

## Myth: The Blessing “Shelo Asani Isha” Is Misogynistic

Every morning, Jewish men say a series of blessings thanking God for their spiritual identity. One of them—“Shelo Asani Isha” (“Who has not made me a woman”)—has sparked confusion and controversy. Is it really a put-down? Or is there something deeper that most people miss?

Let’s break it down.

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### Where Did This Blessing Come From?

The morning blessings—*Birkot HaShachar*—are designed to help us start the day with gratitude for our physical, spiritual, and communal identity.

According to the Talmud (Berachot 60b, Menachot 43b), the sages *initially contemplated* a single, unified blessing:

**“Blessed are You... Who made me a Jew.”**

But since that would only count as one blessing, and Halacha encourages us to reach 100 blessings a day (*me’ah berachot*), they divided the idea into three distinct blessings—each one highlighting a specific aspect of Jewish identity and mitzvah responsibility:

- **Shelo Asani Goy** – “Who has not made me a non-Jew”
- **Shelo Asani Aved** – “Who has not made me a slave”
- **Shelo Asani Isha** – “Who has not made me a woman”

These blessings aren't about hierarchy—they're about the differing **levels of mitzvah obligation** assigned in Halacha.

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### **It's About Mitzvot—Not Status**

In Halacha, women are exempt from many *time-bound positive commandments* (*mitzvot aseih she'hazman grama*)—not because they're less important, but because of traditional family roles and life obligations. The blessing isn't saying "I'm better"—it's saying "I'm grateful for being given more mitzvot and the responsibility that comes with them."

More mitzvot = more accountability. It's a blessing of **spiritual responsibility**, not superiority.

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### **What About "She'asani Kirtzono"?**

Some women today say the blessing:

**"She'asani Kirtzono"** – "Who made me according to His will."

But this version isn't found in the Talmud or early Halachic sources. It was introduced much later and isn't a required or universally accepted replacement.

In fact, one could argue that women should have their own blessings affirming their spiritual mission—clearly and proudly—rather than relying on a vague phrase that may have been created in reaction to misunderstanding. **But the reason such blessings were never formally instituted by the Rabbis is because women were not included in the halachic requirement to reach one hundred blessings each**

**day. These blessings were structured specifically to help men fulfill that obligation.**

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### **A Moment of Humor—and a Deeper Truth**

As a joke, I sometimes say that when I pass the long line outside the ladies' room at intermission during a Broadway show, that's when I really feel "Shelo Asani Isha." But on a serious note, Jewish tradition doesn't rank people by blessings.

Whether man or woman, Jew or non-Jew, Kohen or Yisrael—every person has their own role, and the system only works when we all do our part. Halacha isn't a competition—it's a symphony.

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### **Bottom Line**

**"Shelo Asani Isha"** is not about putting women down. It's a statement of spiritual gratitude for mitzvah opportunity, grounded in Halacha and tradition. Like all the morning blessings, it reminds us of our identity, our duties, and the beauty of a life filled with purpose.

In Judaism, honor doesn't come from status—it comes from fulfilling the role you were given with dignity and devotion.