Women of the Wall
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• Gendered debates over prayer at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount

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Women of the Wall

- Established by Anat Hoffman, 1988
- Challenges in the Israeli High Court of Justice beginning 1989 for the rights of Jewish women to pray at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount with prayer scrolls, Tallit, and certain prayers, all traditionally allowed only to men.
- The Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox answer is Rabbinical: some prayers and religious obligations are duties, some are allowed but not required by gender, and some are forbidden by gender. Most of the prayers and objects that the women use fall in the middle category, but some fall in the forbidden category, *halakhically*. Once you wear Tallit, for example, you are required religiously to rise for early morning prayers every day for the rest of your life, in principle. Women are not required to participate in time-sensitive religious obligations because of their traditional duties to children and family. Thus, allowing even some of the acts and artifacts that fall in the middle category ultimately makes women responsible for things that the religion requires that men not require of them: time-sensitive religious duties.

Image: https://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/archives/everyone-entitled-to-pray-at-kotel/article_95dbb5b4-75d5-5d02-a8f9-7fa4844ab6ca.html
Women praying at the Western Wall between 1898 and 1946

The Women of the Wall are not seeking to have women and men pray together. That is the Conservative movement in Israel, who agreed in the late 1990s to use the Robinson’s Arch area for their prayers in which men and women pray together. The Women of the Wall seek for women to pray with the Torah Scroll, certain prayers, and other religious artifacts traditionally allowed only to men in Orthodox Judaism for some of the reasons mentioned in slide one.

Reading from:

• Prayer, contentious politics, and the women of the Wall: The benefits of collaboration in participant observation at intense, multifocal events by Steven Mazie and Patricia Woods (e.g., Sohn), Field Methods 15:1 (2003): 25-50.