

It is no wonder, then that (רבנו תם) blessed be his memory, the greatest of the (Commentators on the Talmud and Legal Authorities) and his contemporaries, the other rabbis of France, and in later days the "Gaonim" of Poland, Palestine and Germany, solemnly decreed a ban (חרם) against all persons who undertake to officiate at a marriage whilst not ordained rabbis, this interdiction extending also to the bridegroom and the bride's father; and a reprimand was even administered to friends and relatives who attended a wedding at which anyone other than an ordained rabbi had officiated.

Mention is made of this in various commentaries by the great rabbis, who on their part also assented to this ruling.

From the foregoing, it is very obvious how groundless the cantors' claim is that for generations past they, the cantors, have been the official marriage performers. In no country and in no community was a cantor ever permitted to perform a ceremony when a rabbi was available. Even in the barbarous Russia of old where the authorities recognized none but the college-bred and secularly-educated rabbis and ignored the orthodox rabbis as such — even in old Russia, the performing of marriages among Jews was always in the hands of the ordained orthodox rabbis, and not the cantors, with the possible exceptions of occasions when the rabbi found it impossible, personally, to come to the wedding and he permitted the cantor to act in his behalf for that particular occasion. This happened only in cases where the rabbi was positively sure that the cantor was thoroughly competent in the marriage laws, that he was a worthy, religious Jew, and that he would strictly adhere to all the laws. But, permission of this kind a rabbi could issue to a non-cantor just as well, if the man, in the rabbi's opinion, was fitted for the task. For, after all, wherein lies a cantor's superiority to his fellow Jews in the dominion of religion and religious affairs? His entire task is to pray aloud for the congregation, and any loyal Jew is allowed to do this who has the voice for it. Owing to the fact that the Jewish people are lovers of music, certain congregations who could afford it, engaged cantors to sing for them and make their Sabbath and holiday services more enjoyable, but since those congregations could not pay out enormous salaries, they promised the cantors the income from weddings, after the rabbi had received his marriage fee and the beadle too derived benefit for his part in the marriage ceremony. (under the name of (רב חזן שמש, רח"ש) in order that the means of recompense may be (The Hebrew name of the marriage fee "a composite of three capital letters for Rabbis, Hasan, cantor, and Shamos, beadle) enhanced, but by no means was the performance of the marriage ceremony turned over to them. The cantors were only allowed to sing "Mi Adir" (the initial greeting) and the last "Brocheh" (final blessing).)

But to the sorrow of every pious and conscientious Jew, the performance of marriages in the city of Boston has become a loose and degraded affair. Men who are absolutely incompetent, men who do not even know the meaning of the words (הרי את מקורשת לי) men who do not even know how to spell a Hebrew name, have become "officiators" and marriage performers, and many of them are so irreligious that, according to Jewish law, they would not be even eligible as witnesses. We know of cases where individual women, nephews and aunts, "Kohens" (descendants of Aaron the High Priest) and divorcees were united in marriage, (such union is forbidden by Jewish Law) not to mention the marrying of divorcees before the three months after their divorces are up, which has become a common practice with cantors performing marriages. It has reached a point where the parents of the couple to be married must make a strict search in order to make sure that the prospective bride or groom are legitimately born children, in the eyes of the Jewish law.