

On Women reading Parshat Zachor

Rabbi Daniel Sperber

Question: Must women serving as a “co-leading” chazzan on Yom Kippur be fasting?

Answer: There is no doubt in my mind that the chazzan on Yom Kippur has to be fasting.

As to the “co-lead” as you call her, even in those sections of the tefillah where she is halakhically not a shlichat tzibbur, i.e. those sections where tibur does not require the chazzan להוציא אותו ידי חובתו, in the tzibbu’s perception, the chazzan, or the chazzanit, is a shaliach or shlichat tzibbur. Hence, it would be in my opinion most unsuitable to have a shlichat tzibbur who is not fasting.

I don’t think that Kol Nidei really has a different status. Again, halakhicly maybe this could be justified, especially since she is still fasting. But, if she knows, or intends not to fast the whole of Yom Kippur, then for this highly experiential ceremony – as opposed to its halakhic status – it would not be suitable to have someone lead this service who intended not to fast the whole day.

Of course, someone who led the Kol Nidrei service and the following day, for whatever medical reason had to break their fast, should do so. But, this is בדיעבד and not לכתחילה.

I [hope] this is helpful in your determinations.