

Overview

Siman 128 Seif 1:

Birkas kohanim is not done with less than a *minyan* and the *kohanim* count as part of the *minyan*. (A non-kohen should not “lift his hands” even with other *kohanim*.) (The second chapter of Kesubos indicates that a non-kohen who “lifts his hands” violates a positive command but Tosafos relates that R”I did not know what prohibition is violated and it is possible that if he goes with *kohanim* it is permitted but the matter requires further research.)

- ❖ There is an opinion that maintains that *birkas kohanim* is only done if there is a *sefer Torah* but just about all authorities disagree. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ There is an opinion that maintains that when a kohen identifies himself as a kohen he is believed to recite *birkas kohanim*. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ Even if most of the *tzibbur* is *kohanim* they may do *birkas kohanim* as long as there is one *yisroel* to answer. אמן. (M.B. 2)
- ❖ Bach maintains that it is prohibited for a non-kohen to recite *birkas kohanim* only if his hands are raised but Pri Megadim implies that in all cases it is prohibited. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ Later authorities agree that under all conditions a non-kohen violates a positive command if he does *birkas kohanim*. (M.B. 6)

Stories to Share

“Whoever is for Hashem—Come to Me!”

ש"ע ס' קכ"ז, א': "ואין לזר לישא כפיו אפ' עם כהנים אחרים..."
 On today's amud we find that it is forbidden for a non-kohein to recite *birkas kohanim* even with others who are *kohanim*.
 Rav Shimon Schwab, zt"l, was with the Chofetz Chayim, zt"l, as a young man. He recalled, “It was Erev Shabbos of parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei and I will never forget the inspiring words of the Gadol Hador. He said to me, ‘Perhaps you have heard that I am a kohein. What about you? Are you a kohein as well?’
 Rav Schwab continued, “I answered that I was not. The Chofetz Chayim then asked me, ‘Are you a Levi then?’ And I answered, ‘No.’
 “The Chofetz Chayim then exclaimed, ‘What a pity! When the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, everyone will yearn for the opportunity to do the avodah. However, the Torah says that anyone who is not a kohein who comes to do the avodah is liable to the death penalty. So why will a kohein be able to do it and not a *yisrael*? For one simple reason: when Moshe Rabbeinu called, ‘Whoever is for Hashem, come to me!’ my ancestors

Halacha Highlight

Is there a *mitzvah* for non-*kohanim* to receive *birkas kohanim*?

Rema Siman 128 Seif 1
 ואין לזר לישא כפיו

A non-kohen may not “lift” his hands

Rema (סעי' א') rules that a non-kohen may not recite *birkas kohanim* even together with other *kohanim*. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) explains that the *pasuk* instructs *kohanim* to bless the nation. From this Chazal inferred that it is only *kohanim* who are commanded to bless the nation rather than non-*kohanim* and a prohibition that is derived from a positive command is categorized as a positive command. He then mentions a dispute whether this prohibition is limited to where a non-kohen blesses the nation with lifted hands or whether it applies even if the non-kohen does not lift his hands.

Biur Halacha (ד"ה כתב בספר חרדים) cites Sefer Chareidim who maintains that when a non-kohen pays attention and intends to receive the *beracha* from the *kohanim* he is included in the *mitzvah* of “thus shall you bless” which is the positive command for the *kohanim* to bless the nation. Sha’arei Teshuvah (סק"א) cites authorities in addition to Sefer Chareidim who agree that there is a positive command for non-*kohanim* to receive the *beracha* from the *kohanim*. Minchas Chinuch (מצוה שע"ח) cites Ritva who writes that the *mitzvah* is upon the *kohanim*, not the non-*kohanim*. Aruch HaShulchan (סעי' ד') contends that even according to Sefer Chareidim a non-kohen does not fulfill a positive command if he receives the *beracha* from the *kohanim*; rather his intent is that there is an obligation for non-*kohanim* to receive the *beracha* from the *kohanim* but if someone is not interested in the *berachos* he is categorized as one who rejects Hashem’s blessings but he has not violated a positive command. Teshuvos Dvar Avrohom (ח"א סי' ל"א) asserts that even though there is a *mitzvah* for a non-kohen to listen to *birkas kohanim*, nevertheless, there is no obligation for a non-kohen to go to a place so that he should be able to hear *birkas kohanim*. In contrast, *kohanim* have an obligation to make an effort to be able to recite *birkas kohanim* (חיי משה).

responded and yours did not. Only the tribe of Levi ran to Moshe’s side. Because your grandfather did not respond to this cry he deprived all of his descendants from the possibility of serving Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash.
 “The tzaddik said with a passion, ‘When someone cries out: whoever is for Hashem, come to me!—we must run to his side! One who fails to do cannot imagine the losses that he will suffer!’”