



ERETZ HEMDAH

ASK THE RABBI SERVICE

RAV DANIEL MANN



לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Kohen Who Has Trouble Standing

Question: I, an elderly *kohen* with weak legs and poor balance, walk with a cane. I walk up to *duchen* with a cane, stand near a wall, and lean during *Birkat Kohanim* (=BK). Is that valid? Can you suggest a good plan of action?

Answer: Asking your question takes bravery, as we understand that the prospect of not being able to *duchen* would be a great disappointment.

We will start with the strict requirements. *BK* must be done standing (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 128:14). The *gemara* (Sota 38a) learns this from the Torah's connecting of the *kohen's beracha* to his service in the *Mikdash*, which must be done standing. Because standing

is a full requirement, if one leans on something during *BK*, it is invalid (Mishna Berura 128:51). However, one may lean a little, as long as removing the thing he is leaning on would not make him fall (see Zevachim 24a; Mishna Berura 94:22). It is also absolutely required for *kohanim* to lift their hands in the subscribed manner for *BK* (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*; Sota 38a). This makes balance more difficult. You thus must figure out if you can use the wall for balance/security and "pass this test."

Realize that there are legitimate corners to cut to help you qualify. The Mishna Berura (128:52) accepts the Ktav Sofer's (OC 13) idea that the *kohen* needs to lift his hands only when he pronounces each individual word; he can rest in between. The same thing should be true regarding standing – one may lean as he likes in between pronouncing the words (Even Yisrael VII:10; Dirshu 128:70).

Let us rule out another question. A *kohen* may not *duchen* with blemishes on visible parts of the body because they distract the congregation's attention (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.* 30). Arguably, people could view your cane as distracting. However, this is not a problem. First, this is a questionable assumption. Second, if people are used to a distraction, e.g., the situation has existed for 30 days, it is no longer distracting (*ibid.*). Furthermore, since the cane is not in your hand during *BK*, it is not a halachic issue.

We did not find discussion on the presumably most physically difficult part of the process – turning around during the *beracha*, which *kohanim* do with the hands already

UNIQUE HOME IN CENTRAL ISRAEL



Private House in Beit Gamliel (A Religious Moshav)

- * 4 Spacious Bdr.
- * 142 sqm
- * 503 sqm land area
- * Large garden
- * A minute walk to nearby shul

NIS 6,500,000
Oded – 054-254-1046
(No agents fee)

up. We will share two good solutions for this challenge, after discussing the practice of turning around. The most important parts of *davening* are done facing the *aron kodesh*, and it is improper, without a good reason, to stand with one's back to it. However, Halacha made *BK*, at which the *kohanim* address the congregation, an exception (see Sota 40a). However, the *kohanim* turn to the congregation only when they need to, right before *BK*. The matter of timing of turning around and raising the hands is not intrinsic to *BK*, unlike the above matters. In fact, there is a *machloket* whether to turn around before the *beracha* (... *asher kid'shanu ... levarech* ...) or after it, and the present *minhag* is to turn in the middle of the *beracha* (see Aruch Hashulchan, OC 128:20). There is also a *machloket* whether to lift the hands before or after the *beracha* (see opinions in Va'ani Avarchem 19:2).

Given the fact that these questions of timing are just a matter of *minhag*, in your situation you can do what is physically best for you (you do not need to worry that other *kohanim* will resent your acting differently). Specifically,

you can turn with everyone else, but holding your cane, and not raise your hands until you finish turning around and making the *beracha*. You can also turn, with the cane and at more leisure, before the *beracha*, and then put down the cane and raise your hands sometime before the *BK* itself.

In summary, you can appraise whether you can stand well enough at the critical times and figure out how to use legitimate corner cutters. You must make sure you are not endangering yourself concerning a dangerous fall. The wall may be a good solution, but something like a heavy *shtender* **in front of you** may be more effective and safer. Do not be embarrassed to ask for help to set things up best. Your lifetime of past and future *berachot* gives you rights! ■

Having a dispute?



For a Din Torah in English or Hebrew contact:

Eretz Hemdah-Gazit
Rabbinical Court

077-215-8-215 • Fax: (02) 537-9626
beitdin@eretzhemdah.org

לבינסון רז ושות' Lewensohn Raz & Co. משרד עורכי דין ונוטריון Law Offices & Notary

**Estates, Probate,
and Inheritances***

**Real Estate
Transactions**

**Tama 38 and Renovation
Construction Projects**

* Durable Powers of Attorney for Health and Financial Matters



Moshe Raz,
Adv. & Notary

27 Keren Ha'Yesod St., Jerusalem | 02-6731000 | 054-6380149 | office@lawlr.co.il | www.lawlr.co.il