

# Sanctuaries and Sanctity #5

## Akko: Women in the Synagogue

### Akko Timeline

3000 BCE Earliest level of settlement  
2000 **Canaanite** city on Tel Akko  
1500 Conquered by Pharaoh Thutmose  
1000 Hiram King of Tyre gives Akko to King Solomon, **Phoenicians** rule here de facto  
500 City expands to harbor area  
332 Alexander the Great conquers Akko and it becomes a **Hellenistic** city with a harbor and a mint  
66-70 CE **Roman** base during the Great Revolt, many Jews murdered by their fellow citizens  
2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries Significant Jewish and Christian communities  
640 **Muslim** conquest  
1104 **Crusader** conquest  
1187 Saladin captures Akko for the **Muslims**  
1191 Richard the Lion Heart returns Akko to the **Crusaders** and it becomes the capital of his kingdom  
12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century Akko visited and/or settled by Maimonides, Nahmanides, Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, three hundred rabbis  
1291 **Mameluke** conquest and destruction  
1740 Renewed Jewish community Rabbi Chaim ben Atar (Or HaChaim), Rabbi Moshe Luzzato (Ramchal)  
1750 **Ottoman** rebuilding of Akko  
1775 Ahmad al Jazzar rules  
1799 Napoleon besieges Akko and is defeated, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav visits city  
1868 Bahauallah, prophet of the Bahai, jailed by Ottomans  
1918 **British** conquest  
1947 Akko prison break  
1948 **State of Israel** conquers Akko  
2020 49,000 residents, two thirds of the population is Jewish

### Women and Prayer:

Women, slaves and minors are exempt from the recitation of *Shema* and from phylacteries, but are obligated in prayer, *mezuzah* and Grace after Meals.

**(Mishnah Berachot 3:3)**

To pray daily is an affirmative duty, as it is said, "And ye shall serve the Lord, your God" (Exodus 23:25). The service, here referred to, according to the teaching of tradition, is Prayer, as it is said, "And to serve Him with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:12), on which the sages commented, "What may be described as Service of the Heart? Prayer". The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah. No form of prayer is prescribed in the Torah. Nor does the Torah prescribe a fixed time for Prayer.

Hence, women and slaves are under an obligation to pray, this being a duty, the fulfillment of which is independent of set periods. The obligation in this precept is that every person should daily, according to his ability, offer up supplication and prayer; first uttering praises of God, then, with humble supplication and petition ask for all that he needs, and finally offer praise and thanksgiving to the Eternal for the benefits already bestowed upon him in rich measure. **(Maimonides Hilchot Tefilah 1:1-2)**

**משנה ברורה סימן קו ס"ק ד ד) שהיא מ"ע וכו' - כ"ז לדעת הרמב"ם שרק זמני התפלה הם מדברי סופרים אבל עיקר מצות תפלה היא מן התורה שנאמר ולעבדו בכל לבבכם איזו עבודה שהיא בלב הוא אומר זו תפלה אלא שאין לה נוסח ידוע מן התורה ויכול להתפלל בכל נוסח שירצה ובכל עת שירצה ומשהתפלל פ"א ביום או בלילה יצא י"ח מן התורה וכתב המ"א שע"פ סברא זו נהגו רוב הנשים שאין מתפללין י"ח בתמידות שחר וערב לפי שאומרות מיד בבוקר סמוך לנטילה איזה בקשה [ה] ומן התורה יוצאות בזה ואפשר שאף חכמים לא חייבו יותר אבל דעת הרמב"ן שעיקר מצות תפלה היא מד"ס שהם אנשי כה"ג שתיקנו י"ח ברכות על הסדר להתפלל אותן שחרית ומנחה חובה וערבית רשות ואף על פי שהוא מ"ע מד"ס שהזמן גרמא והנשים פטורות מכל מ"ע שהזמן גרמא אפילו מד"ס כגון קידוש הלבנה אעפ"כ חייבו אותן בתפילת שחרית ומנחה כמו אנשים הואיל ותפלה היא בקשת רחמים. וכן עיקר [ו] כי כן דעת רוב הפוסקים וכן הכריע בספר שאגת ארי' ע"כ יש להזהיר לנשים שיתפללו י"ח ונכון ג"כ שיקבלו עליהן עול מלכות שמים דהיינו שיאמרו עכ"פ שמע ישראל כדאיתא בסימן ע' ויאמרו ג"כ ברכת אמת ויצב כדי לסמוך גאולה לתפלה כמו שכתב המ"א בסימן ע' וכ"ז לענין שחרית ומנחה [ז] אבל תפלת ערבית שהוא רשות אף על פי שעכשיו כבר קבלוהו עליהם כל ישראל לחובה מ"מ הנשים לא קבלו עליהם ורובן אין מתפללין ערבית.**

## Inside the Land or Outside?

Rabbi Yosi ben Hanina would kiss the rocks of Akko and say "till here is the land of Israel." (**Talmud Yerushalmi Shviit 4:7**)

If one delivers a get from abroad (medinat hayam), he must affirm that it was written and sealed in his presence.. .

[where does medinat hayam begin?] Rabbi Judah says from Rekem to the east and Rekem is like the east, from Ashkelon to the south and Ashkelon is like the south, from Akko to the north, and Akko is like the north. Rabbi Meir says Akko is considered the land of Israel for a get. (**Mishnah Gittin 1:1-2**)

## Jewish Visitors

**Maimonides (1135-1204)** 1165: and on the 1st day of the week, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Sivan, I safely left the sea. I came to Akko and was saved from apostasy and arrived in the land of Israel. And I vowed that this day would be one of happiness and joy, feasting and giving gifts to the poor, for myself and my household forever. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the week, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan, in the year 4726, we left Akko to go up to Jerusalem, in dangerous circumstances. And I entered the great and holy house and prayed there on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the week, the 6<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of the week, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month, I left Jerusalem to and traveled to Hebron to kiss the graves of my fathers in the cave [of Machpelah]. And that day I stood and prayed, thank God for everything. And these two days, the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> of MarHeshvan, I vowed that they would be holidays for me . . . and as I was privileged to pray in it [the Temple] in its destruction, so should I and all Israel see it rebuilt speedily, amen!

And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein shall be astonished at it. (**VaYikra 26: 32** )

**Nachmanides (1194-1270):** And these words promise redemption more than any of the visions of Daniel. And when it says “and your enemies will be astonished by it,” this is good news, informing us that our land cannot accept our enemies, and this is a great proof and promise, because you cannot find another land as fertile and as prosperous that is now so destroyed, because since we have left it is has not accepted any nation or language and all try to settle it and cannot succeed.

### **Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato (1707-1746)**

A consideration of the general state of affairs will reveal that the majority of men of quick intelligence and keen mentality devote most of their thought and speculation to the subtleties of wisdom and the profundities of analysis, each according to the inclination of his intelligence and his natural bent. . . There are few however who devote thought and study to perfection of Divine service – to love, fear, communion and all the other aspects of saintliness. It is not that they consider this knowledge unessential, if questioned each one would maintain that it is of paramount importance . . . Their failure to devote more attention to it stems rather from its being so manifest and so obvious to them that they see no need for spending much time on it. Consequently, this study and reading of works of this kind have been left to those of a not too sensitive, almost dull intelligence. These you will see immersed in the study of saintliness, not stirring from it. . . This state of affairs results in evil consequences both for those who possess wisdom and for those who do not, causing both sides to lack true saintliness and rendering it extremely rare. The wise lack it because of their limited consideration of it, and the unwise because of their limited grasp. The result is that saintliness is construed by most to consist in the recitation of many Psalms, very long confessions, difficult fasts and ablutions in ice and snow – all of which are

incompatible with intellect and which reason cannot accept. (**Introduction to The Path of the Just (Mesilat Yesharim)**):

## **Did Women Go to Synagogue?**

a certain widow in whose neighborhood there was a synagogue, and despite this every day she went and prayed in the study hall of Rabbi Yohanan. Rabbi Yohanan said to her: My daughter, is there not a synagogue in your neighborhood? She said to him: My teacher, don't I attain a reward for all the steps I take while walking to pray in the distant study hall? (**Sotah 22a**)

Rabbi Meir used to preach in the synagogue of Hammat every Friday night and a certain woman there used to listen to his voice. One day he preached for a long time. She went and tried to enter her house but found that the lamp had gone out. Her husband said to her where have you been. She said I was listening to the preacher. He said to her I swear you will never enter this house until you spit in the face of the preacher. (**Yerushalmi Sotah 1:4**)

And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by the riverside, where it seemed likely that there would be **a place of prayer**: and we sat down, and spake unto **the women which were come together**. (**Apostles 16:13**)

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis they went down to Apollonis, and thence to Thessalonica, where was a **synagogue of the Jews**: and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, [and] for three sabbath days discoursed with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved [the] Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this is Christ, Jesus whom, said he, I **81** proclaim unto you. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas, in the teaching: and many of the devout, and of Greeks a great multitude, and **women, of the first rank**, not a few. (**Apostles 17**)

## **Olei HaGardom**

Shlomo Ben-Yosef: An Irgun member who was the first Oleh Hagardom. He was arrested after an attack on a bus carrying Arab civilians in Safed. He was executed on June 29, 1938.

Dov Gruner: Irgun member captured during a raid on the Palestine Police station in Ramat Gan. He was executed on April 16, 1947.

Mordechai Alkahi: Irgun member arrested en route to an attack on British officers on the Night of the Beatings. Executed on April 16, 1947.

Yehiel Dresner, Irgun member arrested en route to an attack on British officers on the Night of the Beatings. Executed on April 16, 1947.

Eliezer Kashani, Irgun member arrested en route to an attack on British officers on the "Night of the Beatings". Executed on April 16, 1947.

Avshalom Haviv: Irgun member captured during the Acre Prison break, executed on July 29, 1947.

Meir Nakar, Irgun member captured during the Acre Prison break, executed on July 29, 1947.

Yaakov Weiss, Irgun member captured during the Acre Prison break, executed on July 29, 1947.

## Was There an Ezrat Nashim in Ancient Times?

One who did not see the Celebration of the Place of the Drawing of the Water never saw celebration in his days. This was the sequence of events: At the conclusion of the first Festival day the priests and the Levites descended from the [Israelites'](#) courtyard to the Women's Courtyard, where they would introduce a significant repair . . . What is this significant repair? [Rabbi Elazar](#) said that it is like that which we learned surrounded the courtyard with a balcony [*gezuztra*]. And they instituted that the women should sit above and the men below. . . The Sages taught in the *Tosefta*: Initially, women would stand on the inside of the Women's Courtyard,, and the men were on the outside. And they would come to conduct themselves with inappropriate levity in each other's company,. Therefore, the Sages instituted that the women should sit on the outside and the men on the inside, and still they would come to conduct themselves with inappropriate levity. Therefore, they instituted in the interest of complete separation that the women would sit above and the men below. . (**Sukkah 51**)

תוספתא מסכת ערכין (צוקרמאנדל) פרק ב לעולם לא נראית אשה בעזרה אלא בשעת קרבנה  
בלבד

**Kiddushin 81a** R. Kahana said: If there are men without [i.e., in the outer chamber] and women within, we have no fear of privacy. If there are men in the inner chamber and women in the outer, we have fear of privacy. In a Baraitha the reverse was taught. Said Abaye: Now that R. Kahana ruled thus, while the Baraitha taught the reverse, let us act stringently. Abaye made a partition of jugs; Raba made a partition of canes.

