

ברכת כהנים ליום כפור • Birkat Kohanim for Yom Kippur

During the repetition of the Musaf Amidah on page 364 in the Silverman machzor, after the blessing המלך הקדוש, Kohanim and Levi'im leave to prepare for Birkat Kohanim (the Priestly Blessing). Kohanim should all have **large tallitot** - it should be sufficient to cover your face and outstretched hands. If you need a tallit, ask and someone will gladly lend you theirs. Before hand-washing, Kohanim should **loosen their shoelaces** - later you will need to remove your shoes without using your hands. Otherwise, just take your shoes off now. **Levi'im pour water** over the hands of the Kohanim (this is done even though otherwise we don't wash on Yom Kippur). After drying their hands, Kohanim can return to their seats - the Musaf service on Yom Kippur is fairly long, and Birkat Kohanim is not performed until near the very end. However, before the Kohanim disperse again, they should review the tune to be used during the blessing so that everyone knows to sing the same tune (*on Shabbat, no tune is done*).

When we reach the top of page 400, an announcement will be made about Birkat Kohanim - before that point, Kohanim should **remove their shoes** (without using their hands, since they've been washed) and leave them either under their seat or somewhere else out of the way. When the leader starts the paragraph רצה on the top of that page, Kohanim should **proceed up to the front** of the room and **stand in a line in front of the congregation and facing the ark**. At the end of this paragraph, the congregation and the Kohanim recite the following paragraph (which is only said when Birkat Kohanim is performed):

וּתְעַרְבַּ לְפָנֶיךָ עֲתִירָתֵנוּ כְּעוֹלָה וּכְקָרְבָן. אָנָּה, רַחוּם, בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים הָשֵׁב שְׂכִינְתְּךָ לְצִיּוֹן עִירָךְ, וְסִדֵּר הָעֶבֶדוּדָה לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. וְתַחֲזִינָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוּבְךָ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים, וְשֵׁם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קְדָמוֹנֵיּוֹת.

The leader then repeats this paragraph and concludes with a final *berakhah*. At this point, Kohanim **drape their tallitot over their head and hands**, and recite the following paragraph with the congregation (this is מודים - the leader still recites the usual מודים paragraph):

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי כָּל בֶּשֶׂר, יוֹצֵרֵנוּ, יוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית. בְּרִכּוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ, עַל שֶׁחַיֵּיתָנוּ וְקִיַּמְתָּנוּ. כֵּן תַּחֲזִינוּ וְתַקְיַמְנוּ, וְתַאֲסוּף גְּלוּתֵינוּ לְחֻצְרוֹת קְדֻשָּׁה, לְשִׁמּוֹר חֻקֶיךָ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ, וְלַעֲבֹדְךָ בְּלִבְבֵּי שָׁלֵם, עַל שֶׁאֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַל תְּהוֹדָאוֹת.

It is customary for Kohanim to offer the following short prayer here as well:

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּהֵא הַבְּרָכָה הַזֹּאת צוּיָתָנוּ לְבָרְךָ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרָכָה שְׁלֵמָה, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָּהּ שׁוּם מְכַשׁוּל וְעוֹן מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

The leader recites one more line after finishing up מודים, and then the congregation and Kohanim offer the following prayer:

אֲבִינוּ מִלְּכֵנוּ זְכוֹר רַחֲמֶיךָ וּכְבוֹשׁ כְּעֶסֶף וּכְלִיָּה דָּבָר וְחֶרֶב וְרַעַב וְשָׂבִי וּמִשְׁחִית וְעוֹן וְשָׂמֵד וּמַגְפָּה וּפְגַע רַע וְכָל-מַחְלָה וְכָל-תַּקְלָה וְכָל-קִטְטָה וְכָל-מִינֵי פְרַעַנִיּוֹת וְכָל-גְּזֵרָה רָעָה וְשִׁנְאֵת חָנָם. מַעֲלִינוּ וּמַעֲלֵי כָּל-בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ.

The leader repeats this paragraph, after which the congregation and Kohanim say:

וּכְתוּב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל-בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ.

The leader repeats this line and continues. When the leader calls out בְּהַנִּים , the congregation responds כְּאָמֹר - עִם קְדוּשָׁה - and then the Kohanim **raise their hands** keeping the palms facing down and recite the following blessing together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּקִדְּשָׁתוֹ שֶׁל אֱהָרֹן, וְצִוָּנוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵהָבָה.

When the Kohanim get to the word in bold (וְצִוָּנוּ), they **turn around to their right to face the congregation** while finishing the blessing. (It is worth noting that this blessing generally must be recited by memory since a Kohen's hands must be up while reciting it, and hence holding a prayerbook or this sheet is not possible. If a Kohen cannot memorize the blessing, the next best thing to do is to listen carefully to the blessing made by the other Kohanim and answer "Amen" with the intent of fulfilling the obligation to make the blessing by so doing.)

After the congregation responds "Amen" to this blessing, the leader prompts the Kohanim with the words below. Kohanim repeat each word after the leader - however, for the last word in each line, the leader says the word, and the Kohanim sing a tune before repeating the word (*on Shabbat, no tune is done*).

יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ:
יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ:
יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

When repeating the words in bold, the Kohanim sway slightly, moving their arms left and right. The congregation responds "Amen" at the end of each of the three verses. After the congregation responds "Amen" to the final verse, the Kohanim **turn back** to their right to face the ark, and **lower their arms**. The leader then recites the paragraph beginning שִׁים שְׁלוֹם, and upon reaching the words וּבְכָל-שָׁעָה בְּשְׁלוֹמְךָ, the congregation and Kohanim then recite the following before the leader:

בְּסִפּוּר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשְׁלוֹם וּפְרִנָּה טוֹבָה, נִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים
וְלְשְׁלוֹם.

The leader repeats this and continues for a few lines, ending in חַיִּים בְּלַכְּם הַיּוֹם. At that point, one of the Kohanim should open the ark for הַיּוֹם תִּמְחֹל וְתִסְלַח לְכָל-עוֹנוֹתֵינוּ. After the final verse, the congregation and Kohanim respond "Amen," and one of the Kohanim closes the ark. While the leader continues with the final paragraph of the Amidah, the Kohanim recite the following prayer:

רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, עֲשִׂינוּ מַה שֶׁגִּזְרַתְּ עָלֵינוּ, אֵף אַתָּה עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ כְּמַה שֶׁהִבְטַחְתָּנוּ: הַשְּׁקִיפָה מִמַּעוֹן קְדוּשָׁתְךָ,
מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאֵת הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לָנוּ — כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ —
אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ.

After the leader finishes the final blessing of the Amidah (עוֹשֵׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם), Kohanim can remove the tallitot from their heads and wear them normally. Kohanim should stay up at the front until the end of the full Kaddish that follows the Amidah, after which point they should return to their seats and put their shoes back on.