Among the restrictions of Tisha B’Av is that of greeting people, referred to as the prohibition of *sheilat shalom.* This – as do most other Tisha B’Av restrictions – corresponds to the laws which apply to a mourner during the *shiva* period, because all Jews are in mourning for the Beit HaMikdash. One who is greeted on Tisha B’Av by one who may not know this *halacha* should not ignore the greeting, lest doing so embarrass the other person, but should offer a return greeting in a mournful manner.

However, does saying “good morning” or “hello” violate the prohibition of *sheilat shalom?* It is unclear if such a greeting is indeed included in the prohibition. Let’s take a look.

To properly understand the prohibition of greeting others on Tisha B’Av and what it entails, one must first understand what the definition of *sheilat shalom* is. When one Jew meets another, he traditionally greets him with “Shalom Aleichem,” and the other returns the greeting with “Aleichem Shalom.” This greeting was actually instituted by the Sages. Greeting a fellow Jew in this way allows one to do so with G-d’s name, as *Shalom* is one of the names of G-d. *Shalom* does not merely mean “hello,” as it is commonly used in everyday Hebrew, but rather a greeting of “*Shalom Aleichem*” is actually a prayer that the person one greets be blessed.

As such, a number of halachic authorities have distinguished between the traditional greeting of “*Shalom Aleichem*” and modern-day greetings, acknowledgement and recognition. While a mourner should not greet others using G-d’s name, saying “hello” should be no worse than any of the other mundane exchanges which take place on Tisha B’Av, or in a house of mourning for that matter. For example, when one answers the phone, the first word one says is “hello,” which is not really a greeting at all but rather an expression of readiness to engage in conversation. There is no prohibition on conversation on Tisha B’Av or in a house of mourning.

As such, offering another Jew a “Shalom Aleichem” is more of a religious act than a greeting. Common expressions such as “hello,” “good morning” and the like are simply not in the same category as “Shalom Aleichem” in either depth, structure or status. As the Be’er Heitev writes: “It is possible to say that since most of our greetings today consist of simply ‘good morning,’ it is not the true *sheilat shalom* [which is forbidden]… Furthermore it says in the Beit Yosef… that saying ‘hello’ is permissible. It also seems from the Darkei Moshe that greetings are only forbidden when one mentions G-d’s name… Anything else is not *sheilat shalom.*” It is also permitted to wish someone *mazal tov* on Tisha B’Av, to say *yasher koach* or to ask someone how they are feeling.

As such, it is reasonable to suggest that the only type of greeting truly forbidden on Tisha B’Av (or by one who is in mourning) is one which includes the name of G-d. Somewhat related to this is the prohibition against greeting another person in the morning before one has recited *Shacharit.* Here too, the prohibition is specifically greeting others with G-d’s name, “*Shalom Aleichem,*” and not merely a “hello” or “good morning.”

While it might indeed be preferable not to offer any greeting whatsoever on Tisha B’Av (or when in mourning), it cannot be said, however, that a simple acknowledgment is in violation of *halacha.* As such, one who feels it is rude or uncomfortable, even on Tisha B’Av, to pass others without an acknowledgement of some sort, can feel free to nod one’s head or offer a somber “hello.” Often, merely greeting another person by saying their name in a distinct manner and tone of voice accomplishes the same thing as well.

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1 OC 554:20.
2 YD 385:1.
4 Mishna Berura 554:41.
6 Berachot 54a.
7 Shabbat 10b.
8 Meiri, Berachot 63b.
9 Be’er Heitev, YD 385:1.
10 L’horot Natan 2:37, Az Nidberu 136; Halichot Shlomo, Tisha B’Av, Chapter 15 note 30.
11 Emet LeYa’akov 554.
12 OC 89:2.
13 Ibid.
14 Ritva, Moed Katan 27b.
15 Be’er Moshe 4:106; Nahar Mitzrayim, Aveilut, 125; Leket Yosher p.110.