



# Greeting People on Tisha B'Av

Among the restrictions of Tisha B'Av is that of greeting people, referred to as the prohibition of *sheilat shalom*.<sup>1</sup> This – as do most other Tisha B'Av restrictions – corresponds to the laws which apply to a mourner during the *shiva* period,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

However, does saying “good morning” or “hello” violate the prohibition of *sheilat shalom*?<sup>4</sup> It is unclear if such a greeting is indeed included in the prohibition.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> *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.<sup>8</sup>

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*.”<sup>9</sup> It is also permitted to wish someone *mazal tov* on Tisha B'Av,<sup>10</sup> to say *yasher koach* or to ask someone how they are feeling.<sup>11</sup>

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*.<sup>12</sup> Here too, the prohibition is specifically greeting others with G-d's name, “*Shalom Aleichem*,” and not merely a “hello” or “good morning.”<sup>13</sup>

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 acknowledgement 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<sup>14</sup> or offer a somber “hello.”<sup>15</sup> Often, merely greeting another person by saying their name in a distinct manner and tone of voice accomplishes the same thing as well.

<sup>1</sup> OC 554:20.

<sup>2</sup> YD 385:1.

<sup>3</sup> Chayei Adam 135:13; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 124:13.

<sup>4</sup> Mishna Berura 554:41.

<sup>5</sup> Rema, YD 385:1, Leket Yosher p. 110, Rivevot Ephraim 2:155:28.

<sup>6</sup> Berachot 54a.

<sup>7</sup> Shabbat 10b.

<sup>8</sup> Meiri, Berachot 63b.

<sup>9</sup> Be'er Heitev, YD 385:1.

<sup>10</sup> L'horot Natan 2:37, Az Nidberu 13:6; Halichot Shlomo, Tisha B'Av, Chapter 15 note 30.

<sup>11</sup> Emet LeYa'akov 554.

<sup>12</sup> OC 89:2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ritva, Moed Katan 27b.

<sup>15</sup> Be'er Moshe 4:106; Nahar Mitzrayim, Aveilut, 125; Leket Yosher p.110.



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