

VEBDE REBDE

Interruptions during Hallel

Question: Is it, and/or under what conditions, permitted to interrupt Hallel for matters of some importance?

Answer: The mishna (B'rachot 13a) cites two opinions about when it is permitted to greet people during Kri'at Sh'ma and its b'rachot. The factors are: whether the speaking is in the midst of a b'racha or section of Kri'at Sh'ma or between units; how important is the person one is greeting; whether one initiates or responds. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 66:1) rules that between units, one may initiate greetings to any respected person and respond to anyone. Within units, one can only initiate to one's father, rebbe, or a great scholar, as well as someone who can cause him harm; he can respond to anyone who is respected. Responding to Kaddish, Kedusha, and Barchu is important enough to do even in the midst of a unit (ibid. 3).

The gemara (B'rachot 14a) inquires whether one may be as lenient regarding when he may speak during Hallel as during Kri'at Sh'ma. It considers that on the one hand, Kri'at Sh'ma may be more stringent because the mitzva to recite it is a Torah law. On the other hand, Hallel might be more severe, since it is an act of publicizing Hashem's greatness. The

gemara posits that Hallel is not more severe. The gemara then distinguishes between days in which "Full Hallel" is recited (e.g., Yom Tov, Chanuka), in which case one may interrupt only in between units, and days in which "Half Hallel" is recited (Rosh Chodesh, Chol Hamoed Pesach), in which case one may interrupt even within a unit. (Hallel's units are the mizmorim which constitute it; these correspond to the "chapter numbers" that are usually used.)

Sephardim have a clear reason to distinguish between the two types of Hallel recitations: Full Hallel has b'rachot before and after it, which Half Hallel lacks (Shulchan Aruch, OC 422:2). The juxtaposition between b'rachot makes it problematic to talk (see Tosafot, Berachot 14a). However, even Ashkenazim, who make b'rachot before and after both types of Hallel, accept the above distinction. Rashi (ad loc.) explains that only on the days of Full Hallel is there a real obligation to recite; when there is no obligation, interruptions are less problematic.

We cannot go through all the permutations that can arise, but we will address some. The basic difference is that the same respected person whom one may greet only between the units of Kri'at Sh'ma (Shulchan Aruch, OC 66:1), one may greet during Half Hallel even in the midst of mizmorim (ibid. 422:4).

Nowadays, most people do not view the

need to greet others as seriously as Chazal did. Therefore, the poskim have assumed for quite some time that it is no longer appropriate to greet others during Kri'at Sh'ma (Mishna Berura 66:2). Since one cannot speak at any time during Hallel without a special reason (Shulchan Aruch, OC 422:4), the same is true for Hallel, and we do not greet people even during Half Hallel (Dirshu 422:25). What remains permitted to talk about is mainly matters of mitzva that need to be recited, and we will give a few examples. Answering Kaddish, Kedusha, and Bar'chu can be done even in the middle of a unit of Kri'at Sh'ma (Shulchan Aruch, OC 66:3) and therefore certainly during Hallel. Regarding one who is called up to the Torah when he is still in Kri'at Sh'ma, there are several opinions (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 66:4), but the standard one is that he does go up but should try to make it to a unit break before he starts the aliya (Mishna Berura 66:26; see details of how to handle the aliya). If this was during a Half Hallel, it would not be necessary to make it to a unit break. If one has to go to the bathroom, he should not recite Asher Yatzar until after Shemoneh Esrei (Mishna Berura 66:23) and in this case after Hallel because it can wait. The poskim dispute whether one may recite the b'racha on thunder because it cannot be done later, and the more accepted opinion is to do so only if it is between

units of Kri'at Sh'ma (Mishna Berura 66:19). During Half Hallel, it would be permitted at any point.

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