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Interrupting the Shema

The *Mishna* had stated: If one is at the point of the breaks (*between the sections of shema and its blessings*), one may give greeting etc. [*out of respect (to an esteemed person, one who it is proper to greet first) and return a greeting ... these are the words of Rabbi Meir*].

The *Gemora* clarifies: For what purpose may he return the greeting? It cannot be out of respect, for seeing that he may give greeting (*out of respect*), is there any question that he may return it? Rather, it must be that he gives greeting out of respect and he may return a greeting to anyone.

The *Gemora* asks: But then, let us consider the next clause: If, however, he is in the middle (*of a section of shema or one of its blessings*), one may give greeting out of fear (*to someone who might kill him if he does not greet him first*) and return it. For what purpose may he return the greeting? It cannot be out of fear, for seeing that he may give greeting (*out of fear*), is there any question that he may return it? Rather, it must be that he may return a greeting out of respect. But if so, then this (*R' Meir's opinion*) is the identical view of Rabbi Yehudah, as we learned in our *Mishna*: Rabbi Yehudah says: If one is in the middle (*of a section of shema or one of its blessings*), he may give greeting out of fear and return it out of respect; if, however, he is at the point of the breaks (*between the sections of shema and its blessings*), one may give greeting out of respect and return greeting

to anyone. [*Accordingly, there exists no argument between them!?*]

The *Gemora* answers: It is as if there are missing words in the *Mishna*, and this is what it really is saying: If one is at the point of the breaks (*between the sections of shema and its blessings*), he may give greeting out of respect, and it is not necessary to say that he may return it; but if, however, he is in the middle, he gives greeting out of fear and it is not necessary to say that he may return it; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehudah says: If one is in the middle, he may give greeting out of fear and return it out of respect; if, however, he is at the point of the breaks, one may give greeting out of respect and return greeting to anyone.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* to that effect: If one is reciting *Shema* and his teacher or anyone greater than him comes upon him, the *halachah* is as follows: If he is at the point of the breaks (*between the sections of shema and its blessings*), he may give greeting out of respect, and it is not necessary to say that he may return it; but if, however, he is in the middle, he gives greeting out of fear and it is not necessary to say that he may return it; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehudah says: If one is in the middle, he may give greeting out of fear and return it out of respect; if, however, he is at the point of the breaks, one may give greeting out of respect and return greeting to anyone. (13b – 14a)

Other Interruptions

Eichi, the teacher of *braisos* at the school of Rabbi Chiya inquired of Rabbi Chiya: What is the *halachah* of interrupting (*to give greetings*) during the recital of *Hallel* and the reading of the *Megillah*? Do we argue using a *kal vachomer* (*literally translated as light and heavy, or lenient and stringent; an a fortiori argument; it is one of the thirteen principles of biblical hermeneutics; it employs the following reasoning: if a specific stringency applies in a usually lenient case, it must certainly apply in a more serious case*) that if he may interrupt during the recital of the *Shema*, which is a Biblical *mitzvah*, there is no question that he may do so during the recital of *Hallel*, which is a Rabbinical *mitzvah*; or perhaps, do we say that the publicizing of the miracle is more important?

He replied: He may interrupt, and there is no concern at all.

Rabbah said: On the days on which the individual (*even while he is praying privately*) recites the complete *Hallel* (*on Sukkos, Shmini Atzeres, Chanukah, the first day of Pesach and the first day of Shavuos*), he may interrupt (*to greet a person out of respect*) between one paragraph and another, but not in the middle of a paragraph. On the days on which the individual does not recite the complete *Hallel* (*Rosh Chodesh and the remaining days of Pesach*), he may interrupt even in the middle of a paragraph.

The *Gemora* asks: But is that so, for surely Rav bar Shaba once happened to visit Ravina on one of the days on which the individual does not recite the complete *Hallel*, and Ravina did not interrupt his recital to greet him?

The *Gemora* answers: This case is different, for Ravina did not consider Rav bar Shaba as being more prominent than him (*and therefore there was no need to greet him*). (14a)

Tasting vs. Eating

Ashyon, the teacher of *braisos* at the school of Rabbi Ami inquired of Rabbi Ami: May one who is observing a fast take a taste (*of food that is being cooked – to see if it requires any salt or spice*)? Has he undertaken to abstain from eating and drinking, and this is really not such, or has he undertaken not to have any benefit, and this he obtains?

He replied: He may taste, and there is no concern at all.

It has been taught similarly in a *braisa*: A mere taste does not require a blessing (*beforehand*), and one who is observing a fast may take a taste, and there is no concern at all.

The *Gemora* asks: How much may he taste?

Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi used to taste as much as a *revi'is* (*a quarter of a log*). (14a)

Greeting before Praying

Rav said: If one gives greeting to his fellow before he has prayed (*Shemoneh Esrei*), it is as if he made him into a *bamah* (*a private altar; as if he is neglecting the proper place to pray*), as it is written: *Cease from the man in whose nostrils is a breath, for (ba'meh) with what is he regarded as worthy?* Do not read it as '*ba'meh*' – with what; but rather, *bamah*. Shmuel interpreted it as follows: With what reason did you esteem this man and not God?

Rav Sheishes asked from our *Mishna*: If one is at the point of the breaks (*between the sections of shema and its blessings*), one may give greeting out of respect (*to an esteemed person, one who it is proper to greet first*) and return a greeting. [*He is greeting him before he has prayed!?*]



Rabbi Abba explains the prohibition to refer only to one who rises early to visit another at his door (*but to greet someone when you happen to encounter him - that would be permitted*).

Rav Idi bar Avin said in the name of Rav Yitzchak bar Ashyan: It is forbidden for a man to conduct his own business before he says his prayers (*in the morning*), as it is written: *Righteousness shall precede him, and then he shall set his footsteps on his own way.*

And Rav Idi bar Avin said in the name of Rav Yitzchak bar Ashyan: Whoever prays and then goes out on the road, the Holy One, Blessed be He, conducts his business for him, as it is written: *Righteousness shall precede him, and then he shall set his footsteps on his own way.*

Rabbi Yonah said in the name of Rabbi Zeira: Whoever goes seven days without a dream is called wicked, as it is written: *He will sleep satisfied, and he shall not be visited with evil.* Do not read it as *savei'ah* – satisfied, but rather, as *sheva* - seven.

Rav Acha the son of Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said to him: So said Rabbi Chiya in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Whoever satisfies himself with words of Torah before he retires will not be informed of evil tidings, as it is written: *He will sleep satisfied, and he shall not be visited with evil.*

Rabbi Avahu said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: The *halachah* follows Rabbi Yehudah, who says that between *va'yomer* and *emes ve'yatziv*, one should not interrupt.

Rabbi Avahu said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: What is Rabbi Yehudah's reason? It is because we find in the Torah that it is written: *Hashem, God, is true.*

The *Gemora* inquires: Does one repeat the word 'true' (*after ending the Shema with that word*), or does he not repeat the word 'true'?

Rabbi Avahu said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: He repeats the word 'true.' Rabbah says: He does not repeat the word 'true.'

The *Gemora* relates: A certain man went down to act as a prayer leader before Rabbah, and Rabbah heard him say 'true,' 'true' twice, He remarked: A stream of truth has gotten hold of this man. (14a – 14b)

DAILY MASHAL

Veyatziv: Why in Aramaic?

In the sidur *Magid Tzedek* by Rabbi Pinchas of Plotzk, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon, we find a wonderful explanation, praised by the Gaon, of the 16 words *emes veyatziv venachon...vetov veyafeh*. According to his explanation, each expression concerns one verse in the *parshayos* of *Shema'* and *Vehayah im shama'*. The person praying says that what he said in the verse *Shema' Yisrael* is *emes* – true and that what he said in *Baruch shem...* is *yatziv* – firm, and what he said in the verse *Veohavta* - And you shall love Hashem... is *nachon* - correct and so on. The affirmation of *Baruch shem...* is *veyatziv*. Why? Because *Baruch shem...* is whispered so that the angels won't become jealous of us. Therefore its affirmation, though said aloud, is said in Aramaic - *yatziv* is an Aramaic word (Daniel 2:45) - so that the angels, who aren't familiar with this language, shouldn't understand.