

Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz

Minhag Ashkenaz: Sources and Roots

By

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Kedusha – Remaining Silent During the *Chazzan's* Recitation

According to early traditions, most *halakhic* decisors and the great German rabbis, the congregation should not recite the preface to *Kedusha* (נקדוש, or נעריצך on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*), or the intervening segments which were initially assigned to the *chazzan* (ועומתם ברוך יאמרו and ובדברי קדשך כתוב (לאמור). Nevertheless, it has become customary nowadays in many communities for the congregation to participate in the recitation of these three segments of *kedusha* that were initially assigned only to the *chazzan*.

This practice marks a deviation from the original tradition as documented in *halakhic* sources, including the *siddur* texts of Rav Se'adia Ga'on (reflecting the custom of the *Ge'onim* in Babylonia), and the Rambam (reflecting the original *Sephardic* custom). These and several other sources clearly indicate that only the *chazzan* recites these portions of the *kedusha*.

The first recorded instance of this deviation appears in the writings of the Rosh, who encountered this phenomenon when he left Germany and settled in Spain. The Rosh observed that some congregation members would join in the *chazzan's* recitations of these segments, and he strongly objected. His ruling was codified as authoritative *Halakha* in the *Shulchan Arukh*, and this was the prevalent practice among both *Sephardic* and *Ashkenazic* communities alike for many generations.

This began to change with the proliferation of the *Ari-zal's* customs throughout Eastern Europe. The *Ari-zal* held that the congregation should *silently* recite these segments of the *kedusha* along with the *chazzan*, but as this practice became widespread, congregations gradually began joining aloud with the *chazzan*. It would appear that this development led the Taz (Rabbi David Halevi) to suggest several *halakhic* justifications for this practice. By contrast, the Vilna *Ga'on* and most *Acharonim* insisted on

following the time-honored tradition of remaining perfectly silent during the *chazzan's* recitation. In the *Chatam Sofer's* synagogue, for instance, those who joined with the *chazzan* were admonished to remain silent.

Ultimately, the custom to join with the *chazzan* spread throughout Europe to the point where the original, authentic practice was forgotten altogether. German communities, however, stood out in their firm insistence upon adhering to the original practice.

We find in *halakhic* sources a number of reasons why the congregation should remain silent during the *chazzan's* recitation:

- The *kedusha* service was arranged in responsive form; the *chazzan* summons the congregation to give praise to G-d, and then the congregation responds. (*Rokei'ach*)
- The responsive format follows the manner in which the heavenly angels recite *kedusha*. (*Abudarham*)
- Joining the *chazzan* in reciting the portions assigned to him displays irreverence towards the *kedusha* service. (*Rosh*)
- In all parts of the service requiring a *minyan* – *kaddish*, *kedusha* and *barekhu* – it is forbidden for the congregation to recite the segment assigned to the *chazzan*. (*Yesh Nochalin*, *Vilna Ga'on*)
- If the congregation recites the portions assigned to the *chazzan*, they no longer constitute a *minyan*, but rather a group of individuals praying privately. (*Sema*, *Machatzit Hashekel*)
- If the congregation recites the *chazzan's* introductions along with him, they are in effect merely describing how the angels conduct the *kedusha* service, rather

than actually giving praise to the Almighty. (Rabbi A.L. Gordon)

Thus, the time-honored tradition among German communities to remain silent during the chazzan's recitation is the correct, authentic practice as recorded in classical *halakhic* sources.

נִקְדַּשׁ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ בְּעוֹלָם יְיָ שֵׁם שְׁמֹרֵתֶיךָ אֲחֻזָּה בְּשִׁמְיָם
 בְּכָתוּב עַל־יַד נְבִיאֶיךָ וְקָרָא זֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאָמַר קָטָל וְסֵן קְדוּשׁ
 קְדוּשׁ קְדוּשׁ יי צְבָאוֹת מְלֹא כֹחַ הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדֶיךָ אֵין בְּקוֹל
 רֵעַשׁ נְדוּל אֲדִיר וְהִזְקַמְשָׁמִיעִים קוֹל: מִתְנַשְׂאִים לַעֲמַת
 שְׂרָפִים יִלְעָנֵהֶם בְּרוּיָאֲמְרוּ קָטָל וְסֵן בְּרוּיָאֲמְרוּ יי מִמְקוֹמוֹ
 אֵין מִמְקוֹמֵי מַלְכֵנוּ חוֹפִיעַ וְהַמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵינוּ כִּי מִחֲבִיטֵי אֲנֵהֵנוּ לֵךְ
 מִתִּי הַמְלוֹךְ בְּצִיּוֹן בְּקָרוֹב וּבִיטֵינוּ לַעֲלֵם וְעַד חֲשֹׁכוֹן
 הַתְּנַדָּד וְהַתְּקַדֵּשׁ בַּחוּץ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עֵינֶיךָ לְדוֹר וְדוֹר וּלְנֶצַח
 נֶצְחִים: וְעֵינֵינוּ תְּרַאֲנֵה מַלְכוּתְךָ כִּדְבַר הָאֲמוּר בְּשִׁירֵי
 עֲזָרָה עַל יַד יְרוּד מִשִּׁיחַ צְדָקָה קָטָל וְסֵן יְמִלּוֹךְ יי לַעֲוֹלָם לְהַיָּד
 צִיּוֹן לְדוֹר וְדוֹר תְּלִלָהּ: שֵׁן לְדוֹר וְדוֹר רִצָּה אֱוִי־קֶרֶב

Instructions for the solo parts of the *chazzan* in *Shabbat kedusha*
 in Rav Ya'akov Emden's *Siddur*, Altona 1745