**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**Deracheha: Women and Mitzvot**

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Hallel

What is Hallel? When is it recited and why? Who has an obligation to recite it?

# About Hallel

Origins

*Hallel* is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, made up of *Tehillim* 113-118. Although *Sefer Tehillim* is attributed to David ha-melech, our sages suggest a number of possibilities for who first recited some form of a *Hallel* prayer,[[1]](#footnote-1) starting with Moshe Rabbeinu and *benei Yisrael* at the sea.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In each situation mentioned, the Jewish people face an existential threat and recite *Hallel* as a prayer for God's deliverance. Without resolving the question of who originally recited *Hallel*, the Talmud explains that Hallel eventually became a formal enactment.

*Pesachim* 117a

The Sages said: The prophets among them established that Israel should recite it [*Hallel*] at every season, and upon every trouble that does not come upon them [a euphemism for the reverse], then when they are redeemed, they recite it upon their redemption.

In practice, there are two grounds for reciting *Hallel*: First, to mark specific seasons, such as festive days outlined by the Torah. Second, following miraculous redemption of the Jewish people[[3]](#footnote-3) from “every trouble.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Days of Hallel

The Talmud lists the festive days on which we recite a full *Hallel*:

*Arachin* 10a

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: An individual recites the complete *Hallel* on 18 days [throughout the year] - the eight days of *Chag* [Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret], eight days of Chanuka, the first festive day of Pesach, and the festival of *Atzeret* (Shavuot). And in the diaspora, 21 days - the nine days of *Chag*, eight days of Chanuka, the first two festive days of Pesach, and the two festive days of *Atzeret*.

Why recite a full *Hallel* on these holidays and not others? The continuation of the passage presents criteria for determining when to recite *Hallel*. To be eligible, a day must have a unique sacrifice, (i.e., not the six last days of Pesach), be called a *mo’ed* in the Torah (i.e., not Shabbat), be sanctified by a prohibition on labor (i.e. not Rosh Chodesh), and not be a day on which our very lives are judged (i.e., not the Days of Awe). Chanuka meets none of these criteria, but is still a day of *Hallel* because of the need to express praise and thanks for the miraculous redemption from the Seleucid Greeks.[[5]](#footnote-5) Halachic authorities who encourage reciting *Hallel* on Yom Yerushalayim or Yom Ha-atzma'ut view these days as similarly redemptive.

It's not clear from the Talmud if the obligation to recite *Hallel* on the days listed is rabbinic[[6]](#footnote-6) or on a Torah level.[[7]](#footnote-7) Rambam takes the first approach;[[8]](#footnote-8) Ramban disagrees. He argues that reciting *Hallel* is a Torah-level mitzva, perhaps derived from the mitzva to rejoice with song on the festivals when there is a special sacrifice.[[9]](#footnote-9) (As we saw, having a special *korban* is a criterion for when we recite *Hallel*.[[10]](#footnote-10)) Alternatively, since the prophets enacted it, perhaps *Hallel* belongs in the halachic category of *Divrei Kabbala*, matters received from the prophets, which are sometimes treated like Torah-level *mitzvot*.[[11]](#footnote-11)

What is *Hallel* about?

The Talmud lists some of Hallel's more significant themes:

.*Pesachim* 118a

Us, why do we say these [specific *Tehillim* in *Hallel*]? Because they include these five things: the exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Red Sea, the giving of the Torah, the resurrection of the dead, and the birthpangs of *Mashiach*.

*Hallel* begins with a call to praise God, moves on to praise God’s mastery over nature (as exemplified by the miracles the Talmud lists), next prays for salvation, and then praises and thanks God for providing it. We end *Hallel* with an affirmation of faith.

# Women's Exemption

Are women obligated to recite the full *Hallel*? The mishna rules that one man can discharge another's obligation to recite *Hallel*.[[12]](#footnote-12) But if a bondsman, woman, or minor, reads *Hallel* on a man's behalf, their reading doesn't discharge his obligation. In this case, the man must repeat *Hallel* after the reader, word for word.

Mishna *Sukka* 3:10

One for whom a bondsman or a woman or a minor recites [*Hallel*]–he repeats what they say after them.

Rashi explains that this mishna indicates that women, bondsmen and minors are all exempt from the mitzva of *Hallel*. Only someone who is obligated in a mitzva can discharge another's obligation.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Rashi *Sukka* 38a

They recite it for him – They practiced thus: one would read *Hallel* and discharge the obligation for the many. If [the reader] was a slave or woman or minor, since they are not obligated in the matter, they cannot discharge the obligation of those who are obligated. Therefore, he would repeat after him [or her, word for word] everything that he said.

Women are exempt from *Hallel* because it is a positive time-bound mitzva. In practice, though, a woman may recite *Hallel* voluntarily. Women who customarily recite [*berachot* over voluntary mitzva performance](http://deracheha.org/beracha-over-voluntary-performance) recite a *beracha* over *Hallel* as well.

*Bei'ur Halacha* 422 s.v. *Hallel*

It is further explained in *Sukka* 38 and in the halachic authorities that women are exempt from *Hallel* since it is a positive time-bound mitzva…Know that it is clear that, in any case, she [a woman] herself can recite *Hallel* and recite a *beracha* over it even though she is not obligated, as with all positive time-bound *mitzvot* where they [women] are meticulous and recite a *beracha*.

# Women's Obligation

Rambam implies that women are exempt from all recitations of *Hallel*,[[14]](#footnote-14) and Magen Avraham says so explicitly.

*Magen Avraham* 422:5

Women are exempt from every *Hallel* because it is a positive, time-bound commandment.

Tosafot, however, point out that not all *Hallels* are cut from the same cloth. They rule that women **are** obligated in at least one yearly recitation of *Hallel*, at the *Seder*, based on the same halachic principle that includes women in the obligation to drink four cups of wine that night – “[*af hen hayu be-oto ha-nes*](http://deracheha.org/af-hen),” “they too were part of that miracle.”

Tosfot *Sukka* 38a, s.v. *mi she-haya*

This indicates that a woman is exempt from *Hallel* on Sukkot and Shavuot, because it is a [positive] time-bound mitzva. Yet regarding *Hallel* on Pesach nights, *Pesachim* 108a indicates that women are obligated in the four cups [of wine], and presumably the four cups were established specifically so we could say *Hallel* and the *Hagada* over them. *Hallel* on Pesach is different because it is on the miracle, and they too [women] were part of that miracle, but here [on other festivals] it is not recited because of a miracle.

*Hallel* at the *Seder* differs significantly from other *Hallels*. For example, only *Hallel* of *Seder* night is recited at night. Otherwise, the timing for *Hallel* is in the daytime, until halachic sunset. Rav Hai Gaon explains that *Hallel* of *Seder* night is a song, not a mere recitation.

Ran *Pesachim* 26b

But our Rabbi, Hai Gaon z”l, wrote in a responsa that one does not recite a *beracha* on the *Hallel* of the night of Pesach “to complete *Hallel*” because we do not read it in the mode of “reading” but rather in the mode of “song” …

Rabbanit Sally Mayer elaborates on what sets this Hallel apart from others:[[15]](#footnote-15)

Rabbanit Sally Mayer "Hallel: The Song of the Seder"

We do not introduce it with a blessing, which would bespeak the formal establishment of a *mitzvah*, a commandment, because we are spontaneously reacting to a miracle that has just occurred before us. We need not stand, we do not have time to go to the synagogue; elated by our good fortune, we cannot help but sing to thank God for the miracle He has just performed. Even the meal seems in consonance with this *Hallel*, as though it is the champagne brought out to celebrate the joy of victory. The *Hallel* of the *Seder* thus reflects the character of the entire holiday of Passover… *Hallel* celebrates that moment when we personally leave Egypt...

Tosafot's ruling, that women are fully obligated to join in this song of praise and thanks because of inclusion in the miracle, is widely accepted.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Other Hallels

Other halachic authorities have suggested extending Tosafot's ruling to obligate women in other *Hallels* recited for miracles. Rav Raphael Shapiro of Volozhin maintains that women have an obligation to recite *Hallel* on the first day of Pesach,[[17]](#footnote-17) and on Chanuka. (See more on *Hallel* on Chanuka [here](http://deracheha.org/chanuka-other-observances).)

*Torat Raphael* OC 75

On the first Yom Tov of Pesach we also say *Hallel* because of the miracle and not only because of Yom Tov…If so, it seems that also on the first day of Pesach women are obligated to recite *Hallel*…and likewise on Chanuka they are also obligated since it is because of a miracle.

Rav Ovadya Yosef rules that women whose community follows the practice of reciting *Hallel* before the *Seder* should recite it:

*Yechaveh Da'at* 5:34

So one can say that, just as men recite *Hallel* with a *beracha* on Pesach night before the *Seder*, women are also obligated to say it, since it was established over the miracle. It seems further that this is included in Shulchan Aruch’s ruling: "Women are also obligated in the four cups and in all the *mitzvot* that are practiced on that night." *Hallel* on the night of Pesach with a *beracha* [before the *Seder*] is one of the *mitzvot* of Pesach night. If so, women, too, must say it with a *beracha* before the beginning of the *Seder*…

In practice, a woman should make an effort to recite any *Hallel* in which she might be obligated, but she has halachic views to rely on if she cannot manage it (as on a busy evening before the *Seder*).

# Abbreviated Hallel

On Rosh Chodesh, there is no prohibition on performing labor, so there is no obligation to recite a full *Hallel*.

*Arachin* 10a

…So then [we should say it on] Rosh Chodesh, which is called a *mo’ed*? It was not sanctified with a [prohibition against] doing work, as it is written (*Yeshayahu* 30:29) “This song will be for you like a night that was sanctified as a festival.” A night sanctified as a festival [when work is prohibited] requires *shira*, and one not sanctified as a festival does not require *shira*.

How can this passage take the omission of *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh for granted, when it is customary to say *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh? Elsewhere, the Talmud explains:

*Ta'anit* 28b

Rav arrived in Bavel and saw that they recited *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh. He thought he should stop them. When he saw that they skipped sections, he said, “This indicates that they are acting in accordance with the custom of their fathers.” It is taught: An individual should not begin [*Hallel*], but if he began, he finishes [it].

Already in Talmudic times, the Jewish community in the diaspora had the custom on Rosh Chodesh of reciting a partial *Hallel*, *Hallel be-dilug* (lit., *Hallel* with skipped-over passages). Rav, coming from Israel, was unfamiliar with the custom, which may have originated as a way for diaspora communities to remember *kiddush ha-chodesh*, the sanctification of the new moon.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Tosafot explain that the abbreviated *Hallel* has the status of custom, not commandment.

Tosafot *Arachin* 10a s.v. eighteen

"When he saw that they skipped sections, he said, ‘This indicates that they are acting in accordance with the custom of their fathers.’" This indicates that Rav thought that people did not recite [*Hallel*] at all. If so, our saying it is certainly just a custom and not an obligation as on the eighteen days. In any case, Rabbeinu Tam says that one must recite a *beracha* over it, as indicated by the fact that he [Rav] thought to stop them …For otherwise, the moment Rav saw that they did not recite a *beracha* before it, he would have instantly been able to understand that it was not [treated as obligation] but as custom...

Rabbeinu Tam adds that even though *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is only a custom, we do recite a *beracha* over it. (This aligns with his position permitting women to recite *berachot* when performing *mitzvot* voluntarily.) Had the congregation in Bavel begun *Hallel* without a *beracha*, Rav would have understood immediately that they considered the recitation a custom and not a commandment.

There are two other positions on reciting a *beracha* over Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. Rif maintains that one recites a *beracha* over an abbreviated *Hallel* only within a congregation.[[19]](#footnote-19) Rambam rules that one does not recite *berachot* over customs.

Rambam *Berachot* 11:16

Every matter which is a custom, even if it is a custom of the prophets, like taking the willow on Hoshana Rabba, and it goes without saying a custom of the sages, such as reciting *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh and *chol ha-mo'ed* of Pesach, one does not recite a *beracha* over it.

Shulchan Aruch cites the more restrictive views, while Rema allows for an individual to recite the *beracha*.[[20]](#footnote-20)

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 422:2

They recite *Hallel be-dilug*, whether an individual or the community. There are those who say that the congregation recites a *beracha* over it…but the individual does not recite a *beracha* over it. There are those who say that even the congregation should not recite a *beracha* over it, neither at the beginning nor at the end, and this is Rambam's view and thus we practice in the entire Land of Israel and its surroundings. Rema: There are those who say that even an individual recites a *beracha* over it. Thus we practice in these lands. In any case, a person should take care to recite it communally in order to recite a *beracha* over it with the congregation.

*Hallel* is not completed on the last six days of Pesach, because their *mussaf* sacrifice is identical to that of the first day.[[21]](#footnote-21) Contemporary custom is also to recite *Hallel be-dilug* on the final six days of Pesach, and to treat it like *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh.[[22]](#footnote-22)

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 490:4

Every day of *chol ha-mo’ed* and the last two days of Yom Tov, *Hallel* is read *be-dilug* as on Rosh Chodesh.

Women Reciting Abbreviated Hallel

Even though the exemption from positive time-bound commandments generally applies to *Hallel*, many women took on the binding custom to say *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh, as men did. Mishna Berura makes this point, and adds that, in communities in which individuals recite a *beracha* over *Hallel*, women and men alike can rely on Tosafot's ruling to permit reciting *berachot* over customs.

*Bei'ur Halacha* 422:2

Magen Avraham indicates that this law [exempting women from *Hallel*] also applies on Rosh Chodesh. But, in my humble opinion, this is not clear. For this is relevant only on days on which we complete *Hallel*…It makes sense that for *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh, when it is our custom to recite a *beracha*, a woman may also recite a *beracha* like men.... And in the *siddur* of Ya’avetz, he wrote that women should not recite a *beracha* over *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh, but practice is not in accordance with his opinion.

[Rosh Chodesh is considered a sort of Yom Tov for women.](http://deracheha.org/rosh-chodesh) Rebbitzen Chana Bracha Siegelbaum teaches that women's connection to Rosh Chodesh provides added impetus for reciting *Hallel*.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, "Praising Hashem through Song"

Although women are exempted from reciting Hallel on Rosh Chodesh and during the holidays since it is a positive time-bound mitzvah (*Biur Halacha, Orach Chaim, Siman* 422), it seems to me, that if we are created in order to praise Hashem, then we should still make the effort. In the past, when women had to go down to the well to draw water, wash the garments by hand, grind their own flour, and dig up their own potatoes, it is understandable why they should be exempt from reciting Hallel. Today, with washing-machines, disposable diapers, food-processors and pre-checked greens, women have much less of an excuse to refrain from prayer. Especially on Rosh Chodesh, when women are accustomed to abstain from work (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 417) it seems to me, that we should prioritize praising Hashem by reciting Hallel. Reciting Hallel, is actually considered a *minhag*(custom) even for men. So just as men have taking this custom upon themselves and are strict about reciting Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, why should women do any less? Aren’t women also created for the sake of praising Hashem?

May a woman lead a man in reciting Hallel?

We learned from the Mishna that a woman could not discharge a man's obligation in *Hallel* unless she is certainly obligated, as at the *Seder*. The same mishna also discourages a man's responding word for word to a woman's recitation of *Hallel*:

Mishna *Sukka* 3:10

One who had a bondsman or woman or minor reciting [*Hallel*] to him repeats after them what they say, and a curse should befall him.

Why would a man who repeats *Hallel* word for word after a woman deserve a curse? Tosafot explain that a person who is obligated in *Hallel* but does not know it should seek help from someone else who is obligated:

Tosafot *Sukka* 38a s.v. *Ve-tehi lo me’eira*

A curse should come upon him because a bondsman and a woman also are not obligated in *Hallel*, for it is a positive time-bound commandment.

According to this explanation, a man should not be led by a woman in a *Hallel* from which she is exempt, even if he repeats it after her. The curse would not apply, however, when she has the same obligation or custom as men to recite *Hallel*, as on Rosh Chodesh. Indeed, Mishna Berura allows for a woman to lead a man in *Hallel* of Rosh Chodesh:

*Bei'ur Halacha* 422:2

… Only on days when we complete *Hallel*, when men have a rabbinic obligation, are women unable to discharge [men’s obligations], even in a place where [women] are already accustomed to do this mitzva. For [women are reciting *Hallel*] only as a custom, and men as an obligation. But on days on which we do not complete the *Hallel*, when for men it is also just a matter of custom, if in a given place women also took on the custom of this mitzva, what is the difference between them [men and women]? Perhaps the Magen Avraham was referring to a place where women did not adopt this mitzva until now, so they have no obligation at all, even as a custom, and now the woman wishes to recite and discharge [a man’s obligation], and further study is required…

We could make the same case on *chol ha-mo'ed* of Pesach. Similarly, if we view a woman's obligation in *Hallel* on *Seder* night as equivalent to a man's obligation, then a woman could discharge a man's obligation. Rav Ovadya Yosef rules this way.[[24]](#footnote-24) His and Mishna Berura's rulings are easiest to apply in a more private setting, such as a *Seder*, where a woman could lead a call and response for her family. Practice in more public settings would depend on some of the factors we discuss [here](http://deracheha.org/discharging-obligations-in-practice).[[25]](#footnote-25)

# Hallel and the Community

Drawing from the example of Moshe and *benei Yisrael* at the sea, Jews during the Mishnaic era recited *Hallel* communally as a series of calls and responses. The leader would discharge the obligation the entire congregation, who would answer with a few key phrases, or "*halleluyah*."

*Sota* 30b

Rabbi Akiva expounded: when Israel came up from the sea, they set themselves to reciting song. How did they recite song? Like an adult who leads *Hallel* and they repeat after him the beginning of each section [of *Tehillim*]

Rashi *Sota* 30b

Like an adult who leads *Hallel*: He recites it for the congregation to discharge their obligation.

When more Jews became able to recite *Hallel* fluently, in Talmudic times, the leader no longer discharged others' obligations. Much of the call and response format was still maintained, in part to preserve memory of the original practice.

Rashi *Sukka* 38b

From the minhag of *Hallel*. From what we see practiced nowadays in synagogues…We say all of *Hallel* along with the leader until “*Hodu*” and respond “*Hodu*” after him and go back to reciting [*Hallel*] with him until “*Ana*” and respond ”*Ana hoshi’a na*” and “*Ana hatzlicha na*” after him, as we do, and this is not like the recitation of the first ones [Tannaim], who would respond “*halleluyah*” after everything…And Rava said that from the current custom we learn what is the essence of reciting *Hallel* when they first enacted it… what the first ones [Tannaim] established to respond for those who are and are not expert [in reciting it].

In our day, too, the leader of *Hallel* no longer discharges others' obligations, and we recite it with very little call and response. The call and response that remain are important, though. For this reason, halachic authorities encourage reciting *Hallel* with the community. Magen Avraham even writes that a person arriving late to synagogue should delay other prayers (or interrupt *pesukei de-zimra*) in order to recite *Hallel* with the community.

*Magen Avraham* 422:2

To recite it in the community: If one comes to the synagogue close to the time of *Hallel*, he should recite *Hallel* first with the community and then pray.

From its origins, communal *Hallel*, an opportunity to praise and thank God *en masse*, has had a special level of meaning. Rav Soloveitchik puts this in halachic terms. He writes that reciting *Hallel be-tzibbur*, communal *Hallel* of call and response, fulfills the mitzva more completely than an individual's *Hallel*.

*Reshimot Shiurei Ha-Gri"d Soloveitchik*, *Sukka* 38a s.v. *ve-nir'eh*

Fulfillment of the mitzva of response is applicable only in a congregation—for the prayer leader recites, invites, and demands that the congregation respond…Indeed the individual is able to fulfill only the simple mitzva of reciting *Hallel*, and lacks the complete mitzva of *Hallel* that comes into being with the response of the congregation.

What counts as community?

While Rav Soloveitchik writes that a communal *Hallel* requires a *minyan*,[[26]](#footnote-26) a midrash suggests that a group of three can suffice:

[*Midrash Tehillim* 113

[“*Halleluyah. Halleu avdei Hashem. Hallelu et shem Hashem.*] Praise God. Give praise you servants of God. Praise the name of God.” From here the sages said that [responsive] *Hallel* needs no less than three people. To whom does he say "*Hallelu*/Praise" [in plural]? To two people. And the one who says it is one, so there are three.

Rema rules in accordance with this position:

Rema *Shulchan Aruch* OC 422:2

There are those who say that when an individual recites *Hallel*, he says it to two people so they will say the beginning of each [responsive] section with him, for then it is like many [people].. This practice was adopted with “*Hodu*” but not with ”*Ana*.”

Mishna Berura explains that finding another two people to recite *Hallel* with is ideal, though not obligatory, and this holds true for all recitations of *Hallel*.[[27]](#footnote-27)

*Mishna Berura* 422:18

Later halachic authorities wrote that there is no practical difference in this matter between Rosh Chodesh and days on which we complete the *Hallel*, and in all cases one should say it to two [people]…but they wrote that the essence of this matter is only *lechat’chila* [ideally], and if there aren’t two people available, he need not chase after them.

If a collective for *Hallel*'s call and response need not be a *minyan* then perhaps the minimum group of three could include women (or even children old enough to understand *Hallel*):

Rosh *Pesachim* 10:32

What is [described] in midrash *Tehillim*, [a man] with his wife and a minor of educable age, can recite “*Hodu*” [on seder night].

In this spirit, women praying outside of a *minyan* have reason to recite *Hallel* together, including the responsive sections. While *Hallel* among a group of women may not meet Rav Soloveitchik's definition of a communal *Hallel*, it is likely considered a *Hallel* of call and response. In this sense, it is reminiscent of Miriam's song at the sea.

Mechilta of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai 15:21

"And Miriam led them [the women] responsively:" The verse tells us that just as Moshe said *shira* [song] for the men, so did Miriam say *shira* for the women.

The song of Miriam and the daughters of Israel provides inspiration for women reciting *Hallel* in any context, alone or together.

1. *Pesachim* 117a

We learned in a *baraita*: Rabbi Meir would say: David said all the praises written in the *Sefer Tehillim*, as it is written, “’The prayers of David the son of Yishai are completed (*kalu*),’ do not read it as *kalu*, rather as *kol elu* (all of these).” Who said it [*Hallel*]? Rabbi Yosi says: My son Elazar says Moshe and Israel said it when they emerged from the [Red] Sea. And his fellows dispute him, saying that David said it. But his opinion appears more likely than theirs, for how can it be that Israel slaughtered their Pesach offerings and took their *lulavim* and did not recite *shira*?!

As Rashi explains, Rabbi Yosi is inclined to accept his son’s opinion that *Hallel* originated with the exodus from Egypt and splitting of the sea, because he cannot fathom how generations of Israelites slaughtered the Pesach sacrifice or waved the *lulav* without the accompaniment of the joyous song of *Hallel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Pesachim* 117a

Our Rabbis taught: Who said this *Hallel*? Rabbi Elazar said: Moshe and Israel said it when they stood at the [Red] Sea they said, (*Tehillim* 115:1) "Not for our sake, God, not for our sake..." the Divine spirit answered and said to them (*Yeshayahu* 48:11) “For my sake, for my sake I will do it.” Rabbi Yehuda said: Yehoshua and Israel said it when the Kings of Canaan threatened them; they said, "Not for our sake," and [the Divine spirit] answered.... Rabbi Elazar Hamoda’i said: Devora and Barak said it when Sisera threatened them…Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya said: Chizkia and his assembly said it when Sancheriv threatened them...Rabbi Akiva said: Chananya, Misha’el, and Azaria said it when the wicked Nevuchadnezzar threatened them....Rabbi Yosi the Galilean said: Mordechai and Esther said it when the wicked Haman threatened them... [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tosafot *Sukka* 44b

For the redemption of all of Israel we say it [*Hallel*] in perpetuity. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Chiddushei Ha-Gri"z Arachin* 10b

They are two laws [of reciting *Hallel*]: "on each season," i.e. the eighteen set days, and "on each and every trouble" is a distinct law, which is that we can say *Hallel* at every time that we are redeemed from trouble. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Arachin* 10a-b

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon son of Yehotzadak: There are eighteen days on which an individual recites full *Hallel*: The eight days of Chag, the eight days of Chanuka….But Chanuka…[we recite a full *Hallel*] because of the miracle. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Berachot 14b

*Hallel* is rabbinic [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ta'anit* 28b

Rava said: This tells us that *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is not a Torah obligation. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Mishneh Torah* Megilla and Chanuka 3:6

Reciting *Hallel* is always rabbinic on all the days on which we recite the complete *Hallel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sha'agat Aryeh rejects the possibility that Hallel is an aspect of the *shira* of *simchat Yom Tov*, since then one might argue that women would be obligated in *Hallel* of Yom Tov, which would contradict the mishna in *Sukka*:

Sha'agat Aryeh 69

It does not make sense to say this, for if it is true, there is no reason to exempt women from *Hallel*, since they are obligated in the essential song [of Yom Tov] like men…Rather it is certain that reciting *Hallel* is not included in the mitzva of *simcha* at all and is only rabbinic. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ramban's Glosses to Rambam's *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, *Shoresh* 1

…At Sinai, Moshe was commanded that Israel should recite *shira* to the God who took them out of Egypt and split the sea for them and set them apart to serve Him. David came and established this *Hallel* for them so they would recite it. And also the songs in the Temple [the Psalms that were recited when sacrifices were offered, which were composed by David]… And it seems from their words that it (*Hallel*) is from the Torah, as I have explained, and it is either *halacha l’Moshe miSinai* [a Torah-level mitzva without a clear Scriptural source] or it is included in the general commandment to rejoice [on the festivals], as it says, “On the day of you joy and your appointed timed and the beginnings of your months, you shall blast the trumpets on your burnt-offerings and on your peace-offerings.” As the essence of *shira* is singing with the mouth, and instruments are just used to make the voice sweeter. We were commanded to rejoice in song with our sacrifices. At other times, [*Hallel*] is included in the general commandment of rejoicing [on the festivals]. …It’s possible that this [statement that *Hallel* is rabbinic] was said about the days of Chanuka and the days that an individual does not complete *Hallel*…. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ra'avad rules along these lines:

Ra'avad on *Mishneh Torah* Megilla and Chanuka 3:6

They [recitations of *Hallel*] involve a positive commandment from *Divrei Kabbala* [received Torah from the prophets], "The song will be for you as on the night of sanctifying the festive offering" (*Yeshayahu* 30:29). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mishna *Sukka* 3:10

If an adult male recited *Hallel* for him, he responds after him "*halleluyah*". [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For more on discharging obligations, see our articles [here](http://deracheha.org/discharging-anothers-obligations) and [here](http://deracheha.org/discharging-obligations-in-practice). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rambam, Laws of Megilla and Chanuka 3:6, 14

Not only the *Hallel* on Chanuka is rabbinic but reciting *Hallel* is always rabbinic on every day on which we recite the full *Hallel*…If the person calling out the *Hallel* is a minor or bondsman or woman, [a man] repeats after them what they say word for word, for the entire *Hallel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Available here: <https://ots.org.il/hallel-song-seder/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Bei'ur Halacha 422:2

According to the halachic authorities, women are exempt from *Hallel* because it is a positive time-bound mitzva [except for *Hallel* on Pesach night, in which they are obligated because they too were part of the miracle, as Tosafot wrote] [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Available here: <https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=1490&pgnum=269> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Shita Mekubetzet Berachot 14a

On Rosh Chodesh, even the congregation do not recite it except as a custom, a reminder of kiddush ha-chodesh. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Rif *Shabbat* 11b

It is taught: An individual should not begin [*Hallel*], but if he began [it], he finishes [it]. Therefore, if an individual wishes to recite *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh, he recites it without a *beracha*, and skips over passages.

Perhaps the role of commemorating the sanctification of the new month is inherently communal. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Chabad practice is for the prayer leader to recite the *beracha* on behalf of the entire congregation.

Siddur of Rav Schneuer Zalman of Liadi

On the days on which we do not complete the *Hallel*, proper practice is for only the *shaliach tzibbur* to recite the *beracha* at the beginning and end, and the congregation should answer “*amen*” and discharge their obligation with his *beracha*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Other halachic authorities provide ideological reasons why *Hallel* is not recited on the last six days of Pesach. For example, Shibolei Heleket explains that it is inappropriate to recite *Hallel* since that is when the Egyptians drowned, and we do not rejoice in our enemies' downfall. It is difficult to see how he reconciles this view with the Talmud's suggestion that the first *Hallel* was recited at the Sea itself.

*Shibbolei Ha-leket* Rosh Chodesh 174

On Pesach we don't complete *Hallel* except for the first day and its night. Why? Shemuel son of Abba said: "In the fall of your enemy do not rejoice," because on it [the seventh day of Pesach] the Egyptians drowned. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ramban, however, reportedly ruled that the enactment to recite *Hallel be-dilug* on Pesach also applies to an individual who should recite it with a *beracha*, while on Rosh Chodesh one should not.

*Maggid Mishneh* Megilla and Chanuka 3:5

The view of Rambam is to equate *chol ha-mo'ed* of Pesach with Rosh Chodesh [regarding *Hallel*] and this seems to be the view of all commentators aside from Ramban, who distinguished between them and said that on *chol ha-mo'ed* of Pesach even the individual is obligated to recite an abbreviated *Hallel*, because the essence of the enactment was thus, to say it on *chol ha-mo'ed* Pesach in abbreviated form and to recite a *beracha* over it. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Available here:

<https://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2011/03/haftorat-parashat-vayikra.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Yechaveh Da'at 5:34

However, for us, who follow the ruling of Shulchan Aruch that also regarding reading *megilla* women discharge men's obligations…If so, also regarding *Hallel* of Pesach night one can say this. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. In a discussion of *Hallel* in a synagogue setting (available [here](http://text.rcarabbis.org/partnership-minyanim-by-aryeh-a-frimer-and-dov-i-frimer/#respond), p. 124 and footnote 409) Rabbis Aryeh and Dov Frimer raise other concerns. For example, they contend, in the name of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein and Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, that a woman leading *Hallel* is a violation of *kevod ha-tzibbur*. We plan to discuss women leading parts of the synagogue service in a future piece. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Reshimot Shiurei Ha-Grid Soloveitchik Sukka 38b s.v. be-ram*

Indeed Rav Moshe [Soloveitchik] said…that the *minyan* that is necessary for call and response for *Hallel* is a *minyan* of ten. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Aruch Ha-shulchan views this discussion, as well as the ruling that the latecomer to synagogue should delay prayer for the congregation's *Hallel*, as specific to the case of *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh or the last six days of Pesach, where there is a halachic question about an individual reciting *Hallel* with a *beracha*.

*Aruch Ha-shulchan* OC 422:8

All this applies on Rosh Chodesh and *chol ha-mo’ed* Pesach and the last two days of Pesach, but when we complete the *Hallel,* there is no need for all this, because on them the individual is obligated to recite a *beracha*. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)