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{ TOPIC }

***Birkas Kohanim* in Eretz Yisrael and the Rest of the World**



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and a *musmach* of Harav Yisroel Belsky *zt"l*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l* on current issues.

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Birkas Kohanim in Eretz Yisrael and the Rest of the World

For many of those living outside of Eretz Yisrael, *Birkas Kohanim* is the highlight of their davening since it is said only a few times a year. In Eretz Yisrael, though, it is said on a daily basis. Why is this so? Are there any places in Eretz Yisrael where the custom is not to say it daily?

These questions and more will be discussed in this article.

Source

The Gemara¹ mentions that any *kohen* who does not go to *duchan* transgresses three sins. This is brought in halachah as well.² A *kohen* has an obligation to *duchan* daily.³

Outside of Eretz Yisrael

The Beis Yosef⁴ mentions that the custom in Mitzrayim was to *duchan* daily.

The Ben Ish Chai⁵ mentions that the custom in Bagdad was to *duchan* daily.

1 *Maseches Sotah* 38b.

2 *Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah* 15:12; *Shulchan Aruch, O.C.* 128:2. See *Mishnah Berurah* 8.

3 *Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvos, asef* 26; *Rambam* in Introduction to *Hilchos Tefillah V'nefilas Kapayim*; *Sefer Hachinuch, mitzvah* 376; *Meiri, Maseches Chullin* 49a; *Aruch Hashulchan* 1.

4 128.

5 *Tetzaveh* 1:4.

איזן לך להקדיש? הבעולמו אלץ יאמות של הלכה בלכד... (ברכות ה.)



Communities in Eretz Yisrael

The custom in Yerushalayim and other major cities in Eretz Yisrael is to *duchan* daily.⁶

In other areas of Eretz Yisrael, differing customs persist. In some areas in the north of Eretz Yisrael, there is *duchaning* only on *Mussaf* of Shabbos and Yom Tov and not during the week. Many have questioned where this custom derived from.⁷

Some say that in Tzefas the custom is to *duchan* only on Shabbos because of the inconvenience to the *tzibbur*.⁸

In Kiryat Arba the custom is to *duchan* daily.⁹

The custom in Teveria and Haifa is to *duchan* only on Shabbos during *Mussaf*.¹⁰

Some suggest that cities set up by the students of the Vilna Gaon *duchan* daily, as opposed to those set up by others. Sephardim follow the opinion of the Beis Yosef and *duchan* daily.¹¹ Others feel that there is no adequate reason not to *duchan* daily. In fact, in the time of the Arizal, *duchaning* was done daily in Tzefas.¹²

Some explain that the reason why some *duchan* only on Shabbos during *Mussaf* is a compromise. Instead of abolishing the custom to *duchan* daily and only doing it on Yom Tov, these communities *duchan* on Shabbos during

6 Beis Yosef 128; Eretz Yisrael, page 21.

7 Eretz Yisrael, page 22.

8 Minhagei Eretz Yisrael 13:3.

9 Sheilas Shlomo 1:65.

10 Kum His'halech Ba'aretz, pages 179-180. See Kovetz Beis Aharon V'Yisrael 150, pages 80-88. Refer to Shevet Halevi 4:70; Mishnas Yosef 10:28-29; Pe'as Sudcha 2:40. There is an entire *sefer* written on *duchaning* in the cities in the north of Eretz Yisrael entitled "*Nesias Kapayim B'rei Hagalil*."

11 Sheilas Shlomo, *ibid*.

12 Hilchos HaGra U'minhagav, page 124.

Mussaf.¹³ On the one hand, the communities that do not *duchan* daily in Eretz Yisrael wish to do so, since why should there be a difference between different cities within Eretz Yisrael? However, people are afraid to differ from the norm in this regard.¹⁴

The Custom in Eretz Yisrael

The custom in Eretz Yisrael is to *duchan* at *Shacharis* (during the week,¹⁵ and Yom Tov)¹⁶ and at *Mussaf* (and at *Ne'eilah*,¹⁷ but not at *Minchah*).

Duchaning Outside Eretz Yisrael

— Reasons for Leniency

Some mention that the reason why the custom is not to *duchan* daily outside Eretz Yisrael is because the *kohanim* had the custom to go to the *mikvah* before *duchaning* and the countries outside of Eretz Yisrael are cold. Since the *kohanim* could not *duchan* due to the weather, the custom became to *duchan* only on Yom Tov.¹⁸

The Beis Yosef¹⁹ comments that this is not a good reason to refrain from *duchaning* each day, because going to the *mikvah* is a *chumra* and it does not say anywhere in the Gemara that one must go to the *mikvah* before *duchaning*. Because of this concern, they are causing themselves to lose out on *duchaning* and this is not correct.

The *Kol Bo*²⁰ mentions that perhaps the reason to refrain

13 Ibid., page 181.

14 Ibid., page 182.

15 *Mishnah Berurah* 128:164.

16 *Mishnah Berurah* 129:1.

17 If it is still light outside (ibid.).

18 *Agor* 176, which is brought in the *Beis Yosef* 128.

19 128.

20 125.

from *duchaning* daily is because it is an inconvenience for the *tzibbur*.

The *Darchei Moshe*²¹ mentions that since the *kohanim* are busy providing for their families, they are not joyous and therefore do not *duchan* during the week. On Shabbos they are busy thinking about past and future business and are not truly joyous either.²² Since on Yom Tov we are joyous, as it says, “*V’samachta b’chagecha*,”²³ the custom is to *duchan* then.²⁴

The *Beis Ephraim*²⁵ mentions that the reason why *duchaning* is limited outside of Eretz Yisrael is because the status of *kohanim* is in doubt today.

The *Magen Avraham*²⁶ mentions that since the custom outside of Eretz Yisrael is to recite the *Ribbono Shel Olam* prayer, and we do not make personal requests on Shabbos, we do not *duchan* on Shabbos, but only on Yom Tov. (However, this reason does not address why we don’t say *Birkas Kohanim* during the week on a daily basis.)

The Chasam Sofer²⁷ mentions that *duchaning* is written in the *passuk* after mention of the *avodah* — *korbanos*. We daven in place of bringing *korbanos*, and if we do not have concentration while davening then the *duchaning* will not be pure. During the week, when we’re busy with our livelihood, it’s hard to concentrate on our *tefillos*. Therefore,

21 128. This is mentioned in other *poskim* as well (*Shulchan Aruch* 128:44).

22 For more on this, see *Mishnah Berurah* 128:167, who says one should know that Bnei Yisrael are holy and they are not in pain on Shabbos because they are not working.

23 16:14.

24 See *Divrei Yatziv*, O.C. 266.

25 O.C. 6.

26 128:70.

27 O.C. 1:23.

duchaning is reserved for Yom Tov when we are joyous and can concentrate properly.

The *Divrei Yatziv*²⁸ says that the Gemara²⁹ mentions that if one has a dream and does not know what the dream means, he should say the *Ribbono Shel Olam* prayer. During the week and on Shabbos one can fast if he does not know what he dreamt, but on Yom Tov when one must be joyous, fasting is not an option so we *duchan* instead.

The Custom Outside Eretz Yisrael

The custom outside Eretz Yisrael is to *duchan* only on Yom Tov (three *regalim*) and only at *Mussaf* (except for Simchas Torah; see later on) one is joyful over Yom Tov.³⁰

The practice to refrain from *duchaning* on a daily basis outside of Eretz Yisrael is a very old custom.³¹ The Beis Ephraim³² (1762-1828) mentions that in his times, the custom was over 500 years old. The custom stands even if one comes to live in a new place outside of Eretz Yisrael where there was never a Jewish custom in this regard.³³

The custom is only for Ashkenazim outside of Eretz Yisrael, since Sephardim do have the custom to *duchan* daily.³⁴ If an Ashkenazi finds himself in a Sephardi *minyan* he should *duchan* along with them.³⁵

An Ashkenazi *kohen* should not go to *duchan* at a Sephardi *minyan* outside of Eretz Yisrael, but a *kohen* who is

²⁸ *Lekutim V'hashmutos* 41.

²⁹ *Maseches Brachos* 55b.

³⁰ *Rema* 128:44. For a discussion on this, see *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 3:47.

³¹ *Shaarei Teshuvah* 128:75.

³² *O.C.* 6.

³³ *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 10, footnote 5.

³⁴ *Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 10:2.

³⁵ *Rivevos Ephraim* 6:57:3.

from Eretz Yisrael and finds himself outside of Eretz Yisrael may do so.³⁶

One who does not have the custom to *duchan* daily and finds himself in a place in Eretz Yisrael that does should *duchan* with them. If one from Eretz Yisrael is in a place that does not *duchan* daily, he should *duchan* with them on the second day of Yom Tov as well.³⁷

When Harav Sholom Shwardon, *zt"l*, came from Eretz Yisrael to America to collect funds, he would go to a Sephardi minyan where they *duchaned* daily.³⁸

When outside of Eretz Yisrael, Harav Moshe Shternbuch, *shlita*,³⁹ would ask two *kohanim* in Eretz Yisrael to have him in mind when they *duchaned* daily.⁴⁰

When Harav Aharon Leib Shteinman, *zt"l*, would travel outside Eretz Yisrael, he would go to a Sephardi shul that *duchaned* daily so as not to lose out on daily *duchaning*.⁴¹

A “Bad Custom”

There are those who mention that the custom not to *duchan* daily outside of Eretz Yisrael is really not warranted.⁴²

The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁴³ calls it a bad custom, but says it

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Refer to *Igros Moshe*, O.C. 4:106.

³⁸ *Kum Hishalech B'aretz*, page 180.

³⁹ *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 1:130.

⁴⁰ Refer to *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 2:111, which discusses those who live in Eretz Yisrael and travel on an airplane outside Eretz Yisrael, and *duchaning* on the way back on the airplane. Refer to *Shevivei Eish* 1:93, who discusses a case of Eretz Yisrael travelers who find themselves in a hotel alone outside of Eretz Yisrael and whether they should *duchan*.

⁴¹ *Yivorechecha Hashem*, page 578.

⁴² *Rama M'Pano* 95.

⁴³ 128:64.

is like a divine voice came out and said this is how it is that
there is no daily *duchaning*.

Unsuccessful Attempts to *Duchan*

There have been attempts made to *duchan* daily outside of Eretz Yisrael. Most notably, the Gra wished to do so. The night before he was going to implement the custom in his shul, he was taken to jail. He saw this as a sign from Hashem not to go ahead with his plan. Others tried and the night before they were supposed to enact the custom half of the city burned down.⁴⁴ It is reported that if the Gra would have been able to enact *duchaning* every day, he would have stopped his learning and davening and gone from city to city to enact this.⁴⁵

The Baal Hatanya wanted to change the custom outside of Eretz Yisrael to daily *duchaning*, but he was not successful in doing so.⁴⁶

Chol Hamoed in Eretz Yisrael

Tens of thousands of people come to the Kosel Hamaaravi on *Chol Hamoed* for *Birkas Kohanim*. Some people daven *Shacharis* and *Mussaf* in shul and hear *Birkas Kohanim* then, and then come to the Kosel Hamaaravi and hear *Birkas Kohanim* yet again. Some question the permissibility of this practice.⁴⁷

44 *Meishiv Davar* 2:104; *Aruch Hashulchan* 128:64; *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 2:111. See *Tzitz Eliezer* 7:6.

45 *Hagaon Hachassid M'Vilna*, page 107:65. Refer to *Hilchos HaGra U'minhagav* 109:page 123, which mentions that the Gra yearned to be able to *duchan* daily.

46 *Shaarei Halachah U'minhag* 1, pages 167-168. Refer to *Otzros Harayah* 1, page 84, which discusses how Harav Kook, *zt"l*, wished to change the status quo outside Eretz Yisrael.

47 *Hilchos HaGra U'minhagav*, page 124.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לי שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תדה עב)

Yom Kippur

There are some places that have the custom to *duchan* at *Shacharis* on Yom Kippur as well as *Ne'ilah*.⁴⁸ Although the *kohanim* should be happy when they *duchan*, we do not refrain from *duchaning* because it is Yom Kippur, since we should be joyous that we are meriting *mechilah* for our sins.⁴⁹

Rosh Hashanah

The custom is to *duchan* on Rosh Hashanah at *Mussaf* both in and out of Eretz Yisrael.

Hoshana Rabbah

Some have the custom to *duchan* at *Mussaf* on Hoshana Rabbah.

Yom Tov That Falls on Shabbos

There are some places that do not *duchan* when Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, but the custom is not like this.⁵⁰ Some mention that perhaps this practice is due to the fact that we recite the *Ribbono Shel Olam* prayer during *duchaning*, and it should not be recited on Shabbos because we do not make personal requests on Shabbos.⁵¹

Simchas Torah

The custom is to *duchan* on Simchas Torah at *Shacharis* and not *Mussaf*, since there is a concern that the *kohanim* will drink and be unable to *duchan*.⁵² While some say

48 *Shulchan Aruch* 128:44; *Darchei Chaim V'Shalom* 180.

49 *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 100:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 128:166.

50 *Magen Avraham* 70; *Taz* 35; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*; *Mishnah Berurah* 165; *Igros Moshe*, O.C. 5:15; *Darchei Chaim V'Shalom*, *ibid.*

51 *Magen Avraham*, *ibid.*

52 *Levush* 679:1; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 138:8; *Mishnah Berurah* 17.

that the practice is to *duchan* at *Mussaf*,⁵³ this is not the overwhelming custom.⁵⁴

There are those who feel it is proper to daven *Shacharis* and *Mussaf*, and to *duchan* at *Mussaf*.⁵⁵

There are other reasons as to why the practice of many is not to *duchan* at *Mussaf* of Simchas Torah. The Mishmeres Shalom⁵⁶ mentions that on Simchas Torah we *lein* the *brachah* that Moshe gave to the entire *Klal Yisrael*, and since all of *Klal Yisrael* is *bentched* by him there is no need for *Birkas Kohanim* after. Therefore, we *duchan* by *Shacharis*. The *Sefer Haminhagim*⁵⁷ mentions that the reason is because there was a custom that fruits were brought in and thrown at the children on Simchas Torah. The congregation therefore did not have the mindset to *duchan* afterwards at *Mussaf*.

Eretz Yisrael Travelers Have Their Own *Minyan*

Some mention that if people from Eretz Yisrael travel outside with their own *minyan*, they may *duchan* at their *minyan* as long as it is an exclusive *minyan*.⁵⁸

53 *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham* 669, quoting the custom in Prague. This seems to be the custom in Eretz Yisrael, where they *duchan* at *Shacharis* anyway. If a *kohen* drinks whiskey or another alcoholic beverage before *Mussaf*, he goes out of shul during *Birkas Kohanim* and does not *duchan* (*Shaarei Chag HaSukkos*, page 283, 25).

54 Refer to *Ratz K'Tzvi, Yerach Ha'eisanim*, page 277.

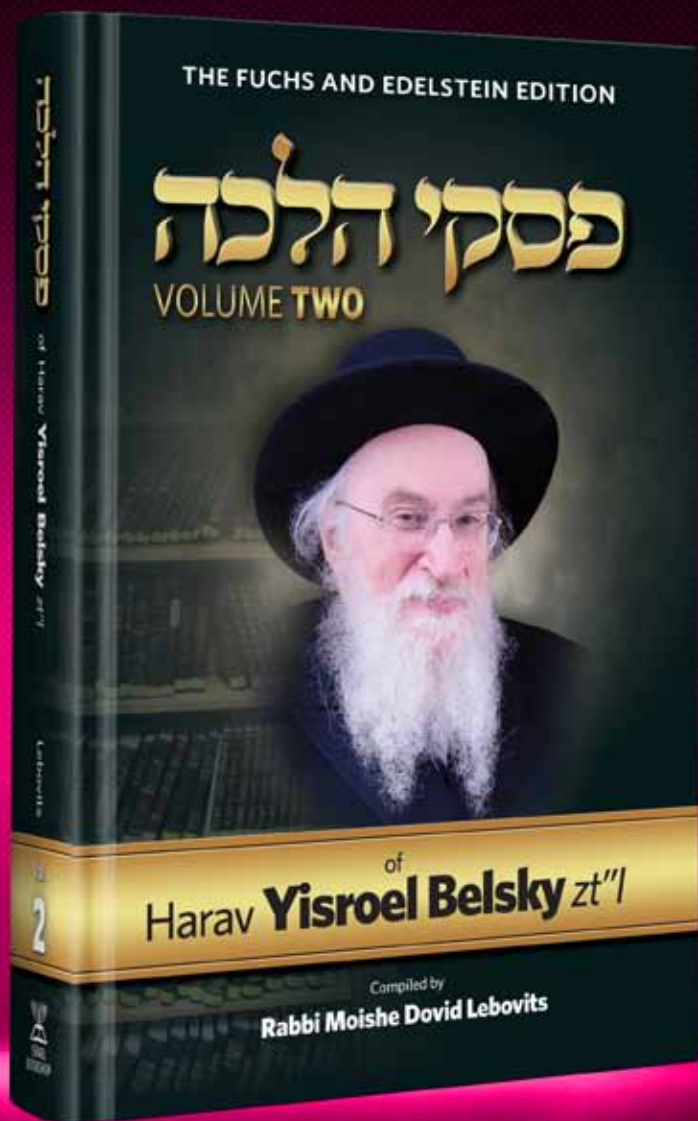
55 *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 3:47.

56 47:4.

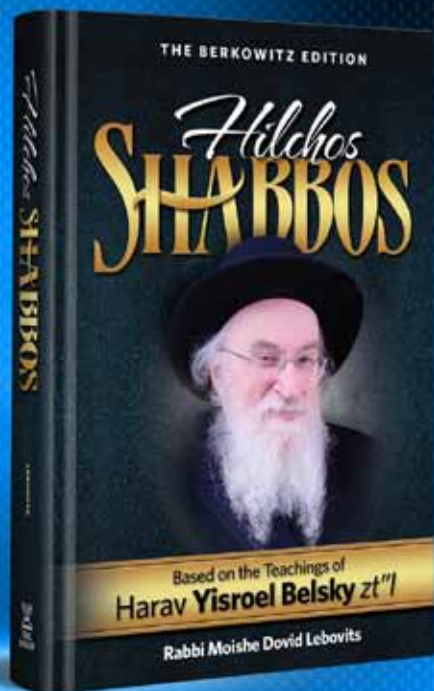
57 Page 30:9.

58 *Orchos Rabbeinu* 1, page 130:15.

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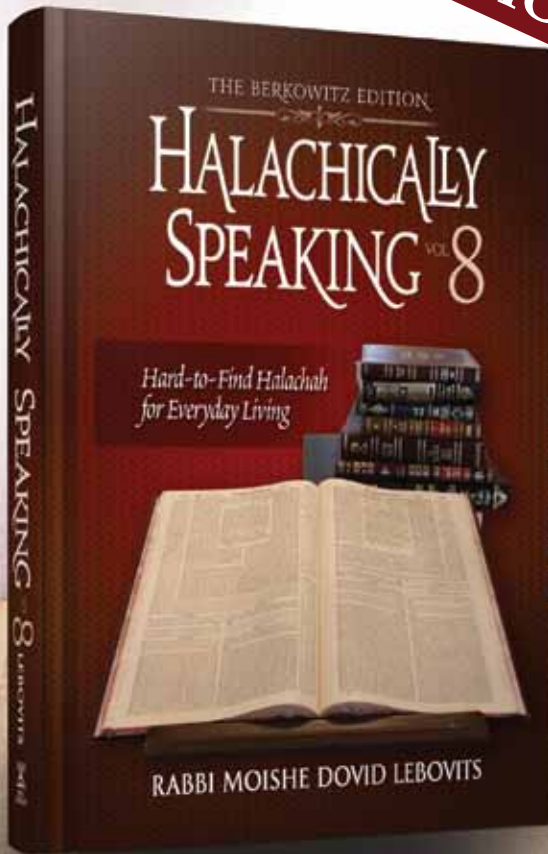
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