

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS “YASHAR KO’AH:” WHAT YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO DO

After a Jew finishes leading a service part or has any other honor in services, Ashkenazic Jews from all over the world might go up to that Jew who just took part in services and say to them “*Yashar ko’ah!*”

Nobody knows exactly what “*Yashar ko’ah*” means. Some people say it’s not even real Hebrew! It sounds similar to “יִישָׁר כֹּחֶךָ” (*yeyasher kohakha*), which means something like “may God reinforce your strength!”*

Even though *yashar ko’ah* is improper Hebrew, there is still a proper response to it! Here’s how to handle these situations:

STEP 1: Act calm.

STEP 2: Follow this chart:

If 1 male person says “ <i>yashar ko’ah</i> ” to you...	...you reply “בָּרוּךְ תְּהִיָּה” (<i>ba-RUKH tih-YEH!</i>)”
If 1 female person says “ <i>yashar ko’ah</i> ” to you...	...you reply “בְּרוּכָה תְּהִיָּי” (<i>beru-KHAH tih-YI!</i>)”
If multiple people, including at least 1 male person , say “ <i>yashar ko’ah</i> ” to you...	...you reply “בְּרוּכִים תְּהִיּוּ” (<i>beru-KHIM tih-YU!</i>)”
If multiple people who are all female say “ <i>yashar ko’ah</i> ” to you...	...you reply “בְּרוּכוֹת תְּהִיּוּ” (<i>beru-KHOT tih-YU!</i>)” OR (in elegant Hebrew): “בְּרוּכוֹת תְּהִיֵּנָה” (<i>beru-KHOT tih-YE-nah!</i>)”

Each of these responses is Hebrew for “**May you be blessed!**” A nice thing to say! And, if you found it easy to say, well... *yashar ko’ah!* And... if you want a real challenge now, turn to the next page...

* The phrase “יִישָׁר כֹּחֶךָ” actually appears—without vowels—in the Babylonian Talmud at Shabbat 87a and Bava Batra 14b.

Maybe you don't want to say “*yashar ko 'ah*” to people. After all, that phrase doesn't make much sense. But you still might want to let Jews know in a traditional way when they do a good job.

A more proper (but slightly more complicated) way to let Jews know when they did a good job at services is to say one of the following phrases, which are more common in the Sephardic world:

If you're talking to 1 male Jew about the good job they did...	...you can say “חֲזַק וּבְרוּךְ” (<i>ha-ZAK uva-RUKH</i>)!”
If you're talking to 1 female Jew about the good job they did...	...you can say “חֲזָקָה וּבְרוּכָה” (<i>haza-KAH uvru-KHAH</i>)!”
If you're talking to multiple Jews, including at least 1 male Jew , about the good job they did...	...you can say “חֲזָקִים וּבְרוּכִים” (<i>haza-KIM uvru-KHIM</i>)!”
If you're talking to multiple Jews who are all female about the good job they did...	...you can say “חֲזָקוֹת וּבְרוּכוֹת” (<i>haza-KOT uvru-KHOT</i>)!”

Each of these responses is Hebrew for “You are strong and blessed!”
A lovely thing to say!

By the way, you already know how to respond to somebody who says any of these phrases to you! You just respond to them exactly the way you would had they said to you “*Yashar ko 'ah*!”

So, the next time someone goes up to you or someone you know and they offer Hebrew words of congratulations with a blessing for strength, you'll know exactly what to do and exactly what to say.