

Kol Nidrei Chanted by a Woman

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The *Kol Nidrei* ritual was a source of considerable controversy during the period of the Geonim and the Rishonim. Rabbenu Tam, and his father R. Meir be Shmuel, argued forcefully that it failed to meet any Talmudic prerequisite for the legal nullification of vows (*Sefer ha-Yashar* sect. 144). As to why it is repeated three times, this is in accordance with the Talmudic ruling (in B. Menahot 65a) to the effect that all rabbinic declarations should be repeated three times.

However, R. Tam (quoted in *Shibolei ha-Leket, Seder Yom ha-Kippurim* sect. 317) remarked on this point:

I have heard that there are places where they say *Kol Nidrei* only once, and that is correct. In their foolishness they became accustomed to saying it three times, as with the annulment of vows, ...but this is nonsense and hovers in the air (i.e. has no real support in the sources).

However, there were Rishonim (such as the Ravyah, vol. 2, Pesashim 528, and the Rosh) who insisted that *Kol Nidei* did satisfy the requirements of a legal nullification of vows. However, the Tur (Orah Hayyim 619) has no clear position on this issue. But all authorities were in full argument that it serves as a deeply meaningful act of *teshuvah* – repentance.

Since it would appear that according to many authorities *Kol Nidrei* is more a symbolic ritual than a truly ritual act of nullification of vows, and there was a custom, declared to be correct of saying it only once, and the three-fold repetition was not deemed necessary by all authorities, and, furthermore, even if it a true nullification (*hatarah*), a single declare ther of suffices, (see *Shach, Yoreh Deah* 128:6, and *Beur ha-Gra* ibid.), it follows that:

Provided there is a *beit din* of three males to make the final declaration, it should be legitimately permitted for a woman to make one (or two) of these declarations.