

# HALOCHOSCOPE

Someone came late to davening. He is in the middle of *Krias Shema* while the congregation is up to *Krias Hatorah*. He hears that the Gabbai is making the customary *Mi Shebairach*, public prayer for the sick. His father is sick and needs his Tefilos. May he interrupt Krias Shema to add his father's name?

The issues:

- (A) Interruptions during Shema
- (B) Davening for the sick
- (C) Is this considered "greeting one in respect or awe"?

## (A) Interrupting Krias Shema

During Krias Shema one must concentrate on the the passage he is reciting. Reciting the first part is a Scriptural Mitzvah to accept the dominance and yoke of Heaven. Thus, without Kavanah, purposeful thought, it has less value. We rule that if one did not have the correct Kavanah in the first verse, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he had no Kavanah in the remainder, he fulfilled it, but one is not allowed to be distracted. Accordingly, it is inappropriate to interrupt Krias Shema. The same applies to the Brochos preceding it and following it. During the first passage, not only is speaking forbidden. One may not signal, wink or gesture either, even if this involves a Mitzvah. In the second passage one may use signals for a Mitzvah, but not speak.

However, interruptions are permitted under special circumstances. The points of interruption are graduated. During recital of a passage or verse, interruption is more serious than between passages. During the first two verses and between Ga'al Yisrael and Shemone Esrei, one may not interrupt at all. The Talmud debates how far the exceptions go. We follow the ruling that one may interrupt during the passages only to greet a person whom one must fear. One may respond to the greeting of one who deserves his respect. Between the passages one may greet someone who deserves respect and respond to anyone's greeting. The Poskim debate whether this applies to the responses of *Kedusha* etc. Some say that this is the loftiest form of greeting or responding out of respect. Others maintain that this is a form of praise for Hashem. It is not right to interrupt the davening one is already involved in with a different praise. We follow those who permit the most important responses.

One called to the Torah in the middle of Shema may go and recite the necessary Brochos, according to Ashkenazic practice. He may not request a Mi Shebairach, but the Gabbai may give him one of his own accord. If the Gabbai forgets his name and asks for it, he may respond. Presumably, this also applies to a family member's name. However, he may not ask for a name to be included.

A father is considered one who deserves respect. Some Poskim explain fear literally. I.e., if one fears for his life he may greet the person. This would not include a father or teacher. Others maintain that out of true fear one could always interrupt without special dispensation. The fear referred to is awe for greatness. This includes a father. However, the Poskim maintain that the entire issue does not apply in a shul, where people do not speak and greet each other. Furthermore, if the person being greeted does not mind not being greeted, one should not interrupt to greet him. It is apparent that apart from the first verses, which are the actual acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, the reason that such exceptions are made to permit interruptions is not due to the prominence of the greeting. I.e., it is not due to overriding Mitzvah to honor the other person. It is due to the need to maintain peaceful relations. Thus, in the parts of Krias Shema that are not on that highest level, one may interrupt, then continue. [See Brochos 13a-b, Yuma 19b, Poskim. Chinuch 420. Tur Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 63:6, 66:1-3, Mishne Berura 26, commentaries.]

### **(B) Davening for the sick**

This type of *Tefillah* is mentioned in the Torah. *Moshe Rabeinu* davened for his sister *Miriam* when she was stricken with *Tzara'as*. The Talmud says that the main purposes of *Bikur Cholim*, visiting the sick, are to make oneself aware of their needs and to be aroused to Tefilah for their recovery. The manner in which one attends the sick, sitting low and in submission, and praying and repenting, is meant to arouse the sick person to Tefilah. If he sees his visitors neglecting Tefilah, he might give up and not daven himself. Hashem wants the Tefilos of the person who is sick. In the wilderness, when the Jews were struck with a serpent, they were saved when they raised their eyes heavenwards to daven.

King David was informed that his son would die. The son was taken ill, yet he davened for him. Though the prospect at that time was that once the sickness had begun, nothing could save him, David fasted and prayed. He showed that the objects of *Teshuva*, repentance, and Tefilah stand alone, regardless of the presence or absence of direct results perceived by mankind. King Chizkiyahu was terminally ill, yet maintained that he had a long-standing tradition that one may not give up. With Tefilah one can be cured from the most serious Heavenly

decree. Furthermore, he instituted the rule that even after the decree has begun taking effect, Tefilah can save one from grave and hopeless sickness. He was cured through his Tefilah. He concealed a book of remedies so that people would not rely on medicine to the exclusion of Tefilah. Thus he taught that one must always have faith in Tefilah and Teshuva. When the desired results of one's Tefilah do not appear to have been fulfilled, he must realize that in the long term each Tefilah helps. Furthermore, one must not stop davening when he sees no results. Often he has not yet davened enough to make a difference, or the Tefilah had insufficient *Kavanah*, direction of thought. Some Poskim maintain that one does not fulfill the Mitzvah of *Bikur Cholim* properly if he does not daven for the sick person. It follows that the visit is to bring about the Tefilos of both patient and visitor. Saying "*Refuah Sheleimah*" sincerely is considered Tefilah.

The Scriptural source for Tefilah lists five things to daven for: prosperity, abundance and quality of bread and water; removal of sickness; absence of miscarriages; long life; and protection from enemies. Thus we see that health is at least one (if not three) of the main purposes of all Tefilah. The Talmud and commentaries maintain that for the truly righteous, medicine will not cure, only Tefilah. Furthermore, while Hashem places laws of nature to determine natural events, a righteous person will rise above these laws with Tefilah.

Moreover, while the gentiles are governed by *Mazal*, destiny, Jews are not governed by it. Even a specific decree can be overturned by Teshuva and Tefila. The Poskim debate whether this applies to an individual as well, or only to the people as a whole. There are also indications that though the length of one's life is predetermined, this too can be changed. The main thing that affects *Mazal* is *Zechus*, merit earned from certain deeds. According to some, these too require Tefilah to make them work. Some Poskim maintain that Tefilah alone can also provide this *Zechus*. *Tzedaka* and acts of kindness atone and save from death.

*Zechus* can help even for other people, especially the *Zechus* of a family member for his relatives. "A prisoner cannot release himself from jail," but needs outside help. The Talmud further relates that it is possible to daven that another person should be aided in repenting to save him. Some Poskim rule that this is an obligation. Though this appears to deny the principle of freewill, the commentaries explain that Hashem does not force one to do Teshuva. Rather, in response to the Tefilah of the person davening Hashem draws near to him, and in his merit to the entire universe. This nearness helps the person being davened for to do Teshuva. [See e.g. Brochos 5b 10a 60b Shabbos 12b 156a-b Psachim 56a Rosh Hashana 17b Taanis 25a Moed Katan 28a Nedarim 39b-40a Kidushin 82a

Baba Basra 16b, etc., Poskim Tur Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 335: especially 4, commentaries. Lev Moshe 1-2.]

### ***(C) Interrupting in our case***

In our case, the person reciting Shema was not greeted by his father. We have already mentioned that the accepted practice is not to greet in Shul at these junctures. However, the issue is whether he should interrupt due to awe or honor. He has an additional obligation to daven for his father's welfare due to the Mitzvos of *Kibud* and *Mora Av Va'eim*. Does this mean that he must interrupt his Krias Shema to catch the *Mi Shebairach*?

Two issues arise. First, we have shown that it seems that the reason for the interruptions is to maintain peaceful relations. Responses are permitted to all people. Nowadays that people do not care so much, one may not interrupt, apparently even for an elder. It does not seem to stem from the Mitzvos of honoring or revering parents or teachers. Not greeting them first might be a more serious affront. Even for the type of Mitzvah that warrants interruption in the middle of another Mitzvah, in our case one is only permitted to signal, but not to speak, and signaling is only permitted in the second passage. However, it is possible that the reason that (originally) one must not wait for elders to greet but must advance the greeting to them is due to these Mitzvos. Accordingly, in our case, though there is no greeting, may the son take the initiative to mention his father's name in the middle of his Shema?

Second, is the communal *Mi Shebairach* enough of a cause for such interruption? It has the added advantage over a private Tefillah in that the entire congregation is involved. They all respond Amein. The inclusion of the names of other sick people helps unite the Zechus and empowers it. It would appear to be an opportunity that must be taken advantage of. However, the main power of this Tefillah is the fact that one promises Tzedaka at the time. It is made at the time of Krias Hatorah to raise money for the shul. The Tefillah part of it is very short, and simply refers to the Zechus of the Tzedaka helping the sick person get better. This is not to understate its potency, but may one interrupt Shema for it? [See Mishne Berura 288:28, etc.]

Therefore, it would appear that one may not interrupt with words for this purpose. However, if the Gabbai knows the name and needs to be reminded to include it, one may signal or gesture to him while reciting the second passage of Krias Shema, or any subsequent section.