* (see infra, text at note 26) but nevertheless performed a *mitsvah*. The third generation *amora*, Rav Yosef, by analogy, applied it to a blind Jew as well, presumably because Rav Yehuda maintained that the blind, too, were exempted from all *mitsvot*; for discussion, see R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Me'or Yisrael*, II, *Eruvin* 97b, s.v. “*T'dh dilma*.” It was not until *Ran* (on *Rif*, *Kiddushin* 31a) in the 14th century that the phrase was first utilized with regard to women, once again by analogy: if a gentile who performs a *mitsvah* receives reward, certainly a woman who performs a (time determined) *mitsvah* should receive reward.
25. Hiddushei haRan, Rosh haShana 33a; Ran on Rif, Rosh haShana 33a; Ran on Rif, Kiddushin 31a. Cf. Tosafot Touques, Kiddushin 31a.
27. See also R. Moses Feinstein, Resp. Igrot Moshe, O.H. IV, sec. 49.
28. See also R. Moses Solomon Kasher, Torat haRogatchover, pp. 50-52.
29. See also Sefer haZikkaron leMaran haGriv Zoltz, supra, note 21; R. Aharon Lichtenstein, “Halakha veHalakhim keOshi'ut Musar: Hirhurim Mahshavtiyyim veHinukhtiyim,” Arakhim beMivhan Milhama (Jerusalem: 1985), p. 19, note 16. Cf. R. Jehiel Jacob Weinberg, Resp. Seridei Eish, III, sec. 104. One can perhaps grasp the idea more fully by considering a military unit which has received its marching orders; one or two particular soldiers are granted exemptions for medical or other personal considerations. Obviously, the exempt soldiers have received the orders, and, as part of the unit, they too are subject to the command—this despite the fact that they are released from performance. Moreover, should the soldiers decide to fully participate in the march with the rest of the unit, the same instructions which are addressed to the rest of the unit would apply equally to them.
30. All this is in contradistinction to an onen (mourning relative prior to burial), who, though normally exempted from all positive commandments, may not opt to fulfill them (Shulhan Arukh, Y.D. sec. 341, no. 1; R. Jehiel Mikhel Tuketchinsky, Gesher haHayyim, sec. 18, no. 19). The guiding principle in this case, however, is kevod ha-met (honor to the deceased). For a review of the sources, see R. Barukh Pinhas Goldberg, Penei Barukh—Bikur Holim keHilkhato, sec. 9, no. 10, note 31, p. 124.
31. The consensus of the posekim is that according to R. Tam, just as the performance of mitsvot asei she-ha-zeman geramman is optional, so too is the recitation of the appropriate benediction. Thus, women may perform such time-determined mitsvot, yet opt not to precede the performance with a berakhah. See Halikhot Beita, Petakh haBayyit, sec. 19; Birkhot haMitsvah keTikun, p. 440, n. 1; R. Dov Tsvi Karelenstein, Ma'aglei Tsedeke, O.H., sec. 2, s.v. “ve-ye-ve'ar ba-ze.” Interestingly, Resp. Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana, I, O.H., sec. 484, suggests that this option remains valid today despite the widespread custom of Ashkenazi women to recite such berakhot.
32. The explanation of R. Uziel and R. Soloveitchik—that “ve-tsivnu” refers to Kelal Yisrael and not to individuals—finds earlier expression in the writings of Ritva, Kiddushin 31a, end of s.v. “keivun”; R. Pinhas haLevi Horowitz, Sefer haMikna, Kiddushin 31a, s.v. “beTosafot d.b. de-lo”; R. Ezekiel Segel Landau, Resp. Noda biYehuda, Mahadura Tinyana, O.H. sec. 112. See also R. Meir Dan Palatski, Hemdat Yisrael, I, Kunteres Torah Or, sec. 14, s.v. “Amnam”; R. Ovadiah Yosef, MeShiurei Maran haRishon leTsiyyon, Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef Shelita, I, Gilyon 14, Ha'azinu 5756, sec. 6, p. 54; R. Yitschak Abraham Twersky, “Iyyun beShitat Rabbeinu
This might well be the intention of Meiri, Kiddushin 31a, s.v. “Gadol,” who writes: “Nevertheless, regarding mitsvot upon which one makes a benediction, if someone who is not obligated performs them, some say that he should make a benediction since he is a co-religionist as are women.” Similarly, Meiri Berakhot 48b, s.v. “Kol mi,” maintains that when reciting the second paragraph of birkat ha-mason, women may say, “For Your covenant which You sealed in our flesh”—which refers to circumcision—because women “are part of Kelal Yisrael and they say these words referring to the nation of Israel.” A similar comment is made by Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 187, no. 8 at the end.

33. This point is stated explicitly by R. Benjamin Ze’ev ben Mattathias of Arta, Resp. Binyamin Ze’ev, sec. 245.

34. Supra, note 24.

35. See Part 1 of the Addendum section of this paper for a collection of examples where Rabbeinu Tam’s patur ve-ose me-vareikh principle has been applied to cases not specifically involving women.

36. In a personal written communication (to Dov I. Frimer, 19 Shevat 5744 [Jan. 23, 1984]), R. David Cohen (of Cong. Gevul Ya’avetz, Brooklyn, New York) formulates this argument as follows: Rabbeinu Tam’s “patur ve-ose me-vareikh” principle is predicated upon the fact that despite the absence of obligation, there is nevertheless a fulfillment of the mitsvah, as evidenced by the receipt of heavenly reward. Hence, the benediction remains relevant and appropriate. (See also the related comments of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik in Reshimot Shiurim, R. Zvi Joseph Reichman, ed. [New York, 5749], Sukka 44b, pp. 230-231, s.v. “veYesh labkor” and s.v. “Sham, bo’d, veRabbeinu Tam”; and R. Abraham Weinfeld, Resp. Lev Avraham, I, sec. 2). However, were a woman to make a benediction normally appropriate for a given mitsvah, yet not fulfill or improperly perform that mitsvah, she would undoubtedly be guilty of reciting a berakha le-vatala (a benediction for naught, thereby unnecessarily invoking God’s name). Likewise, there are certain mitsvot whose fulfillment inherently requires the presence of community in the form of a minyan. The performance of these rituals absent a minyan could in no way be construed as the fulfillment of these mitsvot; consequently, reciting a benediction under such circumstances would constitute a berakha le-vatala. One example of a mitsvah for which an all-male minyan is an absolute prerequisite is tefilla be-tsibbur (communal prayer; see note 3, supra). When this prerequisite has been met, then certain benedictions and prayers may and must be said. However, should there be no minyan, as in the case of a women’s prayer service, then the communal component of these prayers is missing; tefilla be-tsibbur cannot and is not fulfilled. Reciting the texts and benedictions reserved for communal prayer under such circumstances would be a clear violation of taking God’s name for naught. A similar argument is presented in a responsum by the former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Abraham Kahana Shapiro (to Mr. Y. Yudson, 30 Kislev 5750 [Dec. 28, 1989]), cited in full by Eliav Shochetman (supra, note 4, addendum 1), p. 181, at 182. This argument may not be valid, however, should one hold with the minority school of the Noda biYhuda, infra, note 52. The latter raises the
possibility that there may be a fulfillment of communal mitsvot which require a minyan, if ex post facto (be-di-avod) they were performed without the presence of the necessary quorum.


39. Interestingly, Rabbeinu Tam himself, ibid., does not utilize this approach to justify his Hallel ruling, instead using other arguments. See R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, cited in R. Hayyim Dov Altuski’s Hiddushei Batra, haMishir, Berakhot 14a, secs. 134-135. See also R. Joseph Engel, Gilyonei haShas, Berakhot 14a; R. Isaac Ze’ev haLevi Soloveitchik, Hidashei Maran Riz haLevi, Hilkhon Berakhot 11:16. See also the Addendum section of this paper, Part 1, sections c and d.

40. This is the text as found both in Tosafot Berakhot and Haggahot Maimoniyot, supra, note 38. However, in Tosafot Rabbeinu Perets, Berakhot 14a, the text reads: “Lulav and tefilla (prayer).” Cf. Haggahot haBah, Berakhot 14a, note b.

41. Tosafot Berakhot, Tosafot Arakhin, and Haggahot Maimoniyot, supra, note 38. See also R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Birkei Yosef, T.D., sec. 333, end of note 1; R. Eleazar Flekeles, Resp. Teshuva meAhava, II, sec. 693. See also Resp. Hemda Genusa, sec. 12, nos. 8 and 19; R. Abraham Gurevitz, Or Avraham, M.T. Hilkhon Hanukka, 3:7, sec. 28; Hidashei Batra, Berakhot 14a, sec. 75.

42. Mishna Megilla 1:1.


44. Mishna Berura O.H. sec. 690, note 61 and Sha’ar haTsiyyun ad loc. On whether Megilla reading on the fourteenth in walled cities (e.g., when the fifteenth falls on the Sabbath) is considered she-lo bi-zmano, see R. Ovadia Yosef, Yehave Da’at, I, sec. 90, no. 2 and IV, sec. 40, and Yadia Omer VI, O.H., sec. 46. Rama, O.H. sec. 692, no. 1, maintains that a minyan is always required to recite the “HaRav et riveinu” blessing that follows the Megilla reading. For further discussion, see Birur Halakha, sec. 690, no. 18 and sec. 692, no. 1; R. Jacob Hayyim Sofer, Kaf haHayyim sec. 690, no. 124; Yehave Da’at, I, sec. 88 and sec. 90, no. 2; Yalkut Yosef, V, Hilkhon Mikra Megilla, no. 39, note 70, p. 300. There are, however, many dissenting opinions who permit the recitation of HaRav et riveinu even in the absence of a minyan; see, for example, Be’er Heitev, sec. 692, no. 4; Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 690, no. 25 and sec. 692, no. 5; R. Joseph Hayyim, Ben Ish Hai, Tesave 13; R. Aaron Felder, Mo’adei Yeshurun, I, Laws of Purim, sec. 7, no. 9; R. Avraham David Horowitz, Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha, III, end of sec. 103. This is also the view of R. Moshe Feinstein, as quoted by R. David Katz, “A Guide to Practical Halakha—Chanuka and Purim” (New York: Traditional Press, 1979), VIII, Laws of Purim, sec. 14, no. 15, p. 134, and former Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, as quoted by R. Moses Harari,
Mikra'ei Kodesh—Hilkhot Purim, sec. 9, no. 7, note 30. Although Arukh haShulhan, ibid., states that the common minhag is to recite HaRav et riveinu even in the absence of a minyan, apparently the Ashkenazic minhag in Israel is not so; see Lu'ah Dinim uMinhagim, Israeli Chief Rabbinate (5757), p. 60; Lu'ah Erets Yisrael, R. Jehiel Michel Tucazinsky (5757), p. 44. R. Isaac Ratsabi, Shulhan Arukh ha-meKutsar, III, sec. 122, nos. 9 and 11, indicates that according to Yemenite usage, HaRav et riveinu can be said privately.

45. R. David Ibn Abi Zimra, Resp. Radbaz, II, sec. 665. See Addendum, Parts 1c and 1d.

46. R. Jacob Israel Algazi, Kuntres Hug haArts, sec. 3. See also Yabia Omer O.H., I, sec. 40 no. 5.

47. See Resp. Mishne Halakhot, IV, sec. 78; R. Ovadiah Yosef, Me’or Yisrael, II, Megilla 23b.

48. Megilla 4:3 (23b). See also Soferim 10:7 and the commentaries ad loc.

48*See R. Joseph Caro, Kesef Mishne, Hilkhot Tefilla 8:5, s.v. “veKatar” (end); R. Joseph Te’omim, Rosh Yosef, Megilla 23b. See also infra, notes 138-140.

49. While all authorities agree that the institutions of devarim she-bi-kdusha are rabbinic in origin, some maintain that their recitation in the presence of a bona fide minyan is a biblical obligation. See Einayyim laMishpat, Berakhot 21b, no. 3; Aryeh A. Frimer, Or haMizrah, supra, note 3, footnote 14 and sources cited therein. See also R. Solomon Gansfried, Penei Shelomo, Eruvin 100a; Resp. Igrot Moshe, O.H. II, sec. 98.

50. R. Moses ben Nahman, Milhamot Hashem, on Rif to Megilla, chap. 1, sec. 1067, 5a [page 3a in Vilna edition of Rif], s.v. “veOd amar Rav.” For a discussion of the reason in each case, see R. Israel Lipschutz, Tiferet Yisrael, Megilla 4:3, no. 24; R. Pinhas Kehati, Megilla 4:3.

51. See Encyclopedia Talmudit, VI, “Davar she-bi-kdusha,” and Aryeh A. Frimer, Or haMizrah, note 3, supra, footnote 2 therein, for a discussion of those rituals included in this category and its ramifications.


Nevertheless, the majority of posekim reject this position: R. Eleazar Segel Landau (the grandson of Noda biYhuda), Tad haMelekh, Hilkhot Ishut 10:5; R. Joseph Saul Nathanson and R. Mordechai Zev Eitinge, Magen Gibborim, O.H. sec. 143, no. 1, Shiltei haGibborim note 2; R.
Jacob Shalom Sofer, *Torat Hayyim*, O.H. sec. 143, no. 1; R. Israel Eisen-
stein, *Resp. Amudei Eish*, sec. 3, no. 3; *Arukh haShulhan*, E.H. sec. 62,
no. 13—"This does not seem so from any of the codifiers"; R. Matsliah
Mazuz, *Resp. Ish Matsliah*, I, O.H. sec. 13, no. 12, s.v. "veOd" (end) and
Table of Contents, no. 41; *Resp. Sheivet haLevi*, IV, secs. 7 and 14; *Resp.
Tabia Omer*, II, E.H., sec. 6, par. 7 and addendum; VII, O.H., sec. 20,
par. 3; R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Me’or Yisrael*, I, Megilla 23b. See also *Otsar
haPosekim*, E.H., sec. 62, no. 4, no. 18, subsection 3. See as well R. Aaron
Milavsky, *Helkat Aharon*, sec. 2, regarding the view of R. Tam cited by
*Or Zaru’a*, *Hilkhot Nes’at Kapayyim*, sec. 411, that Birkat Kohanim can
be recited with fewer than a minyan. Furthermore, it should be pointed
out that *Noda biYhuda*’s leniency is based on the ruling of the *Jerusalem
Talmud*, Megilla 4:4 (75a), that if a ritual requiring a minyan begins with
the minimum quorum, it may continue even though some have left. The
codes which cite this ruling (e.g., *Mishna Berura*, O.H. sec. 55, no. 11 and
sec. 143, no. 5; *Arukh haShulhan*, O.H. sec. 55, no. 6) make it clear,
though, that at least six must remain for the service to continue. Hence,
even according to *Noda biYhuda*, a majority of a minyan must be present.
Furthermore, *Rav Pe’alim*, O.H., I, sec. 5, maintains that it is forbidden
to begin if it is known in advance that fewer than a minyan will remain for
the entire service. Finally, no one entertains the possibility that one could
ab initio (le-kha-tehila) recite the nuptial blessings in the absence of a
minyan as a patur ve-ose; see the sources cited at the beginning of this
paragraph, as well as *Resp. Tsafnat Pane’ah* (ed. R. Menachem Mendel
Kasher, New York) sec. 83; *saveinu moreinu z’il*, R. Moses Zev Kahn,
*Resp. Tiferet Moshe*, Part 1, sec. 46; *Resp. Mishpatei Uziel*, H.M., sec. 62,

53. Berakhot 21b.
54. Supra, note 48.
55. Consequently, we find a similar discussion regarding the necessity of a
minyan for the recitation of the “thirteen attributes of God.” For a sum-
mary of this discussion, see *Einayyim laMishpat*, supra, note 49; *Resp.
Yehave Da’at*, I, sec. 47.
56. See references cited in Aryeh A. Frimer, note 3, supra; *Resp. Minhat Yits-
hak*, supra, note 5; *Resp. Rivevot Efrayim*, VII, sec. 314 and addendum
p. 446; *Halikhot Beita*, Petah haBayyit, sec. 24. Surprisingly, in his dis-
cussion of women’s tefilla groups, R. Eliezer Berkovits, *Jewish Women in
Chapter 4, pp. 82-83, proposes that the reason for the exclusion of
women from the minyan of communal prayer rituals “can only be that the
rabbis would not allow men and women to pray together.” Based on this
analysis, he suggests that for public prayer and devarim she-bi-kdusha “one
might give serious consideration to the halakhic possibility of a female
minyan.” R. Berkovits errs, however, both in his analysis and his conclu-
sion, for as the scores of rishonim and aharonim cited above in Aryeh A.
Frimer, note 3, supra, make clear, unambiguous rules and rationale exist
for the exclusion of women from the minyan of public prayer—and they
are quite different from that deduced by R. Berkovits. Indeed, the codes
and codifiers are unequivocal: public prayer rituals require a minyan of males. See Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 55, no. 1 and decisors ad loc.: Levush, no. 4; Shulhan Arukh haRav, no. 2; Mishna Berura, no. 3; and Arukh haShulhan, no. 6.

57. R. Shlomo Goren, responsum to R. Mordechai Eliyahu, 1 Tevet 5750 (Dec. 29, 1989). R. Goren’s contention therein that he never intended for his 1974 responsum to be used halakha le-ma’ase is somewhat surprising for two reasons. First, Prof. Aron Siegman, who asked the original “shaila,” has indicated (interviewed by Aryeh A. Frimer, January 1991) that to the best of his recollection, R. Goren was indeed aware that a “women’s minyan” was functioning in the Baltimore area and that the question was being posed on their behalf. Furthermore, R. Avraham Weiss, Women at Prayer (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1990), p. 111, footnote 38, indicates that in a conversation he had with R. Goren in Spring 1989, the latter had reaffirmed his support for the 1974 responsum. Nevertheless, in light of our analysis above, his subsequent December 1989 retraction is well founded.

58. As a general rule, the member groups of the “Women’s Tefilla Network” (WTN), which number to date approximately 60, do not rely on R. Goren’s original ruling and do not say devarim she-bi-kdusha; see the comments of Bat Sheva Marcus, Chair of WTN, in “Walk Humbly with Your God,” Sh’mah, 25/531 (April 4, 1997), pp. 5-7. Nevertheless, in a letter dated January 1996 to the members of the Flatbush women’s tefilla group, Rivka Haut indicates that based on R. Goren’s 1974 responsum, women may recite mourner’s kaddish at the conclusion of the women’s tefilla. See also Rivka Haut, “Women’s Prayer Groups and the Orthodox Synagogue,” in Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue, supra, note 3*, pp. 135-157, at p. 141, in which the view of R. Berkovits, supra, note 56, is also cited. In a recent communication to Aryeh A. Frimer, dated July 25, 1997, Ms. Haut confirms that this remains the policy of the Flatbush Tefilla group. In light of our discussion above, such a development is halakhically improper, unfounded and indefensible.

59. The responsum, dated 12 Kislev 5745 (November 25, 1985), was subsequently published in the halakhic journal of the R.C.A. See R. Nissan Alpert, R. Abba Bronspigel, R. Mordechai Willig, R. Yehuda Parnes and R. Zvi Schachter, “Teshuvah beInyan Nashim beHakafot veKhu,” HaDarom 54 (Sivan 5745), pp. 49-50. It should be emphasized that the R.C.A. at no time adopted the position of this responsum as the official halakhic policy of the organization. The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of February 27, 1986, record the following: “The President stated categorically that he did not ask this question of the Rashei Teshiva in the name of the R.C.A. He asked the question as an individual . . . The Executive declared that the opinion of the five Rashei Teshiva was not the official position of the R.C.A. regarding this matter, that the R.C.A. has, to date, not taken any official position regarding the halakhic admissibility of women’s tefillot (sic!).” For further clarification of the position of the R.C.A., vide infra, note 248.

60. R. Abba Bronspigel, “Minyanim meYehadim leNashim,” HaDarom, ibid., pp. 51-53. The responsum is dated “the eve of Hanukka 5745,” i.e. 24
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61. R. Zvi (Hershel) Schachter, "Tse'i Lakh belkvei haTson," ("Go Thy Way Forth by the Footsteps of the Flock" [Song of Songs 1:8]), Beit Yitshak 17 (5745), pp. 118-134, reprinted in R. Zvi Schachter, BeIkevei haTson (Jerusalem: Beit haMidrash deFlatbush, 5757), pp. 21-37. All citations in this article to R. Schachter's responsum are to its original publication in Beit Yitshak. For an English summary of R. Schachter's lengthy Hebrew responsum (as well as a review of some of the other halakhic literature on women's prayer groups), see R. Jonathan Sacks, L'Eyla 22 (Rosh haShana 5747, September 1986), p. 54.

62. R. Zvi Schachter, "Belnyanei Beit haKenesset uKdushato," Or haMizrah, 34:1, 2 (Tishrei 5746), 54, at pp. 64-67; reprinted in Eretn haTsvi, see. 12—see especially pp. 96-99.


64. R. Menashe Klein, lengthy and yet unpublished responsum to Dov I. Frimer, 9 Shevat 5746 (January 19, 1986), on the subject of women's tefilla groups; a short selection from this teshuva appears in the article of E. Shochetman, supra, note 4, p. 173. The major arguments are that: women's services are a sharp departure from normative Jewish custom and practice over millennia; they contravene "kol kevuda bat melekh penima" and the rules of modesty; such innovations are clearly based on the Women's Lib movement and the motivation of those who initiated them is impure; the shekhina resides in the home of a righteous woman and it is from there that her prayers will be heard. On the subject of women's Megilla readings, see R. Menashe Klein, Resp. Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana, I, O.H. sec. 550.

65. R. David Cohen, personal written communication to Aryeh A. Frimer, Feb. 3, 1990; on the grounds "that they are clearly based on the Women's Lib movement, which is [a violation of] be-hukoteihem lo telechu (see Tosafot, Avoda Zara 1:1a)."

66. R. David Feinstein, interviewed by Aryeh A. Frimer, March 26, 1991; on the grounds that it is a sharp departure from normative Jewish custom.

67. R. Shalom Messas, Resp. Shemesh uMagen, II, sec. 28. The major arguments are: first, that women's services are private worship, and, hence, inappropriate for the synagogue, which is dedicated to bona fide tefilla be-tsibbur; second, one loses the opportunity to fulfill tefilla be-tsibbur by praying in a women's service. The first objection is surprising in light of the ruling of Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 90, no. 9, that private prayer is preferable in a synagogue; the second objection will be discussed below.

68. R. Leib Baron, "Belnyan Im baNashim Rasha'ot le-hitPallel beTsibbur ve-liKrov baTorah u-biFrat Eitsel haKotel haMa'aravi," HaDarom 60 (Elul 5751), pp. 27-29. His major objections are that the motivation of those involved in women's services is impure ("ein levavan im haKadosh Barukh
that this practice is influenced by the Reform, and finally, that such an innovation might violate “bal tosif.” Regarding the first two points, see the discussion below. Regarding bal tosif, see notes 91, 95, 227 and Addendum section of this paper, Part 5 infra.

69. In a one-page resolution dated 7 Shevat 5757 (January 14th 1997), the Va'ad HaRabonim of Queens charged that women’s prayer groups, hakafot and Megilla readings were “poreits geder be-masoret Yisrael (breaching the boundaries of Jewish tradition)” and therefore prohibited. See also a subsequent article by R. Yitzchak A. Sladowsky, Executive Vice President of the Queens Va'ad, Sha’ma, 27/531 (April 4, 1997), pp. 3-4.

70. R. Juda haLevi Amihai, unpublished responsa to Beit Kenesset Mitspe Nevo, Ma’ale Adumim, dated 6 Kislev 5758 (on the stationery of Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau); see below, note 71.

71. R. Efrayim Greenblatt, Resp. Rivevot Efrayim, VII, sec. 235. Both R. Amihai (supra, note 70) and R. Greenblatt rule against women dancing with a sefer Torah based on a custom that menstruants (niddot) do not look at a sefer Torah (see Resp. Binyamin Ze’ev no. 153; Mishna Berura, O.H. sec. 88, no. 7), a fortiori to carry it. A discussion of this latter issue will be deferred to Part II of this paper. Suffice it to say that four internationally renowned posekim have indicated that menstruating women no longer have the custom of refraining from looking at the Torah scroll. See R. Moses Feinstein, responsa to R. Meir Fund, dated Sivan 14, 5743 (May 26, 1983), text appearing before note 218 infra; R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, infra, text near note 251 and note 258; former British Chief Rabbi, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, in consultation with the London Beit Din, Leyta 28 (Rosh haShana 5750, September 1989), p. 21ff, reprinted in Dear Chief Rabbi, Jeffrey M. Cohen, ed. (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1996), p. 90; and the noted Israeli posek, R. Joseph Shalom Elyashiv, conversation with R. Shlomo H. Pick, 22 Iyyar 5752 [May 25, 1992]. In any case, it is not clear why this concern should prevent the vast majority of non-menstruants from dancing with the Torah, particularly since R. Amihai himself admits that this is a stringency not required by halakha.

72. Supra, note 20, on the grounds that it is a sharp departure from normative Jewish custom.

73. R. Zalman Nehemiah Goldberg, “Tefillat Nashim beFarhesya,” Tehumin 18 (5758, in press), on the grounds that it is an imitation of the ways of heretics (i.e., the Reform movement) and consequently violates U-behukoteihem le telekhu. Our thanks to Dr. Itamar Warhaftig for providing us with an advance copy of R. Goldberg’s article.

74. We note that both former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Abraham Shapiro, supra, end of note 36, and Shlomo Goren, supra, note 57, have also come out in opposition to women’s services—but only those in which devarim she-bi-kedusha are recited. This was stated explicitly by R. Shapiro to R. Avraham Weiss; see R. Avraham Weiss, Women at Prayer, note 57 supra, p. 111. In their respective responsa, Rabbis Goren and Shapiro also opposed the actions of the “Women of the Wall,” but here, too, special halakhic and legal considerations are at play, not relevant to regular prayer services.

75. Supra, note 59, at p. 49. See also R. Bronspigel, supra, note 60, at p. 51;
76. Magen Avraham, O.H. sec. 282, no. 6; See also R. Masud Hai Rokei'ah, Ma'ase Rokei'ah, Hilkhot Tefilla 12:17; Misha Berura, sec. 282, no. 12; Birkei Yosef, sec. 282, no. 7; R. Jacob Meshullam Orstein, Yeshu'ot Ya'akov, sec. 282, no. 4; R. Zvi Hirsh Grodzinsky, Mikra'ei Kodesh, sec. 4, no. 1, Sha'arei Kedusha note 1; R. Hillel Posek, Resp. Hillel Omer, sec. 187.

77. R. Schachter, supra, note 61, at p. 118.
78. Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 690, no. 18 and Rama, ad loc.
79. Supra, note 44.
80. Supra, note 78.
81. Supra, note 61 at 118-119.
83. R. David haLevi, Turei Zahav, O.H. sec 685, no. 2 (end), as understood by R. Joseph Te'omim, Peri Megadim, Mishbetsot Zahav ad loc., and by R. Zvi Pesah Frank, Mikra'ei Kodesh, Purim, sec. 2. See also R. Hayyim David Halevy, Asif Lekha Rav, VII, sec. 41 and a more recent elaboration in Resp. Mayyim Hayyim, II, sec. 42.
84. R. Schachter, supra, note 61, at p. 119.
85. R. Jacob Reisha, Resp. Shevui Ya'akov, O.H. III, sec. 54; R. Abraham Hayyim Rodriguez, Resp. Orah laTzadik, sec. 3; Resp. Teshuva meAhava, II, sec. 229; Alim liTrufa (letter by the Gaon of Vilna which advises the women of his family not to attend the synagogue); R. Menahem Mendel Schnereohn of Lubavitch, Resp. Tsemah Tsedek, O.H., sec. 19, no. 2; R. Shneur Zalman of Lublin, Resp. Torat Hesed, O.H., sec. 4, no. 6; R. Isaac Herzog, Resp. Heikhal Yitskhak, O.H., sec. 12, no. 5, par. 9—reprinted in Pesakim uKhtavim I, She'eilot uTshuvot beDinei Orah Hayyim, sec 24; Resp. Tiferet Moshe, part 1, sec. 29; Resp. Tsits Elijzer, IX, sec. 11; R. Isaac Liebes, Resp. Beit Avi, IV, sec. 3; Resp. Sha'arei Moshe II, sec. 3; R. Bezalel Stern, Resp. beTsel haHokhma, IV, sec. 19; R. Moses Sternbuch, Modaim uManim, I, sec. 9; R. Reuben Margaliot, Margaliyyot haTam, Sanhedrin 74b, sec. 27; R. Isaac Yosef, Yalkut Yosef, She'eirit Yosef, part 2, page 348, note 16; R. Yisrael Pesah Feinhandler, Avnei Tashfe—Hilkhot Tefilla, sec. 16, no. 6 and notes 12-13. See also R. Jacob Isaiah Bloy, Tsehaka uMishpat, sec. 12, no. 63 and R. Isaac J. Fuchs, haTefilla beTshibbur, addendum to sec. 3, no. 80. Interestingly, R. Ahron Soloveichik, in conversation with Dov I. Frimer, July 8, 1997, maintains that men and women share the same obligation (or lack thereof) in both tefilla be-tsibbur and keriat haTorah. However, even were women personally obligated, R. Ahron Soloveichik posits that they are, nonetheless, specifically excluded by Hazal from counting towards a minyan or serving as a hazan or ba'alat keria because of kevod ha-tsibbur. Further discussion of this position is beyond the scope of this paper.
86. Torat Hesed, supra, note 85, and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in Avnei Tashfe, supra, note 85 and footnote 13 therein. Most other posekim seem to disagree, however; see, for example, R. Eliezer Rogeler, Yad Eliahu, part 1, sec. 7; R. Joseph B. Soloveichik, Reshimot Shiurim, Sukka 38a, p. 183, s.v. "veNire"; R. Samuel haLevi Wozner, as cited in Avnei
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Yashfe, supra, note 85, footnote 12 therein; R. Joseph Shalom Elyashiv, cited in Avnei Yashfe, supra, note 85, footnote 12 therein, and in Adar uFurim, sec. 8, no. 5, par. 2; R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Resp. Benei Vanim, II, sec. 7. See also Meiri, Rosh haShana 28a, who states: "Our women, who pray in synagogue in a section unto themselves, do not fulfill tefilla be-tsibbur, since it requires ten." However, based upon the analysis of Resp. Benei Vanim, ibid., one may contend that Meiri is referring to a case where the mehitsa reaches the ceiling. See also the references cited in Aryeh A. Frimer, ibid., section G.

87. Tosafot, Rosh haShana 33a, s.v. "Ha"; Rosh, Kiddushin 31a; Meiri and Ran on Rif, Megilla 23a, s.v. "haKol Olim"; Sefer Avudraham, Sha'ar ha-Shelishi, s.v. "Katav haRambam zal"; Sefer haBaTin, Beit Tefilla, Sha'arei Keriat haTorah 2:6; Beit Yosef, O.H. sec. 28, s.v. "haKol" and Derisha ad loc.; Alim LiTrufa, supra, note 85; Resp. Orah laTsadik 3; R. Shalom Mordechai haKohen Shvadron, Resp. Maharshal, I, sec. 158; Resp. Mate Tefuda, sec. 282, no. 7; R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Kisei Rahamin (complete edition, Jerusalem: 1959), Masekhet Soferim 14:14 Tosafot s.v. "sheMitsvah" and 18:4, Tosafot s.v. "she-haNashim"; Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 282, no. 11; Resp. Tabia Omer, O.H. VIII, sec. 54, no. 7; Resp. Tehave Da'at, IV, sec. 23, note 1; Talkut Yosef, II, Hiyuv Keriat haTorah veTiltul haSefer Torah, sec. 9 and footnotes 6 and 11; R. Isaac Yosef, Kitsev Shulhan Arukh Talkut Yosef, O.H. sec. 135, no. 9; R. Moses Stern (the Debriciner Rav), Resp. Be'er Moshe, VIII, sec. 85; R. Efrayim Greenblatt, Resp. Rivevot Ephrayim, VI, sec. 153, no. 21; R. Yisroel Taplin, Orah Yisrael, sec. 2, no. 8. See also R. Moses Mordechai Karp, note 89, infra, and Birkhot haMitsvot keTikunan, p. 184, n. 8. Regarding the view of R. Ahron Soloveichik, see note 85, supra.

88. Supra, note 76.

89. R. Bezalel Stern, supra, note 85. R. Moses Mordechai Karp, Hilkhot Hag beHag: Purim (Jerusalem: Oraysa, 5791) addendum to 7:3 note 7, p. 213, suggests that Magen Avraham also agrees that women are not inherently obligated in keriat haTorah. However, once keriat haTorah begins, an obligation devolves upon them along with the men, since they are part of the isibbur (community) present in shul. This would then be analogous to the laws of zimmun, which is optional for women, but in the presence of three men becomes obligatory for the women as well (Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 199, no. 7). According to R. Karp's novel approach, the "exodus" of the women, mentioned by Magen Avraham, occurred before the reading of the Torah commenced. A similar interpretation is suggested by R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin in "Mahu Kevod haTsibbur," HaDarom 55 (Elul 5746), p. 33 (see p. 39) and Resp. Benei Vanim II, no. 10 (see p. 42).

90. R. Elijah of Vilna, Alim liTrufa. Jerusalem's Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shalom Messas, supra, note 20, records that most Moroccan Jewish women never attended synagogue even on Yom Kippur. As a result, few synagogues even had women's sections. Those women who did come to the synagogue rarely participated in the prayer service. R. Messas attributes this primarily to the women's illiteracy and lack of education.

91. Deut. 13:1 (see also Deut. 4:2). This verse contains two prohibitions,
commonly referred to as “bal tosif” and “bal tigra,” which are in most respects halakhic mirror images of each other. See Encyclopedia Talmudit III, “Bal Tigra”; ibid., “Bal Tosif.”

92. See text at note 6, supra.

93. See text at note 24, supra.


95. The following authorities maintain that women cannot be culpable for bal tosif (and, hence, bal tigra—see note 91, supra) in mitsvot from which they are exempted: R. Isaiah di Trani (The Younger), Piskei Ri’uz, Rosh haShana 4:2, no. 3; R. Joshua Boaz Baruch, Shiite haGibborim, Rosh haShana 33a, no. 3; R. David Fraenkel, Korban haEida to Yerushalmi Eruvin 10:1 (26a), s.v. “Ma’an de-amar”; R. Ezekiel Kahila (reputed to be a pseudonym for R. Joseph Hayyim alHakam of Baghdad), Resp. Torah liShma, secs. 173 and 425; R. Joseph Babad, Minhat Hinukh, Commandment 454 (end); R. Solomon Avigdor Rabinowitz, Binyn Shelomo, sec. 14, no. 5; Hemdat Yisrael, part 2, Kunteres Derekh haHayyim, sec. 5, no. 1; R. Jacob Segal Prager, Sh’eilat Ya’akov, sec. 18; R. Gedalia Felder, Yesodei Yeshurun I, sec. 93; R. Isaac Jacob Fuchs, Halikhot Bat Yisrael, Chapter 20, sec. 1, note 1. Several scholars maintain that bal tosif (and bal tigra) applies only to a mitsvah which is obligatory (hiyyuvit), but not to one which is optional (kiyyumit or reshut). See R. Prager, ibid.; R. Simcha Elberg, “Im Mutar leKayyeim Mitsvat Se’udot Shabbat beMatsa beShabbat shel Erev Pesah,” HaPardes 32:5 (Shevat 5718), p. 20; see also comments to the article by R. B. Z. Rosenthal, infra; and R. Uri Langer, “Im Shayyah Bal Tosif bi’Sifrut haOmer,” HaMa’or 17:5 (Iyyar 5726), p. 3. This is, of course, the essence of a mitsvat asei she-ha-zeman gerama: obligatory for men, optional for women.

Others maintain that women can be culpable for bal tosif even in mitsvot from which they are exempted; see R. Isaac Tayeb, Erekh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 17, no. 2; R. Joseph Saul Nathanson and R. Mordechai Zev Eitinge, Magen Gibborim, O.H. sec. 17, no. 2, Elef haMagen, note 4; R. Hayyim Judah Leib Litvin Sosnitzer, Sha’arei Dei’a, 12; Kaf haHayyim, O.H. sec. 17, no. 2, no. 8; R. Yisroel Taplin, Orah Yisrael, sec. 26, nos. 14 and 15; R. Leib Baron, supra, note 68. R. Ben Zion Rosenthal maintains that bal tosif also applies to mitsvot which are optional (kiyyumiyyot); see R. Ben Zion Rosenthal, “Bal Tosif beMitsvat she-Eina Hiyyuvit,” HaPardes 33:2 (Heshvan 5719), p. 17; R. Ben Zion Rosenthal, “Bal Tosif beVirkhat Kohanim,” HaPardes 33:11 (Av 5719), p. 16—reprinted in R. Ben Zion Rosenthal, Tenuvat Tsiyyon, secs. 42 and 43. Cf. Birkei Yosef, O.H. sec. 17, no. 2, who leaves the issue of bal tosif by women unresolved.

Finally, there is also some discussion as to whether there is a prohibition of bal tosif on one who adds to a rabbinic enactment. The consensus is that there is not; see Resp. Ketav Sofer, sec. 120; Sefer haMikna, kelal 51; Resp. Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana II, H.M. sec. 478.

96. Those halakhic authorities who disagree with this ruling argue that a
woman who voluntarily prays implies all the requirements imposed upon one who is obligated to pray, *i.e.*, a man; see note 97, *infra*. (For a discussion of the related view of Behag, see Resp. Benei Vanim, II, sec. 19, p. 72.) This contention has no logical parallel to women’s prayer groups. The latter clearly have no intention to constitute a minyan and could not halakhically constitute a minyan for public prayer even if they so intended. The voluntary assumption of obligation is not the same as legally imposed obligation; see Gidon Rothstein, “The Roth Responsa on the Ordination of Women,” *Tradition* 24:1 (Fall 1988), pp. 104-115; *Sha’arei Tovah*, I, supra, note 23. Minyan requires legally imposed obligation; see Aryeh A. Frimer, *infra*, note 3. An analogous argument can be found in R. Isaiah di Trani (The Elder), *Piskei Rid, Rosh haShana* 33a and again in *Sefer haMaḥria*, sec. 78.


98. See *infra*, note 102.

99. Among contemporary sources, see R. Ovadiah Hadaya, Resp. *Yaskil Avdi*, VII, Kunteres Aharon, O.H. sec. 2; R. Moses Feinstein, Resp. *Igrot Moshe*, O.H. III, sec. 7. While some of the halakhic consequences of kavvana are muted in our day (see, *e.g.*, O.H. sec. 98, no. 2 and sec. 101, no. 1), we are required to do all we can to maintain an optimal level (see *Mishna Berura*, sec. 98, no. 7). In any case, R. Moses Sternbuch, *Mo’adim uZmanim*, I, sec. 9, and Resp. *Teshuvot veHanhagot*, I, sec. 74 and III, sec. 36, maintains that kavvana plays an even more critical role in women’s prayers than it does in those of men.


101. Meiri, *Beraḥkot* 27a (ed. R. S. Dickman, p. 99); R. Hayyim Mordechai Margaliot, *Sha’arei Teshuva*, O.H. sec. 52, sec. 1; R. Joseph Mashash,
102. Resp. Igrot Moshe, supra, note 99; see also II, sec. 27. There are, however, posekim who argue that tefilla be-tsibbur has priority over kavvana, not because public prayer is obligatory, but rather because it is a more preferable form of hiddur mitzvah. See, for example, R. Bahyai ben Asher Ibn Halawe, Pirkei Avot II:5, s.v. “Hillel omer al tifros min ha-tsibbur” (we thank R. Aharon Lichtenstein for bringing this reference to our attention); R. David Zvi Zehman, Resp. Kav Zahav, I, sec. 1; Resp. Yaskil Avdi, supra, note 99. See also infra, note 244, regarding the view of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik in this regard.

Whether, in fact, tefilla be-tsibbur is obligatory for men or merely a hiddur mitzvah is a subject of some debate. See the sources cited by R. Isaac Yosef, Yalkut Yosef; She’erit Yosef; Part II, sec. 70, p. 330ff and R. Isaac Jacob Fuchs, Tefilla be-Tsibbur (Jerusalem: n.p., 1978), Introduction, sec. 4 (some of the sources cited are clearly not conclusive and are open to other interpretations). As indicated, R. Feinstein, supra, note 99, maintains that communal prayer for men is a rabbinic obligation. This view also appears in Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 90, nos. 20-21; Resp. Tiferet Moshe, supra, note 85; Arnet Yashfe—Hilkhot Tefilla, sec. 6, no. 11, note 16; and Resp. Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana, I, O.H. sec. 66 and 67. See as well the comments of Rabbis Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Joseph Shalom Elyashiv and David Kornglass as reported by R. Aryeh Zev Ginzberg in Resp. Divrei Hakhamim, O.H. sec. 6, no. 96. Many other leading authorities, however, differ, maintaining that tefilla be-tsibbur is merely a hiddur mitzvah. See references cited supra in previous paragraph of this note; R. Israel Moses Hazzan, Kerakh Shel Romi, sec. 6 and 7; commentary of R. Shalom Moses Hai Gagin, Yeri’ot haOhel to R. Samuel Yarondi’s Oheil Moed, Sha’ar Keriat Shema, Derekh Shelishi, Netiv Dalet, no. 4, s.v. “VaAni haPa’at” and Sha’ar Tefilla, Derekh Revi’i, Netiv Alef, no. 23 at end; R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, Lev Ivra, pp. 158-159; R. Aryeh Pomeronchik, Eimek Berakha, Birkhot Keriat Shema, no. 1, pp. 7-8; R. Menahem Mendel Kashar, Torah Sheleima, XV, Yitro, addenda, sec. 5, reprinted in Resp. Divrei Menahem, I, sec. 29; R. Benjamin Joshua Zilber, Resp. Az Nidberu, XIV, secs. 37-38; R. Moses Malka, Resp. Mikve haMayyim, V, E.H. sec. 3, no. 4; R. Fuchs, ibid. pp. 33-34. R. Ahron Soloveitchik, in a conversation with Dov I. Frimer, July 8, 1997, indicated that this was also the view of his grandfather, R. Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk. R. Aharon Lichtenstein stated to the authors that this position of R. Hayyim Soloveitchik was often cited approvingly by R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik as well. (Interestingly, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik also records that his father, R. Moses Soloveitchik, maintained that tefilla be-tsibbur is not merely a better mode of private prayer, but an inherently different prayer form; see Reshimot Shiurim, Sukka 38a, p. 184, s.v. “Dimyon.” This does not, of course, preclude the possibility, that tefilla be-tsibbur is optional).

R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, Lev Ivra, ibid., emphasizes, though, that even according to this school, tefilla be-tsibbur is a communal obligation, i.e., the men of the community are obligated to ensure that a minyan is available for public prayer; only when such has been secured does actually
praying within a minyan become a hiddur mitzvah. A similar analysis has been proffered by R. Joseph Rosen ("The Rogatchover"), Tsaftn Panei'ah, M.T., Hilkhots Tefilla, 12:5, with regard to keriat haTorah. See also R. Abraham Aaron Price, Mishnat Avraham, I, to Sefer Hasidim, sec. 410, pp. 410-411.

Even according to those authorities cited above who maintain that public prayer for men is merely a hiddur mitzvah, there is room to distinguish between the Sabbath and Holidays, where communal prayer is obligatory, and weekdays, where it is not. See Nahmanides, Lev. 23:2; Peri Megadim, Mibbeenet Zahav, O.H. sec. 490, no. 2 (end); R. Simeon Greenfeld, Resp. Maharshag, II, sec. 82. Cf., though, R. Jacob haLevi Moellin, Minhagei Mahariel, Hilkhots Eruvei Ha'tseirot.

103. One can, therefore, take issue with R. Bleich's position (supra, note 63) that "the fulfillment of a mitzvah [e.g., prayer] in an optimal manner [i.e., via tefilla be-tsibbur], albeit without extraordinary kavvana, is to be favored over less optimal fulfillment accompanied by fervent religious experience." While such a statement may be true with regard to men, it may not necessarily be so for women.

104. Magen Avraham, in his gloss to the statement of Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 689, no. 1, that "women, too, are obligated to hear the Megilla," writes, "'Women'—Therefore one must read the Megilla at home for the unmarried women." To this, Be'er Heitev and Mishna Berura add: "In some places, the unmarried women go to the women's section of the synagogue to hear the Megilla." R. Menashe Klein, supra, note 64, understands from the above citations that it was not the obligation nor the wont of the unmarried women, and certainly of the married women, to hear a public reading of the Megilla. (See, however, Halikhot Beita, Petah haBayyit, no. 25, who suggest an alternate understanding of Magen Avraham). R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Tsibbur Nashim biKri'at haMegilla, Keshot, 4 (Adar II/Nisan 5755), sec 14, pp. 8-10, reprinted in Resp. Benei Vanim, III, sec. 7, suggests that this is the meaning of the cryptic suggestion of Behag, Halakhot Gedolot, Hilkhots Megilla, s.v. "haKal hayavin"; cited in Rama, O.H. sec. 689, no. 2, that women are obligated in hearing the Megilla [in private] and not in reading it [in public]. R. Mordechai Jacob Breisch, Resp. Hilkot Yuakov, III, sec. 144, argues that women are obligated in neither be-rov am hadrat melekh ("In the multitude of people is the King's glory," Proverbs 14:28; vide infra, sec. B.6 for a discussion of this term) nor in pirsumei nisa (publicizing the miracle). A similar position is maintained by R. Moses Sternbuch, Mo'adim uZmanim, II, sec. 173, and R. David Auerbach, Halikhot Beita, Petah haBayyit, sec. 25.

105. R. Israel David Harfeness, Resp. VaYvarekh David, I, O.H. sec. 82, and R. Gavriel Zinner, Nitei Gavriel—Dinei uMinhagei Purim, sec. 13, no. 3, note 6, dissent, however, maintaining that women are obligated in be-rov am. At first blush, this would also seem to be the view of Hayyei Adam, kelal 155, no. 7, who writes, "... Even if one can gather a minyan in his home, it is still highly preferable (mitzvah min ha-mu-vhar) to go to the synagogue—he, his wife and his children—to hear the Megilla." Similar language is found in Bah, O.H., end of sec. 687 and Ateret Zekenim.
Nevertheless, one could well argue that Hayyei Adam, Bah and Ateret Zekenim maintain that children and certainly women contribute by their presence to the be-rov am hadrat melekh of others, though they themselves are not obligated therein. See R. Joshua M.M. Ehrenberg, Resp. Devar Teshoshna, I, sec. 96. Alternatively, these posekim may consider the presence of women and minors preferable because of pirsumei nisa (even in the absence of be-rov am). This is in fact the implication of Or Zarua, Hilkhot Megilla sec. 368, who states that one should be accompanied to the reading of the Megilla by his wife and children because of pirsumei nisa.

106. R. Mas'ud Raphael Alfasi, Resp. Mashha deRabvata, addenda at end of II, sec. 689; R. Joseph Hayyim, Resp. Rav Pe'alim, O.H. II, sec. 62; R. Moses Hayyim Lits Rosenbaum, Sha'arei Emet, Hilkhot Megilla, sec. 4, Hemdat Arye, sec. 4, no. 5; Hug haArets, sec. 3; R. Joseph Hayyim Sonnenfeld, Resp. Salmat Hayyim, I, sec. 101; R. Tsvi Pesah Frank, Mikra'ei Kodesh, Purim, sec. 35 and 50, note 3; R. Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz, Hazon Ish, O.H. sec. 155, no. 2; R. Isaac Halberstadt, Shenei Serei haKodesh, p. 16; Purim Meshulash, sec. 2, nos. 8 and 9 and addendum thereto; R. Hanoch Zundel Grossberg, Iggeret haPurim, first edition, sec. 7, no. 2, second edition, sec. 8, no. 3; Resp. Yabia Omer, VIII, O.H. sec. 23, no. 27 and sec. 56, end of no. 4; R. Ovadiah Yosef, Likkutei Kol Sinai, sec. 23, p. 47; Yalkut Yosef, V, Hilkhot Mikra Megilla, sec. 7, p. 284; Kitsur Shulhan Arukh Arukh Yalkut Yosef, O.H. sec. 692, nos. 4 and 10; Resp. Tsits Eliezer XIII, sec. 73; R. Joseph Shalom Elyashiv (personal written communication to Aryeh A. Frimer, 27 Adar 5754, March 10, 1994); Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, cited in Lu'ah Dinim uMinhagim, Israeli Chief Rabbinate (5757), p. 122; R. Joel Schwartz, Adar uPurim, sec. 8, no. 5, par. 2 and 3 and note 11; Halikhot Beita, sec. 24, nos. 17-21 and notes 33, 34, 44 and 48; Hilkhot HaHag beHag: Purim, sec. 8, no. 13 and 14, note 32 and addendum to sec. 8, no. 13, note 31, p. 218; Chief Rabbis of Ma'ale Adumim Joshua Katz and Mordechai Nagari, Ma'alot, no. 185, Parshat Tetzave 5756, Halakha Setura, sec. B, no. 5 and conversation with Dov I. Frimer (March 23, 1996); R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, supra, note 104. Other posekim dissent; see R. Shlomo Kluger, Hokhmat Shelomo, O.H. sec. 689, no. 5; Kaf haHayyim, O.H. sec. 690, no. 120; Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 690, no. 25; Resp. Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana, I, O.H. sec. 550; and R. Moshe Feinstein as quoted by R. Dovid Katz, supra, note 44. Note, however, that both Arukh haShulhan and R. Feinstein, like many other leading posekim, maintain that the HaRav et riveinu benediction can be said even in the absence of a minyan; see infra, note 44.

107. For a discussion of the rationale, see supra, note 3.

108. Resp. Rav Pe'alim, Mikra'ei Kodesh, Resp. Tsits Eliezer, Adar uPurim and Purim Meshulash (all supra, note 106) suggest that Rama, O.H. sec. 690, no. 18 (see text near note 80), was hesitant to count women into a minyan together with men due to modesty considerations. Rama, however, would have no such reservations regarding a minyan for Megilla made up exclusively of women.

109. R. Sraya Devlitsky, Purim Meshulash, sec. 2, note 20, for example, refers to these second Megilla readings for women as the “takana gedola”
(important innovation) of Bnei Brak.

110. Surveys of the different opinions can be found in the following works: *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, XII, “Zekhirat Ma’ase Amalek,” sec. 3 (p.222); *Resp. Yabia Omer*, VIII, sec. 54; *Resp. Yehave Da’at I*, sec. 84; *Halikhot Beita*, sec. 9, no. 5, note 8; *Halikhot Bet Yisrael*, sec. 22, no. 1, notes 1-4; *Halikhot Hagg beHag: Purim*, sec. 3, no. 3 note 8 and end of addendum to sec. 3, no. 2 note 7, p. 214; *Nitei Gavriel—Dinei uMinhagei Purim*, sec. 4, no. 4, notes 5-8, and no. 10, note 14; responsa of R. Isaac Goldberger printed at the very end of the 5744 edition of *Nitei Gavriel—Halikhot Purim* [the responsum does not appear in the later, 5752, edition]. For additions, see Aryeh A. Frimer, *Tradition, supra*, note 3 and footnotes 36-38 therein. To those who obligate women, add R. Baruch HaLevy Epstein, *Torah Temima*, Deut. 25:19, note 206; *Minhat Yitshak*, IX, sec. 68, no. a; *Teshuvot veHanahagot*, III, sec. 223. To those who exempt women, add R. Hayyim Halberstam, *Resp. Divrei Hayyim*, O.H. II, sec. 14; *Resp. Divrei Tatsiv*, O.H., II, sec. 288; *Rivevot Ephrayim*, O.H. IV, sec. 43, p. 81; *Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha*, V, sec. 80; R. Sha’ul Yisraeli and former Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, cited in *Mikva’ei Kodesh—Halikhot Purim*, sec. 1, no. 19, note 45; R. Yisroel Taplin, *Orah Yisrael*, sec. 2, end of no. 8; *Resp. Degel Re’uvein*, sec. 6. These latter *posekim* indicate that the lenient position is the view of the vast majority of codifiers and common practice. R. Moses Portman (Poniveze Yeshiva, Bnei Brak; conversation with R. Shlomo H. Pick and recorded in personal communication to Aryeh A. Frimer, April 1992) indicated that it was not the practice of religious women in Telshe, Lithuania to make a special effort to hear *Parshat Zakhor*, R. David Zvi Hillman (editor, *Encyclopedia Talmudit* and Frankel edition of *M.T.*; conversation with R. Shlomo H. Pick, *ibid.*) indicated that this was generally true for much of Eastern Europe. In addition, we note that both Rabbis Hanokh Henikh Agus, *Marheschet*, sec 22, no. 2, and Meir Simha haKohen of Dvinsk, *Or Same’ah*, Megilla 1:1, discuss the cryptic ruling of *Halakhot Gedolot*, *Halikhot Megilla*, s.v. “haKol hayyavin” and note 93 *supra*, that women are obligated in hearing the *Megilla* and not in reading it. They both posit that this view, which suggests that women have a lesser *Megilla* obligation than men, is essentially the same as that of *Hinukh*, who argues that women are exempt from the obligation of reciting *Parshat Zakhor*. Since the view of Behag is normative halakha for Ashkenazic Jewry (see *Shulhan Arukh* and *Rama*, O.H. sec. 689, no. 2), *Hinukh* should be as well. R. Isaac Ratsabi, *Shulhan Arukh ba-meKutsar*, III, sec. 121, no. 4, indicates that according to Yemenite practice, women are exempt from *Parshat Zakhor*. See also R. Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, *Resp. Binyan Av*, III, sec. 30; R. Isaac Yosef, *Kissur Shulhan Arukh Bialkat Yosef*, O.H. sec. 135, no. 9, sec. 143, no. 6 and sec. 685, no. 10.

sec. 166, She'arim haMetsuyanim beHalakha, Kunteres Aharon, sec. 140, no. 1; Ta'khut Yosef, V, Keriat Parshat Zakhor, sec. 8, note 12, pp. 259-260; responsa of R. Isaac Goldberger printed at the end of Nitei Gaavriel—Hilkhot Purim [5744 edition]. See also R. Tsvi Pesah Frank, Mikra'ei Kodesh, Purim, sec. 5, pp. 82-83 and the comments of R. Joseph Cohen, ad. loc., nos. 8-9. R. Lichtman, ibid., and R. Jehiel Abraham Zilber, Birur Halakha, O.H. sec. 146, no. 2, demonstrate that the contrary view of Resp. Terumat haDeshen is predicated on a misprint (of one letter!) in the standard editions of Piskei haRosh, with the proper reading being “be-asei mi-deOraita” rather than “be-asara mi-deOraita”—as found explicitly in the Oxford-Bodley manuscript of Piskei haRosh, as well as in Tosafot haRosh and Tosafot Rabbeinu Tehuda heHasid, Berakhot 47b, s.v. “Mitsvah.”

112. Yalkut Yosef, supra, note 111; R. Moses Feinstein, as cited in Mo'adei Yeshurun, I, Laws of Purim, 1: 6(a) and note 12 ad loc. (p. 64); R. Sha'ul Yisraeli and R. Avigdor Neventsal, as cited by R. Moses Harari, Mikra'ei Kodesh—Hilkhot Purim, sec. 1, no. 20, end of note 49 (end); Resp. Sheivet haLevi, IV, sec. 71, no. 1; R. Sraya Devlitsky, Purim Meshulash, sec. 2, note 20; Adar uFurim, sec. 3, no. 4(b)(2). Cf., however, R. Haim David HaLevy, Resp Asei Lekha Rav, VII, sec. 41; R. Yehiel Abraham Zilber, supra, note 111; and Halikhot Bat Yisrael, supra, note 111.

As R. Schachter himself comments, supra, note 61 at p. 119, even if a minyan for Parshat Zakhor were biblically required, it is not at all clear that the failure to recite the attendant berakhot would, in fact, impinge upon the fulfillment of the mitsvah. First, the benedictions over the public reading of Parshat Zakhor may be of only rabbinic origin. (See the discussion found in the following sources: Peri Megadim, supra, note 83; Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 47, nos. 3-4; R. Joseph Cohen, Hararei Kodesh, no. 6 on Mikra'ei Kodesh, supra, note 83; Resp. Yabia Omer, III, O.H. sec. 27, no. 11; Resp. Yehave Da'at, I, sec. 85, p. 244). Second, even if the benedictions themselves are biblically mandated, it does not necessarily follow that failure to recite them would prevent one from fulfilling a Parshat Zakhor obligation. See at length R. Abraham Dow-Ber Kahane Schapira, Resp. Devar Avraham, I, sec. 16; R. Tsvi Pesah Frank, Kunteres Mili deBrakhot, Resp. Har Zevi, O.H. II, sec. 1 (printed originally as a preface to Toledot Ze'ev, authored by his brother Ze'ev Wolf Frank); R. Isaac Arieli, Einayim laMishpat, Berakhot 15a, s.v. “ve-lo bi-vrakha.”

113. Resp. Torat Hesed, O.H. sec. 37; R. Hayyim Eleazar Shapira, Resp. Minhat Elazar, II, sec. 1, no. 4 ff.; R. Joshua Heschel Michel Shapira, Tsits haKodesh, sec. 52, no. 3; R. Dov Ber Karasik, Pithei Olam uMatamei haShulhan, O.H. sec. 685, no. 7, note 14; Resp. BeTse'el haHokhma, VI, sec. 49, no. 7 and at the end of the responsum; R. Meir Zev Goldberger, Resp. Imrei haMezeg, no. 22; Mo'adim uZmanim, II, sec. 167; Resp. Yabia Omer and Kinyan Torah beHalakha, supra, note 110; Mo'adei Yeshurun, Laws of Purim 1:3, note 9 in the name of R. Moses Feinstein; Nitei Gaavriel—Dinei uMinhagei Purim, sec. 4, no. 10 and note 14; Orah Yisrael, sec. 2, end of no. 8, note 36; R. Mordechai Eliyahu in Shabbat be-Shabbato, VIII, no. 24 [380], 8 Adar II 5792 [March 13, 1992], Meishiv haHalakha, Shulhan Arukh ha-mekKutzar, supra, note 110. See also Resp.
Rivevot Ephrayyim O.H. IV, sec. 43. R. Aharon Lichtenstein (conversation with Dov I. Frimer) has also ruled that women can fulfill their Parshat Zakhor obligation, even if biblical in nature, by reading the requisite portion from a printed Humash in private.

114. Resp. Yabia Omer, VIII, addendum to O.H. sec. 54, reports to seeing this custom in Har Nof, Jerusalem; Purim Meshulash, sec. 2, no. 8, note 20, records that this is the custom in Bnei Brak; Resp. Minhat Yitshak, supra, note 110, lists “Ashkenaz” and many other communities. We have also witnessed this practice in the United States in Boston, Boro Park (Brooklyn), Cleveland, and Washington Heights (Manhattan), as well as in Israel in Rehovot and Ma’ale Adumim. R. Aharon Felder, LeTorah veHora’a: Memorial Volume to R. Moses Feinstein (5749), p. 216, cites “one of the greatest rabbis” to the effect that this custom is by no means new and has been in practice for many generations. In a subsequent conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer, Jan. 6, 1991, R. Felder identified the great rabbi as R. Shimon Schwab. R. Moses Stern, cited by R. Dovid Katz, supra, note 44, sec. 1, no. 22, page 84, and by R. Joel Schwartz, Adar uPurim, sec. 3, no. 3 (1), Talkut Yosef II, Keriat haTorah beAsara, sec. 5 and note 7, and R. Isaac Goldberger (responsa printed at the end of Nitei Gavriel—Hilkhot Purim [5744 edition]) also permit such a practice. R. Isaac Yosef, Talkut Yosef, O.H. sec. 143, note 5 and Kitzur Shulhan Arukh Talkut Yosef, O.H. sec. 143, no. 6, permits the practice only if women find it near impossible to attend the regular keri’a of Parshat Zakhor.

On the other hand, other posekim do not approve of this practice. See Resp. Torat Hesed, supra, note 113; R. Moshe Feinstein, cited by R. Aharon Felder, Mo’adei Yeshurun, I, Laws of Purim, sec. 1 no. 3 and note 9 ad loc., pp. 63-64, and by R. Dovid Katz, ibid., sec. 14, no. 2, p. 133; R. Menashe Klein, cited by R. Dovid Katz, ibid., and by R. Joel Schwartz, ibid.; R. Aharon Felder, LeTorah veHora’a, ibid. For a discussion of this prohibitive position and its rationale, see infra, note 139.


116. R. Abraham David Horowitz, Resp. Kinyan Torah beHalakha, V, sec. 80, no. 4. See also Resp. Minhat Yitshak, supra, note 110, who also raises this possibility.

117. R. Moses Sofer, Derashot Hatam Sofer, III, Derush leBar Mitzvah, p. 72. Cf., however, Resp. Torat Hesed, O.H. sec. 37, and R. Joseph Cohen, Hararei Kodesh on R. Tsvi Pesah Frank’s Mikra’ei Kodesh, Purim, sec. 6, p. 86, who contend that even if women are obligated to read Parshat Zakhor, they cannot constitute a minyan for the reading. This debate is, in reality, predicated on the larger question of women and minyan. See at length Aryeh A. Frimer, supra, note 3. Rabbis Sofer and Horowitz clearly belong to the “First School,” while Rabbis Schneur Zalman and Cohen align themselves with the “Second School,” as defined in that article.

118. It should be noted that being exempted from a mitsvah is not always a valid reason for not performing it. For example, one is required to put tsitsit on the corners of one’s garments when one wears a four-cornered garment—but there is no obligation to wear such a garment! Neverthe-
less, R. Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, Beit haLevi, part 2, Derush 11, demonstrates that even in a case of a non-obligatory mitsvah such as tsitsis, if the general custom is to obligate oneself (e.g., by wearing a four-cornered garment) and one refrains from doing so, he is liable for heavenly punishment. (See also Tosafot, Pesahim 113b, s.v. “Ve-ein lo banim.”) This is because his inaction, in light of the general custom, suggests that he despises mitsvot, and he is therefore considered a sinner. This, however, is not at all relevant to a woman's choice to forego tefilla be-tsibbur in order to attend a women's service. First, it is certainly not the universal custom of women to come to shul. Attendance is undoubtedly greater on Shabbat or Yom Tov mornings, but there are many communities in which most women simply stay home, as the Gaon of Vilna, supra, note 85, advised the women of his family to do. Second, and more fundamentally, even if a woman should choose to attend shul, she would not—and could not—thereby bring herself to a state of obligation in tefilla be-tsibbur.

119. See supra, note 104.
120. Supra, note 61 at p. 51.
122. Note that R. Shternbuch, Resp. Teshuvot veHanhagot, ibid., cites the verse from Psalms 34:4: “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together,” as the source text for the first form of public worship which does not require a minyan. This is the very same verse which the Talmud, Berakhot 45a-45b, utilizes as the basis for the birkat ha-zimmun recited by three adults—three men or three women—who eat bread together. See text at note 14, supra. Rashi, Berakhot 45b, s.v. “deIka,” clearly underscores that women as well are included within “the fulfillment of “O magnify the Lord with me.”
123. R. Solomon Luria, Yam Shel Shelomo, Bava Kama, chap. 4, sec. 9 (Bava Kama 38a). The Talmudic passage under discussion by Maharshal deals with a particular law in torts in which Jews are given preferential treatment over non-Jews. The Talmud recounts that upon learning of this ruling, two non-Jewish emissaries/spies of the Roman Empire queried the rabbis as to the details of this law. Maharshal notes that the rabbis were accurate in their presentation despite possible serious repercussions, including the loss of life. Maharshal adduces this as proof that one must choose martyrdom over misrepresenting halakha. The view of Maharshal is cited in R. Isaiah Horowitz, Shenet Lekhot haBerit, Part 1, Tractate Shavuot, end of Pereh Ner Mitsvah, s.v. “Kevod haTorah”; R. Elijah Rogeler, Resp. Yad Eliyahu, sec. 48; R. Moses Shternbuch, Ta'am vaDa'at, Shemini, s.v. “ve-et ha-arnevet.” For additional discussion of the view of Maharshal (and Rabbeinu Jonah Gerondi, discussed below in the Addendum section of this paper, Part 2 and Part 3p), see Igrot Moshe, O.H. II, sec. 51; R. David Cohen, Birkhat Ya'aveits, pp. 52-54; R. Abraham Drori, Resp. Aderet Tiferet, sec. 31; R. Judah David Bleich, Contemporary Halakhic Problems, II (New York: Ktav Publishing House and Yeshiva University Press, 1983), pp. 134-138, and in his “Siddur Hupa leKohen veSa'afek Gerusha
124. For a general halakhic discussion of the prohibition of lying and possible exceptions, see the Addendum section of this paper, Part 6.

125. Supra, note 63.


127. This is an assumption which R. Schachter states more explicitly in his article, “BeInyanei Beit haKenesset uKdushato,” supra, note 62.

128. Supra, note 3.

129. R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, responsum to Aryeh Leib Lewis, dated Tamuz 8, 5745 (June 27, 1985); published under the title “Mahu Kevod ha-Tsibbur,” HaDarom 55 (Elul 5746), p. 33; expanded and revised in Resp. Benei Vanim, II, sec. 10. R. Henkin suggests several possible grounds for refuting Maharshal’s proofs. See also R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, Kitvei haGri Henkin, II, Teshuvot bra, see. 95, no. 2.

130. R. Isaac Herzog, supra, note 123 (end).

131. Igrot Moshe, supra, note 123. Rav Feinstein points out that Maharshal’s position that ziyyuf haTorah requires martyrdom is seemingly contradicted by two Talmudic passages. In Gittin 14b (see Rashi, ad loc., s.v. “tav ramu lei”) the Talmud recounts how R. Dustai, for fear of bodily harm, encouraged ruffians in their thrashing of his fellow, R. Yose, despite the fact that it was the latter’s halakhically correct position which precipitated the ruffians’ actions. Although R. Dustai consciously misrepresented halakha to save himself, the Talmud concludes this account with R. Ahi’s approval of R. Dustai’s behavior, which, as explicitly stated by several rishonim (Meiri, Gittin, 14a, s.v. “Kevor ramaznu”; Tosafot Hakhmei Anglia, Gittin 14b, s.v. “Arda ve-arta”) refers to his words of encouragement as well. A similar story is recounted in Nedarim 22a (see Ran and Rosh ad loc., s.v. “uFra”): the well-traveled amora, Ula, found himself witnessing the murder of one of his traveling companions. Fearing for his own life, Ula not only expressed his approval of the murderous action, but even encouraged the murderer to finish the job! Furthermore, the Talmud records R. Yohanan’s approval of Ula’s action in light of the potential danger to Ula’s own life, despite the fact that Ula clearly misrepresented Jewish law in implying that this heinous crime is permissible. Indeed, Tosafot, Sota 41b, s.v. “Kol ha-ma-hanif,” and other posekim, cited in Part 2 of the Addendum section of this paper, refer to the story of Ula as evidence that one may misrepresent Jewish law in times of danger. (See also Tiferet Yisraet, Pe’a 1:1, Boaz note a.) All this presumably contravenes the view of Maharshal that martyrdom is called for where ziyyuf haTorah may result. As noted in the text, R. Feinstein limits the prohibition to ex-
It is significant that R. Feinstein's distinction between explicit and implicit misrepresentation finds precedent in a related law of martyrdom. Jews are bidden to martyr themselves rather than deny their Jewishness or declare themselves idolaters, for this is equivalent to denying God (ke-kofer beElokei Yisrael). Nevertheless, double entendres are permitted. Thus, the Talmud (Nedarim 62b) permits one to declare that he is a "fire worshipper" since God is referred to as "a consuming fire" (Deut. 9:3). This is permissible even if the only purpose is to save oneself from a discriminatory tax. See Y.D. sec. 157, no. 2 and Kenesset haGedola, s.v. "Assur le-adam"; Beis Lehem Yehuda, s.v. "Lashon de-mi-shtamei'a"; and Pithei Teshuva (n.18) ad loc. It is noteworthy, however, that misrepresentation, even by implication, which involves flattering or encouraging the halakhically forbidden action of a wicked individual (as in the cases of Ula, R. Dustai or Agrippas, mentioned in note 131 and Addendum section of this paper, Part 2) is still forbidden because of hanufa (as discussed in Addendum, Part 2); however, this does not require martyrdom. See, though, R. Judah David Bleich, supra, note 123 and Addendum, Part 3.

R. David Cohen, "Heakov leMishor" (Jerusalem: Morasha leHanhil Press, 5753) p. 33, s.v. "ve-nizkarti" (and in personal communication to Aryeh A. Frimer, Dec. 27, 1990). Rabbi Zelig Epstein, in conversation with Aruye A. Frimer and Noach Dear, March 8, 1996, argued, however, that such a siyuyf baTorah may have been permitted only because it enabled the spiritual salvation of Kelal Yisrael. This would be analogous to the position of R. Joseph Colon, Resp. Maharik, sec. 167 (see also Encyclopedia Talmudit, XXII, "Ye-hareg veAl YaJavor," at pp. 64-65), who justifies the actions of Yael and Queen Esther on the grounds that it resulted in the salvation of Kelal Yisrael.

Supra, note 123.


See the Addendum section of this paper, Part 3, for an extensive list of views and cases which apparently demonstrate that misrepresenting halakha is merely another—albeit, perhaps, a more serious—form of lying, which may be permitted under certain conditions and is by no means grounds for martyrdom.

Supra, text at note 125.

See, for example, Rivka Haut, "Women's Prayer Groups and the Orthodox Synagogue," in Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue, supra, note 3*, pp. 135-157, at p. 141.

For a review of some of the relevant responsa, see R. Ovadiah Yosef, Haggada Hazon Ovadiah, II, Hilkhot Hodesh Nissan, sec. 1, no. 6 and Resp. Yabia Omer, VIII, addendum to O.H. sec. 54. The question of using and transporting a sefer Torah for a women's Torah reading, as well as the complicated issue of berakhot, will be discussed and documented in detail in Part 2 of this paper, which deals with the "Practical Issues" of halakhic women's prayer groups. We simply note at this juncture that, regarding a women's Torah reading, R. Mordechai Tendler writes in the
name of his grandfather, R. Moshe Feinstein (infra, text following note 217), “They may also read from the Torah, though they should be careful not to do so in such a manner as to create the erroneous impression that this constitutes keriat haTorah.” (See, however, an apparently contradictory ruling by R. Moshe Feinstein, cited by R. Aharon Felder, supra, note 114.) In a letter to Ms. Nili Arad, dated 22 Adar 5750 (March 19, 1990), concerning “The Women of the Wall” controversy, R. Meir Yehudah Getz, then Rabbi of the Kotel, indicated that the women’s use of the sefer Torah, though not customary, did not contravene halakha. Finally, the following posekim indicate that their objection is to a women’s Torah reading performed with benedictions: R. Ovadiah Yosef, Yom haShishi, 14 Shevat 5750 (Feb. 9, 1990), p. 30; R. Isaac Yosef, Talkut Yosef, II, sec. 145, Keriat haTorah baAsara, no. 4 and note 6, p. 135; R. Isaac Yosef, Kitsur Shulhan Arukh Talkut Yosef, O.H. sec. 143, no. 5; R. Joseph Kappah, HaIsha veHinukha (Amana, Kefar Saba, 5740), p. 35, nos. 9 and 10; and R. Efraim Greenblatt, Riyevo Ephrayyim, VI, sec. 153, no. 12.

139. Perisha, Y.D. sec. 270, no. 8, and Siftei Kohen, Y.D. sec. 270, no. 5, prohibit reading from a Torah scroll when not halakhically required, even without the attendant benedictions, maintaining that such a practice shows disrespect for the Torah. The rationale behind this is that printed Humashim are readily available and the Torah should not be handled unnecessarily. This stringent position is rejected by R. Ovadiah Yosef, Haggada Hazon Ovadiyah, supra, note 138; Resp. Yabia Omer, VIII, addendum to O.H. sec. 54, and many other posekim to be cited in Part 2 of this paper.

140. Resp. Radbaz, III, sec. 529 [964] and V, sec. 157 [1530]) regarding shenayim mikra ve-chad taryum. Radbaz’s position is cited on O.H. sec. 285, no. 1 by Magen Avraham, no. 1; Kenesset haGedola; Mahzik Berakha, no. 2; Mishna Berura, no. 2; Arukh haShulhan, no. 7; Shulhan Arukh haRav, no. 4; Kaf haHayyim, no. 7; and Birur Halakha, no. 20, who offers additional citations. See also R. Chaim Elazar Shapira, Nimukei Oray Hayyim, O.H. sec. 669, end of no. 2; Resp. Torah liShma, O.H. sec. 58; and Talkut Yosef, IV, part 1, sec. 285, no. 14. R. Yosef reiterates that the keriat haTorah benedictions may not be recited.

142. See Radbaz to M.T., Hilkhot Melachim 10:10; R. Gershon Arieli, Torat haMelekh, ad loc.
145. R. Abraham Samuel Benjamin Sofer, Resp. Ketav Sofer, Hoshen Mishpat (henceforth H.M.) 39; Resp. Meishiv Davar, I, sec. 46; R. Solomon Chaim haKohen Aviner, MiKedem leBeit El, O.H. sec. 5; R. Jacob Ariel, “LaAbduta shel haKehillah beNusah haTefilla,” Tefumin 9, pp. 196-202. (See, however, the comments of R. Yair Dreyfus, ad loc.).
146. It should be noted that R. Schachter not long ago authored an extensive article on various aspects related to the synagogue (supra, note 62). Despite the appropriate opportunity, R. Schachter did not use that forum to attack the opening of shulach throughout Boro Park, Williamsburg, Bnai Brak and Jerusalem—not to mention junior, teen-age, young couples, hashkama (“ear-
ly”), yeshivishe, “happy” (R. Shlomo Carlebach devotees), and assorted other breakaway minyanim. The arguments used by R. Schachter against women’s prayer groups, while questionable in their application with regard to women—as noted below—are certainly relevant to these male groups, yet R. Schachter fails to criticize them.

147. Supra, note 143; Encyclopedia Talmudit, XII, “Zerizin Makdimin leMitsvot,” pp. 409, 419.


150. Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 90, no. 15; Mishna Berura, sec. 90, no. 28; Hayyei Adam, kelal 17, no. 5.

151. Supra, note 149.

152. Supra, note 149.

153. Supra, note 149.

154. Peri Megadim, O.H. sec. 689, Eishel Avraham, no. 1; Mishna Berura, sec. 689, no. 1.

155. For a similar reason, i.e., lack of any obligation, there should also be no problem of “lo tit-godedu”; see Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 651, no. 22.

156. Supra, note 76.


158. R. Abraham Hayyim Na’eh, Ketot haShulhan, sec. 45, no. 2, Badei haShulhan no. 5.

159. Ketot haShulhan, sec. 45, no. 9. Mishna Berura, sec. 199, no. 18, Sha’ar haTsiyyun, no. 9 cites this source and comments: “The [three women] will definitely not lose anything by breaking off [from the three men making the zimmun].”

160. See text near note 104.

161. Supra, note 104.

162. See also Resp. Heikhal Yitshak, O.H. sec. 63, no. 5—reprinted in Pesakim uKhtavim, II, She’ilot uTeshuvot beDinei Orach Hayyim, sec 106, no. 5.


164. Supra, note 129. This observation is confirmed by the comments of R. Avraham Weiss, supra, note 57, p. 118.

165. R. Eliezer Berkovits, Jewish Women in Time and Torah (Hoboken, N.J.:
Krav Publishing House, Inc., 1990), Chapter 4, pp. 77-81, discusses *lo ra'inion eino ra'aya* (*vide infra*). He posits that in all cases “which are quoted to show that *lo ra'inion* is a *ra'aya* (proof), there are always two opinions, one for the practice, the other against it. In all these cases, the non-practice is a rejection of an opposing ruling. Where, however, there is no opposing ruling, the non-practice of an activity does not establish it as a *minhag* that must not be changed.”

166. Justice Menachem Elon, in his “The Women of the Wall” decision (*supra*, note 4, pp. 313-317), distinguishes between a custom *not* to do something (*hesder shelili*), and no custom to do something (*lacuna*). For a related suggestion, see *Yehave Da’at*, I, end of no. 24.

167. See, for example, R. Abraham Butchatch, *Eishel Avraham*, O.H. sec. 692: “It is not prevalent (*she-ein matsui*) that any woman should read to be *motzi* others.” See also *Divrei Yatsir*, O.H. II, sec. 294.


169. Noteworthy in this regard are the comments of R. Benjamin Joshua Zilber, *Resp. Az Nidbern*, VI, addendum (*hashmatot*) to sec. 67-68, end, regarding the issue of girls’ lighting *Shabbat* candles in addition to their mothers: “And as to R. Blumenfeld’s citation in this regard of ‘he-hadash assur min haTorah (that which is new is forbidden)—perish the thought that one would use this principle with respect to any case where the innovation was instituted in order to strengthen religion. The *Hatam Sofer* (R. Moses Sofer) z”l never intended to refer to such an instance.”


Jonathan Eybeschutz, Kereiti uFleiti, Y.D. sec. 1, Kereiti, no. 4 and Urim veTummim, H.M. sec. 37, Tumim, no. 24; R. Samuel Ashkenazi, Mekom Shmuel, II, Y.D. sec. 1; R. Hayyim Broda, Torah Or veDerekh Hayyim, I, Y.D. sec. 1, Derekh Hayyim, no. 1; R. Jacob Hayyim Sofer, Kaf haHayyim, Y.D. sec. 1, no. 10; R. Halfon Moses haKohen, Resp. Sho'el veNishal, V, O.H. sec. 82, sv. "Gam m'sh" (cf. ibid., sec. 1, sv. "Akh nire"); R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Mesora 13 (Adar 5757), p. 25. This also seems to be the view of R. Alexander Sender Schor, Simla Hadasha, sec. 1, Teru'ot Shor, no. 14 (end). See also R. Joseph Ibn Ezra, Massa Melekh, Ne'ilat She'arim, Minhagei Mammon, root 7, pp. 63c-64a.

R. Nissim Hayyim Moses Mizrahi, Resp. Admat Kodesh, I, E.H. sec. 31, and his brother, R. Israel Meir Mizrahi, Resp. Peri haArets, II, sec. 2, both distinguish between two cases: (1) where the action is fundamentally permitted according to halakha, yet the posek is asked now to forbid it due to a claim of minhag resulting from passive behavior of the community; (2) where an activity has already been declared prohibited in previous generations due to minhag and the posek is now asked to rule that the old custom is no longer in force due to the community's passive behavior. These two rabbinic brothers maintain that a proper formulation of the halakhic rule is that a community's passive behavior is incapable of changing the halakhic status quo. Consequently, in case 1, the communal passive behavior will not support the conclusion that a prohibitive minhag has developed contrary to the established halakha; thus the activity will remain permissible. In the latter situation (case 2), the passive behavior of the community will not void the existing prohibitive custom; thus the activity will remain forbidden. The issue of women's tefillot obviously falls into the former category.

The view of R. Moses Isserles is unclear and appears to be self-contradictory. See Darkei Moshe haArokh, Y.D. sec. 1, no. 2; Mappa, Y.D. sec. 1, no. 1; and H.M. sec. 37, no. 22. For one attempt at reconciling and unifying R. Isserles' position, see R. Johanan Kremnitzer, Orat Mishor, Y.D. sec. 1, both mahadura kama and mahadura batra. See also R. Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook, Mitsvot Re'iya, Y.D. sec. 1, no. 1.

174. Infra, note 182*.
177. Supra, note 175.
178. The numerical value of the letters in the words "ga'o ga'a"—"highly exalted" equals 18, the number of benedictions in the shemone esrei.
179. Supra, note 176.
180. See Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, (London: E. Gold-
ciated before the female worshipers to whom she sang hymnal portions”; Rechenza of Nurenberg (d. August 1, 1298), Guta bat Natan (d. 1308), and Dulce of Worms (d. 1238, wife of R. Elazar of Worms, author of the *Ma’ase Rokei’ab*).

180*R. Joseph Messas, *Nahalat Avot*, V, part 2, pp. 268-269. The citation is from the Master’s degree thesis research of David Biton, Department of Jewish History, Hebrew University. We thank David Biton and Leah Shakdiel for bringing this source to our attention.


182. See discussion at note 109, supra.

183. As to Sephardic kehillot, see *Resp. Shemesh uMagen*, II, sec. 72, no. 3 and *supra*, note 90. Regarding Ashkenazic communities, see *Mo’adim uZmanim*, I, sec. 9. R. Shternbuch adds that in light of their high educational level, contemporary Jewish women should no longer be lenient with daily prayer—despite the lack of practice in the past.


187. *supra*, note 129.

188. Cf. R. Zalman Nehemiah Goldberg, *supra*, note 73. R. Goldberg cites a responsum of R. David Zevi Hoffman, *Resp. MeLamed leHo’il*, I, sec. 16, which discusses the use of an organ in the synagogue. R. Hoffman contends that the prohibition of *u-be-hukoteihem* applies also to actions and modes of behavior which imitate the practices of Jewish heretics (e.g., Reform Jews). R. Hoffman finds support for his argument in *Mishna Hullin* 2:9, which forbids slaughtering an animal in the marketplace and allowing the blood to drain into a hole. The mishna explains that such behavior is not allowed since it appears “to imitate the ways of the *minim.*” Rashi, *Hullin* 41b, s.v. “Te-hake,” comments that through imitation “one will strengthen their hand in their ways.” The Talmud, *ibid.*, proceeds to quote a *beraita* which explicitly bases this prohibition upon the biblical text of *u-be-hukoteihem*. See *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, *supra*,
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note 186, at 316-317. R. Goldberg accordingly argues that inasmuch as women's participation in the prayer service finds its source in Reform practice, following suit would transgress *u-be-hukoteihem*.

With all due respect, however, R. Goldberg's reliance upon R. Hoffman's responsum is quite problematic. As noted by the various commentaries, the activities of the *minim* prohibited by the above *Mishna Hullin* are idolatry-related practices. See, for example, *Rabbeinu Gershom, ad loc.; Rashi, Hullin 41a, s.v. "Aval."* In fact, R. Jehiel Jacob Weinberg, *Resp. Seridei Eish*, III, sec. 93 (end), underscores this very point in his discussion of R. Hoffman's responsum. R. Weinberg therefore takes pains to note that the use of the organ in the synagogue was initially instituted by the Reform movement with the clear design of imitating Christian religious services. Under such circumstances, adopting Reform practice would in essence constitute an adoption of Christian practice and thus violate *u-be-hukoteihem*.

No such parallel can be drawn with women's *tefilla* groups. All-female prayer groups do not imitate either established Christian religious practice or Jewish heretical practice rooted in non-Jewish religious behavior. Interestingly, in discussing a women's Torah reading accompanied by *keriat haTorah* benedictions, R. Ovadiah Yosef strengthens his prohibitive ruling by arguing that one must guard against the ways of the Reform movement. Nevertheless, he refrains from suggesting that such a practice is a violation of *u-be-hukoteihem*. See R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Yom haShishi*, 14 Shevat 5750 (Feb. 9, 1990), p. 30; R. Isaac Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef*, II, sec. 143, *Keriat haTorah baAsara*, no. 4 and note 6; *Kitsur Shulhan Arukh Yalkut Yosef*, O.H. sec. 143, no. 5.

In closing, it should be emphasized that R. Weinberg concurs, as does R. Ovadiah Yosef, that those specific practices and innovations which would strengthen the convictions of Jewish heretics are clearly to be avoided, despite the fact that they do not technically violate *u-be-hukoteihem*. However, such considerations are within the realm of public policy, a subject which we will discuss more fully later in this paper.

189. *Cf. M.T., Hilkhos Avoda Zara*, 11:1. The terms “*mada'o*” and “*dei'otav*,” however, are to be properly understood and translated as “theology” (or “articles of faith”) and “ethical behavior,” respectively, and not “ideas” and “opinions.” See the commentaries of both R. Joseph Kafah and R. Nachum L. Rabinovitch, *Yad Peshuta, ad loc.* Of course, a particular idea or view may be prohibited on other grounds.

190. *Leviticus* 18:3.


192. For a summary of the authorities and views on this issue, see *Resp. Yabia Omer*, III, Y.D. sec. 25, nos. 8-9; *Encyclopedia Talmudit, supra*, note 186, at 306-307.


197*See various articles in Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue, note 3* supra.

198. Supra, note 62.

199. R. Menashe Klein, unpublished responsum, supra, note 64.


203. Shavuot 30a; Tur and Shulhan Arukh, H.M. secs. 96 and 124.


205. Supra, note 202.

206. Surprisingly, R. Schachter (supra, note 62) suggests that kol kevuda is the rationale behind the exclusion of women from a minyan quorum. We have previously (supra, note 3) demonstrated that according to many, if not most, posekim, there are a variety of instances where women may indeed count together with men, and certainly alone with other women, towards a minyan quorum; see text at note 24, supra. Although public prayer is not one of these instances, the reason has nothing to do with kol kevuda. It would seem clear that kol kevuda is not relevant to the fulfillment of religious rituals in general and prayer services in particular.


208. R. Sha’ul Yisraeli, editor’s note 4, p. 226, to R. Moses Dov Wilner, Ha-Torah ve-haMedina 4 (Elul 5712), p. 221—reprinted in BeTsomet haTorah ve-haMedina (Jerusalem: Tsomet, 1991), III, p. 230, note 7, p. 235; R. Issacher haLevi Levin, HaTorah ve-haMedina 5-6 (5713-5714), p. 55, section 12, p. 61—reprinted in BeTsomet haTorah ve-haMedina, III, p. 236, sec. 8, p. 242; R. Aryeh Binosovsky (Bina), HaTorah ve-haMedina 5-6 (5713-5714), p. 62, section 14, p. 70—reprinted in BeTsomet haTorah ve-haMedina, III, p. 221, sec. 6, p. 228; Mikvei haMayyim, III, T.D. sec. 21; Resp. Benei Vanim, supra, note 204; R. Asher Eliach, cited in Resp. Rivevot Ephrayyim VI, sec. 68. Surprisingly, even R. Menashe Klein seems to agree that there is a relative element to kol kevuda; see Resp. Mishne Halakhot, IV, sec. 125. To this list should be added all those posekim who allow women to assume community leadership roles (elected or otherwise). See R. Chayim Hirschensohn, Resp. Malki haKodesh, II, as well as assorted letters of concurring scholars in volumes III and VI; R. Jacob Levinson, HaTorah ve-haMada (New York: 5692), pp. 22-54; Resp.
209. Supra, note 208.


211. This point is discussed above at length in Section A. See also note 74, supra.


213. R. Nachum L. Rabinovitch ruled leniently both regarding a women’s tefilla, in a conversation with Dov I. Frimer, Sept. 26, 1994 and July 3, 1997, as well as women’s hakafot on Simhat Torah, interviewed by Dov I. Frimer and Ben Tzion Greenberger, Sept. 26, 1994, and Dov I. Frimer, June 28, 1997. R. Aharon Lichtenstein, interviewed by Dov I. Frimer, Sept. 26, 1994, also maintained that women dancing with the Sefer Torah on Simhat Torah was halakhically permitted; however, the discussion with R. Lichtenstein was merely a theoretical one and not a pesak halakha le-ma’ase (ruling in practice). Both scholars indicated that the women’s hakafot should not be carried out in the men’s section, but rather behind the mehita or in a separate room.


215. See Section E below.

215+See also R. Shlomo Riskin’s conversation with R. Feinstein, infra, note 264.

217. This was confirmed by R. Tendler in a conversation with Dov I. Frimer on September 16, 1997. R. Tendler noted that his discussions with his grandfather were conducted in Yiddish. The subsequent responsum, written by R. Tendler in Hebrew to R. Meir Fund of Brooklyn, New York and dated 14 Sivan 5743 (May 26, 1983), was based upon R. Feinstein’s formulations and phraseology. On this latter point, see the exchange of letters by R. Bertram Leff and R. Alfred Cohen, The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society 34 (Fall 1997), pp. 115-118.

217*. R. Mordechai Tendler, conversation with Dov I. Frimer, ibid. See also the related comments of R. Avraham Shapiro in the text, infra, following note 225*. R. Ovadiah Yosef, Tom haShishi, 16 Iyyar 5757 (May 23, 1997), p. 26, has indicated that one should not rely on the halakhic rulings of a rabbi who, despite his recognized general scholarship, is known not to be an expert in halakha. Should one rely on such a halakhic ruling, if the rabbi’s pesak later proves to be in error, the questioner is held fully culpable (ne-hshaw ki-meizid) for his/her misdeeds. See also Resp. Rashba, I, sec. 98 (end).

218. Except for the words in italics which appear in the original letter in Hebrew.

219. R. Chaim Spring, personal written communication to Aryeh A. Frimer (November 1985): “I have no objection to this reading in the synagogue library. Why are you asking the question? There are some things you don’t ask, because once you ask them they become political questions with all the accompanying pressures. You have to know when to ask a she’ela.”

220. Ma’ale Adumim Chief Rabbis Joshua Katz and Mordechai Nagari, Ma’alot, no. 185, Parshat Tetsave 5756, Halakha Sedura, sec. B, no. 5 and conversation with Dov I. Frimer, March 23, 1996—this ruling was reprinted the following year as well in Ma’alot, Parshat VaYikra 5757, Halakha Sedura; R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, “Mahu Kevod haTsibbur,” HaDarom 55 (Elul 5746), pp. 33-41 (see especially top of page 37)—expanded and revised in Resp. Benei Vanim, II, no. 10; R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, Tsibbur Nashim biKri’at haMegilla, Kesbot, 4 (Adar II/Nisan 5755), sec. 14, pp. 8-10—reprinted in Resp. Benei Vanim, III, sec. 7; R. Gedaliah Felder, cited by R. Henkin in HaDarom, ibid. In a conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer, April 29, 1992, R. Henkin reaffirmed the accuracy of this citation, despite its omission in the revised Benei Vanim presentation of this responsum. Similar opinions have been orally expressed by (in alphabetical order): R. David Cohen, conversation with R. Shael I. Frimer, March 1979, and to Aryeh A. Frimer, March 1980; R. David Feinstein, conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer and Noach Dear, March 26, 1991, and to Aryeh A. Frimer, Dov I. Frimer and Noach Dear, March 19, 1995; and R. Levi Yitzchak haLevi Horowitz, The Bostoner Rebbi, conversation with Mr. Noach Dear, March 1990—however, on April 13th, 1997, the Rebbi’s gabbai, Nesanel Peterman, wrote the following: “Since the Rebbi considered this issue in the early 1990’s, the whole question of women’s ‘rights’ has become more complex and the Rebbi would like to consider the wider issues further.” R. Aharon Lichtenstein, conversation
with R. Chaim Brovender, March 1992 and February 1994, and to Dov I. Frimer, October 21, 1992 and February 19, 1994, also permits a women's Megilla reading. Nevertheless, R. Lichtenstein does advise Jerusalemite women not to hold such a reading when the fifteenth of Adar falls on Shabbat (known as Purim me-shulash). In such an instance, Jerusalemites read on the fourteenth, and, as noted previously (see discussion at note 42, supra), many posekim maintain that since this reading is not on its normally designated date, a minyan is an absolute requirement. (In all other years, a minyan is advisable but not a prerequisite to fulfillment.) While most authorities agree that ten women do constitute a minyan for mikra Megilla even on Purim me-shulash, a minority dissent (see supra, note 106 and discussion in Aryeh A. Frimer, Tradition, supra, note 3). R. Lichtenstein maintains, therefore, that it is best to be stringent so as to be sure that one’s obligation has been fulfilled. Cf. the view of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, text infra, near notes 265-267. R. Ahron Soloveichik, in a taped conversation with Dov I. Frimer, July 8, 1997, ruled that in those communities, such as in Israel, where there is already an established custom to have a second Megilla reading for women, it is irrelevant whether the reader is male or female. Elsewhere, where such a minhag is not so common, a special women’s Megilla reading should not be permitted (for hashkafa and public policy reasons; vide infra, Section E). Should the local rabbi be afraid, however, that a rift in the community might result, he should refrain from taking any position whatsoever on the matter.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Tzadia Omer, VIII, O.H. sec. 56, end of no. 4, writes: “. . . Resp. Mishne Halakhot (Mahadura Tinya, I, O.H. sec. 550) challenges the custom of women who make a minyan by themselves for mikra Megilla . . . On the contrary, the aforementioned custom should be encouraged.” The cited Resp. Mishne Halakhot deals with a custom for one woman to read the Megilla for all the women present. R. Yosef’s teshuva seems to imply that he approves of this custom in its entirety. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out for accuracy that this responsum deals with the question of women’s counting for a minyan for mikra Megilla, not with the question of whether women can read for other women. Indeed, R. Ovadia Yosef never tackles this latter question head-on in any of his writings, though neither does he rule it out, despite his many opportunities to do so. This is presumably because he maintains that by law (mi-tsad ha-din), women can read even for men, though he permits it in practice only if there are no other viable options (bi-shet ha-dehak). See Tehave Da’at, V, sec. 34, note 2, p. 162; MeShiurei Maran haRishon leTsiyyon Rabbeinu Ovadia Yosef Shelita, I, Gilyon 19, VaYera 5756, sec. 2; Me’or Yisrael, I, Megilla 4a, s.v. “Tosafot d’h nashim”; Yalkut Yosef, V, Dinei Keriat haMegilla, sec. 12, p. 287; Kitsur Shulhan Arukh Yalkut Yosef, sec. 689, no. 7.

The above posekim who permit a women’s Megilla reading reject two often-quoted rulings: The first is that of Magen Avraham, O.H. sec. 689, no. 6, who, based on Midrash Ne’elam Rut, indicates that it is preferable for women to hear the Megilla from men. Although R. Israel Meir haKohen cites Magen Avraham in Mishna Berura, O.H. sec. 689, no. 8, he takes serious issue with him in Sha’ar haTsiyyun no. 16, ad loc. Midrash
Ne'elam is not accepted as normative halakha by the following: Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 689, no. 5; former Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, cited by R. Moses Harari, Mikra'ei Kodesh—Hilkhot Purim, 6:8, note 29; several other posekim cited by R. Nahman Kahana, Orhot Hayyim, O.H. sec. 689, no. 2, note 6.

The second ruling is that of R. Nethanel Weil, Korban Netanel, gloss to Rosh, Megilla, chap. 1, sec. 4, note 40, who, based upon Tosaftot Sukka 38a, s.v. "beEmet amru," indicates that it is a breach of propriety (zila milta) for a woman to read Megilla for a group of women. The view of Korban Netanel is cited approvingly by Mishna Berura, ibid., Sha'ar haTsiyyun no. 15 and Kaf haHayyim, O.H. ibid., no. 17. Nevertheless, the posekim cited above, as well as many others cited infra in the next paragraph of this note, would argue that Korban Netanel misunderstood the ha'alei haTosafot, who were in fact discussing the impropriety of a woman's reading of the Megilla for men. This understanding of Tosafot is maintained by Magen Avraham, O.H. sec. 271, no. 2 (as noted by Korban Netanel himself) and has been confirmed by the text in Tosafot haRosh, ad loc., which explicitly refers to men. According to this approach, Tosafot's "zila milta" is only a different formulation of the Kevod haTsibbur concept applied to keriat haTorah (Megilla 23a; Shulhan Arukh O.H. sec. 282, no. 3), though the two may not be identical. See also the comments of R. Chaim Zalman Dimitrovsky to Rashba, Megilla 4a, s.v. "veAmar R. Yehoshua," note 431; the related comments of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik in Reshimot Shiurim, R. Zvi Joseph Reichman, ed. [New York: 1974], Sukka 38a, p. 184, s.v. "Beram le-fi haTosafot"; Otsar Mefarshei haTalmud, Sukka, II, 38a, s.v. "I nami mishum."

As pointed out above, several posekim—in addition to those cited in the first three paragraph of this note—have taken issue with Korban Netanel. Hence, R. Jacob Zev Kahana, Resp. Toledot Yaakov, sec. 5; R. Jehiel Michel Tucazinsky, Lu'ah Erfes Yisrael, Purim dePrasim; and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in Halikhot Beita, Petah haBayyit, sec. 25—all maintain that one woman may make berakhot for many others. We note, however, that R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, as recorded in a personal written communication from his nephew, R. Yitshak Mordechai Rubin, to R. Asher Viner (Kislev 5794), was nevertheless unwilling to permit a women's Megilla reading, though he does not state why. The following posekim also set aside the view of Korban Netanel: R. Gabriel Zinner, Nitei Gavriel—Dinei uMinhagei Purim, sec. 13, no. 9, note 14; R. Zvi Kohen, Purim veHodesh Adar, sec. 10, no. 17; R. Haim David Halevi, Mekor Hayyim liBnot Yisrael, sec. 34, nos. 6 and 7; and R. Moses Mordechai Karp, Zer Abavon—Inyanei Purim (Jerusalem: Oraysa, 5749), sec. 21, no. 7, who writes: "All the posekim have stated simply that a woman can read for other women, and it would seem so even for many women." See also R. Karp's Hilkhot Hag beHag: Purim, sec. 7, no. 3, note 7, p. 60, where he states: "See the Sha'ar haTsiyyun, who writes in the name of Korban Netanel that a woman should not read for many women because of zila milta. This does not seem to be the view of other posekim." These four authors indicate, however, that because of Midrash Ne'elam, a women's Megilla reading is not preferred; it is, nevertheless,
permitted if necessary. See also *Arukh HaShulhan*, O.H. sec. 271, no. 5, and R. Ben-Tsiyon Lichtman, *Benei Tsiyyon*, IV, O.H. sec. 271, no. 3, s.v. “veRa’iti,” who also disagree with Korban Netanel’s understanding of Tosafot, though their stance on a women’s Megilla reading is unknown.

Both of the past Chief Rabbis of Israel have published opinions against women’s Megilla readings: former Sephardic Chief Rabbi R. Mordechai Eliyahu is quoted by R. Moses Harari, *Mikra’ei Kodesh—Hilkhot Purim*, sec. 6, no. 8, note 30; while former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Abraham Kahana Shapira is quoted by his assistant, R. Zalman Koitner, in a letter distributed by a group called “Women of Efrat for the Achdut of Halakha” and published in the newspaper *Yom haShishi*, 15 Adar 5791 (March 1, 1991), p. 8. R. Shapira’s letter indicates that although “… halakhically, a woman can read for other women,” “one should not change the prevalent custom” which has followed the more stringent ruling of Mishna Berura (Korban Netanel). As noted above, R. Menashe Klein, *Mishne Halakhot, Mahadura Tinyana, ibid.*, also dissents.

221. For example, R. David Cohen and R. David Feinstein, *supra*, notes 65 and 66. In the words of R. David Feinstein: “You can’t forbid women from doing that in which they’re obligated.” See also *MiShiurei Maran haRishon leTsiyyon Rabbeinu Ovadiah Yosef Shelita*, I, Gilyon 19, VaYera 5756, sec. 2, where R. Ovadia Yosef permits a woman to read Megilla for a man (when necessary and only according to Sephardic usage), concluding: “And this is not, perish the thought, a Reform innovation, since this is the law and the halakha.”


223. The issue of berakhot at a women’s keriat haTorah will be discussed at length in Part II of this paper. Suffice it to say that the following leading posekim explicitly forbid the recitation of birkhot keriat haTorah at a women’s Torah reading: R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yom haShishi*, 14 Shevat 5750 (Feb. 9, 1990), p. 30; R. Isaac Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef*, II, sec. 143, Keriat haTorah baAsara, no. 4 and note 6; *Kitsur Shulhan Arukh Yalkut Yosef*, O.H. sec. 143, no. 5; R. Joseph Kahaf, *HaSha veHinukha* (Kefar Saba: Amana, 5740) p. 35, nos. 9 and 10; R. Efriam Greenblatt, *Rivevot Ephrayim*, VI, sec. 153, no. 12; *Minhag Yissachar*, supra, note 5; R. Feinstein, *infra*, text following note 217; R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *infra*, text at note 251; British Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits and the London Bet Din, *supra*, text at note 222; R Mordechai Eliyahu, *supra*, note 20; R. Abraham Shapira, *supra*, end of note 36; R. Shlomo Goren, *supra*, notes 57, and R. Gedalia Dov Schwartz, *Tradition* 26:3 (Spring 1992), pp. 97-99. We note in addition R. Feinstein’s insistence that no Torah benedictions—not even the birkhot limud haTorah appearing in the birkhot ha-shahar—be recited, lest it create the erroneous impression that the
women's Torah reading constitutes *keriat haTorah*; R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *infra*, text at note 251, concurs. R. Jakobovits suggests the use of a *Humash* for Torah readings rather than a *sefer Torah*, although he does not explicitly forbid its use. His successor, R. Sacks, does, however; see *supra*, end of note 222.

224. In light of R. Feinstein's clear skepticism, it might well be argued that he should be grouped together with the Rav and Rabbi Ahron Soloveitchik (see *infra*, section E of text) as one who opposes women's *tefilla* groups on *hashkafic* and public policy grounds (personal communication from Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein, May 29, 1997 and Rabbi Shael I. Frimer, June 12, 1997). Nevertheless, because of the apparent leeway he gave ba'alei hora'a to determine the matter on a case-by-case basis, we believe it more correct to include R. Feinstein in this middle school. See also the exchange of letters by R. Bertram Leff and R. Alfred Cohen, note 217, *supra*, as well as note 225**.

225. *Supra*, note 4, at p. 308. See also p. 323. The syntax of the original Hebrew is quite complex and has been somewhat simplified in our English translation.

225* Similar comments were independently expressed by R. Aharon Lichtenstein with regards to women's *hakafot*; see note 213, *supra*.

225** R. Shapiro explained that this was the basis of the halakha of *arketa demisana*; see Sanhedrin 74a-b. For a similar understanding of the Sanhedrin text, see R. Abraham Borenstein of Sochaczew, *Resp. Avnei Nezer*, Likutei Shevetilot uTeshuvot, sec. 149; Cf. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, as cited by R. Zvi (Hershel) Schachter, *supra*, note 61, p. 133, who gives a similar explanation. It should be pointed out that R. Shapiro pushes the middle approach quite close to that of the Rav and Rabbi Ahron Soloveitchik (vide *infra*, Section E). Yet there is a clear distinction between the two approaches: R. Shapiro allows for a case-by-case determination of the “policy” issues, while the Rav and Rabbi Ahron Soloveitchik view these issues on a broad base, as inherently related to the nature and essence of women’s prayer groups. See also note 224.


227. We have discussed above the prohibition of *bal tosif*—adding to the Torah; see *supra*, text and note 91. Based on *bal tosif*, Maimonides forbids one to claim that something is biblically forbidden when it is actually rabbinic in origin. In *M.T.*, *Hilkhot Mamrim* 2:9, he writes: “If the [court] forbids fowl [seethed in milk], claiming that it is included in “goat” and is forbidden biblically, this is an addition. However, if it said that goat flesh is biblically permitted, but we forbid it and we notify the people that it is a [rabbinic] edict . . . this is not an addition. . . .” Ra’avad, ad loc., dissents, arguing that biblical verses are often cited in the Talmud as source-texts for rabbinic prohibitions. See *Kesef Mishne* and *Lehem Mishne*. For further discussion, see the Addendum section of this paper, Part 5.

228. See the Addendum section of this paper, Part 6, for a discussion of various
aspects of lying. As discussed therein, many leading *posekim* maintain that it is forbidden to knowingly misrepresent halakha or the rationale behind a given ruling even if the purpose is to prevent possible future violations; others dissent.


230. In discussing the prohibition to forbid that which is permitted (see *infra*, note 232), R. Shabtai haKohen, *Siftei Kohen, Y.D.*, end of sec. 242, *Kitsur beHanhatat Hora’ot Issur veHeter*, no. 9, writes: “Therefore, if [a *posek*] must prohibit because he is in doubt or because of a stringency in a matter which is not clear as the sun, he must notify [the questioner] that the prohibition is not clear-cut, but that we must nevertheless be stringent.” *Sedei Hemed, Aleph, kelal* 214, “Asur la-asor et haMutar,” citing *Shakh*, states that the same is true if the prohibition is based on a “humra be-alma” (non-obligatory stringency), because otherwise the stringency may well lead to future error. See also R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, *Teshuvot Ivra*, sec. 52, no. 3 (in *Kitvei haGri Henkin*, II) and the discussion of R. Ephraim Meir Lasman, cited in *Resp. Seridei Eish*, I, sec. 6, subsect. a, s.v. “Kedei le-kayyeim.”

231. R. Yehuda Herzl Henkin, *Resp. Benei Vanim*, I, sec. 37, no. 12, strongly advises against upgrading a prohibition, since such misrepresentation most often results in gossip, hate, unlawful leniencies in other areas, *hillul Hashem*, and a total loss of trust in rabbinic authority should the truth become known. (This despite the fact that, as mentioned in the Addendum section of this paper, Parts 4 and 5, R. Y.H. Henkin maintains that when a *posek* upgrades a prohibition for just cause, there is no prohibition of either *bal Tosif* or lying). Similar views are expressed by *Resp. Torah liShma*, sec. 371; R. Moses Jehiel Weiss, *Beit Yehezkel*, p. 77; R. Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook, *infra*, note 232; R. Joseph Elijah Henkin, *supra*, note 230; R. Haim David HaLevy, unpublished responsum to Aryeh A. Frimer, dated 7 Shevat 5756; and R. David Feinstein, conversation with Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer, March 19, 1995. See also the commentary of Radbaz to *M.T.*, *Melakkhim* 6:3, where even normally permitted lying is forbidden lest it result in *hillul Hashem* should the truth be discovered. Similarly, in discussing *Sanhedrin* 29a and the cause of Adam and Eve’s sin (see the Addendum section of this paper, Part 5), R. Hanokh Zundel, *Eits Yosef, ad loc.*, s.v. “Ma,” comments that one must be particularly careful how a stringency and its rationale are formulated, for if no distinction is drawn between a stringency and the original ordinance, any error found in the stringency may lead the masses to believe that there is an error in the original ordinance itself.

232. For example, according to several sources, included in the prayer of R. Nehunya ben haKana (*Berakhot* 28b) is the phrase, “... And that we should not permit the forbidden and forbid the permitted;” see *Yerushalmi, Berakhot* 4:2; Maimonides, *Commentary to Mishna Berakhot* 4:2 and
M.T., Berakhot 10:23; Rif and Rosh, Berakhot 28b. In addition, the Mishna in Avot V:8 states, “A sword comes to the world . . . because of those who teach Torah not according to the halakha.” Rabbeinu Jonah of Gerondi, R. Ovadiah of Bartenura, Tosefot Yom Tov, Tiferet Yisrael, and R. Pinhas Kehati all understand this to include both he who prohibits the permitted and he who permits the forbidden. R. Shabtai haKohen, supra, note 230, states: “Just as it is forbidden to permit the forbidden, so it is prohibited to forbid the permitted . . . because [a stringency in one place] will lead to a leniency elsewhere.” Resp. Teshuva meAhava, I, sec. 181, at the end, states, “The punishment for one who is improperly stringent in his ruling is greater than that of one who is improperly lenient.” Resp. Divrei Hayyim, I, Y.D. sec. 2 (based on Maimonides’ Sefer haMitsvot, Lo Ta’ase 273) argues that one who forbids the permitted violates the biblical prohibition of “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment . . .” (Leviticus 19:15). Resp. Igrot Moshe, Y.D. II, sec. 45, states: “It is also clear that one is obligated to clarify the law, even if there is reason to fear that as a result there may be some wrongdoers and fools who will err . . . And the clarification of the law, even to be lenient, is an obligation even greater than teaching Torah. . . .” Particularly noteworthy are the comments of R. Samuel Eliezer Edels, Hidushei Agadot to Hullin 44b, s.v. “haRo’e,” who indicates that one who is stringent in case of doubt gets a share in the world to come, but that one who labors to find grounds for leniency not only gets a share in the world to come, but enjoys this world as well! See also Encyclopaedia Talmudit, VIII, “Hora’a,” p. 489, and references cited in footnotes 48-50 therein; Sedei Hemed, Aleph, kelal 214, “Asur la-asor et haMutar” and Pe’at haShulhan, Ma’arekhet haAleph, kelal 75; Resp. Maharashdam, Y.D. sec. 91; Resp. Ya’aveitis, I, sec. 5, s.v. “veKhi teima”; R. Joseph Engel, Beit haOtsar, Aleph, no. 136, s.v. veAyyin od beSifra,” p. 204; R. Baruch HaLevy Epstein, Mekor Barukh, III, sec. 17; R. Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook, Orah Mishpat, no. 111 (pp. 117-120) and 112 (pp. 120-129); R. Ephraim Meir Lasman (cited in Resp. Seridei Eish, I, sec. 6, subsection a, s.v. “Kedei le-kayyeim”; R. Aaron Levin, Birkat Aharon, no. 233; Resp. Devor Tzevah, I, sec. 19 and the addendum thereto; Resp. Az Nidhehu, VI, p. 156 at end; Mishne Halakhot, IV, sec. 105; V, sec. 104; IX, sec. 262; R. Gedalia Felder, Nahalat Tzvi, II, pp. 22-24; Sefer Beit Aharon, VII, kelal “Ein laAsor haMutar,” pp. 565-605. For a popular presentation of the subject, see R. Moshe Weinberger, “Keeping up with the Katz’s,” Jewish Action 48:3 (Rosh haShana 5749) (1988), pp. 10-19 and references cited therein; see especially p. 15ff and footnote 62 ad loc.

For similar statements, see Tashbeits, III, sec. 281; Resp. Radbaz I, sec. 129 at end; Pithei Teshuva, Y.D. sec. 184, no. 5.


234*See the comments of Justice Elon, supra, note 4, at pp. 322-323.

(2/5/96), Mrs. Sabina Frimer (4/5/96), R. Shmuel Goldin (7/29/97),
R. David Gorelik (3/7/96 and 9/7/96), R. Carmi Horowitz (2/16/96
and 2/21/96), R. Yehuda Kelemer (2/16/96 and 6/17/96), R. Baruch
Lanner (5/4/97), Mr. Nathan Lewin (7/24/97), R. Aharon Lichtenstein
(9/25/94, 2/1/96 and 1/8/97), Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein (2/1/96),
R. Haskel Lookstein (2/1/96 and 3/13/96), Dr. Caroline Peyser (5/9/97),
R. Shlomo Riskin (1/31/96, 5/27/96 and 1/1/97), R. Bernard
Rosenweig (8/5/97), R. Jacob J. Schacter (2/1/96), R. Haym
Soloveitchik (2/5/96), Dr. Atarah Twersky (2/1/96), R. Mayer Twersky
(7/28/97), R. Oscar Wachstock (R. Abraham Etzion; 1/31/96, 2/1/96
and notes dated Emor 1972), R. Binyomin Walfish (3/10/96), R. Charles
Weinberg (2/1/96 and 2/21/96). We express our deepest thanks to all of
these people for sharing with us the details of their conversations with the
Rav and for allowing us to publish their remarks. In addition, we wish to
thank R. Saul Berman (7/87, 1/31/96 and a taped public lecture at
Lincoln Square Synagogue, 12/10/1986) for his assistance and valuable
source material, and Mrs. Nancy Forse Shloush (2/18/96, 2/23/96 and
5/6/96) for her detailed recollections regarding the background to the
Brandeis women's service. See also R. Moshe Meiselman, note 63, supra;
R. Mayer Twersky, "Torah Perspectives on Women's Issues," Jewish Action

236. R. Mordechai Feuerstein, who served as the Rav's shamash during the
early 1970's, has indicated to us that he believes the first time the Rav
addressed the issue of women's services was late in 1971 (shortly before
the Rav's conversation with R. Shlomo Riskin; vide infra, note 264). The
Rav shared with R. Feuerstein that a group of women studying at Bran-
deis University had approached him on the matter. The Rav was not in
favor of the prayer group, but it was clear to the Rav that the women were
not prepared to listen and would proceed under any circumstance. The
Rav consequently gave them halakhic guidelines similar to the ones he
later gave to R. Wachstock and R. Riskin; see text and notes 249-251.
Our attempts at discovering who actually spoke to the Rav regarding the
Brandeis women's prayer group have proven unsuccessful. The last to
speak to the Rav on this issue was presumably Dr. Caroline Peyser, in early
1986.

237. See Nefesh haRav, pp. 24-26; conversation with R. Aharon Lichtenstein.

238. R. Moshe Meiselman, supra, note 63, p. 146. R. Aharon Lichtenstein
emphasized that minhag beit ha-kenesset is not an independent category
and does not appear as such in the halakhic literature. Rather, it is, as a
rule, part of the general concept of custom and practice. Nonetheless, R.
Soloveitchik has noted that minhag beit ha-kenesset can, under the proper
circumstances, also be rooted in the concept of kedushat (kevod) beit ha-
kenesset. See R. Meiselman, ibid. See also R. Zvi Schachter, supra, note
62.

239. See notes 162-163, supra. Apropos, Dov I. Frimer recalls that as National
Educational Coordinator for Yavneh, the National Religious Jewish Stu-
dents Association, he approached the Rav regarding the idea of reading
from the Torah on Shabbat while facing the congregation rather than fac-
ing the Holy Ark. R. Soloveitchik responded that indeed, such a practice
is mentioned by R. Joseph Caro in his *Kesef Mishne, Hilkhot Tefilla* 11:3. Nonetheless, inasmuch as the accepted custom is to read the Torah facing the Ark—as noted by R. Caro himself—one should not act otherwise. See also *Nefesh haRav*, p. 131, no. 3.

240. The Rav had expressed the concerns outlined in this paragraph to R. Yehuda Kelemer and R. Binyomin Wallish. The term “brinkmanship,” however, was utilized by the Rav in his conversations with R. Kelemer.

241. See *Shulhan Arukh*, *O.H.* sec. 17, no. 2.


244. Surprisingly, R. Soloveitchik does not entertain the possibility that women attending women’s prayer groups are perhaps motivated by a sense of greater kavvana. See supra, notes 100 and 101, that a number of posekim maintain that greater kavvana supersedes tefilla be-tsibbur. R. Lichtenstein indicates that until approximately the time when the Rav’s wife, Tonya, fell ill (ca. 1963), the Rav was of the opinion that other spiritual considerations (e.g., the study of Torah, enhanced personal kavvana) could be of greater importance than participating in communal prayer. Later, however, the Rav modified his position. Although he continued to maintain that communal prayer was not in and of itself a halakhic requirement, he now attributed much more significance to tefilla be-tsibbur than he had hitherto. As a result, the Rav believed that one should not sacrifice tefilla be-tsibbur merely for increased kavvana; one should rather strive to attain the highest level of kavvana which he can within the communal prayer setting. As previously mentioned, the conversations with the Rav, which serve as the basis for this article, took place during the 1970’s and early 1980’s, somewhat after his change of mind. Consequently, for the Rav, greater kavvana could not serve as a valid justification for women’s prayer groups.

245. See discussion at the beginning of Section B at note 59.
246. Conversation with R. Kenneth Brander. R. Brander was the Rav’s shamash at the time the responsum appeared (1985) and was personally present at those times when individuals tried repeatedly to convince the Rav to add his signature to the responsum. The Rav consistently refused to do so.

247. Conversation with R. Brander. For the sake of accuracy, Rabbi Brander emphasizes that due to health considerations, the Rav did not review the pesak, and therefore neither expressly accepted nor rejected its specific arguments.

248. It was for this reason that the Rabbinical Council of America, as well, refrained from adopting the responsum of the RIETS Rashei Yeshiva as official halakhic policy of the organization—despite the fact that the RIETS responsum was addressed to the then president of the R.C.A., R. Louis Bernstein. Approximately a year or so prior to the appearance of the responsum, during R. Gilbert Klopman’s tenure as R.C.A. President, R. Binyamin Walfish, in his capacity as Executive Director of the R.C.A., met with the Rav in order to receive guidance on a variety of issues relating to women and halakha. During this very important conversation, R. Soloveitchik indicated—as he had on numerous other occasions with other people—that there were few serious halakhic problems with women’s prayer groups, provided they refrain from devarim she-bi-kdusha. Nonetheless, the Rav expressed to R. Walfish his strong feeling that such groups should be discouraged. The Rav emphasized, though, that his considerations were not strictly halakhic, but more in the realm of public policy. The Rabbinical Council of America believed that it could not adopt a halakhic view, such as that articulated in the RIETS responsum, which was clearly contrary to the Rav’s own position. See supra, note 59.


249. The initial conversation with the Rav regarding the Maimonides women’s tefilla was held with R. Oscar Wachstock (R. Abraham Etzion). The essence of that conversation is found in R. Wachstock’s notes dated Emor 1972, which corresponds to the week of 9 Iyyar 5732—April 23, 1972. (R. Wachstock does not recall, however, the precise date of his meeting with the Rav, though it occurred several months earlier—presumably at the very end of 1971.) R. Wachstock sent a copy of his notes to his close friend, R. Saul Berman. We are very grateful to R. Berman for providing us with a copy of these valuable notes. These notes—with certain critical deviations regarding birkhot haTorah prior to the pseudo keriat haTorah—provided the framework for the women’s prayer group held by R. Berman while serving as rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan. R. Berman was apparently unaware that the Rav had distinguished—albeit on public policy grounds—between the educational setting and a communal one; see below at note 254. Moreover, as noted in the text, the Rav withdrew his support for the idea even within educational settings.

250. See, for example, Siddur haGra (before Aleinu), pp. 182-184; R. J. Emden, Siddur Beit Ya’akov (following Tahanun), p. 81; Otsar haTefillot (before Ashrei), I, pp. 418-420; Seder Avodat Yisrael (following Taha-
This is explicitly stated in the notes of R. Wachstock, supra, note 249. R. Soloveitchik gave the same instructions to Rabbis Riskin and Horowitz when they, respectively, discussed the matter with the Rav. See also R. Meiselman, supra, note 63, p. 197, note 64. R. Wachstock and R. Horowitz indicate that the Rav might have considered allowing birkhot limud haTorah “were it not for the Conservatives.” (From R. Wachstock’s notes. The Rav was concerned about the confusion the berakhot might generate in light of the general egalitarian movement within Conservative and Reform Jewry.) Cf. R. Meiselman, ibid., p. 145. We will defer further discussion of the issue of birkhot haTorah (limud or keri’a) before a pseudo keriat haTorah to Part II of this paper. Re: the issue of nidda and sefer Torah, see infra, note 258.

252. To R. Jeffrey Bienenfeld.

253. R. Soloveitchik also provided the same guidelines, outlined in this paragraph of the text, in situations where it was clear that the service could not be totally prevented—as was indeed the case in the Brandeis University women’s service; vide supra, note 236. A similar case arose in 1978, when a rabbi who was about to assume a rabbinical position discovered that the synagogue had a regular women’s tefilla group. Under the circumstances, there was no possible means for the new rabbi to halt the women’s service entirely. The Rav advised the rabbi to make sure that no devarim she-bi-kdusha would be recited. R. Soloveitchik made it clear that he did not endorse women’s services and that he was not at all happy with the direction they had taken; nonetheless, under the circumstances, this was the least detrimental alternative. On a separate occasion, he told Rabbi Kenneth Brander that in these type of be-di-allad situations, the services should preferably be held outside of the synagogue so that the differentiation between them and regular minyanim would be evident; see text after note 244, supra.

254. Our information regarding the initial attempts to start a women’s tefilla at the Maimonides School in 1972 is based upon our conversations with R. Oscar Wachstock and R. Charles Weinberg, as well as R. Wachstock’s above-mentioned notes (supra, note 249). R. Wachstock was a teacher at the Maimonides school during the relevant period, while R. Weinberg, a personal friend of the Rav, was a member of the Maimonides Board of Education. Our remarks regarding the 1974 attempt are based upon conversations with R. Carmi Horowitz and R. Weinberg. R. Horowitz taught at Maimonides at that time, while R. Weinberg then served as the school’s Head of the Hebrew Department. As far as the Rav’s fears that his halakhic ruling would be misunderstood and misapplied, it indeed seems that they were well justified; see supra, note 249.

255. Conversation with R. Aharon Lichtenstein.

256. Shulhan Arukh, O.H. sec. 135, no. 14. For a detailed discussion of the issue of tiltul sefer Torah as regards various other practical aspects of women services, see Part 2 of this paper and supra, note 138.

258. While this was implicit in his remarks to many of the people with whom the Rav discussed this matter, R. Soloveitchik stated it explicitly in his conversations with R. Haskel Lookstein and R. Baruch Lanner. A further discussion of nidda and sefer Torah will be deferred to Part 2 of this paper, which deals with the "Practical Issues" of halakhic women's prayer groups. Apropos, the Rav indicated to R. Wachstock that niddut would similarly not prevent a woman from wearing tefillin. Cf., however, Arukh haShulhan, O.H. sec. 34, no. 6.

259. While the Rav expressed his opposition to hakafot in shul on many occasions, his opposition to hakafot extended, in reality, to other venues as well—even where tilsut sefer Torah was not involved.


261. Conversation with R. Walfish.

262. In his conversation with R. Baruch Lanner in the late 1970s regarding Simhat Torah hakafot for the National Council of Synagogue Youth, R. Soloveitchik recommended against their institution, despite their obvious educational benefit. Moreover, in discussions with R. Yosef Adler and R. Binyomin Walfish, the Rav expressly indicated that his opposition extended both to women's participation in formal hakafot ("Ana Hashem hoshia na" etc.) and to their dancing—even behind the mehitsa—with a sefer Torah between hakafot. See also R. Moshe Meiselman, supra, note 63, p. 146. R. Moshe Berger reports that in the early 1980s, the Rav also advised Orthodox women from Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel to refrain from having a special Torah reading on Simhat Torah, even without berakhot.

262*. Conversation with R. Yehuda Kelemer; see text at note 214, supra.

263. See, for example, R. Zvi Schachter, "MiPeninei haRav Zal," Beit Yitshak 28 (5756), 9-34, at p. 23.

264. R. Moshe Meiselman, supra, note 63, p. 146. See also supra, note 238. R. Shlomo Riskin, then rabbi at Lincoln Square Synagogue, had been among the first people to discuss the women's services and hakafot issue with R. Soloveitchik, sometime in late 1971. Also present at that meeting was the Rav's shamash during that period, R. Mordechai Feuerstein. The Rav gave R. Riskin the same halakhic guidelines he gave to R. Wachstock (see text and notes 249-251). Nonetheless, the Rav expressed his view that women's services were "tokenism"—to which the Rav objected (see note 242, supra). Moreover, the Rav believed that it was not worth "the political price." Despite all the above, R. Riskin maintains that the Rav conveyed to him a sense that he had confidence in R. Riskin's judgment of his community's needs. Accordingly, for Simhat Torah 5733 (October 1, 1972), R. Riskin arranged for a women's service to meet in the synagogue's beit midrash. In so doing, R. Riskin was among the first Orthodox rabbis in the United States to actually hold women's hakafot and services in his synagogue.

R. Riskin has shared with us that a few short years after he instituted these practices at Lincoln Square Synagogue, he received word that the Rav was displeased. As a result, he went to ask the Rav whether or not he should "pull back on the whole thing." R. Riskin reports that the Rav responded, "No." In addition, R. Riskin went to consult as well with R.
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Moshe Feinstein on the matter. R. Feinstein inquired whether, in R. Riskin’s judgment, women would leave Lincoln Square Synagogue and go to the Conservative synagogues if the women’s services and hakafot were halted. R. Riskin responded in the affirmative, “Most definitely.” Upon hearing R. Riskin’s evaluation, R. Feinstein told him that had he (R. Riskin) approached him (R. Feinstein) prior to initiating the women’s hakafot and services, R. Feinstein would have opposed their institution. However, inasmuch as R. Riskin had already introduced these practices, and since their cessation would cause women to leave for the Conservative movement, R. Riskin could allow them to continue.

265. See discussion supra, text and note 44 and notes 78 and 79.

266. See supra, note 106 and discussion in Aryeh A. Frimer, supra, note 3.

267. Conversations with R. David Gorelik, R. Jacob J. Schacter and R. Binyomin Walfish. Both R. Schacter and R. Walfish noted, however, that the Rav indicated that if necessary, there was room to be lenient. Consequently, R. Soloveitchik advised R. Walfish that where the women of a particular congregation insist on having their own Megilla reading, the rabbi should not object. Similarly, in a telephone conversation with R. Shmuel Goldin and Mr. Nathan Lewin (in 1980 or 1981), the Rav permitted a women’s Megilla reading by Mr. Lewin’s daughter, Alyza, for those women who were unable to attend the regular congregational, early morning, Purim minyan. R. Soloveitchik emphasized, however, that the women’s reading should not be held in shul, that the ba’alat keria could read only for women, and that this reading was not meant to replace the more preferred regular reading with a male minyan.

Apropos, R. Adler recalls that the Rav often commented on his difficulty in accepting the view of Behag, Halakhot Gedolot, Hilkhot Megilla, s.v. “haKol hayyavin.” Behag maintains that women are obligated in a lesser obligation of merely hearing the Megilla, while men are obligated in the maximal obligation of reading. Nonetheless, the Rav acknowledged that since Rama, O.H. sec. 689, no. 2, cites Halakhot Gedolot’s ruling approvingly, it has become normative halakha. Consequently, women could not read Megilla for Ashkenazic men. Interestingly, though, in the Winter of 1977, our sister-in-law, Mrs. Sabina Frimer, asked the Rav whether she could read the Megilla for her grandmother and home-bound grandfather. The Rav responded that it would be preferable to find a male to read for them, but if she were not successful, she could read for them herself. The Rav also suggested that the grandfather should make the berakhot.


269. It is interesting to note that while R. Ahron Soloveichik casts doubt on the motivation of the overall majority of women’s tefilla participants, the Rav (text, supra, following note 244) tended to acknowledge the legitimate motivation of many of the rank and file. See also R. Nisson Wolpin and Levi Reisman, note 3*, supra, for a critique of the public pronouncements of some of the prominent Orthodox feminist leadership.

270. For a summary of the parameters of this halakhic concept, see Encyclopedia Talmudit, VI, “Geneivat Da’at,” pp. 225-231.


273. See above, note 220, first paragraph. R. Ahron Soloveichik also opposes a women's Torah reading in a school setting, irrespective of whether berakhot are recited.


275. Cf. note 139, *supra*.

276. R. Schwartz cites the responsum of R. Aryeh Leibush Balachover, *Resp. Shem Aryeh*, O.H. sec. 5, as precedent for the position that the possibility of fragmentation and divisiveness is a legitimate consideration in halakhic rulings.

277. Among all of those with whom we discussed this point, only one individual—who requested that his name not be used—indicated that the Rav, in conversation with him regarding hakafot, utilized the term *assur*. All others emphasized that the Rav clearly refrained from the use of this term, invoking instead the phrase "not recommended" or the like.

278. *Supra*, note 4, at p. 325.


285. Our many conversations with women across America active in women's prayer groups reveal that in many—though certainly not all—communities, the generation of the daughters (now in their late teens and twenties) are substantially less interested in such groups. These younger women do eagerly attend when some special occasion or event is celebrated, be it a *Simhat Bat* (or *Zeved haBat*), *Bat Mitzvah*, a *Shabbat Kala*, or a women's *Megilla* reading; nevertheless, they are only marginally involved in the *tefilla* group on a regular basis. While this trend is unquestionably worthy of further documentation and analysis, various interim interpretations of these facts have been put forward. One possibility is that it is a result of negative social pressure; the "daughters" fear that involvement in such groups would stigmatize them as "Women's Libbers," affecting possible future *shiddukhim* or employment possibilities. Another relates this phenomenon to the fact that this second generation—unlike many of the
mothers—has benefited from extended periods of intensive higher Jewish learning (see note 3*, supra). On the one hand, these daughters are dissatisfied with what they view as the incompleteness and inauthenticity of the women’s prayer service; on the other, they are substantially more attracted to advanced Torah scholarship, which they value as more permanent and genuine. Put simply, they aspire to being talmidot hakhamim rather than hazzaniyyot. We note in this regard that R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik verbalized on many occasions his belief that—public policy issues aside—the women’s energies were being misdirected in their battle for prayer groups. These intellectual and spiritual energies could be more properly, profitably and permanently invested in Torah scholarship (conversations with R. Baruch Lanner, R. Binyomin Walfish and R. Charles Weinberg). Indeed, the Rav actively supported women’s involvement in all areas of Torah study, and he himself inaugurated the Talmud program at Stern College for Women.

286. Resp. Seridei Eish, III, sec. 105—this responsum is dated 1951. See also ibid., II, sec. 52. The issue under discussion was the right of women to vote and be elected for government. On this topic, see at length, “Leah Shakdiel vs. The Minister of Religious Affairs et al.” (1988), 42 (ii) Piskei Din 221, pp. 247-270. Regarding R. Weinberg’s position, see p. 260.