ט. אחר שאומר השליח צבור "ובזמן קריב ואמרו אמן", עונים הקהל: "אמן, יהא שמיה רבא מברך...".

ועד היכן עונה: למנהג הספרדים יש לו לענות עד "דאמירן בעלמא", כדי להשלים כ"ח תיבות. וחלק מהאשכנזים נוהגים לענות רק תיבות: "יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא". וחלק מהאשכנזים מוסיפים על זה גם תיבת "יתברך".

28 letters vs. 28 words

9) Immediately after responding the third Amen, the congregation adds the response of *Yehe Shemeh rabba mevarakh*.... The custom of Sefardic Jews is to continue this response until the words *da'amiran be'alma* – making the response 28 words long. The custom of Ashkenazic Jews is to respond only *Yehe Shemeh rabba mevarakh le'alam ul'alme almaya*, except that some Ashkenazic Jews add the word *yitbarakh*.[395]

395. The *Bet Yosef* cited three opinions regarding the response of *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba*:

a) 28 letters: Rabbenu David Abudarham testified that some people respond all the way up to the words *ve'imru Amen*. The tradition he received from his teachers is to respond only *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba mevarakh le'alam ul'alme almaya*, and no more. This appears to be the opinion of Rav Sa'adya Ga'on and Rabbenu Asher as well. The seven words beginning with *Yehe* have a total of 28 letters, while the word Amen is a response to the previous portion of kaddish and is not connected to the rest. The *Kol Bo* (#7) likewise stated that the response consists of 28 letters, and that this is the meaning of the Talmud's teaching: "Whoever responds *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba* with all *koḥo* (his strength)...." The letters of the Hebrew word *ko'aḥ* have the numerical value of 28.

Rashi (*Sefer Hapardes*) and Rambam (text of the prayers) both ruled that the response includes only these seven words.

b) 28 words: After citing the custom of responding with 28 letters, Harav Yitzḥak Abohab cited a second opinion that the congregation should respond with 28 words, which means from *Yehe Shemeh rabba* until the words *da'amiran be'alma* (this is the custom that Rabbenu David Abudarham observed people practicing). He cited a manuscript stating that according to the *Ge'onim*, it is technically sufficient to respond until the word *almaya*, but if someone added even one more word he must continue to the end [of the half-kaddish]. He should not add the words *ve'imru Amen*, since those words are the cantor's instructions for others to respond Amen, and only the cantor gives those instructions. Since there are two opinions regarding how much one must respond, if someone is in the middle of the *Shema* or its blessings and he interrupts to respond to kaddish, he should respond with only seven words since he might be guilty of an unnecessary interruption if he would recite the longer response.

c) until after *yitbarakh*: The *Bet Yosef* cited a Midrash teaching: Ribbi El'azar son of Ribbi Yose related, "One time I was walking along the road and I found Eliyahu, *z"l*, together with 4,000 camels carrying full loads. I asked him what they were carrying, and he replied that they carried God's wrath and fury with which to punish those people who speak between kaddish and *Barekhu*, or between two related blessings, or between two passages of the prayers, or between *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba* and the word *Yitbarakh*."

It seems from this that the congregation must recite the word *Yitbarakh*, for it is unlikely that Eliyahu was referring to the cantor only. It is possible, however, that the congregation needs to respond only through the word *almaya*, but they must listen to the cantor continuing with *yitbarakh* and no one may speak while waiting for the cantor to reach *yitbarakh* and continue.

Harav Yosef Gikatilla warned that it is imperative for each person to add the word *yitbarakh* immediately after the word *almaya*, and if someone does not, he is liable to receive a severe punishment.

In practice

The *Shulḥan Arukh* (56:3) states that it is a mistake to respond only until the word *almaya*, since it is forbidden to separate the word *almaya* from the word *yitbarakh*. This follows the ruling of Harav Yosef Gikatilla, but it does not reveal to us whether it is sufficient to simply add the word *yitbarakh* or whether one should add more. The *Magen Avraham* (56:9) inferred from the *Bet Yosef* that one should recite all 28 words until *da'amiran be'alma*, and this is likewise the opinion of the *Shene Luḥot Haberit* and the *Eliya Rabba*. Despite this, the *Magen Avraham* concluded

י. העונה "יהא שמה רבא", ובטרם שסיים לומר עד "דאמירן בעלמא", הגיע השליח ציבור ל"שמיה דקודשא בריך הוא", לא יענה "אמן", כי עניית אמן שלאחר "שמיה דקודשא בריך הוא" אינה חיובית כל כך לפי הדין, ומכיון שעודנו עוסק בעניית "אמן יהא שמה רבא מברך", ולא השלים כ"ח

Dealing with a speedy cantor

10) If someone begins to respond *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba*... but finds that the cantor is quick and reaches the words *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu* before he has finished responding until *da'amiran be'alma*, he should not interrupt to respond Amen to the cantor's *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu*. It is not imperative according to the halakha to respond Amen at that point, and since he is occupied already with responding *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba*, he may continue until he has completed the 28

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that the most correct practice is to respond the first seven words only.

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (56:33) ruled that according to the Arizal we must respond with the 28 words until *da'amiran be'alma*, as we are taught in *Sha'ar Hakavanot*, and this is the common custom of Sefardic Jews. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. I, #5:3) concurred with this.

The *Netivot Hama'arav* (page 20) testified that although the scholars of Morocco follow the above instructions, the masses adopted the practice of responding through the words *deKudsha berikh Hu* only. This practice, however, has no halakhic foundation. The *Ale Hadas* (page 113) likewise complained that there is no source to justify this practice, citing the *Orhot Hayim* (page 21) who challenged his readers to find a basis for this practice.

Practice of Ashkenazic Jews

Among Ashkenazic Jews, there are two customs, both cited in the *Mishna Berura* (56:15). One custom is to respond only until the word *be'alma*, as the *Bet Yosef* concluded, and the other is to add the word *Yitbarakh*, following the ruling of Harav Yosef Gikatilla. Harav Eliyahu of Vilna endorsed the first custom, explaining that the word *be'alma* ends the sentence, while the word *yitbarakh* begins the next sentence. Therefore, they do not belong together. The *Mishna Berura* commented that Harav Eliyahu would agree that it is permissible to add the word *yitbarakh* as long as one pauses after the word *be'alma*. The *Arokh Hashulhan* Epstein admitted that most Lithuanian communities had the practice of responding through the word *yitbarakh*. This is definitely the custom of most Hassidic communities as well.

Almaya Yitbarakh

The *Od Yosef Hai* (*parashat Vayehi* halakha 12) states that Harav Yosef Gikatilla's ruling that it is forbidden to interrupt between the word *almaya* and the word *yitbarakh* when responding to kaddish means that it is forbidden to pause even momentarily to show that *almaya* is the end of one sentence and *yitbarakh* is the beginning of the next sentence. Although *yitbarakh* actually begins a new sentence, when we respond to kaddish we are to recite these words without pausing whatsoever, although it sounds as if we are running one sentence into the next one.

According to the prayer book of Harav Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi, however, the instructions indicate that we ought to pause momentarily between these words since *almaya* is the end of a sentence. This likewise seems to be the opinion of Rashi in his *Hapardes* prayer book. Despite this, the *Od Yosef Hai* testified that the common custom follows the instructions of Harav Yosef Gikatilla, and this practice should not be discouraged or protested.

Apparently, the *Od Yosef Hai's* position is that if someone asks for instructions, he should be taught to pause momentarily after *almaya*, following the instructions of Harav Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi. Nonetheless, the universal custom today among Sefardic Jews is to recite the words without pausing whatsoever, and this is the simple reading of the *Shulhan Arukh* (56:3). In fact, this is clearly the teaching of the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayehi* halakha 11). Harav Yaakov Hillel (journal *Mikabtze'el* #29, pages 87-89) expressed surprise at the teaching of the *Od Yosef Hai*, demonstrating that there is no proof from the words of Harav Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi to suggest that he differed with Harav Yosef Gikatilla.

תיבות, דהיינו עד "דאמירן בעלמא", אין לו להפסיק לענות אמן זו. וכן דעת רבינו האר"י בשער הכוונות.

אבל אם החזן או אומר הקדיש ממהר מאוד, והגיע לסיום חצי הקדיש, ואמר "דאמירן בעלמא ואמרו אמן", והוא עודנו באמצע כ"ח תיבות של "יהא שמה רבא מברך", יפסיק ויענה 'אמן', שאמן זה שהוא סיום חצי קדיש, יש הכרח לענותו, שהכל הולך אחר החתום.

ולכתחלה על השליח ציבור, וכן על מי שאומר קדיש, לומר "יהא שמה רבא" בנחת, לאט לאט, ולא למהר, כדי שיספיקו הקהל לענות עד "דאמירן בעלמא", ואחר כך יענו גם "אמן" אחר "שמיה דקודשא בריך הוא". [ראה ביבי"א ח"א סי' ה, ח"ו סי' ח אות ג, הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' צט]

יא. גם השליח צבור האומר קדיש, צריך לומר "יהא שמיה רבא" וכו'. אולם לא יאמר "אמן" יהא שמיה רבא. [רמ"א סי' נו ס"א]. [כה"ח ס"ק כז]

words until *da'amiran be'alma*. This follows the instructions of the Arizal in *Sha'ar Hakavanot*.[396]

If the cantor recites kaddish so quickly that he reaches the words *da'amiran be'alma ve'imru Amen* before the congregation has completed their response of *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba*, however, they must cut themselves short and respond Amen to the end of the half-kaddish. It is vitally important to respond Amen at that point.[397]

In light of this, it is important for the cantor or anyone else reciting kaddish to recite it slow enough to enable the congregation to respond *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba* properly and still be able to respond Amen to *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu*.

The cantor also recites *Yehe Shemeh*

11) The cantor, or whoever recites kaddish must also recite the sentence of *Yehe Shemeh rabba*,[398] but he does not repeat the preceding Amen.

396. The *Sha'ar Hakavanot* states that if the congregation or any individuals have completed their 28-word response of *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba* by the time the cantor reaches the words *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu*, they should respond Amen at that point. It is obvious from this that if anyone in the congregation has not yet completed his 28-word response, he should not interrupt to respond Amen. This is the ruling of the responsa *Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. II, #38) and the *Petah Hadevir* (56:6). Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. I, #5:4) deduced from this that according to the Arizal, we are definitely obligated to respond with 28 words for *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba*, for if it was not an absolute obligation we ought to interrupt it in order to respond Amen to *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu*. Afterward he reconsidered, explaining that it might not be an absolute obligation, but even so we should not interrupt it since there is no halakhic obligation to respond Amen to *Shemeh deKudsha berikh Hu*.

397. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* VI, #8:3) ruled that in this case one must interrupt to respond Amen to the cantor, since it is most important to respond Amen to the end of the half-kaddish. He cited the *Tahorat Hamayim* (*Shiyure Tahora*, *ma'arekhet ayin*, #44) who issued this ruling, and he repeated it in *Halikhot Olam* (Vol. I, page 99).

The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, #85:10), however, ruled that even in this case one should not interrupt to respond Amen, and he argued that this is the ruling of the responsa *Rav Pe'alim* (Vol. II, #38). Maran the Rishon Letziyon did not concur with this interpretation.

The *Eshel Avraham* of Butchatch pointed out that if several people respond *Amen Yehe Shemeh rabba* until *da'amiran be'alma*, they are not to respond Amen to one another. They are to respond to the cantor only.

398. The cantor's *Yehe Shemeh rabba*

The *Mishna Berura* (56:2) states: "The cantor must also say the words *Yehe Shemeh rabba*... silently, and then