

# Essay on women in judaism

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



## **Executive Summary**

It has been noticed that, for any given religion or community, the role of women is marvellous in the development of the respective society. However, it has taken a long time for the entire society to accept the status of women similar to that of men. The same is the case of the women in Judaism, wherein, initially, during the period between 30 BCE and 350 CE, they were neglected by the society. Their role was limited within the household, and hence, they cannot contribute much to the development of the society. But, with the passage of time, and with their migration to other foreign lands, the Jewish women actively participated in the movements so as to access their equal rights in the society. Their voices and activities brought about a revolution during the later periods. It was due to the hard efforts put in by the women during these times, after which, the status of a woman in the Jewish society became equal to that of a man in the society.

This paper shall first of all highlight the conditions of the women during the historical period, and will determine the problems faced by them. It will then mention about certain important women personalities that contributed in the development of women in the Jewish society. It will mention the activities carried out by these women, and how they focused upon providing education to all the women of the society. They wanted the women to work similar to that of men; they did not want their roles to limit within the households. And, hence, today we can often see the Jewish women contributing a lot to the business world in the modern era. It will then conclude with the recent developments that have taken place in the Jewish society.

The Jewish race has often been looked down upon and segregated as a result

of different reasons that had a direct link to their racial background. The Jews have a long history of terrible things that impacted on their lives at the instigation of other races. The Classical Jewish literature provides certain information on the women. It is mentioned that, the women are having more powers than men, but are not provide the platform to utilize it wisely for the entire society (Baskin, 1991: 41-51). They are tender-hearted and are more careful than man.

They seem to be right on raw knowledge and can process the information in a better way. In addition, Israel was created from Egypt, with the help of huge contribution from the Israeli women. Thus, overall it seems that, the women have been playing their roles right from the historic times. We would be taking into consideration the timeframe between 30 BCE and 350 CE in order to understand the growth of women in Judaism. The role of women, however, was quite limited during these times, but still, we can find the traces of leadership, and a characteristic of leading from the front amongst the Jewish women. And, we might consider these reasons, due to which we can find today's women finding equal status with men in the Jewish society. According to several researchers, the hatred of the Jewish people by other races dates back to 200-300 CE when they poisoned other people from other European countries particularly the Christians in their quest to control the world. This apparently led to a plague that resulted in general hatred of the Jewish people. For instance, the researchers have confirmed that Jewish people were the ones that have spread the poison throughout the world. The Jewish actions had spiral effects as they found themselves demised by people from different parts of the globe (Baskin, 1991: 41-51).

The Jewish women in around 100 CE were not spared from this predicament since they found themselves at the receiving end. They were ridiculed in different parts of the globe and they were treated negatively such that they were as good as nonexistent. The Jewish race was so much despised that very few people thought that they would survive this kind of onslaught. As fate would have it, the women in particular have persevered and somehow have made a mark about their existence through various contributions in different parts of the globe.

If we talk about the period between 30 BCE and 350 CE, the Jews can be found living all over the world. They were living in both Christian controlled and Muslim controlled lands of the world (Marcus, 1986: 34-45). However, some of the historians confirm that, the Jewish were more accepted by the Muslims rather than the Christians. Despite of their separate ethnicity, Jews used to mix up easily with any other community.

Apart from the fact that Jewish men were allowed to trade, the women were treated with scepticism as a result of different reasons. However, the Jewish women were there to stay (Marcus, 1986: 34-45). About 350 years after their first arrival in the US in particular, it can be observed that Jewish women have made significant contributions in various facets of life to date. As such, this paper seeks to discuss some of the contributions that have been made by Jewish women in various aspects of life up to date. The paper will mainly focus on famous women who have made remarkable contributions in different aspects of life in the US in particular.

The arrival of Jewish women on American land signalled the growth of the Jewish race in this land since this meant that they would continue to

conceive children. Besides the fact that the early Jewish women to visit America were treated with scepticism, it can be observed that some of the women defied the odds to become the reputable women in different aspects of life.

It seems that, the women during the period between 30 BCE and 350 CE were not so much aware of the customs, traditions, ways of living, and working in normal conditions. They were required to follow only the orders provided by their husbands or masters. But, still there were few women, who believed that, it was important to hold the family together, and provide better education to their children. They, thereby, put in their best efforts in order to prove a better quality education, even during those olden times. According to Steinberg (2008), the Jewish women became quite popular, because of their contribution to the education and social sector. This led to the growth of the entire system for educating and maintaining the identity of millions of future Jewish children. Her contribution to the education system remains a remarkable thing and millions of Jewish descendents have significantly benefited from the education system. This women have played a significant role in ensuring that the education system is designed in such a way that it can cater for their interests as well. It has also been designed to represent their identity.

It was during the period of 100 CE, when these women had realised that education was important for the survival of the Jewish race. This was the only gateway through which, the Jews could preserve their race as well as retain knowledge that would help them to fit in different societies in which they previously disliked. The Jewish education system currently borrows heavily

from the early education system that was developed during the times between 30 BCE and 350 CE.

The women in Judaism were considered as an important part of any settlement system. And, hence, we cannot negate their role and their participation in the daily matters of human lives. During these olden times, the life of a typical Jewish woman was specific to its family and farm houses. The women were working along with their fathers, brothers or husbands in the farm houses. This family oriented role of women was neglecting the social or political power for the women of any kind.

The women could participate in the indoor activities and in house jobs or in their farms but, their active participation was not considered in a given society. Somewhere, down below their emotions, they believed that, they should also have power, control, and authority to make decisions. They wanted to contribute equally to the society, but since, men did not allow them to participate it became almost impossible for them to carry out such things.

If we compare those times, with the present times, there were no human rights movement or no agencies that could help in such cases. However, today, the Jewish women can seek a lot of help from any regulatory agencies in the direction of growth, development, and prosperity. Today, a given man cannot ignore the status of a woman in the Jewish society. The time has changed a lot, in between these periods, and hence, women, can freely contribute to the society.

The women during the period between 30 BCE and 350 CE also seemed to be more of educated and knowledgeable as compared to the men. Men

during those times were actively engaged into the development of the Kingdom, his Empire, and the warfare activities. Hence, he did not have the time to take care of his family, or to look after the administration of his family. And, hence, it was these Jewish women, who always focused upon their efforts, in keeping together, her husband, children and other family members, even during worst of the times. The women were determined to work along with the men in every sphere of life to contribute in best manner to the social development. This can be seen in Figure – 1.

In one of the researches conducted, it is mentioned that, the theoretical concepts and philosophies of the ancient Jewish women were carry forward by Hannah Solomon, another Jewish woman, who belonged to a fashionable club in Chicago who represented Jewish women at the World's Fair (Steinberg, 2008: 31-47). She went on to create the National Council of Jewish Women, a progressive social reform movement that did not cut itself loose from its core of Jewish identity. This lady, put forward various notable contributions of the early Jewish women in front of the modern world, after which, the status of the women in the society was increasing (Baskin, 1991, 50).

America has a record of racial segregation and discrimination of minority groups especially in the workplaces. These minority groups including the Jews were relegated to poor working conditions for low wages. However, the two mentioned women above stood up for the rights of the Jewish people at large and the war was won through a spirited fight. To date, the other Jewish descendants are still enjoying the standards of equality that were set by the courageous women predecessors.

Jewish feminism during 200 CE also significantly contributed toward the improvement of welfare of the women in different American-Jewish communities. This spurred the movement toward gender equality where some women who were well-educated fronted the movement to promote feminist ideas in their respective societies.

Under the feminist movement, women began to view themselves from a different perspective. According to Adelman (2001), the feminist insights proposed by the Jewish women during the olden times helped them to perceive themselves from a different way. Such activities favouring women had a significant impact on the lives of Jewish women since they began to stand up for the recognition of their rights.

There are also other feminist authors who contributed toward the development of Jewish women in various scenarios. For example, Betty Friedan helped to create a movement that not only changed the lives of individual women but also of the rest of the world. Her ideas were later incorporated in various communities and they significantly helped to change the thoughts and ideas of the men around the world.

In UK as well, it can also be seen that the ancient Jewish women have also positively contributed in different aspects of life (Adelman, 2001: 60). It can be observed that there are very few, if any societies can survive without women. This notion has been aptly supported by Deech. He has mentioned that, there will be no society where there will be no women. Women are the most important part of any society in the world, and even men, will be need them during the course of decision-making.

He observed that women contributed over half of the Jewish community and



about one third of them have degrees and this figure is larger than their male counterparts. It has been observed that there are prominent women in the fields of journalism, academia, law, medicine and psychotherapy, the arts and politics and they have contributed a lot in these disciplines (Taitz, Henry, & Tallan, 2003: 71-73).

Over and above, it can be noted that, Jewish women of the ancient ages have significantly contributed in the development of various facets that impact on their lives and those of the other people at large across the globe. From a minority grouping some Jewish women have significantly made contributions that have helped create household names and they continue to be recognized for their sterling work in various disciplines.

Like in any other religion, women are often looked down upon as a result of issues related to gender bias where women are often viewed as weaker than men. However, this is not always the case since women are also capable of performing the same tasks that used to be viewed as a preserve for the male counterparts only. The Jewish feminists in particular have organized movements that are still existing and playing a pivotal role in advocating for the interests of women particularly in gender equality. This has also helped the women in different communities to gain significant recognition and they are also capable of enjoying the same opportunities just like their male counterparts.

With the notable contribution from the ancient Jewish women, the status of today's women in the Jewish society also changed at the same time. There was an increase in the number of girl children attending schools and securing proper education. Today, we can find many Jewish women working

at several organizations. Such change was possible only due to a severe revolution from the women in a given Jewish society. They finally gained the equality status with the men as shown in Figure - 2.

The Jewish women today are now contributing to several fields, and are also participating in various sectors so as to improve their entire society. They are working in close collaboration with men, and are modifying the existing laws and norms of the society. They want more freedom and liberal rights so that there is proper development for the women as well. And, hence, we have observed several examples in this direction.

Thus, looking at the progress of these ancient Jewish women, it seems that, the world of Jewish has really changed (Adelman, 2001: 91). The men had to grant equal status to the women in today's contemporary world, and hence, this can be considered to be the biggest win for the Jewish women.

## References

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Figures

Figure – 1: Jerusalem - Visitors Flock to Museum Exhibition Featuring Display of 250 Years Of Hasidic Judaism

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Source: <http://www.vosizneias.com/111738/2012/08/14/jerusalem-visitors-flock-to-museum-exhibition-featuring-display-of-250-years-of-hasidic-judaism/>

Figure – 2: Women in Judaism, Part II: Woman ≠ Man

Source: <http://patentlyjewish.com/women-in-judaism-part-ii-woman-%E2%89%A0-man-so-i-learned/>