The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Thurs, Jan 29, 2026 ■ י"א שבט, תשפ"ו
סימן נ"ג סעיף ה'-ו'

Overview

Siman 53 Seif 5:

If no one possesses all of the desired traits (See 53:4) the one who is wisest and excels at good deeds should be chosen. If there is a choice between one who is ignorant but elderly, has a pleasant voice and is desired by the community or one who is just thirteen but understands what he is saying, the one who is younger should be chosen even if he voice is not as pleasant. Someone who transgressed a prohibition inadvertently, e.g. he killed someone inadvertently, and repented may be chosen as *shaliach tzibbur* but if he transgressed intentionally he may not be chosen since he developed a bad name before he repented.

- The thirteen year old takes precedence over the older person (mentioned in Rema) even to become the permanent *shaliach tzibbur*. (M.B. 19)
- Someone who sins inadvertently (and repents) is considered righteous and may be chosen even *l'chatchila* as *shaliach tzibbur*. (M.B. 20)
- Magen Avrohom cites authorities who maintain that even one who sinned intentionally but repented may be chosen as the permanent *shaliach tzibbur*. (M.B. 22)
- Elya Rabba writes that for the *Yamim Noraim* one should be strict and avoid choosing a *shaliach tzibbur* who developed a bad reputation. (M.B. 22)

Siman 53 Seif 6:

We only choose someone who has a full beard since that is a sign of respect for the *tzibbur*. To serve as *shaliach tzibbur* occasionally it is sufficient to have two hairs as long as he is not designated by the *tzibbur* or the *shaliach tzibbur* to fill in for him at specified times.

- The *tzibbur* may not forgo their honor regarding this matter. (M.B. 23)
- On fast days and the *Yomim Noraim* a *tzibbur* should be stringent and not send even occasionally one who does not have a beard and in this case as well the *tzibbur* can not forgo their honor. (M.B. 24)
- It is not necessary to confirm the presence of the two hairs since for Rabbinic matters one may assume that a thirteen year old has reached this stage of development. (M.B. 25)
- It is acceptable to appoint the man without a beard to be available as a substitute when the *shaliach tzibbur* is not there. Others disagree and maintain that even this is prohibited. (M.B. 26)

Stories to Share

The Honor of the Community

מ"ב ס' נ"ג, ס"ק כ"ג: "ואין הצבור יכולים למחול על כבודם בזה..."

There was a certain yeshiva where most of the boys did not yet have beards. Although there was no regular chazzan, the same people would usually lead the prayers—all of whom were not old enough to grow a beard.

One fast day a certain bochur was called up to daven as usual when an older person objected. "At least on a fast day the man who leads the prayers must have a beard. The mechaber writes explicitly that it is not considered honorable for the community for a chazzan too young to have a beard to lead the prayers at any time, but this is forbidden on fast days."

Although the bochurim were quick to point out that they were mochel on their kavod—after all, none of them had beards yet so how important could this really be—the older man dismissed their reasoning. "Don't you know that the Mishnah Berurah states explicitly that the community may not be mochel on this requirement? Clearly the community forgoing their honor is irrelevant even though most of them are not old enough to have a beard…"

When this question was brought before Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that a chazzan too young to grow a beard was permitted to lead the prayers in such a community. "In a place where most of the constituents are young and cannot grow a beard it is permitted for one of these bochurim to lead the prayers, even on a fast day. When the vast majority of the community is too young to grow a beard this requirement due to kavod hatzibur is indeed irrelevant."

Halacha Highlight

Choosing a *shaliach tzibbur* that does not have a beard

Shulchan Aruch Siman 53 Seif 6

אין ממנין אלא מי שנתמלא זקנו מפני כבוד הצבור

We only appoint someone whose beard is full out of respect for the *tzibbur*

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ו') writes that it is disrespectful to appoint someone as *shaliach tzibbur* if he does not have a full beard. Shulchan Aruch (סע' ח') adds that it is not necessary for the *shaliach tzibbur* to have a beard as long as it is discernable that he is old enough to have a beard. Therefore, one who is twenty may serve as *shaliach tzibbur* even if he does not have a beard. Occasionally, it is acceptable to have someone serve as *shaliach tzibbur* even though he does not yet have a beard. Biur Halacha (ד"ה אבל באקראי) writes that even occasionally a *tzibbur* should not appoint someone without a beard to serve as *shalich tzibbur* if there is someone with a beard or at least twenty years old who can also serve as *shaliach tzibbur*. Kaf HaChaim (סי"ק מ"ט) observes, however, that the custom is to be lenient about this matter and allow someone without a beard to serve as *shaliach tzibbur* occasionally even if there is someone else available to serve as *shaliach tzibbur* who has a beard.

Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק כ"ג) writes that the requirement that the *shaliach tzibbur* have a beard is not a prerequisite that they may forgo. Taz (סק"כ) explains that honor for the *tzibur* is synonymous with honor for the Divine Presence since the intent when choosing a *shalaich tzibbur* is to demonstrate honor and respect for Hashem. Although in this context Mishnah Berurah wrote that the *tzibbur* may not forgo their honor, elsewhere, he mentions that there is a dispute whether a *tzibbur* can forgo their honor (ע' באור הלכה סי' קמ"ג סע' ב' ד"ה אין קורין בו). In high schools where most of the people who are davening do not yet have a full beard, there is no issue for one of the young men to serve as *shaliach tzibbur* even permanently (ע' פסקי תשובות אות י"ב והע' 90).