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WOMEN AS *SHELIHOT TZIBBUR* FOR *HALLEL* ON *ROSH HODESH**^{*}

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I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary *sifrei halakhah* which address the issue of women's obligation to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* are unanimous—they are entirely exempt (*peturot*).¹ The basis given by most² of them is that *hallel* is a positive time-bound commandment (*mitzvat aseh shehazman gramah*), based on *Sukkah* 3:10 and Tosafot.³ That Mishnah states: “One for whom a slave, a woman, or a child read it (*hallel*)—he must answer after them what they said, and a curse will come to him.”⁴ Tosafot comment: “The inference (*mashma*) here is that a woman is exempt from the *hallel* of *Sukkot*, and likewise that of *Shavuot*, and the reason is that it is a positive time-bound commandment.” *Rosh Hodesh*, however, is not mentioned in the list of exemptions.

* The scope of this article is limited to the technical halakhic issues involved in the specific area of women's obligation to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* as it compares to that of men. Issues such as changing *minhag*, *kol isha*, *areivut*, and the proper role of women in Jewish life are beyond that scope.

¹ R. Imanu'el ben Hayim Bashari, *Bat Melekh* (Bnei Brak, 1999), 28:1 (82); Eliyakim Getsel Ellinson, *haIsha vebaMitzvot Sefer Rishon—Bein haIsha leYotzrah* (Jerusalem, 1977), 113, 10:2 (116-117); R. David ben Avraham Dov Auerbakh, *Halikhot Beitah* (Jerusalem, 1982), 8:6-7 (58-59); R. Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs, *Halikhot Bat Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1983), 2:22 (50) and note 58 there, 16:6 (238); R. Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs, *Tefillah keHilkhatah* (Jerusalem, 1989), 22:19 (388); R. Menachem Nissel, Rigshei Lev (Southfield, MI, 2001), 6:1 (162).

² Rigshei Lev, op. cit., *Halikhot Bat Yisrael*, 50 note 57, and *haIsha vebaMitzvot*, op. cit., cite these sources explicitly. The other citations will be addressed below, pp. 3ff.

³ *Sukkah* 38a, s.v. *mi shehaya*.

⁴ This is the version of the Mishnah that appears in our printed editions. I will not address here the textual variants nor their implications, nor will I dispute the underlying assumption of the cited *sifrei halakhah* that the position of the Tosafot, namely, that reciting *hallel* on certain occasions is undisputably a *mitzvat shehazman gramah* from which women are exempt, is the correct explanation of the mishna. For more on this, see my forthcoming article “Women and *Hallel*: A Comprehensive Halakhic Analysis.”

II. THE STATUS OF HALLEL ON ROSH HODESH

One can only be exempted from something which is obligatory. Tosefta (*Sukkah* 3:2) brings the list of obligatory recitations of *hallel*: “On eighteen days of the year and one evening one reads the *hallel*, and they are: the eight days of *Sukkot*, and eight days of *Hanukah*, and the first day of *Pesah* and its evening and the festival of *Shavuot*.” This list is brought in slightly modified form and augmented for the Diaspora in two places in the Gemara (*Ta’anit* 28b and *Arakhin* 10a): “Rebbi Yohanan said in the name of Rebbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: Eighteen days that the individual completes on them the *hallel*: the eight days of *Sukkot*, and eight days of *Hanukah*, and the first day of *Pesah*, and [the first] day of *Shavuot*; and in the Diaspora twenty-one days: the nine days of *Sukkot*, and eight days of *Hanukah*, and two days of *Pesah*, and two days of *Shavuot*.” Notably absent is *Rosh Hodesh*.

Arakhin 10a addresses the issue of days not listed in this *beraita*:

What is the difference between on *Sukkot* that we say [*hallel*] every day and on *Pesah* that we don’t say it every day? *Sukkot* is differentiated through its sacrifices (*halukin be-korbanoteihen*), [whereas] *Pesah* is not differentiated through its sacrifices. [On] Shabbat, which is differentiated through its sacrifices, one should say it! [One does not, because] it is not called an appointed time (*mo’ed*). [On] *Rosh Hodesh*, which is called an appointed time, one should say it! [One does not, because] it is not sanctified through [refraining from] doing work (*asiyat melakhah*), as it says (Is. 30:29), ‘For you, there shall be singing as on a night when a festival is hallowed’—a night which is hallowed for a festival requires singing, and one which is not hallowed for a festival does not require singing.

The Talmud here clearly posits the possibility that *Rosh Hodesh* would require recitation of *hallel*, and rejects that possibility. So far, we have seen no indication that there exists any obligation to say *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*.

Ta’anit 28b brings the first evidence of the recitation of *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*:

The Mishnah should also have taught the first of Nissan [in addition to the first of Tevet] as a day on which there was no *ma’amad* because there is *hallel*, and *musaf*, and the wood offering. Rava said: ‘This says that the *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh* is not Biblical’ (*lav de’oraita hi*) as Rebbi Yehoshua said in the name of Rebbe Shim’on ben Yehotzadak [our *beraita* from above is quoted] . . . Rav came to Bavel. He saw them reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* and contemplated stopping them. When he saw that they were skipping he said: ‘Learn from this [that] the custom of their ancestors is in their hands.’ A Tanna taught: ‘An individual does not begin and if he began, he should finish.’”

Three important rulings regarding *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* are learned from this *sugya*: 1) *Hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* is not a Biblical commandment such that it would override the *ma`amad*; 2) Rav was ready to stop a community from reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, and only desisted because of changes evidencing the existence of an ancient custom; and 3) An individual has no obligation to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*.

Rava's conclusion regarding the status of *hallel* is uncertain. It is entirely possible that he considers the *hallel* of Hanukah to be biblical in origin such that it pushes off the *ma`amad*, but would accept the idea that reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* is a rabbinic enactment.⁵ *Rashi*⁶ rejects this possibility by linking Rava's statement to Rav's story, in which the *hallel* recited on *Rosh Hodesh* in Bavel is identified as *minhag avoteihem beyadeihem* and says that the *hallel* of Hanukah is similar to a Biblical commandment.⁷

The *beraita* brought at the end of the *sugyah* in *Taanit* is also open to multiple interpretations.⁸ Is it forbidden for an individual (as opposed to the community) to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*,⁹ or merely optional? Is this referring to the blessing(s), or to the psalms of *hallel* themselves? Is it referring to the full *hallel* or the partial *hallel*? For the purposes of our investigation, we need to know whether the force of the *minhag* devolves upon the individual to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, or on the community as a whole. *Tosafot*¹⁰ provide an answer to this question: "And it appears that the individual is not obligated to read the *hallel*; nevertheless, if he wants to obligate himself, he may (*hareshbut beyado*)."¹¹ Similarly, *Rashi*¹¹ says: "He does not need (*eino tzarikh*) to begin on *Rosh Hodesh*." For the individual, reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* is a completely non-obligatory act, although a permissible one. *Tosafot*, *Arakhin* 10a, s.v. *y"b yamim*

⁵ This could be the case if the criteria for reciting *hallel* on any given occasion were Biblically-determined, and if those conditions were met later in time by a new day, then the obligation to recite *hallel* on that day would be Biblical. (See, e.g., *Pesachim* 117a.) This would not contradict the Gemara in *Arakhin* if we assume that Gemara to be defining Biblical criteria for the recitation of *hallel*. *Tosafot*, *Arakhin* 10a, s.v. *y"b yamim* explicitly reject this possibility. See also R. Yehudah Heshil Levenberg, *Sefer Imrei Hen* (Lakewood, NJ, 1992), 10 (64-65).

⁶ ad. loc., s.v. *zot omeret*.

⁷ There is a wide range of opinion as to whether *hallel* on the occasions listed in the *tosefta* and *baraita* is a Biblical or Rabbinic enactment. For an overview, see, e.g., *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, s.v. *Hallel*.

⁸ For a short summary of the ways this *baraita* has been interpreted, see Sinai Adler, *Sefer haHodayah: Be'urim uBeirurim beInyanei Hodayah laHashem baHalakhah ubaTefillah* (Jerusalem, 1997), 125-26.

⁹ Perhaps in violation of the injunction not to recite *hallel* every day, which, according to *Rashi*, means superfluously. See *Shabbat* 118b and *Rashi* there, s.v. *harei zeh mehareif umegadeif*.

¹⁰ ad. loc., s.v. *amar*.

¹¹ ad. loc., s.v. *lo yathil*.

conclude: “The inference [from this *beraita*] is that the community (*tzibbur*) is obligated from the general custom (*meminhag be’alma*).” *Tur*, *Orah Hayim* 422, and *Beit Yosef*, ad. loc., bring the various halakhic opinions and their sources in the Rishonim, respectively.

III. WOMEN AND THE CUSTOM TO RECITE HALLEL ON ROSH HODESH

Regarding the relationship of women to this custom, *Magen Avraham*¹² says:

Women are exempt from every *hallel* (*mekol hallel*) because it is a positive time-bound commandment and therefore they cannot exempt others’ obligation unless he answers after them each word, and a curse will come to him because he did not learn, and if he did learn, he offends his creator by making agents such as these.

The rationale of the *Magen Avraham*’s comment is unclear. He quotes the *Tosafot* in *Sukkah*, but we have seen that that *Tosafot* was referring only to the obligatory readings mentioned in the *beraita*, and not necessarily to *Rosh Hodesh*. The *Magen Avraham* could be implicitly claiming that the exemption of women from *mitzvot aseh shebazman gramman* extends to all such *mitzvot*, even *minhagim*,¹³ but such a position would be quite novel, considering the debate over whether women are automatically exempt from positive time-bound rabbinic commandments in the absence of an explicit exemption.¹⁴ Another explanation must be sought.

The *Be’ur Halakhah*¹⁵ addresses the *Magen Avraham* directly, in the context of examining the possibility of fulfilling someone else’s obligation in *hallel*:

And it is further explained in *Sukkah* 38 and the *poskim* that women are exempt from *hallel* because it is a positive time-bound commandment [excluding *hallel* on the eve of Pesah for [in that] they are obligated because they too were included in the miracle (*af hen hayu be’oto ha’nes*)—thus wrote the *Tosafot* there] and therefore they cannot exempt men unless they answer after them word for word [he concludes there in the *beraita* that a curse will come to him who requires

¹² Shulhan Arukh, *Orah Hayim* 422:2, s.v. *nashim*

¹³ If that is indeed the reasoning of the *Magen Avraham*, he would still have to agree that an additional factor, such as *af hen hayu be’oto hanes*, could override the presumptive exemption. It seems reasonable to suggest that in the arena of *minhagim*, even if the presumption is towards exemption, acceptance of the *minhag* might count as one of those additional factors.

¹⁴ See *Halikhot Beitah*, *Petah haBayit* 7 (36-38), who brings a number of sources on both sides of the disagreement.

¹⁵ ad. loc., s.v. *Hallel*.

his wife to read for him]. And the implication (*mashma*) from the *Magen Avraham* is that this law is also relevant on *Rosh Hodesh*, and in my humble opinion this is not clear, because it is only appropriate to say regarding days on which we complete *hallel* on which there is a rabbinic obligation on men, [that] women cannot fulfill their obligation even in a place where they are accustomed (*nahagu*) in this *mitzvah* already, because these [the women] are only from the side of *minhag* and these [the men] are from the side of obligation, but on days on which we don't complete the *hallel*, because for men it is also only from the side of custom (*de'al haanashim hu gam ken rak me'tzad minhagah*), and in this place the women are also accustomed in this commandment, what is the difference between them (*mai nafka mina bein eilu le'eilu*)? And perhaps the intention of the *Magen Avraham* [is] to places in which women are not presumed [to do] this *mitzvah* until now, that also from the side of *minhag* there is no obligation upon them, and now a woman wishes to read and fulfill [a man's obligation], and this requires thought.¹⁶

The *Be'ur Halakhah's* basic argument is that someone obligated only by the force of custom cannot fulfill the obligation of someone obligated by the force of rabbinic decree, but when the obligation itself comes only by force of custom, then all those who are accustomed to perform that action are equally obligated. In light of this reasoning, it becomes very difficult to understand the aforementioned *sifrei halakhah* who implicitly or explicitly contrast the obligation of women with the obligation of men to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* as *peturah* versus *mehuyevet*.¹⁷

A different source is brought by Rav Fuchs for his contention that women are exempt in *Tefillah keHilkhatah*:¹⁸ Mishnah Berurah, *Orah Hayim* 106:4. That

¹⁶ It is somewhat unclear to what the *Be'ur Halakhah's* "*tzarikh iyyun*" is referring: his explanation of the *Magen Avraham* or his entire proposal that women who have accepted (communally) the *minhag* of reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* may fulfill the obligation of men. See note 18 below, where I argue for the former reading.

¹⁷ *Halikhot Beitah*, 58 note 12, *haIsha vebaMitzvot*, 117 note 13, and *Halikhot Bat Yisrael*, 50 note 58, admit to the possibility of women fulfilling the obligation of men introduced by the *Be'ur Halakhah*. The former, however, seems to imply that the *Be'ur Halakhah* is a solitary opinion, whereas in reality the *Be'ur Halakhah* and the *Magen Avraham* are the only two classic halakhic sources even to address the issue, and at that, only the former does so explicitly. (Admittedly, the *Yeshu'ot Ya'akov*, *Orah Hayim* 422:6, agrees with the *Magen Avraham*, but he does not offer any additional proof for the cogency of the *Magen Avraham's* position that the exemption from *mitzvot aseih sheha-zeman gerama* extends to the *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh*, his logic referring only to the recital of a *berakha* given the assumption that women do not share an equal obligation with men to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*.) *Halikhot Bat Yisrael* attempts to diminish the force of the *Be'ur Halakhah's* argument by emphasizing that he leaves it with *tzarikh*

source deals entirely with the controversy surrounding women's obligation for *tefillah*, i.e., the *Amidah*. Nowhere in that paragraph does the Mishnah Berurah relate specifically to *hallel*. Curiously, in *Halikhot Bat Yisrael* (his earlier work), Rav Fuchs gave a different source for the same *halakhah*—the aforementioned *Be'ur Halakhah*! The new source, however, does point us to a deeper understanding of the *Magen Avraham's* exemption of women from *hallel*. The Mishnah Berurah writes:

And the *Magen Avraham* wrote that according to this reasoning [that there are two kinds of prayer, Biblically-obligated prayer unfixed in time and text, and rabbinically-obligated prayer fixed both in time and text] most women are accustomed not to pray *Shemoneh Esrei* regularly morning and evening, because they say immediately in the morning close to washing some petition, and Biblically they are exempt through this, and it is possible that even the Sages did not obligate them further.

Without getting into the various difficulties with the explanation of the *Magen Avraham*¹⁹ (which, it should be noted, the Mishnah Berurah rejects in favor of the position of the Ramban and *rov haposkim* that women are indeed obligated in fixed prayer), we see him here attempting to justify the custom of the women of his day not to pray the *Amidah*. If they were not praying the *amidah*, in which they are certainly obligated according to most opinions, then all the more so they must not have been saying *hallel*, which, by the *Magen Avraham's* time, was inextricably linked to the *shaharit* service, and particularly *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* for which there is such strong encouragement that it be recited with the *tzibur*! It seems reasonable, then, to say that the *Magen Avraham* was *paskening* out of a desire to justify the widespread custom of women not to say *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, and did so by extending the general exemption from other *hallels* which are obligatory for men to this one, which is not.²⁰

iiyun. I contend that the *tzarikh iiyun* refers not to his general presentation, but rather to his explanation of the *Magen Avraham*, which he prefaces with “and perhaps (*ve'u-lai*).” By contrast, the *Be'ur Halakhah* begins his criticism of the *Magen Avraham* with humble language (*uleaniyut da'ati ain zeh barur*) but nowhere does he indicate lack of certitude except in his attempt to explain the *Magen Avraham*.

¹⁸ p. 388, note 36.

¹⁹ See *Sha'ar Ha-Tziyyun* 106:5.

²⁰ The obvious difficulty that could be raised against my claim is that the *Magen Avraham* could simply have said that reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* is a *minhag* and that the women of this time had not accepted the custom. This would also have excused their behavior, without the need to apply a halakhic source that seems unrelated to the issue at hand, and without introducing a novel idea regarding the automaticity of the *petur* from *mitzvot aseh shehazeman geraman*, namely, extending it to *minhagim*. My response to that difficulty is to posit that the *Magen Avraham* found it preferable to offer a general

Two *sifrei halakhah* bring different or additional proofs other than (or in addition to) the exemption from *mitzvot asel shebazeman geraman*, which we have now contended is either irrelevant to the issue of obligation in a *minhag* or is overridden by the factor of women accepting that *minhag*. Rigshei Lev states:

And my friend R' N. G. added another reason to exempt women from saying *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, because saying *hallel* is a custom (*minhag*), see Tosafot, *Berakhot* 14a, s.v. *Yamim*, and if so it is possible that it was not the custom of women to say it.”²¹

Tosafot there indeed prove that *hallel* is a custom and not an obligation at all, but do not relate to the issue of women; and, it should be noted, utilize their assumption that women may bless upon *mitzvot* from which they are exempt as proof that one may bless upon the *minhag* of reciting *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*! So, while true that women are *peturot*, men are equally *peturim*; regarding acceptance of the *minhag*, Rigshei Lev himself notes that women are accustomed to say it, as does the *Be'ur Halakhah*.

Bat Melekh cites *Yabia Omer* 6-OH:#45 and *Tzitz Eliezer* 9:#2. Neither source relates directly to our question; the former discusses the question of whether women are obligated to recite *hallel* on *Hanukah*, and the latter addresses the general question of whether women may recite blessings on *mitzvot shebazeman geraman*. R' Waldenberg (*Tzitz Eliezer*) makes only one indirect reference to *hallel* in a general way:

“And see likewise in *Sefer Yeshuot Yaakov Orach Hayim* 422:6 who writes regarding *hallel* that everyone's custom is that women bless on reading *hallel* as they bless on all other positive time-bound commandments despite their exemption. And even though he casts doubt

halakhic justification for the behavior of the women (as he did regarding saying the Amidah) than to make an argument from *minhag*, which would more easily be subject to dispute. Even if one prefers not to accept my explanation of the *Magen Avraham's* motivation, however, the *a fortiori* (*kal vahomer*) regarding the reality of whether women were actually saying *hallel* would still be valid, and lends great strength to the *Be'ur Halakhah's* claim that the women of the *Magen Avraham's* time must not have been reciting *hallel* and for that reason he wrote that they were exempt, but that he would admit that women who have accepted the *minhag* have an obligation on par with men. One could also proffer a slightly different explanation of the *Magen Avraham*: instead of arguing (as does the *Be'ur Halakhah*) that he initially intended this *halakhah* to be contingent on whether women have accepted the *minhag*, simply say that the *Magen Avraham* was responding to the reality of his time (that women were not saying *hallel*), perhaps in order to be *melameid zekhut* on the women of his generation, but that had those women adopted the *minhag*, he would agree that they shared the same obligation as men, and could fulfill their obligation. Ultimately, there is no *nafka mina* between these explanations.

²¹ p. 162, note 1.

there about *hallel*, nevertheless he concludes that the custom has a strong hold (*shbeyad haminhag gavrah*) and it is not within the ability of the contemporary Sages to stop it (*ve'ein beyedei hakhmei hazman limbhot*).”

Not only does R' Waldenberg not address our question, but he agrees with the *Yeshuot Yaakov*'s self-refutation regarding the power of the *minhag*!

In connection to *Rosh Hodesh*, R' Ovadiah Yosef (*Yabia Omer*) says:

At first glance, it appeared to me to say that according to what R' Daniel haBavli writes in *Sefer Maaseh Nisim* (*siman* 1): ‘Nevertheless, reading *hallel* they already said explicitly that it is Biblical, but they distanced (*birhiku*) the *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh* in their saying (*Taanit* 28b) that *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh* is not Biblical (*lav de'oraitta hi*)’ . . . and nevertheless *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh* is not included [in the list of eighteen days on which *hallel* is recited] because the reading on it is only a custom and the Sages did not obligate its reading (*velo hayyavunu hakhmim be'keriyato*) and therefore they said the *hallel* of *Rosh Hodesh* is not Biblical.”

Thus R' Ovadiah Yosef affirms the contention that *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* has no obligatory force whatsoever for men or women except as adopted through custom.

IV. ADDITIONAL FACTORS

Having examined the technical issues of obligation and exemption, and concluded with the *Beur Halakhah* that there is compelling logic and evidence to allow a woman to recite *hallel* for a man on *Rosh Hodesh*, three more issues ought to be addressed: 1) the curse (*me'eira*) mentioned in *Sukkah* 3:10; 2) the reasons behind the recitation of *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, and whether they would logically lead to exempting (or discouraging) women from the custom of reading *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*; and 3) the communal nature of the *minhag* and whether this affects the ability of women to recite *hallel* for a community.

*Rashi*²² says: “that he has not learned, and if he has learned, a curse will come to him for denigrating his Creator to make such agents as these.” *Tosafot*²³ disagree on textual and conceptual grounds, and explain that the curse has nothing to do with learning, but rather because he has appointed people who are not obligated to read for him. According to *Tosafot*, there is nothing wrong at all with a woman reciting *hallel* for men on *Rosh Hodesh*, because they share the

²² *Sukkah* 38b, s.v. *ve-tavo me'eira*.

²³ ad. loc., s.v. *ve-tehi lo me'eira*.

same obligation. As for Rashi's first explanation, that the curse is the result of his ignorance, it would not matter whether a man or woman says hallel for him.²⁴ Rashi's second claim that even a learned man deserves a curse for appointing a woman to recite hallel for him is explained by Tosafot to be the result of obligation disparity and would therefore not be relevant on Rosh Hodesh.

What are the reasons behind the custom to recite hallel on Rosh Hodesh?²⁵ Me'iri says:

Hallel of Rosh Hodesh was an established custom (*minhag kavua*) for everyone in *Bavel*, in order that they should publicize the matter (*kedei sheyitparseim hadavar*) to everyone that it is *Rosh Hodesh*.²⁶

He does not explain why this did not pertain to *Eretz Yisrael*; perhaps it was because the new moon itself was fixed in *Eretz Yisrael*, there was no need for additional publicization.²⁷ On the one hand, women, being disqualified from offering testimony, were not involved in the fixing of the new moon, and hence this reason would exempt them; alternatively, they are generally obligated in matters of publicization, and have other special positive connections to *Rosh Hodesh*, as will be detailed below.

Rabbi J.D. Singer²⁸ offers the following reason for saying *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*: "Because of the happiness of the day (*simhat hayom*) which is a holiday (*yom tov*) for the moon whose light is renewed, and Israel are counted to the moon (*monim lalevanah*), and in its fullness there will be peace for us." As will

²⁴ Rashi's explanation is difficult to understand in light of the next clause in the mishna which does not censure a man who appoints another man to read it for him. See *Tosafot*, *ibid*.

²⁵ This is a different question than inquiring about the origins of half-*hallel* on Rosh Hodesh. Regarding that question, see Louis Finkelstein, "The Origin of the *Hallel*," *HUCA Annual* 23 (1950-1951): 319-337, especially 320, 334-337, and Robert Alan Hammer, "On the Origin of the Partial *Hallel*," *CJ* 23:4 (1969): 60-63. The former argues on theological and historical grounds that the Babylonia *hallel* actually preceded *hallel Shaleim*, while the latter argues that "the Babylonians were unable to understand the differentiation made between the Passover and Rosh Hodesh and the other days . . . out of deference for the old laws, they omitted small sections . . ." speculation which I hardly find convincing. For our purposes, however, the reasons they proffer are abstract and neither support nor oppose women's inclusion in the custom.

²⁶ *Beit ha-Behira Ta'anit* b (pub. Kedem, 4th ed.), 101.

²⁷ According to this explanation, it is unclear why this custom did not develop in *Eretz Yisrael* after the destruction of the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* and the cessation of fixing the new moon according to witnesses, when presumably *Rosh Hodesh* would be as much in need of publicization there as it had been in *Bavel*. Perhaps they were conscious of the *baraita* of the 18 days and did not wish to appear to be adding to that, even through changing the form of the *hallel* that they would recite.

²⁸ *Ziv Ha-Minhagim* (Jerusalem, 5725), 7.

be seen below, the festive holiday nature of *Rosh Hodesh* is connected through Midrash specifically to women, and indeed, was a reward for women and because of women. Relating the recitation of hallel to *simhat yom tov*, which in turn is due entirely to women, offers support for including women in the custom.

There is great debate over whether the *minhag* to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* falls also on the individual or just on the community. What is clear is that the ideal situation is to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* with the *tzibbur*, and that there is some communal component to the *minhag*. Do women leading *hallel* satisfy this component? If one assumes that the *Be'ur Halakhah* was fully cognizant of the implications of his position, then from the fact that he does not relate to this point one could conclude that he tacitly admits that they do.²⁹ More convincingly, however, the *Be'ur Halakhah* draws a distinction between a single woman who accepts the *minhag* of reciting *hallel* in an environment in which women generally do not have the *minhag*, saying that she cannot fulfill a man's obligation, versus the ability of a woman to do so when women as a class have accepted the *minhag*. It is eminently reasonable to attribute the *Be'ur Halakhah's* requirement that women as a class accept the *minhag* before they can fulfill the obligation of men to the communal component of this *minhag*, and that when women accept the *minhag* as a community, they thereby include themselves also in the communal component of its recitation, both as participants who should be encouraged to recite it with the *tzibbur*, and as people who can lead the *tzibbur* in its recitation.³⁰

There is also a great positive reason for including women as leaders of the recitation of *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*. Women have a very famous connection to *Rosh Hodesh*, as summarized by *Halikhot Bat Yisrael* 16:1: "*Rosh Hodesh* . . . was given to them [women] for the merit of the righteousness of the women of the generation of the desert who did not join with their jewelry in the sin of the Golden Calf." Additionally, *Megillah* 22b cites a Beraita that four *aliyot* were established for *Rosh Hodesh* because on that day there is no *bittul melakhah*, which Rashi³¹ explains as follows: "There is not so much *bittul melakhah* because the women do not do *melakhah* on it." The claim is astounding—synagogue services were lengthened because of the meritorious customary conduct of women! By this reasoning, it is entirely appropriate that women, having now accepted upon themselves the custom to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh*, should lead the congregation, as part of their greater connection to this quasi-festival, which was ordained in their merit.

²⁹ I grant the weakness of argument from silence.

³⁰ Regarding the factual issue of whether women have actually accepted it as a *minhag*, the *Be'ur Halakhah* himself argues that by his time they had. See also Rigshei Lev, op. cit.

³¹ ad. loc., s.v. *rashei hodashim*.

V. CONCLUSION

The recitation of *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* is a *minhag*; neither men nor women have a fundamental obligation to recite it. In those communities in which women have adopted the custom to recite it, they are on par with men for whom it is also customary, and share the same responsibilities and privileges that stem from that obligation. A woman's recitation fulfills the obligation of each individual man as well as that of the *tzibbur*.³² The leading of *hallel* by women should serve to remind us of the righteousness of the women who resisted the sin of the Golden Calf, and inspire us to follow their example of remaining firmly committed to our principles in the face of overwhelming pressure and despair.

³² Even in accordance with the *minhag* of the *Gr"a* (*Tosefet Ma'aseh Rav* 40) to merely respond to the blessing of the *shaliach tzibbur* and not recite it individually, since women who have adopted the *minhag* to recite *hallel* on *Rosh Hodesh* share in all the identical *halakhot* with men, including the rules regarding the blessing, they may lead it and one who follows the *Gr"a's minhag* will have acted properly.