



Overview

Halacha Highlight

Performing a *mitzvah* during *shema*

Mishnah Berurah Siman 66 Seif Koton 2

הלילה לשאל או להשיב אפילו דברי תורה וכו'

G-d forbid, to inquire or respond even words of Torah etc.

Although Shulchan Aruch presents the guidelines for inquiring about others and responding to inquiry of another about one's well being Mishnah Berurah (סק"יב) writes that nowadays we do not interrupt our *davening* for these matters even if they are Torah related. The only time it may be permitted is if not responding would put a person's life in danger or if not responding would cause someone a loss of money. Under normal conditions not only is it prohibited to speak, but it is also prohibited to communicate by signaling to someone or writing them a message. Furthermore, one is not permitted to intentionally do something that will distract one from his *davening*, even if it is Torah or *mitzvah* related (פסקי תשובות אות א').

Birkei Yosef (י"ד ס"י רמ"ד אות א') writes that if a *talmid chacham* walks past one who is reading *shema* he must stand up in his presence. This does not constitute a lack of respect for Hashem to the contrary, since standing for a *talmid chacham* is a *mitzvah* it becomes a means of honoring Hashem as well. Furthermore, the principle that once one is involved in one *mitzvah* he is exempt from other *mitzvos* does not apply since it is possible to fulfill them both simultaneously. Tzitz Eliezer (ח"ד ס"י י') disagrees, and contends that it is prohibited for one to stand for a *talmid chacham* while saying *shema* and rejects the argument that standing does not violate the principle that one who is engaged in one *mitzvah* is exempt from another. He agrees, though that during *pesukei d'zimra* and *birchos krias shema* one must stand.

As far as giving *tzedaka* is concerned, one should not give *tzedaka* while reading the first *parsha* of *shema*. During the second and third *parshiyos* it is permitted but even so we find that there were *Gedolim* (פסקי תשובות ס"י ס"ג אות ו') who took steps to minimize the interruption (הליכות שלמה פ"ז אות ד') would place before him a stack of money and when poor people would come they would take the money themselves.

tzenter," which meant that they were only stuck for the tenth man.

When a guest came to town and saw these apparently bizarre interruptions during the gabbai's davening he was astounded. Immediately after the prayers he informed the gabbai that calling for a minyan was clearly forbidden even after he began *pesukei d'zimrah*, and surely by the time he reached the blessings of *shema*.

The gabbai for his part was not convinced. "What is the difference between giving and returning shalom, which is a *mitzvah*, and any other *mitzvah*? Although we no longer interrupt the prayers to give or return shalom that is only because doing so during davening is not a *mitzvah*. But calling for a minyan which is surely a *mitzvah* may certainly be done during the blessings of *shema*!"

When this question reached the Hisorrerus Teshuvah he agreed with the gabbai but had an important addition to make. "Although the gabbai is correct, that is only if holding up a paper explaining the problem will be ineffective. But if a paper is just as efficient it is clearly forbidden for him to speak!"

התעוורת תשובה, ח"א, סי' פ"ז

Siman 66 Seif 1:

Between paragraphs one is permitted to inquire about the well being of an honored person and respond to an inquiry about one's well being to anyone. In the middle of a paragraph one may inquire about the well being of someone that one fears, e.g. a father, *rebbe* or someone who is wiser and certainly to a king or strongman. It is also permitted to respond to an inquiry from an honorable person even in the middle of a *pasuk* with the exception of the *pasuk* of שמע ישראל and ברוך שם כבוד when one may not interrupt at all unless he fears that he will be murdered.

- ❖ This *halacha* applies only when two people happen to meet one another but it is prohibited to intentionally visit someone even a parent or *rebbe* before *davening*. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ One may only inquire or respond if there is a concern that not responding will generate hatred. Sefer HaChinuch also writes that one should not interrupt for someone who has never indicated that he minds when others do not greet him. Accordingly, since the custom is that people do not greet one another in *shul* one may not inquire or greet someone even during *pesukei d'zimra*. (M.B. 2)
- ❖ An honorable person is someone whom it is appropriate to greet, e.g. an elderly person or a Torah scholar. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ Rashba implies that one is permitted to inquire about another's well being even though it will force him to have to interrupt to respond. (M.B. 4)
- ❖ When two people are equal in stature inquiring or responding is categorized as "out of honor." (M.B. 6)
- ❖ According to some one should not interrupt in the middle of a *pasuk* unless an idea is completed and if he does interrupt he must restart the *pasuk*. (M.B. 10)
- ❖ If one could speed up to finish the *pasuk* before answering *kaddish* or *kedusha* one should make an effort to do so but if not one may respond even in the middle of a *pasuk* and afterwards he should restart that *pasuk*. (M.B. 10)
- ❖ One should not interrupt between שמע ישראל and ברוך שם since ברוך שם is also part of the declaration of Hashem's Unity. (M.B. 11)
- ❖ The implication is that one does not interrupt while reading the *pasuk* שמע ישראל even to answer *kaddish*, *kedusha* or ברכו. (M.B. 12)

Stories to Share

The Gabbai's Call

ש"ע ס' ס"י, א': "בין הפרקים שאול..."

A certain community shul had a difficult time getting a minyan together. They often had to keep trying—and would sometimes fail. Even when they eventually did get a minyan, it could sometimes take until almost *shemoneh esrei* to complete the count. The gabbai of the shul would intone, "Minyan, minyan!" while davening. Of course he often was required to do so after he began *pesukei d'zimrah*. At times, he even was required to continue loudly informing all people passing by that they still lacked a minyan, although by that time he was usually able to say the comforting, "A tzenter, a