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 asch 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.

1 R. Imanu’el ben Hayim Bashari, Bat Melekh (Bnei Brak, 1999), 28:1 (82); Eliyakim Getsel Ellinson, haIsha vehaMitzvot 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 Tsirael (Jerusalem, 1983), 2:22 (50) and note 58 there, 16:6 (238); R. Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs, Tefillah keHilkhatot (Jerusalem, 1989), 22:19 (388); R. Menachem Nissel, Rigshei Lev (Southfield, MI, 2001), 6:1 (162).

2 Rigshei Lev, op. cit., Halikhot Bat Tsirael, 50 note 57, and haIsha vehaMitzvot, 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 mitzvah 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 [re 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 bi) 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 *suga*: 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 Rashi6 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 *suga* 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. Tosafot10 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 (*hareshut beyado*).” Similarly, Rashi11 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’h yamin*

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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., *Pesahim* 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’h yamin* 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 *bara’ita* 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 baHadayah: Be’urim uBe’irurim baInyanei 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 umgadeif*.

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 (meminbag 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\(^\text{12}\) 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 asch shehazman graman extends to all such mitzvot, even minhagim,\(^\text{13}\) 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.\(^\text{14}\) Another explanation must be sought.

The Be’ur Halakhah\(^\text{15}\) 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 ba’anes)—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

\(^\text{12}\) Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 422:2, s.v. nashim

\(^\text{13}\) 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 banes, 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.

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

\(^\text{15}\) 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 women 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 mehuvelt.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

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16 It is somewhat unclear to what the Be’ur Halakhah’s “tzarikh iyun” 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, halsha vehaMitzvot, 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 ut Ta’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 asch she-ba-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—(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 pray 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

18 p. 388, note 36.
19 See Sha’ur 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 ash shebazeman 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 aseh shehazeman 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.”

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 shehazeman geraman. R’ Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer) makes only one indirect reference to hallel in a general way:

“And see likewise in Sefer Yeshuot Yaakov Orah 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 melamed 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 (shayad haminhang gavrah) and it is not within the ability
of the contemporary Sages to stop it (ve’ein beyedei bakhmei hazman
limbot).”

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
hayayunu bakhmim 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 con-
cluded 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 read-
ning 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.

Rashi22 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.” Tosafot23 dis-
agree 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. 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? 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.

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. 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. Singer 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

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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.


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. 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.

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 Rashi 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 tzibur.\footnote{Even in accordance with the minhag of the Gr”a (Toseft 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.} 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.