



Overview

Siman 128 Seif 4:

When *kohanim* do not want to ascend the platform they are only required to be outside of the *Bais HaKnesses* when the *chazzan* calls the *kohanim*. However, in order that one should not be suspected of being disqualified the custom is that they do not reenter the *Bais HaKnesses* until after *birkas kohanim*.

- ❖ Magen Avrohom in the name of Mordechai writes that the kohen who will not bless the nation must walk out before רצה. (M.B. 12)
- ❖ *Poskim* write that those *kohanim* who are unfit to bless the nation even Rabbinically are not required to walk out of the *Bais HaKnesses* for *birkas kohanim*. However, if there are no other *kohanim* other than the ones who are unfit, *Poskim* imply that they should walk out before רצה. (M.B. 12)

Siman 128 Seif 5:

***Kohanim* may not ascend the platform wearing shoes but in knee boots it is permitted.** Some are stringent if the knee boots are made of leather (and the custom in some places is to be lenient.)

- ❖ The concern is that a strap will tear which will be a source of embarrassment. The kohen will tie it while the other *kohanim* are reciting *birkas kohanim* which could give rise to the suspicion that he does not have proper lineage. (M.B. 15)
- ❖ The shoes should be hidden, meaning that they should not be left in the open since that is disrespectful to the honor of the *Bais HaKnesses*. Shoes should be removed before the *kohanim* wash their hands but if the shoes could be removed after washing without touching the shoes they may be removed after washing. (M.B. 15)
- ❖ The rationale behind the stringent position is that since the knee boots are made of leather they are the same as shoes and sandals and included in the Rabbinic decree. (M.B. 17)
- ❖ Later authorities write that it is not proper for one to ascend the platform barefoot since people do not appear before prominent people barefoot; rather one should wear socks. This is the custom. (M.B. 18)

Halacha Highlight

Wearing non-leather shoes for *birkas kohanim*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 128 Seif 5

לא יעלו הכהנים לדוכן במנעלים

***Kohanim* should not ascend the platform with shoes**

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ה') writes that *kohanim* should not ascend the platform with shoes. Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק ט"ו) explains that the concern is that a strap from the shoe may come undone and one would be embarrassed to be seen with torn shoes in front of others. To avoid the potential disgrace, the kohen will tie the strap while the other *kohanim* are reciting the *beracha*, and when people see that the kohen with the torn shoe is not reciting the *beracha* with the others it could raise the suspicion that perhaps a flaw was discovered in his lineage. Once this enactment was made, it included any type of leather shoe or sandal, even those that do not have a strap that could come undone. Sefer Da'as Torah observed that there are *kohanim* who do not remove their shoes until they have ascended the platform and this practice is incorrect. The wording of Shulchan Aruch indicates that the restriction is that one may not ascend the platform with shoes and he does not write that a kohen may not recite *birkas kohanim* with shoes. Therefore, he cautions *kohanim* to remove their shoes before they ascend the platform (חיי משה).

Sha'arei Teshuvah (סק"י) cites authorities who maintain that a kohen may not even ascend the platform with shoes that are made from felt. Kaf HaChaim (אור כ"ט) also cites authorities who do not permit a kohen to ascend the platform with shoes made of felt but adds a qualification that if it is cold and it would be difficult for a kohen to be without his shoes one may be lenient and permit the wearing of felt shoes. Another qualification he adds is that the felt shoes that are worn for *birkas kohanim* cannot be shoes that are worn outside since shoes worn outside may be dirty and are disrespectful to the *tzibbur* (See Mishnah Berurah (סי"ק י"ח). Aruch HaShulchan (סעי' י"ב) adopts a lenient position and permits a kohen to recite *birkas kohanim* with non-leather shoes as long as they do not have straps. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach agrees in principle with Aruch HaShulchan but hesitates to rule leniently since it could lead people to think that a kohen may wear any type of shoe for *birkas kohanim* (חיי משה בשם הליכות שלמה עמ' קל"ב).

Stories to Share

The Negligent Kohen

ש"ע ס' קכ"ז, ד': "כשהכהנים אינם רוצים לעלות לדוכן..."

On today's amud we find that a kohen who leaves shul before רצה and remains outside is definitely not required to recite *birkas kohanim*.

Although in the diaspora *birkas kohanim* is a rare event, in Israel it is recited each morning. A certain kohen enjoyed his morning coffee but also woke up a bit late for davening. His solution was to rush to shul and then get a coffee after *kedushah*. Unfortunately, this often caused him to miss *birkas kohanim*. Since he was often the only kohen in the minyan, this upset the gabbai and the other congregants.

They wished to teach this kohen a lesson that he would not soon forget. Of course, before they acted on their impulse, they first wanted to ensure that their plans were halachically acceptable. As the shul's representative, the gabbai went to Rav Vosner and asked if he could refuse this kohen the first aliyah.

The man argued, "After all, if he doesn't do his job as a kohen, is the kahal responsible to give him the special mark of respect due to a kohen? I heard that the Chasam Sofer, זי"ל, refused to give a kohen who neglected to do *birkas kohanim* the first aliyah. If this is true, then there is a good precedent for using this privilege to teach the man a lesson."

Rav Vosner disagreed. "Although you should definitely tell this man off since he doesn't do *birkas kohanim* regularly, you may not withhold *rishon* from him. He admits that he is a kohen and does not actually violate the positive commandment and has not violated his *kehunah*.

He concluded, "It is true that that the Chasam Sofer fined a kohen in this manner, but that was a special case. He did not mean to rule that one should halachically nullify a kohen's right to honor in every case!"

שו"ת שבת הלוי, חלק ט', סימן כ"ז