

Teaching Torah To Women

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

Introduction

"Rabbi Chanina said Only after Avraham set up the tent of Sarah did he establish his own.¹ Traditional Judaism has taken the reference to the "tent of Avraham" and the "tent of Sarah" as representing two spheres of activity within Jewish society. "Sarah's tent" included the family and the home, while "Avraham's tent" extended also the larger community. Bilam reluctantly praised the people of Israel, "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob."² Over the centuries, indeed, the tents were goodly, and each man and woman found contentment and fulfillment in his or her own "tent."

However, we are now living in an age which has seen the rise of a vibrant feminist movement within the ranks of Orthodox Jewry. This movement has evolved within the context of a Jewish society which has always emphasized intellectual curiosity and growth. Numerous women now seek involvement in Judaism on an intellectual level more similar to that of their male counterparts. There is some resistance and also a great deal of adjustment to these new demands.

Rashi explains that according to R. Eliezer, if a woman will be dimensions of this issue. The philosophical or *hashkafic*

1. *Bereshit Rabbah* 29:15

2. *Bamidbar* 24:5.

*Rebbe, Ezra Academy, Queens;
Mashgiach, N'vei Tzion of Queens*

ramifications of the halacha, notwithstanding their importance, will not be dealt with within the context of the following discussion.

The Problem: Exemption or Prohibition?

In *Kiddushin* 29b, the Talmud states:

How do we know that she [the mother] has no duty to teach her children? Because it is written, *ve-limaddetem* [and you shall teach], which also reads *u-lemaddetem* [and you shall study]; hence whoever is commanded to study, is commanded to teach; whoever is not commanded to study, is not commanded to teach. And how do we know that she is not bound to teach herself? Because it is written, *ve-limaddetem* [and you shall teach] — *u-lemaddetem* [and you shall learn]: the one whom others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach himself, and the one whom others are not commanded to teach, is not commanded to teach himself. How then do we know that others are not commanded to teach her? Because it is written, "And you shall teach them to your sons" — but not your daughters.

According to the conclusion of the Gemara, a woman's exemption from the commandment of *Talmud Torah* (learning Torah) is manifested in three ways:

- 1) A woman is not required to teach her sons Torah;
- 2) A woman is not required to learn Torah herself;
- 3) A father is not required to teach Torah to his daughters.³

The foregoing Gemara concludes only that a woman is not *obligated* to teach or learn Torah. Concerning this general principle there is little controversy. However, the question whether a woman *may* study has proved to be one of the most controversial halachic issues to date.

The source of this controversy is a remarkable *sugya*

3. See also: Tos. *Kiddushin* 34A and *Shabbat* 32B. Yerushalmi *Brachot* 2:7. *Eruvin* 10-1. Rambam *Talmud Torah* 1:1, *Sotah* 3:20. *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 246:6. *Shulchan Aruch* Harav, *Talmud Torah* 1:14

(discussion) in *Sotah* (20a-21b).⁴ The Mishna there deals with a woman who is suspected of committing adultery but insists that she is innocent. She must therefore submit herself to the test of drinking the "bitter waters" as prescribed by the Torah.⁵ If she is in fact innocent, then she will be unharmed by the water, but if she has committed adultery the water will take its deadly course. However, the Mishna explains that there are cases where although the woman is in fact guilty, the effect of the water may be suspended for up to three years. This can happen when she has to her credit certain "merits" which have in their power to protect her for a limited amount of time. Then the Mishna quotes the following dispute:

Hence, declared Ben Azzai, "a man must teach his daughter Torah so that if she must drink (the bitter waters) she may know that the merit will suspend her punishment."⁶ R. Eliezer says, "If a man teaches his daughter Torah, it is as though he taught her *tiflut* (תפלות)." R. Yehoshua says, "a woman prefers a *kav* together with *tiflut* to nine *kavs* together with restrictions of chastity."

Based upon our first reading of the Mishna we may summarize the three opinions quoted:

- 1) According to Ben Azzai, a father is obligated to teach his daughter Torah.
- 2) R. Eliezer (in the Mishna) does not actually cite a specific ruling. He simply berates a father who has chosen to teach his daughter.
- 3) R. Yehoshua does not mention either a woman's studying

4. Variant readings of the text may be found in the *Dikdukei Sofrim Hashalem* edition of *Sotah* P. 299.

5. *Bamidbar* 5:11-31

6. In other words: if the woman has learned Torah she will know that the reason the water did not kill her immediately (in spite of her guilt) is because of a *z'chut* (Rashi). The Meiri, however, explains that Ben Azzai is referring to *other* women who are present and perhaps know of the woman's guilt. If they have learned Torah they will know that the words of the Torah are true and that the water will eventually take effect. See *Tiferet Israel* on the Mishna

Torah or a father's obligation concerning his daughter's Talmud Torah. He merely states his evaluation of the nature of an average woman.

The word *tiflut* has been interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is based upon a verse in Job (6:6): "Can that which is tasteless (*tofel*) be eaten without salt." According to this, *tiflut* would mean trivial and irrelevant things.⁷ The Rambam explains that since women are generally not ready to dedicate themselves completely to Torah study, their knowledge will necessarily be superficial. Given such superficial knowledge, a woman will not be able to appreciate the depth and scope of Jewish learning and will come to consider it irrelevant and trivial.⁸

The alternate translation of *tiflut* is immorality or lechery. Rashi explains that according to R. Eliezer, if a woman will be taught Torah she will acquire wisdom and she will thus understand how to conduct immoral affairs without being discovered.⁹ This interpretation is based upon a verse in Jeremiah (23:13): "And I have seen *tifla* in the prophets of Shomron." R. Eliezer expressed the same opinion in even stronger terms in an incident recorded in the Yerushalmi (*Sotah* 3:4). A wealthy and educated woman once asked R. Eliezer an incisive question regarding the chapter in the Torah which relates the story of the Golden Calf. He replied that "There is no wisdom in women except with the distaff (spinning wheel)." The Rabbi's son, Hyrcanus, reminded his father that perhaps it would have been better to answer her question since she was in the habit of giving a large annual tithe to their family (who

7. This interpretation is in accordance with that of the Rambam (*Hilchot Talmud Torah* 11:3) and the Meiri (*Sotah* 20B).

8. *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:13 as explained by R. Moshe Meiselman, *Jewish Women In Jewish Law*, Ktav 1978, P. 34-35. The Satmar Rav in *Vayael Moshe*, P. 444, is of the opinion that because we suspect a woman's Torah learning of being superficial, every woman necessarily falls under the suspicion of being a potential *Talmid She'eino Hagun* to whom we are forbidden to teach Torah. This will be discussed in greater detail. See also R. Shmuel Ashkenazi's notes to the Rav's *Hilchot Talmud Torah* (Kehot 5743) P. 557.

9. See *Resp. Maharil* 199. The Ramo in Y.D. 246:6 clearly concurs with this interpretation. See *Tiferet Israel* and R.G. Ellinson, *Haisha V'Hamitzvot* P. 150, Note 29.

were *Leviim*). In response, R. Eliezer stated, "Let the words of the Torah be burnt, but they will not be handed over to a woman."¹⁰

The Gemara itself does not provide a definition of the word "Torah." Are the sages referring to the *Torah SheBichtav* (Written Torah), *Torah SheBeal Peh* (Oral Torah) or both? We can safely surmise that Ben Azzai obligates the father to teach his daughter the Oral and certainly the Written Torah. Since the underlying rationale of Ben Azzai's requirement is to ensure that every woman be familiar with the fact that certain "merits" can delay the effect of the water, he obviously requires the study of the Oral Torah since the delaying effect of merit is not mentioned in the Written Torah itself.¹¹

R. Eliezer can be understood in two ways: 1) Perhaps he agrees that women may or should be taught the Written Torah and only berates a father who teaches his daughter the Oral Torah. 2) It is possible that he rebukes a father for even teaching his daughter the Written Torah.

R. Yehoshua's description of women can also be interpreted in two ways: 1) Perhaps his opinion is identical with R. Eliezer's and his statement was merely made in order to further substantiate his colleague's. 2) If we assume that R. Eliezer only rejects Ben Azzai's decision concerning the Oral Torah but concurs with his *Heter* to study the Written Torah, it is possible that R. Yehoshua, in his assessment of women, rules that their being taught the Written Torah also falls under the category of *tiflut*.¹²

In order to understand the Mishna we must now turn our attention to the famous ruling of the Rambam which is itself the source of considerable controversy:¹³

10. See also: *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* 18, *Chagiga* 3A and *Yoma* 66B.

11. See the commentary of R. Yoshiyahu Pinto (Rif) to *Ein Ya'akov* in *Sotah*, *Vayael Moshe* P. 435, Dr. Meir Hershkowitz, *Or Hamizrach* 17, P. 43. R. Tzadok Hacohen of Lublin suggests a fascinating approach to understanding the *sugya* in *Otzar Hamelech*, T.T. 1:13.

12. See commentary of Rashi to R. Yehoshua's statement regarding Esther in *Megilla* 15B.

13. *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:13.

A woman who studies Torah is rewarded, but not to the same degree as is a man, for she is not commanded and anyone who does that which he is not commanded to do, does not receive the same reward as one who is commanded, but only a lesser reward. However, even though she is rewarded, the Sages commanded that a man must not teach his daughter Torah. This is because the mind of the majority of women is not disposed to study and they will turn the words of Torah into words of nonsense according to their limited understanding. Our sages said that anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is to be considered as if he had taught her her trivial and unimportant things. What were they referring to? The Oral Torah. However, the Written Torah should not be taught before the fact (*lechatchila*), but if he has taught her, it is not considered as if he has taught her *ti'lut*.

This decision of the Rambam presents us with a number of difficulties:

1) The Rambam quotes the statement of R. Eliezer, thereby indicating that he follows his ruling. He endorses the liberal interpretation of R. Eliezer which considers only the teaching of the Oral Torah to be *ti'lut*. Nevertheless, he proceeds to forbid, before the fact (*lechatchila*), even the study of the Written Torah which should be permitted according to the liberal interpretation which sees no disagreement between R. Eliezer and Ben Azzai as far as the Written Torah is concerned.

2) The *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁴ quotes the Rambam, and the Ramo adds: "However, she is obligated to study those laws which apply to women."¹⁵ Is the Ramo simply elucidating the *psak* of the Rambam, or is the purpose of his note to disagree with any part of his ruling?

14. *Yoreh Deah* 246 b.

15. This halacha is quoted in the name of the *Agur* (*Hilchot Tefilla* 2) who quotes the *Smag*. However, it has been pointed out that in fact the origin of this halacha is in the *Smak* (*Sefer Mitzvot Katon*) in the introduction written by his students. This is also quoted by the *Beit Yosef* Y.D. 340 and will be discussed in greater detail.

3) As far as a woman's studying Torah is concerned, the Rambam rules that she is to be rewarded. On the other hand he accepts R. Eliezer's strong disapproval of a father who teaches his daughter Torah, noting the dangers involved in such an action. Why is the woman herself excluded from R. Eliezer's exhortation if in fact her mind is not adapted to the study of Torah?

4) How do we reconcile the Rambam's ruling with the many recorded historical accounts of prominent Jewish women who excelled in their knowledge of both the Written and Oral divisions of the Torah? To complicate matters, most of these women were the daughters or wives of famous rabbinic authorities who often assisted them in their studies.¹⁶

16. The *Tosefta Kelim* (B.K. 4:9) quotes a ruling in the Laws of Ritual Purity in the name of R. Meir's famous wife, Bruriah. (Similar examples of Bruriah's erudition and the Rabbis' acceptance of her rulings may be found in *Tosefta Kelim B.M.* 1:4, *Gemara Pesachim* 62B, *Erubin* 53B. See also *Shabbat* 133B) In the *Sefer Sibuvai R. Petachya of Regensburg* (p. 9), it is recorded that R. Shmuel b. Eli, the Gaon of Baghdad in the late 12th century, had a daughter who was fluent in Scripture and Talmud and taught these subjects to male Yeshiva students through a second story window. The Chida in *Shem Hagedolim* tells us that the Rashbatz (3:78) quotes a solution to a difficult Talmudic problem in the name of a certain Rabbanit (Rabbi's wife). In a gloss to the Responsa of the Maharshal (no. 30) we find that Rebbetzin Miriam (the grandmother of the Maharshal) taught halacha to advanced Yeshiva students from behind a partition. The son of the famous halachic authority R. Yehoshua Falk (author of the *Prisha* and the *Smag*) in his introduction to the *Prisha*, quotes novellae in the name of his mother Baiba, who he says was proficient in many areas of halacha. Regarding other educated women of this period, see Cecil Roth, *Outstanding Jewish Women in Western Europe, 15-17 Centuries*, in *The Jewish Library* Vol. III, Edited by Leo Jung, P. 151 ff., and Shlomo Ashkenazi, *Dor Dor U'Manhigav*, P. 199-268. In our own time, we have also heard of women who were great Talmudic scholars, particularly the wife of R. Isser Zalman Meltzer who was instrumental in editing his classic commentary on the Rambam, and the sister of the *Aderet* of Ponevezeh.

See also *Responsa Rav Pe'alim* of R. Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, *Sod Yesharim* no. 9. The famous Rav of Jerusalem, R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, was said to have a set "chavrutot" with his wife for half an hour each day in order to study *Orah Chaim* (*Sefer Amuda D'nehora*, P. 13). This is related to another difficulty in our understanding of the Rambam. He rules that women are not exempt from the commandments involved in the *Pardes*; namely: The knowledge of G-d and his

Written or Oral Torah?

The *Taz* (Y.D. 246:4, note 4) provides a source for the Rambam's distinction between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. In the Torah (*Devarim* 31:10-13) the king is commanded to read certain sections of Mishna Torah (*Devarim*) before all of Israel during the Sukkoth festival at the end of each seven year period. This is called "*Yom Hakahal*" — the day of assembly. The Torah states, "You must gather together the people, the men, women, and proselytes from your settlements and let them hear it." Obviously, writes the *Taz*, the women were included in this day of public learning where portions of the Written Torah were studied. This forms the basis of the Rambam's decision that teaching the Written Torah to women is not equated with teaching *tiflut*. However, asks the *Taz*, if the proof from *Yom Hakahal* is a valid one, why then did the Rambam insist that even the Written Torah should not be studied לכתחילה? The *Taz* answers his own question: "It seems to me that over there [*Yom Hakahal*] the king only taught the simple meaning of the text (פשוטי הדברים) which in truth is completely permissible לכתחילה even according to us as is the custom every day. However, the study of the meaning of the Torah by means of *Hitchakmut* and *Havanah* (thorough analysis) is what was prohibited. This is the meaning of the statement of the Talmud (*Chagiga* 3A), 'Men in order to study and women in order to listen' — the women were only permitted to listen to the simple explanation of the Mishna Torah but took no part in its study." Thus, according to the *Taz*, the Rambam's prohibition to teach

unity and the love and fear of G-d as explained in *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*. As is well known, according to the Rambam the *Pardes* refers to physics (*Maaseh Beresheit*) and Metaphysics (*Maaseh Merkava*). However, he explicitly states that it is not proper to walk about in the *Pardes* unless one has first filled his belly with bread and meat, the knowledge of what is forbidden and permitted. He concludes that this prerequisite knowledge is available to all, men and women alike. (*Yesodei HaTorah* 4:13). This seems to imply that women may indeed study the "*Hanayot of Abaye and Rava*." In order to do this question justice, an in-depth study of the Rambam's conception of *Pardes* would have to be undertaken, which is beyond the scope of this article.

women the Written Torah refers only to an in-depth, analytical form of study, not to a more basic one.¹⁷

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes (Maharatz) cites the *Taz* and offers an interesting proof to verify his explanation from the aforementioned case of the woman who approached R. Eliezer with a question regarding the sin of the Golden Calf. The Maharatz points out that perhaps R. Eliezer refused to respond to her question only because to do so would have required an analytical explanation of the text. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the woman was thoroughly familiar with the *parsha* itself. R. Eliezer was not

17. The halachic decision of *Shoel U'Meishiv* (4:41) is in accordance with the explanation of the *Taz*. See *Ios Sotah* 21B and *Chagiga* 3A which quotes the Yerushalmi. This *chiddush* is usually attributed to the *Taz*. However, his father-in-law, the *Bach*, had already reached the same conclusion in his commentary on the *Tur* (Y.D. 246). In fact, there is an important addition in the *Bach*, where he states: "One should not teach women *derech kera* (on a regular basis) but rather only in the form of *shmiya* — listening on an irregular basis." This form of study is considered a *mitzvah* as in the *parsha* of *Kahal*, in order that they should know how to observe the commandments. Here the *Bach* alludes to the paradox in the Rambam, where a woman is rewarded for Torah study while her father is forbidden to teach her Torah on a simple level, yet learning on an irregular basis is considered a *mitzvah*. See *Magen Avraham Orach Chaim* 282:6 who derives from the *Yom Hakahal* that women are obligated to hear the weekly readings of the Torah. See *Resp Taziv Eliezer*, Vol. 9, No. 3, P. 31.

Interestingly enough, in the *Tur* we find an inverse version of the Rambam: "Our sages have said that anyone who teaches his daughter Torah it is as if he has taught her *tiflut*. To what does this refer, to the Written Torah, but the Oral Torah should not be taught (לכתחילה) but if it is taught, it is not considered *tiflut*." The *Beit Yosef* claims that this version is apparently the result of a scribe's error and the correct version is that which is found in the Rambam. However, R. Aharon Walkin in *Respona Z'kan Aharon* (Y.D. 66) postulates a fascinating rationalization for the textual version of the *Tur*. As we have seen regarding the *Yom Hakahal*, the "men came in order to study and the women in order to hear." R. Walkin writes that this distinction between studying and hearing is in effect a distinction between the Written Torah which *must* be studied from a text and the Oral Torah which may only be heard and not recorded in a text. (See *Gittin* 60A). Therefore, we may deduce from the *Yom Hakahal* that women may only listen, which refers to the Oral Torah, but may not study the Written Torah by means of the text. Therefore, according to the version of the *Tur*, the main prohibition is the study of the Written Torah and not the Oral Torah. Although this is an innovative approach to the *Tur's*

upset nor did he rebuke her for having acquired this basic knowledge.¹⁸

One of the major commentators of the Rambam, R. Eliezer Rokeach, author of *Maaseh Rokeach*, apparently agrees with the *Taz*. He concludes that the primary *issur* involved is the study of the Oral Torah which lends itself to technical hairsplitting and, hence, the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse to which women may be prone. The Written Torah, he says, was prohibited (according to the Rambam) as a result of a *gezerah* (a particular regulation) — if we permit women to study the Written Torah, they would very likely be encouraged and curious to study the Oral Torah, which is forbidden. This eventuality would exist only

questionable version, it is for the most part an unacceptable one, as R. Walkin himself explains in the Response.

This raises another interesting question regarding women and *Talmud Torah*: Does the prohibition of memorizing verses from the Bible apply to women as well as men? R. Eliezer Lopian in a short article in *Moriah* (Kislev 5741, P. 53) decided to investigate this matter after he was informed that a well-known scholar refused to allow his daughter to comply with her teacher's assignment to commit *Shirat Debora* to memory. According to R. Lopian, this scholar's fears appear to have been unfounded. He attempts to prove that according to Tosafot (B.K. 3B) the prohibition of memorizing verses from the Torah applies only to those who are commanded to study the Torah. Since women are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, they are not included in the prohibition. R. Avraham Weinfeld in *Resp. Lev Avraham* (no. 13) also rules that teachers may assign their female students to memorize portions of the *Tanach*. According to him, the entire prohibition was only made regarding the study of the Written Torah by heart. However, when a student (male or female) uses the actual text but memorizes verses in order to test his or her proficiency, there is no *issur* whatsoever. In the future, R. Weinfeld writes, these students will refer once again to the text in the course of their studies. He concludes with a short investigation identical to that of R. Lopian.

18. *Hagahot Maharatz Chajes, Sotah* 21B. See also his *Hagahot Chagiga* 3A and Responsa No. 32. The Mishna in *Nedarim* (35B) can be understood according to the explanation of the *Taz* and *Maharatz Chajes*. The Mishna deals with a man who has forbidden himself, by means of a vow, to derive any benefit from a particular individual. The Mishna rules that although he himself may not receive any instruction in the study of the Written Torah from this man, his sons and daughters can receive such instruction. This would clearly indicate that a woman may be taught the Written Torah. According to the *Taz's* explanation of the Rambam, the Mishna is referring to instruction in the simple meaning of the text

where a woman studies the Written Torah in a manner which is itself analytical. However, there would be no reason to enact a *gezerah* when a woman is simply studying the simple meaning of the text.¹⁹

R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi in his classic *Hilchot Talmud Torah* (1:14) rules that teaching women the Oral Torah is considered *tiflut*, but he fails to mention any *issur* regarding the Written Torah. There are those who understand this omission as clear proof that the Rav, in opposition to the ruling of the Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch*, permits women to study the Written Torah without any limitations regarding the depth of study.²⁰ This would be in accordance with the *Piskei HaRid* (*Nedarim* 37a).²¹ There are others, however, who disagree with this

as opposed to an analytical form of study which is prohibited. See the commentaries of the *Tosafot Yom Tov* and *Melechet Shlomo* on the Mishna. See also the *Rosh* on the Gemara (35B), the *Biur Hagra* (Y.D. 246-25) and R. Shmuel Ashkenazi's notes on the *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, p. 556.

19. *Maaseh Rokeach* on Rambam T.T. 1:13. R. Yosef Halevi Boskowitz (the son of the *Machatzit Hashekel*) in *Seder Hamishna* (T.T. 1:13) writes that according to the Torah, women are only exempt from *Talmud Torah* but are permitted to study and by doing so receive the reward of one who is not commanded but performs the mitzvah. The prohibition of *Talmud Torah* to women is of rabbinic origin. It was enacted in order to prevent the misuse of the words of Torah on the part of individuals whom they considered likely to do so. However, even the Rabbis could not possibly have included the study of the Written Torah in the category of *tiflut* since in the *parsha* of the *Yom HaKahal* the Torah states: "In order that they may learn to fear G-d."

According to the *Taz* and others, this refers to the listening of the women. If the Torah itself claims that the study of the Written Torah (on the part of women) is a source of fear of G-d, how could the Rabbis have categorized it as a possible source of "vain talk" (דברי הוֹאֵר)? R. Boskowitz concludes that the Rambam forbids לכתחילה even the study of the Written Torah for fear that it might lead to the study of the Oral Torah. See R. Dovid Auerbach, *Halichot Beita* (Jerusalem 5743) P. 391, *Shoshanim L'David* on the Mishna in *Sotah, Resp. Mahari* (*Hachadashot*) No. 45.

20. *Resp. Tzitz Eliezer*, Vol. 9, No. 3, P. 31, R. Shmuel Ashkenazi, *Notes on Hilchot Talmud Torah* P. 555.

21. *See Beit Yosef* and *Taz Orach Chaim*, End of 47, who conclude that women recite *Birchat Hatorah* because of the Written Torah. See R. Reuven Margolies' note on the *Sefer Hasidim* 313 Mosad Harav Kook, edition P. 245.

interpretation of the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*.²² There is one halachic authority, the *Ateret Z'kenim*, who rules that women *must* study the Written Torah.²³

Mitzvot Which Apply to Women

As previously mentioned, the Ramo, in his gloss to the *Shulchan Aruch* (246:6) states: "However, a woman must learn the laws that apply to her." How does this ruling relate to the *psak* of the Rambam? What is the nature of this obligation and its relationship to the prohibition of *Talmud Torah* for women?

Two early sources of this halacha appear in the *Sefer Hasidim* and the *Sefer Mitzvot Katan (Smak)*. In the *Sefer Hasidim* we find the following:

A man must teach his daughters the mitzvot, the *Piskei Halachot*. Concerning what was said that whoever teaches a woman Torah it is as if he taught her *tiflut*, this refers to the depth of the Talmud, the rationale of the mitzvot, and the secrets of the Torah. These are not taught to a woman or a child. However, she should be instructed in the laws of the mitzvot. If she is ignorant of the laws of Shabbat how can she possibly observe it, and similarly with all the mitzvot. We find that in the days of Chizkiyahu, the king of Judah, men, women, and children knew the laws of sacrifices and ritual purity.²⁴

The students of R. Yitzchak of Corbeille write in the introduction to the *Smak*, "And he also wrote that we (men) must tell the women the positive and negative mitzvot that apply to them. The *kriah* (reading) and *dikduk* (careful study) in these

22. Notably, R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the present Lubavitcher Rebbe, in *Likutei Sichot*, Vol. 14, P. 150. ff. 12

23. *Ateret Z'kenim, Orach Chaim* 47:14.

24. *Sefer Hasidim* 313. See *Vayoel Moshe, Kuntres Lashon Hakodesh*, Ch. 41-42, *Resp. Shoel U'maishiv* 4 41. *Shiurei Beracha* O.C. 47. *Yosef Ometz* 67.

mitzvot will benefit them just as *Esek Hatalmud* (involvement in study) benefits men."²⁵

In order to understand the principle involved in this paradoxical obligation on the part of women to study certain segments of the Torah, it will be helpful to digress briefly and first investigate the controversial issue of whether women are permitted (or obligated) to recite the *Birchot Hatorah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* very clearly states, "Women recite the blessing over the Torah."²⁶ However, in his commentary on the *Tur*, R. Yosef Caro elaborates. He quotes the Maharil who first bases the halacha upon the distinction of the Rambam between the Written and Oral Torah. Women may recite *Birchot Hatorah* because they too may study the Written Torah.²⁷ Then he quotes the Maharil's concluding statement, "And certainly women recite the blessing, according to the *Smak*, who wrote that women are obligated to study their mitzvot." The *Magen Avraham* in his commentary on the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* cites the explanation of the *Smak* as quoted in the *Agur* and the *Beit Yosef*.²⁸ According to this, women *must* recite the *Birchot Hatorah*.

The Vilna Gaon²⁹ disagrees with this explanation and writes:

And their opinion is unacceptable for a number of reasons. The Torah itself (as interpreted in the Gemara) shouts' to us "And you shall teach your sons" and not your daughters. So how could women possibly say "Who has commanded us" or "Who has given us [the Torah]"? Clearly, the matter must be explained according to what is written in *Tosafot* and the other *poskim*, that women are permitted to recite a *bracha* whenever they choose to perform a *Mitzvat*

25. The *Smak* specifically states that women should study the laws of 'their' mitzvot by means of a text

26. *Orach Chaim* 47:14.

27. Maharil 199. This will be discussed in greater detail

28. O.C. 47:14. In addition he quotes the Maharil's contention that women also recite the order of the sacrifices (which contains portions of the Torah) when they pray. This entitles them to recite the *Birchot Hatorah*. See *Mor U'ketziya* O.C. 47.

29a. *Orach Chaim* 47:14.

Asei SheHazman Grama (positive commandment performed at a particular time). Although the Rabbis have taught "whoever teaches his daughter Torah it is as if he has taught her *liflut*," this statement was only made in connection with the Oral Torah.

Therefore, whereas according to the *Magen Avraham* the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* is that women *must* recite the *Birchot Hatorah*, the Vilna Gaon understands that women are simply *permitted* to say the blessing just as they are permitted to recite a *bracha* over any *Mitzvat Asei SheHazman Grama*.²⁹

Most notably, what emerges out of this debate is the *requirement*, on the part of major halachic authorities, for women to recite the *Birchot Hatorah*. This would imply that there is in fact an obligation of *Talmud Torah* incumbent upon every woman. These authorities have ruled that since women must study the laws which apply to them, they must recite the *bracha* which was established by our Sages for the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*.³⁰

29 According to the opinion of Rabbenu Tam as cited in *Tosafot Kiddushin 31A*. See R. Rakover's (*Birkat Eliyahu*) explanation of the Gra. The *Biur Halacha* adds that this disagreement between the *Magen Avraham* and the Gra has another major effect on the halacha: According to the *Magen Avraham*, the *Birchot Hatorah* of a woman can exempt a man. However, according to the Gaon, the man *must* recite the blessing since for the woman it is optional, she cannot exempt him. (*Biur Halacha* 47:14 and *Minchat Chinuch* 430). See also R. Moshe Sternbuch, *Hikhot Hagra U'Minhatag*, *Birchot Hashachar* #8. A number of authorities point to a major difficulty in the Gra. If the Gaon is explaining that the *psak* of the *Shulchan Aruch* reflects its agreement with the opinion of Rabbenu Tam, then why does the *Shulchan Aruch* rule in a number of places that women are not allowed to recite a blessing on a *Mitzvat Asei Shehazman Gerama* (*Orach Chaim* 17:2, 589-6). Various approaches to this dilemma have been suggested. See R. Eliezer Shach, *Avi Ezri* on Rambam T.T. 1:13, *Vayael Moshe* 3:46. R. Yisroel Meir Paretsky, *Sefer Kavod Harav* (Student Org. of Yeshivat Yitzchock Elchanan 5744) P. 233-236. Some suggest that the Gaon is in fact arguing with the *Shulchan Aruch*. See *Halichot Baitei P. 16*, *Birkat Eliyahu* and *Damesek Eliezer* on the Gra.

30. This relationship between *Birchot HaTorah* and *Talmud Torah* on the part of women is clearly spelled out in one of the classic works of the *Acharonim*. The *Shaagat Aryeh*, in Responsum 35, addresses himself to the question of whether a woman is also obligated to write her own Torah. According to the Rosh, the

main purpose of the mitzvah of writing a Torah is for one to study it. The *Shaagat Aryeh* maintains that even according to the Rosh a woman would be obligated to participate in this mitzvah although women are exempt from the general mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. Since according to many *Rishonim* they must recite the *Birchot HaTorah*, because of the requirement to study the mitzvah which apply to them, they too are included in the obligation of writing a Torah for the purpose of study. Therefore, according to the *Shaagat Aryeh*, the fact that women must make a *bracha* in order to study their mitzvot indicates that they are somehow included in the official category of those who are commanded to study Torah.

A detailed discussion of the *Shaagat Aryeh* may be found in *Mishnat Avraham*, Sub-section 40. See also *Or Someach* (*Hilchot Sefer Torah* 7:1) who points to the correlation between the mitzvah of writing a *sefer Torah* and the mitzvah of studying Torah. "The Torah says, 'Now write for yourselves this song and teach it to Bnei Yisrael.' It is clear that the main reason for the mitzvah of writing a Torah is for the sake of studying it. Therefore the Rabbis rule that a woman is exempt from this mitzvah since she is exempt from the mitzvah of studying Torah." A significantly different interpretation of the verse may be found in a recently published responsum of R. Alexander Moshe Lapidus. He claims that the mitzvah of writing a Torah depends on the mitzvah of teaching Torah to others and not on the obligation of studying Torah yourself. The verse emphasizes "and teach it to Bnei Yisrael." Even though women must study those mitzvot that apply to them, everyone agrees that they are not obligated to teach these mitzvot to anyone else. Hence, they are not obligated to perform the mitzvah of writing a *sefer Torah*. (*Ikvei Beracha*, Edited by R. Pinchos Halevi Lifshitz, P. 123).

The question of the relationship between women, writing a *sefer Torah*, and *Talmud Torah*, is raised in a fascinating responsum of the Radbaz. This authority was asked to state his opinion regarding the question of whether a person who is not related must *tear kriya* when he is at the bedside of a woman who has died. The Radbaz cites a Gemara in *Moed Katan* (25A) which rules that "whoever is standing before the deceased at the time of the departing of the soul must *tear kriya*. This is compared to a *sefer Torah* that has been burned in which case all present are obligated to *tear*." Rashi explains: "Since the individual could have continued learning, he is like a *sefer Torah*." The Radbaz writes that according to Rashi's understanding of the Gemara this law only applies to a person present in the room of a dead man. A woman, who is exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, cannot be considered a *sefer Torah*. The Radbaz then quotes the Rambam who offers two different interpretations of the Gemara which do not distinguish between men and women. The Radbaz rules that we should be strict and follow the Rambam, since even according to Rashi women who do choose to study Torah are rewarded (Rambam TT 1:13). Therefore, they may be considered similar to a *sefer Torah* (Ramban, Resp. No. 988).

The question of whether or not women are obligated to hear the reading of the *Parshat Hashavua* (Portion of the Week) is also related to the fact that they are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. The *Magen Avraham* (O.C.

282:6) contends that women are indeed obligated to hear the weekly reading of the Torah since the Mishna (*Sofrim* 18:4) includes women among those who may be counted among the seven people who are called up to the Torah on Shabbat. He explains that even though the mitzvah of *Kriat HaTorah* was established for the purpose of *Talmud Torah* from which women are exempt, they are nonetheless obligated to hear the reading of the Torah. The reason for this is that once the mitzvah of *Kriat HaTorah* was established it attained the status of a mitzvah in its own right. Therefore the particulars of the mitzvah of *Kriat Torah* are not dependent on the halachot of *Talmud Torah*. *Kriat HaTorah*, like the *Yom Hakahal*, is a by-product of the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. Upon its establishment *Kriat HaTorah* gained its own halachic independence. (See also the *Birkei Yosef* 282:7).

R. Yechiel Epstein in the *Aruch Hashulchan* strongly objects to the Magen Avraham's interpretation of *Masechet Sofrim* and insists that women are exempt from the mitzvah of *Kriat HaTorah* for two reasons: 1) They are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* which cannot be viewed as a separate mitzvah. 2) *Kriat HaTorah* is a *Mitzvat Aseh SheHazman Grama* a mitzvah which is performed at a specific time from which women are exempt. (See also R. Yaakov Emden, *Mor U'ketziya* O.C. 417). The *Tosafot* (*Rosh Hashana* 33A), the *Rosh* (*First Perek Kiddushin*, *Siman* 49) and many other *Rishonim* quite clearly agrees with the *Aruch Hashulchan* regarding his claim that the mitzvot of *Kriat HaTorah* and *Talmud Torah* are inseparable, since they are all bothered by the fact that women can be included in the seven who are called up to the Torah in spite of the fact that they are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. See comment of *Chida* in *Kisei Rachamim* on the Mishna in *Masechet Sofrim*.

The *Mishna Brura* concludes that the custom of women is not to make any special effort to hear *Kriat HaTorah*. As a matter of fact, he writes that many women are careful to leave the synagogue in order not to hear the reading of the Torah. R. David Auerbach (*Halichot Beita* P. 62 Note 4) suggests two possible reasons for this strange custom: 1) Perhaps it originates from the ruling of a number of *Poskim* that women who are in a state of *Niddah* may not look upon a *Sefer Torah* (*Magen Avraham*, *Taz* 88:2, *Mishna Brura* 88:8). 2) Since it is very difficult for the women to hear the reading of the Torah from the women's section, the custom developed to leave the synagogue instead of risking the possibility of getting involved in unrelated conversations which would be a disgrace to the *Sefer Torah*. Based upon the above, R. Yosef Shalom Elyashuv of Jerusalem has ruled that it is preferable that a woman who arrived late to the synagogue recite the *Shmoneh Erei* while there is still time even though in doing so she will not be able to hear *Kriat HaTorah*. (Quoted by R. Yitzchok Fuchs in *Halichot Bat Yisroel* P. 55 Note 77). R. Elyashuv was also said to have added that in modern times, since most women understand what is being read, an effort should be made by such women to pay attention to *Kriat HaTorah*. As far as those days besides Shabbat during which we read the Torah see *Halichot Beita* P. 62-63. The question of whether women are obligated to hear *Parshat Zachor* is one of the most "popular" issues found in the *Acharonim*. R. Auerbach refers to many of these *Acharonim* in his discussion of the topic (P. 63-67).

Rabbi Yoseph Ber Soloveitchick in the *Beit Halevi*,³¹ like the Vilna Gaon before him, could not accept an approach which so explicitly seems to contradict the accepted talmudic dictum that women are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*.³² Nevertheless, a formidable group of *Rishonim* as well as *Acharonim* determined that women must recite the *Birchot Hatorah* because they too are obligated to study the mitzvot which apply to them. In order to resolve this problem, the *Beit Halevi* makes an important distinction between two forms of *Talmud Torah*: a) study of Torah b) knowledge of Torah. We have already seen that at the *Yom Hakahal* the men were to study and the women were to listen.³³ Why did the Torah distinguish between studying and listening if women are also obligated to study their mitzvot? The *Beit Halevi* therefore concludes that women are not commanded to study even their mitzvot. Only men have a positive commandment of *Talmud Torah* and fulfill their obligation even by studying subjects that do not apply to them (or possibly anyone else in the absence of the *Beit Hamikdash*). Although the *Smak* and others hold that women must study their mitzvot, they do not perform any mitzvah in the act of studying. Their only obligation is to "know" the mitzvot which apply to them, and "study" is simply a means of obtaining that knowledge. That is why the men came to study and the women to listen — to gain the information necessary for them to observe the commandments. The fact that women can recite the *Birchot Hatorah* is a result of the *psak* of Rabbenu Tam that women are allowed to make *brachot* even on those commandments from which they are exempt.³⁴ According to this conclusion of the *Beit Halevi*, once a woman is familiar with her

31. *Beit Halevi* 1:6. See *Beit Halevi* on the Torah, *Parashat Mishpatim*. See R. Shlomo Wahrman, *Shearit Yosef*, Vol. II, P. 52.

32. Rambam T.T. 1:1.

33. *Chagiga* 3A and *Tosafot*, and *Tosafot Sotah* 21B.

34. The reason the *poskim* make special mention of the fact that women can make the *Birchot HaTorah* is only because with these *brachot* there is an additional reason why perhaps they would not be recited, namely, the halacha of R. Eliezer in *Sotah*. See *Beit Halevi*. Also, *Minchat Chinuch* end of Mitzvah 430.

halachot, she is no longer required to study them in any form.³⁵

In halachic terminology, an act which is a prerequisite to the fulfillment of a mitzvah is known as a "Hechsher Mitzvah." According to the *Beit Halevi* and many other *Acharonim*, *Talmud Torah* is a *Hechsher Mitzvah* which is required of women in order that they may actually observe those commandments which are incumbent upon them. R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, in one of his responsa in *Achiezer*, deals with the question of whether extra money which was originally designated for a men's Yeshiva may be transferred to the account of a local girls' Yeshiva (*Beit Yaakov*). In his short reply, he quotes the suggestion of the questioner himself, that the solution of the problem could very well depend on how we define the nature of a woman's *Talmud Torah* as opposed to that of a man. Since women are exempt from the actual mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, their obligation to study the mitzvot can only be categorized as a *Hechsher Mitzvah*. Naturally,

there would be a problem involved in transferring funds that were set aside for a mitzvah in order to be used for the purpose of a *Hechsher Mitzvah*.³⁶

There are authorities, however, who understand that a woman's responsibility to study her mitzvot and recite the *brachot* implies that her Torah study is more than just a *Hechsher Mitzvah*. The *Bayit Chadash* (*Bach*) quotes the Maharshal, "Women have affinity to the words of the Torah when they study mitzvot that apply to them."³⁷ What is the nature of this affinity to *Talmud Torah* that on the one hand allows (or requires) women to recite the *Birchot Hatorah* but on the other hand complies with the accepted halacha that women are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*? One possible solution to this is proposed by R. Menachem M. Schneerson, the present Lubavitcher Rebbe.³⁸ The Rambam, based upon a Mishna in *Zevachim*, rules that: "We have therefore learned that an improper thought invalidates a sacrifice when it occurs during any of the four stages of the sacrifice: slaughtering, receiving the blood, carrying of the blood, and sprinkling of the blood upon the altar."³⁹ R. Yosef Rosen, better known as the Gaon of Rogatchov, comments on this halacha:

commentary *Tzalach* (*Berachot* 11B) writes that according to *Tosafot* a man who has interrupted his learning is not required to repeat the *Birchot HaTorah* when he resumes learning because he is constantly obligated to learn; therefore the interruption is not considered a break. However, a woman who is responsible only to know her mitzvot and not to study them would have to repeat the *Birchot HaTorah* in the course of the day each time she resumes her study of the mitzvot. The opinion is not found in any of the *Rishonim*, and the *Tzalach* himself concludes "however, I have not found even a trace of this in the words of *Rishonim* or the *Acharonim*." See *Yeshuot Yaakov* O.C. 47:8.

36. *Achiezer* III, No. 79. See R. Yoel Teitelbaum, *Resp. Divrei Yoel* I, p. 266.
37. *Tur* Y.D. 246. The *Drisha* quotes the same Maharshal but instead of writing that women are שייכות to Torah, he simply says that according to the Maharshal it is a mitzvah for them to study their commandments. The Chida (*Yosef Ometz* 67) claims that the *Bach's* version of the Maharshal seems to be the more accurate one. He contends, however, that the *Drisha* would also agree that women have a שייכות to *Talmud Torah* which obligates them to study their mitzvot and make the proper *brachot* before learning. See *Tzitz Eliezer*, Vol. 15, p. 59.

38. *Chiddushim U'Beurim BaShas* (Kehot 5739) p. 217-223.

39. *P'Sulei Hamukdashim* 13-4.

35. The Chida, in his authoritative *Birkei Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 47) reached the same conclusion as the *Beit Halevi* from a text in *Shabbat* (33B) which quotes R. Shimon as saying that the disease of *Askara* is caused by *Bitul Torah*. The Gemara asks, if R. Shimon is correct, then why do women, who are exempt from *Talmud Torah*, also die of *Askara*? The Gemara answers that women die of *Askara* because they disrupt the Torah of their husbands. The Chida writes that the Gemara should have answered that *Bitul Torah* is possible by women also — if they are negligent in the study of their mitzvot. Since the Gemara did not offer this answer, the Chida deduces that only men are commanded to study and women are only responsible to know. The Chida further develops this approach in his responsa *Yosef Ometz* No. 67 and *Tov Ayin* No. 4. For a lucid explanation of the Chida see responsa *Tzitz Eliezer*, Vol. 15, No. 24, who discusses this issue in the context of the general nature of the *Birchot HaTorah* as being a *Birchat Hamitzvah* or *Birchat Hashaveach*, or *Birchat Hanehenin*. See *Resp. Chikrei Lev* 1:45. *Halichot Beita* p. 17-18. The Rebbe of Sochatchov in *Avnei Nezer* does not mention the responsum of the *Beit Halevi* but is opposed to the *Shaagat Aryeh* on the same grounds and reaches the same conclusion. He explains that the learning of women is part of their fulfillment of the mitzvah. When a woman studies a mitzvah, she is in essence beginning the action of that mitzvah since the actual physical fulfillment of the commandment is impossible without previous knowledge as to how it is to be carried out. (Y.D. 352, Introduction to *Eglei Tal*. See also R. Meir Dan Plotzki, Introduction to *Chemdat Yisrael*. See also *Hagahot HaYavetz Tosafot Kiddushin* 34A and R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *L'eor Hahalacha* p. 207). R. Yechezkel Landau in his *talmudic*

"Even though the carrying of the blood to the altar is in reality just a necessary action that must be taken in order to perform the actual ceremony of the sprinkling of the blood, that action acquires its own significance and is therefore counted as one of the stages of sacrifice, where an improper thought invalidates the sacrifice."⁴⁰ In other words, any cause which is absolutely essential to its effect has by that very characteristic gained an independent significance of its own. A similar situation exists, according to R. Schneerson, in the case of women and *Talmud Torah*. Although the Torah exempts women from *Talmud Torah*, it obligates them to observe their commandments. In order to attain this end there exists an indispensable means – study. Because of its necessity, this study gains its own significance and identity although it does not fall under the general category of *Talmud Torah*. This is the meaning of women "having an affinity" to *Talmud Torah*.

This form of *Talmud Torah* has its own unique identity which is related to the regular mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. Therefore, a woman may recite the *Birchot Hatorah* and may continue to be involved in her act of *Talmud Torah* even after she has acquired enough knowledge to observe the commandments.⁴¹ It would also seem that according to this approach there would be no restrictions regarding the level in quality of study as long as the woman remains within the confines of her form of *Talmud Torah*. According to R. Yosef Shaul Nathanson, when the Temple existed women were able to study all the intricate laws of ritual slaughter 'Mitoch HaTalmud' – in the talmudic manner – since they too brought sacrifices.⁴² Anyone who is familiar with the talmudic method realizes that its study entails much more than a review of practical halachic conclusions.

Independent Study – Sincere Motivation

Let us return to the statement of the Rambam: "A woman

40. *Tzafnat Paneach* on the Torah, Beginning of *Parshat Massei* and commentary on the Rambam, Vol. II, P. 51 (3). See also *Tzafnat Paneach* on *Devarim* P. 372.

41. See also R. Shmuel Ashkenazi's notes to the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* P. 560-561.

42. *Shoel U'Meishiv*, Vol. IV, No. 41. Although he writes that this deduction was

who has studied Torah has a reward, but it is not like the reward of a man for she was not commanded, etc.. Yet even though she has a reward, the Sages commanded that a man not teach his daughter Torah for the mind of the majority of women is not adapted to be taught, etc.. The Sages said, 'Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah, it is as if he taught her *tiflut*.'"⁴³

R. Yehoshua Falk in the *Prisha* comments:

The minds of most women (*rov*) are not adapted to be taught Torah. However, if a woman has taught *herself*, it is apparent to us that she is no longer included in the category of *rov* (most) women. Therefore, the Rambam wrote that she is rewarded. This refers to a woman who has studied Torah properly and consequently will not turn the words of the Torah into words of nonsense. A father is forbidden to teach his daughter Torah lest she turn the words of Torah into words of nonsense since he does not know what lies in her heart.⁴⁴

The *Prisha*, in this brief note, has turned our attention to two crucial points which most of the authorities did not mention:

1) At the beginning of the halacha, when the Rambam writes that a woman studying Torah is rewarded, he specifically mentions the woman *herself* without referring to her being taught by her father or any other instructor.

2) According to the Rambam, *most* women are not geared for Torah study. This would imply that certain women are to be considered exceptions who are indeed prepared to study.

Thus, according to the *Prisha*, the general prohibition to teach women Torah is surely in effect. However, if a woman demonstrates her motivation by studying Torah on her own, thereby showing that she considers it to be a serious pursuit, the prohibition is removed.⁴⁵ A father (or teacher) may not impose

made by means of pilpul alone we do not find anything in the rest of his discussion which contradicts this conclusion.

43. Rambam, *Hilchot Talmud Torah*, 1:13

44. *Tur, Yoreh Deah, Prisha* 246:6

45. Meiselman, P. 38. See R. Eliezer Shach *Avi-Ezri*, Rambam, T.T. 1:13.

Torah knowledge upon women in an "arbitrary" manner as one does upon men, but may teach Torah to a woman who demonstrates the proper motivation.⁴⁶

Similarly, the Chida points to the case of Bruriah whose vast knowledge of the Written and Oral Torah is recorded in numerous places in the Gemara. Apparently, he claims, the Rabbis after much scrutiny came to the conclusion that Bruriah could not be included in the category of the majority of women, by virtue of her brilliance and sincerity. Since she was self-motivated to such a degree, she was permitted to receive Torah instruction.⁴⁷ An early source of this important distinction may be found in the Responsa of the Maharil who states the following: "The prohibition applies specifically to the father who teaches his daughter, but a woman who studies on her own is rewarded as one who is not obligated to

46 Ibid.

47 Chida, *Resp. Turv Ayin*, No. 4. See also R. Isaac Abraham Hakohen Kook, *Igrot Reiya* No. 467. The *Tzitz Eliezer* (Vol. 9, No. 3) quotes the *Meshevet Moshe* on the Rambam, T.T. 1:13 who disagrees with the Chida and insists that the Rabbis could not possibly have allowed for exceptions when the issue was established. Since the *heter* would depend on the extent of the woman's sincerity, it would be very difficult to consistently make reliable character judgements. He points to the tradition that in the end Bruriah herself was misled. See *Resp. Maharil* 139 and *Yefeh Letet*, Y.D. 246:19. R. Yeruchem Ciechanowicz in *Torat Yerucham* reaches the same conclusion as the Chida and attempts to prove that Tosafot (B.K. 15A) concur with this line of reasoning.

When dealing with the question of how could Devorah be a judge, the Tosafot were never troubled by the fact that women are forbidden to study Torah. (This is before the conclusion that she judged by means of prophecy). Hence, according to the Tosafot, Devorah was recognized as being competent and sincerely motivated and was therefore permitted to learn herself as well as to teach Torah to others. See also Tosafot *Yevamot* 45B. *Chinuch*, Mitzvah 77. The case of Devorah raises another question, may a woman render decisions in practical halacha? According to the *Shulchan Aruch*, under ordinary circumstances, a woman may not be a judge (*Choshen Mishpat* 7:4). However, the *Chinuch* states: "The prohibition to render a halachic decision (while drunk) applies to all places, at all times, to men as well as to wise women who are proficient in *Horaah*" (rendering halachic decisions). (Mitzvah 152) This is quoted by the *Be'nei Yosef* (C.M. 7:12) as well as the *Pitchei Teshuvah* (C.M. 7:5) and the *Shaarei Teshuvah* (C.C. 462:17), *Maachzikei Bracha* (Y.D. 42:30). See also Tosafot, *Niddah* 50A, *Ran*, *Shevuot* 30A, *Midrash Bamidbar Rabba*

perform a mitzvah but has done so because she has sincere intentions."⁴⁸

These authorities apparently view the Rambam's ruling as one which allows for a shift in attitude due to a change in the general orientation of women toward intellectual pursuits. This is a broad and bold *heter* which would basically allow serious women the option of studying all areas of the Torah with the traditional and halachically-expected intensity of their male counterparts.

This liberal approach to the issue of women and *Talmud Torah* found an articulate spokesman in an obscure authority quoted by R. Baruch Halevi Epstein in the *Torah Temimah*:

I have seen it fit at this point to copy something that I have found written in an old, rare *sefer* called *Maayan Ganim* written by R. Shmuel ben Elchanan Yaakov Rekavalti, in which the author addresses a letter to a certain "educated" woman concerning the *heter* of women to study Torah: "The statement of our Rabbis, 'Whoever teaches his daughter Torah is considered as if he has taught her *tiflut*', is perhaps referring to a father who teaches his daughter while she is still young and impressionable and tends to understand everything in a literal sense. Certainly, in such a case there is reason to apply the warning since most women are frivolous and spend their time involved in trivial things ... However, those women, whose hearts have motivated them and brought them closer to the work of G-d as a result of their own choice to do what is right, may ascend the mountain of G-d and dwell in His holy place. These women are considered exceptional and the Torah sages of their

(*Nasfo* 10:15). However, there is no question whatsoever regarding the general reliability of women to describe a particular object or situation even though this will effect the halacha. See R. Yitzchak Fuchs, *Halichot Bat Yisroel*, P. 125 ff. 29. In *Iggerot Moshe* (Y.D. Vol II No. 44-45) R. Moshe Feinstein discusses the question of whether a woman is permitted to serve as a *kashrut* supervisor in a restaurant or catering hall.

48 *Maharil Resp.* (Hachadashot) No. 45. See however his responsum in the earlier edition of his *Teshuvot* No. 139. *Tzitz Eliezer* Vol. 9, No. 3 (P. 29).

generation must encourage, strengthen, and direct them ... Carry out your plans and succeed, and from Heaven you will be helped."⁴⁹

This *heter* is clearly an all-inclusive one. Motivated and capable women may study and be taught the Written and Oral Torah and are rewarded for their efforts. Thus, what appears to be a legal prohibition in both the Gemara and the Rambam has been reduced to a practical warning for the majority of women who are either unmotivated or insincerely motivated to pursue the study of the Torah. Such women may not be *taught* Torah for the reasons listed in the Gemara and the Rambam.⁵⁰ However, any mature woman who exhibits a sincere desire to study Torah (whether written or oral) has by doing so removed herself from the category of the majority of women who are not prepared to learn Torah and are likely to misinterpret or misuse it. A direct implication of this view would be that in contemporary society, where women are regularly involved in serious academic pursuits, they may (or should) be allowed to seriously pursue their Torah studies.⁵¹ Moreover, according to the *Maayan Ganim* and the Chida, once a woman has demonstrated her deviation from the majority, she should actually be taught Torah by a competent authority since the entire prohibition no longer applies to her. The father, as well as anyone else, has by this time a clear indication of "what lies in her heart," and they can teach her Torah without any hesitation. Rabbi M. Meiselman points to an historical precedent, namely the period of King Chizkiya, concerning which the Talmud states: "They searched from Dan to Beersheva and did not find an ignoramus, from Gevat to Antipat and could not find a young boy or girl, man

49. *Torah Temimah, Devarim* 11:17.

50. See the conclusion of *Torat Yerucham I. Shearith Yosef*, Vol. II, P. 49 R. Chaim David Halevi of Tel Aviv, *Livnot Yisrael*, Ch. 49. The *Tsitz Eliezer* (Vol. 9, No. 3) points out that this view can be reconciled with the ruling of the *Taz* and the *Gra* (O.C. 47:14) regarding *Birchat HaTorah*.

51. Meiselman, P. 39.

or woman who was not completely conversant with the detailed laws of ritual cleanliness."⁵²

The factors of motivation and historical perspective have provided impetus for a broad spectrum of twentieth century authorities to assume a liberal position regarding the formal study of Torah by women who attend *Beit Yaakov* and other women's Yeshivot. R. Yisroel Meir Hakohen (the *Chafetz Chaim*), in his commentary to *Sotah*, states the following:

It would seem to me that this (prohibition) is only at those times of history when everyone lived in the place of his ancestors and the ancestral tradition was very strong for each individual, and this motivated him to act in the manner of his forefathers as it is written, "Ask your father and he will tell you." In this situation we can say that women may not study Torah and she will learn how to conduct herself by emulating her righteous parents. However, nowadays, when the tradition of our fathers has become very weakened and it is common for people not to live in the same place as their parents, and women learn to read and write a secular language, it is an especially great mitzvah to teach them Bible and the traditions and ethics of our sages like *Pirkei Avot* and *Menorat HaMaar* and the like, so that the truth of our holy heritage and religion will become evident to them; otherwise, Heaven forbid, they may deviate entirely from the path of G-d and violate all the precepts of the Torah.⁵³

There are some modern-day writers⁵⁴ who concluded from the

52. *Ibid.* P. 38. The Gemara is found in *Sanhedrin* 94B. This interpretation of the Gemara is by no means universally accepted. R. Yoel Teitelbaum in *Vayoel Moshe* P. 444-447 offers a different interpretation as well as a good number of *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* who seem to support his approach.

53. *Likute Halachot, Sotah* 20A. See also his collected letters, *23 Shevat* 5693, as quoted in R. Yaakov Fuchs, *Halichot Bat Yisroel*, P. 121 and conclusion of *Chomat Hadat*.

54. See for example Arthur M. Silver "May Women Be Taught Bible, Mishna, and Talmud? Tradition, 17 (Summer 1978).

above statement that the *Chafetz Chaim* had basically done away with all the traditional (and for many – halachic) restrictions of *Talmud Torah* for women. The Satmar Rav strongly opposed this reading of the *Chafetz Chaim*:

There are fools who have misinterpreted the words of the *Chafetz Chaim* as they are recorded in his *Likutei Halachot on Sotah* ... thereby attributing to him nonsense which he never spoke and consequently defaming the name of that *Tzaddik*. According to them it appears as if, G-d forbid, the *Chafetz Chaim* said that a clear halacha originating from the Talmud and *Rishonim* and codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* no longer applies. These writers have eyes but do not see that all the subjects that he mentioned (Torah, Prophets, and Ethics of *Chazal*) are not forbidden according to the *din* as I have explained. In spite of their being permitted, a number of generations were strict and did not allow women to study even these subjects. There could have been a number of reasons for this stringency. One is that perhaps they were concerned that the study of these subjects might lead to the study of those areas which are prohibited to them. Therefore, they relied upon the *Kabbalat Avot* – family transmission of the necessary halachot as we see in the *Maharil*. Regarding this, the *Chafetz Chaim* wrote that because of the weakening of *Kabbalat Avot* in modern times it is no longer sufficient for a girl to rely on family traditions but, rather, it is a mitzvah to teach her those subjects which we are (and always were) permitted to teach women. This can be done in spite of the custom of previous generations to refrain even from this permissible area of study. The *Chafetz Chaim* never intended, G-d forbid, to permit that which is forbidden according to halacha nor to disregard what *Chazal* described as teaching *tiflut*. Certainly, in our feeble generation where *Kabbalat Avot* is weaker than ever, the prohibition remains in effect.

Therefore, according to the Satmar Rav, the only innovation made by the *Chafetz Chaim* was to allow initially the non-

analytical study of the Bible and talmudic ethics on the part of women. These subjects have always been permitted halachically, but in previous generations, for various sociological reasons, were not taught to women. The *Chafetz Chaim* did not make any mention of Mishna or Gemara in his famous *heter*. Similarly, R. Moshe Feinstein writes the following:

The Sages commanded us not to teach women *Mishnayot* which is *Torah SheBaal Peh* and falls under the category of *tiflut*. Therefore, we should prevent women from studying it. Only *Pirkei Avot*, which deals with matters of morals and ethical behavior, should be taught to women in order to inspire in them love of Torah as well as noble characteristics. Other tractates may not be taught.⁵⁵

R. Zalman Sorotzkin, in an often-quoted responsum, very enthusiastically endorses the liberal approach to our issue and its implementation in the curriculum of *Beit Yaakov* and other girls schools. Nevertheless he writes:

Practically speaking, the question of women studying the Oral Torah requires further investigation. However, in reality, in the *Beit Yaakov* schools, the Oral Torah is never analyzed anyway ... The statement of *Chazal*, "Whoever teaches his daughter, etc." was only made regarding the study of the Oral Torah by means of thorough analysis and *pilpul*.⁵⁷

Thus we are presented with a perplexing paradox. Many of the twentieth century authorities who seem to be relying upon the approach of the *Maharil*, *Prisha*, *Chida* and *Bach* in order to permit Torah study for women, do not follow the *heter* to its logical conclusion; namely, the permissibility to study or be taught Oral Torah.⁵⁸ Apparently, they are very hesitant to write off the Gemara

55. *Vayoel Moshe* P. 451-452.

56. *Iggerot Moshe* Y.D. 3:87. See also Y.D. 2:139, 2:109.

57. *Resp. Moznayim Lemishpat* No. 42, *Hadea V'Hadibur*, *Drush* 3.

58. See also R. Samson Rafael Hirsch, *Horeb*, Ch. 75, Commentary to *Siddur*, *Kriyat Shma*.

in *Sotah* as well as the Rambam as an outdated warning which would not possibly apply to the twentieth century.

The view of the *Prisha* and even of the *Maayan Ganim* had very little to do with the actual status of even a small minority of women in their times. At most, it provides us with a rationalization of the historic reality of isolated cases of women who were well-versed in all areas of the Torah.

Nevertheless, the *Prisha's* interpretation of the Gemara and the Rambam has gained immense significance in our "Bruriah-filled" society. R. Ben Zion Firer points out,

Today, the question is not whether or not a woman should study Torah, but rather should a woman study Torah or should she study other subjects which are unrelated to the Torah. An obsession to pursue the tree of knowledge has taken hold of all people, women as well as men ... If a modern woman does not study Torah, she will certainly study *tiflut*.⁵⁹

59. *Noam*, Vol. III, P. 131-134. See also R. Shlomo Malka, *Resp. Mikveh Hamayim*, No. 21, *Resp. Chemdat Tzvi* Y.D. II No. 8, Dr. Meir Hershkowitz, *Or Hamizrach* 17, P. 40-52, 124-132. *Resp. Zekan Aharon*, Y.D. No. 66, R. Avraham Y. Neimark, *Eshel Avraham*, *Sotah* 20B, *Tzitz Eliezer* Vol. 9, No. 3, R. Elimelech b. Shaul *Mitzvah Valei*, Vol. II, P. 139-159. These scholars would also agree that the fact that a girl attends Yeshiva high school does not necessarily mean she is either mature or serious in terms of Torah study. However, because of the inevitable onslaught of the corrupt values of modern society, it is essential that every Jewish girl be exposed to a broad program of Torah study. The danger of "shrewdness and vain talk" with individual girls is much less imminent and detrimental than the certain *tiflut* of society and its educational institutions which all of the girls will eventually have to contend with. R. Aharon Walkin (*Resp. Zekan Aharon* Y.D. No. 66) quotes the *Shiltei Giborim* who rules that it is permitted to teach non-Jews the books of the *Netivim* and *Ketuvim* in order that they may read of the comforting prophecies since this may lead them to attach themselves to Torat Yisroel. R. Walkin then writes: "We can make a *kal v'chomer*, the teaching of Torah to a non-Jew is forbidden from the Torah and yet it is permitted because it might bring him to G-d. This is the law in spite of the fact that according to the Sages, converts have often been the source of difficulty for the Jewish people and Judaism in general does not encourage conversion. Certainly, when we are dealing with the daughters of Israel who have a standing obligation to observe the mitzvot, there is a great responsibility to teach them Torah. This is the case even though the subject matter itself might

The same sentiments are expressed by R. Meiselman,

Most say that they (the Sages) urged caution and prudence out of fear of the dangers of superficial knowledge. No authority ever meant to justify the perverse modern-day situation in which women are allowed to become sophisticatedly conversant with all cultures other than their own. If in the 20th century American women are more familiar with the Protestant ethic than with the Jewish ideal, it is nothing but a violation of the original intent of R. Eliezer's statement.⁶⁰

These scholars have indeed accepted the view of the *Prisha* and the others as one which represents a sweeping *heter* for modern women to study and be taught both the Written and Oral parts of the Torah.⁶¹ We can only conjecture what the attitude of the *Chafetz Chaim* might have been today.

As we have seen, one authority, the Satmar Rav, has insisted that the *Chafetz Chaim* did not deviate in the least bit from the

not be of benefit to women, since through study they will be motivated to remain in religious schools and they will be saved from the current of heresy flooding the streets. In the *Nachalat Shiva* (83) it is written that in order to save a Jew from a possible situation of conversion one is obligated to desecrate the Shabbat. We have seen with our own eyes that due to the *Beit Yaakov* schools tens of thousands of souls have been spared eternal (spiritual) death. Therefore, we can understand the obligation of every Jew to support the establishment of these schools. Even if there is a possibility of an *Issur* involved we must consider at the present time our responsibility to save our daughters from *Shmad* and spiritual death before which all the laws of the Torah are suspended."

60. Meiselman P. 40

61. These scholars would also agree that the fact that a girl attends high school does not necessarily mean she is either mature or serious in terms of Torah study. However, because of the inevitable infiltration of the corrupt values of modern society, it is essential that every Jewish girl be exposed to Torah study.

As a result of the fact that there are presently many women who are professional teachers, a number of authorities have discussed the halachic status of a woman who is well-versed in Torah. Does she have the same status as a *Talmid Chacham*? How are her students or other Jews expected to treat her? R. Ovadiah Yosef (*Yechave Daat* Vol. III, No. 72) quotes the Gemara in *Shruot* (30B) which tells us of an actual case where R. Nachman stood up out of respect

halachic norms as expressed in the Rambam. According to the Satmar Rav, the Talmudic prohibition of R. Eliezer⁶² must be adhered to more stringently in our permissive era than ever before. His opinion is central to any discussion of the topic not only because of his legendary brilliance and erudition, but also because it has molded the educational institutions and attitudes of thousands of Jewish girls and women in both American and abroad. The Satmar Rav's first contention is that even Ben Azzai, who was of the opinion in *Sotah* that a father must teach his daughter Torah, would agree with R. Eliezer that it is forbidden once the Torah's requirement that the suspected woman drink the bitter water is no longer in effect.⁶³ According to Ben Azzai, the

for the wife of R. Huna because "the wife of a chaver is considered like a chaver." At first glance, writes R. Yosef, this would suggest that certainly one must stand before a woman who is herself learned. However, the Gemara could be interpreted to mean that one should stand before the wife of a *Talmid Chacham*, because that is considered another form of honoring the *Talmid Chacham* himself, not because the woman by virtue of her own qualities deserves such respect. In fact, according to most of the *Rishonim*, the obligation to stand up for this woman is no longer in effect once her husband has died. On the other hand, R. Yosef cites the opinion of the *Sefer Hasidim* (P. 578) that the commandment to stand before an elderly person resides even to an elderly woman. (See also *Sefer Hachinuch* 257). Indeed, R. Ovadiah Yosef quotes the responsa of two Sephardic authorities who rule that one must stand before a woman well-versed in Torah regardless of her age. (R. Yehuda Iyas, *Beit Yehuda* Y.D. Vol. I, No. 28 and R. Yitzchak Ataya, *Zera Yitzchak* P. 88B). The *Minchat Chinuch* also rules accordingly (257:3). Since the mitzvah: to rise before an elderly person is found in the Torah itself, therefore in a case of doubt (*safek*) such as a wise woman, R. Yosef rules that it is best to rise before her. As far as a student rising out of respect for her female teacher, R. Ovadia rules that there is no question that she must, and she is also forbidden to refer to a female teacher by name (unless its accompanied with "my teacher"). The Gemara deduces that a student must respect his Rebbe because it is he who "brings him into the life of the coming world." (*Bava Metzia* 33A). This reasoning applies to a female teacher as well in spite of the fact that neither she nor the student are obligated to study Torah. The woman is nonetheless considered the girl's "Rebbe" since the girl is obligated to know those laws which apply to her and her teacher is the person who provides the information required.

62. Which he agrees applies primarily to the Oral Torah as well as the analytical study of the Written Torah.

63. All authorities agree that the drinking of the waters by the *Sotah* is no longer possible. *Sotah* 47A. Rambam *Hilchot Sotah* 3:19.

daughter must be taught Torah so that she will know that certain merits have the power to postpone her death. Once it is no longer necessary that she be knowledgeable in that specific area, he would agree with R. Eliezer that a father is forbidden to teach his daughter Torah. The only debate would then be whether or not a father who has nonetheless studied Torah with his daughter is to be considered as if he has taught her *tiflut*. The Satmar Rav agrees that even according to R. Eliezer the simple meaning of the Torah, as well as the final halachic conclusions in areas of law which apply to women, may be taught.⁶⁴

R. Teitelbaum's second contention is a most fascinating one. According to the halacha, it is forbidden to instruct an unworthy student (תלמיד שאינו הוגן).⁶⁵ A major source of this halacha is R. Gamliel's policy concerning the admission of prospective students into the yeshiva. כל תלמיד שאין תוכו כבודו אל יכנס לביית המדרש — "Any student whose 'inside' is not the same as his 'outside' should not enter the study hall."⁶⁶ This prohibition was primarily directed at men who are commanded to study the Torah. The Satmar Rav writes that certainly it applies to women, who are exempt from the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* and a majority of whom are presumed to misunderstand and misuse the teachings of the Torah. He concludes that the argument in the Gemara between R. Eliezer and Ben Azzai could very well be revolving around R. Gamliel's controversial policy. Both sages would agree that any woman who falls within the category of "her inside is not like the outside" may not be taught. Similarly, they do not argue that in a case when we are not positive that she is consistent we must suspect her of being inconsistent and hence, she may not be taught Torah. The only point of debate is where we are certain that a woman is sincerely interested in studying Torah for its own sake. According to R. Eliezer, the prohibition still stands, whereas according to Ben Azzai, such a woman should be taught. Therefore, concludes the Satmar Rav, under the present circumstances where we are no

64. *Vayael Moshe* P. 433-440.

65. *Hullin* 133A, Rambam *Talmud Torah* 4:1, *Shulchan Aruch* 246:7

66. *Brachot* 28A.

longer capable of judging the sincerity of another person, we are certainly not permitted to teach Torah (the Commentaries, Oral Torah) to women.⁶⁷

As far as teaching women the positive and negative commandments that apply to them, R. Teitelbaum quotes the Maharil's ruling that even these halachot may not be taught in a formal manner, by means of a text. Instead, the required information must be transmitted according to the tradition. By growing up in an observant home the girl should be able to know these halachot. If she does need some additional information, she can direct her inquiries to a competent halachic authority.⁶⁸ The Satmar Rav writes that throughout history this decision of the Maharil was more or less adhered to by the vast majority of Jewish communities. He continues that, unfortunately, in the twentieth century this method is no longer applicable. Very often the girl's

67. *Vayoel Moshe* P. 440-444. In an article published in *HaPardes* (June-July 1956) R. Leib Baron of Montreal disagrees with the Satmar Rav's understanding of the principle of *Talmid She'eino Hagun*. He cites the Maharsha (*Berachot* 28) who explains that *Talmid She'eino Hagun* is referring to a *Talmid Chacham* who is not G-d fearing. Based upon this it is impossible to make a broad classification of women as lacking in fear of G-d. The Maharsha (*Chullin* 133A) offers another explanation of *Talmid She'eino Hagun* as a student who from the very start of his learning appears to have unworthy intentions. Clearly, an average woman does not undertake the study of Torah with dangerous or improper intentions. *Chazal* only feared that through the study of Torah a woman might eventually be led astray. According to R. Baron if every woman is to be considered a *Talmid She'eino Hagun* the *Poskim* would never have ruled that she is permitted to study the simple meaning of the Torah and obligated to study the laws of her mitzvot.

68. *Resp. Maharil* 199. Interestingly enough a relatively modern authority, R. Yechiel Michel Epstein in the *Aruch Hashulchan*, writes: "Our teacher the Ramo has written that a woman must study the laws that apply to her. However, it has never been our custom to teach them the halacha by means of the text nor have I ever heard of such a custom, but rather a woman teaches her daughter and daughter-in-law the necessary laws. Recently the laws that apply to women have been printed in the vernacular (Yiddish) and may be studied. Our women are scrupulous and whenever there is any doubt (concerning a halacha) they inquire, never relying on their own judgement in even the smallest matter." (Y.D. 240:19). This clearly concurs with the Satmar Rav's opinion that at least as far as Ashkenazic Jewry is concerned, the Maharil's method was used. R. Epstein does

parents are uninformed or misinformed in many areas of practical halacha. Also, modern day Jewish girls are for the most part growing up in an atmosphere which discourages respect for traditional laws and values. In order to overcome these obstacles, R. Teitelbaum agrees that it is absolutely essential that we establish and maintain Yeshivot for girls.⁶⁹ As far as the curriculum in these yeshivot is concerned, he writes that the written Torah may be taught, but commentaries such as Rashi are forbidden since they consist of an in-depth analysis of the text as well as the *drashot* of *Chazal*.⁷⁰ Naturally, the study of Mishna or Gemara is absolutely forbidden. Books such as *Menorat Hamaor* and *Tzenah Ure'ناه* may be studied although they contain quotations from the Gemara, since they are primarily *mussar* (ethics) texts which do not analyze the texts quoted.⁷¹

Although most modern day *Poskim* disagree with the conclusions of the Satmar Rav, his *psak* has made a major impact upon his considerable following, as well as upon the *Eidah Charedit* community of Jerusalem which was also under his jurisdiction. All Chassidic communities have established Yeshivot for girls which for the most part attempt to emulate the European tradition of educating girls. The study of *Mussar* texts, *Midrash*, and legends of the *Tzaddikim* form the core of the curriculum. In varying degrees, an analytical approach to studying Torah is avoided. In recent years a number of Chassidic educators have suggested and even implemented more innovative and analytical

not rule that it is forbidden for women to study the text in a formal manner. He simply relates to us an historic reality that to the best of his knowledge it was not done.

69. *Vayoel Moshe*, P. 447. Letters Vol. I No. 34 and 55. R. Teitelbaum also writes that the Maharil himself alluded to the fact that the degree to which his ruling applies depends upon the Torah conditions of each particular generation. See *Vayoel Moshe* Ch. 43.

70. *Vayoel Moshe* P. 452.

71. *Ibid* P. 450. See also *Iggeret Hagra*, R. Yosef Dovid Epstein, *Mitzvoet Habayit*, P. 94-97.

approaches to the study of the Written Torah. The study of the Oral Torah in any form is still forbidden.⁷²

Conclusion

We have seen that the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* may be divided into two distinct schools regarding their understanding of the Rambam's statement in *Hilchot Talmud Torah*.

1) One view interprets the Rambam's statement as a permanent prohibition. Hence, women may not study nor be taught Torah. However, the actual prohibition applies only to the study of the Oral Torah as well as to in-depth study of the Written Torah. These forms of study fall under the category of *Tiflut* and *Divrei Havai*.

2) An alternate view refuses to understand the Rambam's statement as a rigid prohibition against *Talmud Torah* for women. Instead, this school is concerned with the underlying rationale of the *psak*. It asks: What if a woman is clearly not one of those who should be suspected of misinterpreting the Torah? May a woman teach herself Torah? Was the Rambam's *psak* no more than a warning to a society whose women were for the most part intellectually unmotivated? Within this school there are authorities who subscribe to a moderate *heter*: women may study the Written Torah with all of its commentaries. The Oral Torah may be studied on an individual basis under careful supervision and guidance. Other authorities in this school permit "open enrollment" of women into classes of all areas of the Torah, under the condition that such a program constructively caters to the needs of a good number of women in a particular society.

All religious authorities agree that women should study the laws that apply to them. They differ as to how those mitzvot should be studied and whether or not this form of study is related to the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*.

72. This information was obtained by means of personal discussions I have had with educators from the Satmarer, Bobover, Vishnitzer, Klausenberger, Gerer, and Belzer courts.