



Ask The Rabbi...

Researched at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College
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Issue #68

This issue is dedicated in memory of R. Avrohom David ben Zvi Hirsch Jacobs Z"l on his first Yahrzeit - 14 Sivan 5755

- This edition contains:
1. A Man's Bracha
 2. Yiddle Riddle

Simon Maurice Jackson < S.M.Jackson-bp1i5884@Imu.ac.uk > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If women are equal to men in Judaism, why is this not reflected in the text of the Morning Bracha? Why does the man say "...Who has not made me a woman," whilst the woman must be content with "...Who has made me according to His will?"

Dear Simon and Mrs. Berman,

First, let's look at things in context. This bracha appears in the Siddur as part of a group of three blessings: "Blessed are You Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe..."

- (1) Who has not created me as a **non-Jew**."
- (2) Who has not created me as a **slave**."
- (3) Who has not created me as a **woman**."

What is the connection between these three categories — non-Jew, slave, woman? The Otzar HaTefillot explains that these categories are in **ascending order of Mitzvah responsibility**:

The first category is that of a non-Jew. Non-Jews are obligated in the seven categories of Noachide Laws.

The next category is that of a slave. For a Jew to own a slave, the slave had to go through a type of partial conversion including circumcision. The slave then became obligated in **most** of the Torah commandments.

The third category is that of a Jewish woman. She is fully obligated in **all** the commandments, with the **exception** of approximately 15.

The function of these blessings is to **acknowledge our responsibilities** by identifying the mitzvot which are addressed to us. When a Jewish woman makes the first two

Mrs Alexis S. Berman < mtwx48c@prodigy.com > wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

I am writing a speech for the Sisterhood of my Temple in Valley Stream, New York. I would like the women to appreciate the beauty of the woman's role in Judaism. The women know that at morning prayers men say a blessing about not being created a woman. They don't know the reason.. Could you please provide me with some thoughts on this issue?

blessings she has sufficiently identified her responsibilities. For a Jewish man to identify his responsibilities, an additional blessing is necessary.

Now, the question remains, wouldn't it be nicer to phrase this blessing in the positive? Why not say "Blessed are you Hashem...Who has made me a **Yisrael**?"

Maybe, but there's a problem. Let me explain with a parable:

Let's say you're the forward for the English Lions. It's the deciding match of the World Cup, and the score is tied with 3 seconds remaining. You have an open shot on the goal. You step on the ball. You fall down. You lose.

Afterwards, you step into a London pub. The place is full of irate fans crowded around the TV set while the image of you stepping on the ball is shown over and over again in slow motion. Now, I ask you: Do you announce your arrival?

What am I driving at with this parable? We have an important "goal" in this world: The mitzvot. Saying these brachot in the positive would be like the soccer player going into the pub and declaring, "I'm the forward for the Lions." Saying "I'm a Yisrael" would invite the response, "Oh, but are you keeping all the mitzvot of a Yisrael?" Therefore, we make the point **indirectly**: "I'm not a non-Jew, I'm not a woman." Certainly this is not an expression of pride, but rather an acknowledgment of our goals.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Moshe Schwartz from Costa Rica posed this riddle:

In the Shabbat prayers we say that Hashem called Shabbat "Chemdat Yamim" — "Most coveted of days." (ArtScroll Siddur Page 468/9)
Where in the Torah is Shabbat called "Chemdat Yamim?"

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Ask The Rabbi is written by **Rabbi Benzion Bamberger, Rabbi Reuven Subar** and various other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

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