The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן קכ"ח סעיף כ"ו-כ"ט

Overview

Siman 128 Seif 24:

The people who stand behind the *kohanim* are not included in the *beracha* but those who are in front or to the side are included and even a wall of iron does not interpose. If the people behind the *kohanim* have no choice, for example, they are engaged in their work and are not able to come, they are included in the *beracha*.

- Included are those who are not literally behind the *kohanim* but are off to their sides but are still behind them. (M.B. 93)
- Those who are to the sides of the *kohanim* but remain to their front are included in the *beracha*. (M.B. 95)
- Those who are not *anusim* are not included in the *beracha* even if they are in the *Bais HaKnesses* if they stand behind the *kohanim*. (M.B. 96)

Siman 128 Seif 25:

In a *Bais HaKnesses* populated with only *kohanim*, if there are only ten people present they all ascend the platform and their *beracha* is directed towards the people in the fields and it is the women and children who will answer אמן. If there are more than ten people then ten people should not ascend the platform and should respond אמן while the others will recite *birkas kohanim*.

- The *shaliach tzibbur* does not ascend the platform; rather he announces the words to the *kohanim*. (M.B. 97)
- Even if women and children are not present they should recite *birkas kohanim* since answering אמן is not essential. (M.B. 98)

Stories to Share

Their Brothers in the Fields

ש"ע ס' קכ"ח, כ"ה: "לאחיהם שבשדות..."

On today's amud we find that even those simple people who are not present during birkas kohanim are also included in the blessing. Perhaps one of the most important contributions of the Baal Shem Tov was to build up the downtrodden masses. The simple folk who couldn't learn much are also an integral part of the chosen people. They, too, have a spiritual mission here on earth.

During one of the many times that Rav Meir Arak, zt"l, met with the Imrei Emes, zt"l, of Gur, he asked the rebbe a question that was troubling him. "I do not understand why our sages draw a distinction between nesachim and other sacrifices. Regarding other sacrifices our sages teach that anyone who learns the laws of the sin or guilt offering is considered to have brought that sacrifice. Clearly the same is true regarding other sacrifices. And presumably, this is also the case regarding one who learns the laws of nesachim.

"Strangely, when the sages mention a person who wishes to bring nesachim they do not recommend studying the halachos. "Instead, they say that one who wishes to pour libations on the altar should fill the throats of Torah scholars with wine. (יומא, דף עא) Why is this second point necessary?"

The Imrei Emes replied in an inspiring manner. "Telling people that learning the laws of sacrifices is likened to bringing a sacrifice is only helpful to those who can learn. What about the simple folk who are unable to delve into the complexities of kodshim? It was for them that our sages said that one who supports Torah scholars by providing them with wine is considered to have poured libations on the altar. Doesn't a simple person also need a way to draw near to Hashem while there is no beis hamikdash?"

כמוצא שלל רב, ויקרא, ז':י"ב

Halacha Highlight

Standing in front of the *kohanim*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 128 Seif 24
אפילו מחיצה של ברזל אינה מפסקת
Even an iron wall does not interpose

Shulchan Aruch (סע' כ"ד) writes that the people who are behind or to the side of the *kohanim* are included in the *beracha* and even a wall of iron does not prevent the *beracha* from reaching them. However, those people who are in the *Bais HaKnesses* but stand behind the *kohanim* are not part of the *beracha* since the *beracha* is to be given with the *kohanim* and the *tzibbur* facing one another (מ"ב ס"ק צ"ד). Regarding those that are to the side of the *kohanim,* Mishnah Berurah differentiates between those who are to the side towards their front and those who are to the side but towards their back. It is only those that are to the side but are still in front of the *kohanim* who are included in the *beracha* but those who are to the side but behind the *kohanim* are not included in the *beracha* (מ"ב ס"ק צ"ג וצ"ה).

Although Shulchan Aruch rules that those who are to the sides but still in front of the *kohanim* are included in the *beracha*, nevertheless, there are authorities who were particular to stand directly in front of the *kohanim* during *birkas kohanim*. Therefore, when there are numerous *kohanim* it is preferable for them to spread out along the eastern wall in order to afford more people with the opportunity to be directly in front of the *kohanim* rather than group together in front of the *aron kodesh*. Similarly, although Shulchan Aruch ruled that even an iron wall does not prevent the *beracha* of the *kohanim* from reaching the *tzibbur*, nevertheless, it is preferable for people to stand in a place where there is no obstruction between themselves and the *kohanim*. It is only when space is limited or for some other reason one cannot stand in front of the *kohanim* without an intervening wall should one rely on Shulchan Aruch's ruling. However, when possible one should make an effort to stand in front of the *kohanim* without anything intervening between himself and the *kohanim* (פסקי תשובות אות נ"ו).