The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Sun, Oct 11, 2026 ■ ל' תשרי, תשפ"ז
סימן קכ"ח סעיף כ"א-כ"ג

Overview

Siman 128 Seif 21:

Kohanim may not sing two or three tunes for _birkas kohanim_ since there is a concern that they will become confused, therefore, they should use the same tune from the beginning until the end.

- By switching songs they may become confused and will not know which *beracha* or word to recite. (M.B. 82)
- A *chazzan* should also not sing multiple *niggunim* although Elya Rabba justifies the practice. (M.B. 83)

Siman 128 Seif 22:

An effort should be made that the announcer should be a yisroel and when a kohen is the _chazzan_ a yisroel should stand next to him and announce the words to the _kohanim_ while the _chazzan_ stands silently.

- According to our custom that the *shaliach tzibbur* is the announcer an effort should be made that the *shaliach tzibbur* should not be a kohen. (M.B. 85)
- Later authorities agree that this *halacha* is *l'chatchila* but if there is no one else who can announce the kohen who is the *shaliach tzibbur* may announce. (M.B. 87)

Siman 128 Seif 23:

While the _kohanim_ are blessing the people they should not look elsewhere or become distracted; rather they should look down as one does for _davening_. The _tzibbur_ should concentrate on the _beracha_ and should face towards the _kohanim_ although they may not actually gaze at them. The *kohanim* are also not allowed to look at their hands during the *beracha*. For this reason the custom is that they pull their *talis* over their head with their hands outside of the *talis*. Some places have the custom that the *kohanim*'s hands are also under the *talis* so that the *tzibbur* should not see their hands.

- The *tzibbur* should not look at the faces of the *kohanim* or their hands. (M.B. 89)
- Technically it is only prohibited to gaze for a long period of time at their hands since it could lead the *tzibbur* to become distracted. A glance is permitted and it was only in the *Bais HaMikdash* that even a glance was prohibited since the Divine Presence rested on the hands of the *kohanim*. Nevertheless, the custom is to avoid even glancing at their hands to commemorate the prohibition that applied in the *Bais HaMikdash*. (M.B. 89)
- According to later authorities the first custom mentioned by Rema is preferable. (M.B. 91)
- Darkei Moshe mentions the custom for the *tzibbur* to cover themselves with their *taleisim* so that they so not look at the hands of the *kohanim*. (M.B. 92)

Halacha Highlight

Do the _kohanim_ keep their hands under their _talis_?

Shulchan Aruch Siman 128 Seif 23
ולא יסתכלו בהם
They should not look at them

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' כ"ג) writes that while the *kohanim* are reciting *birkas kohanim* the *tzibbur* should not gaze (meaning to stare for an extended period of time) at their hands. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק פ"ט) explains that nowadays the only prohibition is to gaze at the hands of the *kohanim* since it will distract the *tzibbur* from the *beracha*. Looking briefly at their hands is not prohibited. It was only during the time of the *Bais HaMikdash* was there a prohibition to even look at their hands since in the *Bais HaMikdash* the *kohanim* recited the *beracha* using the actual Name of Hashem and the Divine Presence rested on their hands. Nevertheless, the custom is to avoid looking at their hands altogether.

Rema adds that that the *kohanim* also may not look at their hands and for that reason the custom is for the *kohanim* to pull their *talis* over their head with their hands outside of the *talis*. Rema then notes that there are communities that have the custom that the *kohanim* keep their hands under their *talis* so that the *tzibbur* does not gaze at their hands. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק צ"א) writes that the first custom is more correct. Shulchan Aruch HaRav (סעי' ל"ו) also writes that the custom for the *kohanim* to keep their hands outside of their *talis* is more correct. When the hands of the *kohanim* are outside of their *talis* there is no material that intervenes between their hands and the people who are receiving the *beracha*. Kaf HaChaim (אות קמ"ג) disagrees and maintains that according to Zohar the *kohanim* should cover their hands with their *talis* and it is not considered an interposition between their hands and the *tzibbur*. Aruch HaShulchan (סעי' ל"ו) also confirms that the common custom is for the *kohanim* to keep their hands under their *talis*.

Stories to Share

A Duet?

ש"ע, ס' ק"ח, י"א: "וכן החזנים בכל מקום שמנגני ..."

On today's amud we find the halachos of how many tunes a chazzan should sing.

A certain rabbi wished to keep his congregants happy. He knew that one way to hire a chazzan with a magnificent voice. Unfortunately, the person with the nicest voice in his city was not Jewish. Yet he was educated and for a good wage was willing to sing in shul—but of course he was ineligible to lead the services. After thinking about this problem, he thought he had a solution. A Jewish chazzan could lead the prayers, and the non-Jew would harmonize with him to make the davening more pleasant. Since this rabbi did not want to do anything forbidden by halachah he decided to consult with the Vayechi Yosef of Pupa, zt"l, regarding this question. In his letter, the rabbi added, "If this is forbidden, I want a clear source for this."

"It is certainly forbidden," the rebbe replied. "As far as a source, this is clear from an explicit Mishnah at the end of Menachos. There we find that even a kohein who served idolatry is forbidden to participate in the avodah in the beis hamikdash. Since in our time prayers take the place of sacrifices, a non-Jew may not help a Jewish chazzan even if doing so would enhance the prayers."

When the rebbe told this story to his students he added. "I was pained by this strange inquiry since I wondered why it had come specifically to me. What message was Hashem telling me? Eventually I understood this as a hint from heaven to improve my prayers. I need to be vigilant against the inner non-Jew—the yetzer hara—who sometimes steals into my thoughts while I pray. I must work hard to remove any trace of improper motivation caused by the yetzer hara. Instead my prayers must be only for Hashem alone!"

תולדות ויחי יוסף, ח"ב, ע' שע"ט