



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Let's talk about Bameh Madlikin for a moment-- you know, the thing we say between Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv?

Believe it or not, there are some hidden gems in Bameh Madlikin that we might miss when we say it. In fact, some of these gems get at the core of what Shabbat is all about.

For example, in it we say:

הַמְכַבֵּה אֶת הַנֵּר מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא מִתְיָרָא מִפְּנֵי גוֹיִם, מִפְּנֵי לְסָטִים, מִפְּנֵי רוּחַ רָעָה, וְאִם בְּשִׁבְלֵי
הַחֹלָה שִׁישָׁן, פְּטוּר.

"If one extinguishes a lamp because he fears idolaters, bandits, melancholia, or so that a sick person can fall asleep, he is not liable."

The Shulchan Aruch rules just like this, saying: מותר לכבות הנר בשביל שיִישן, "It is permitted to extinguish a flame on Shabbat for a sick person to sleep or if there is danger" (278:1).

When we read this, we might be rightly taken aback-- "You mean today we can turn off a light for someone who is sick? Isn't it prohibited to extinguish a flame on Shabbat?"

The Mishnah Berurah (278:1:3) clarifies that the value at hand that allows for this is pikuach nefesh (saving a life). If a person is so ill that his/her life is in danger, we can transgress Shabbat in order to provide care and relief. This breaking of Shabbat is exemplified in our text by the extinguishing of a flame. It is clear that this value only applies when a life is in danger (יש בו סכנה). But even ruach raah-- a psychological melancholia that Chazal understood to be a mental illness that made one fear light to a point of serious danger-- applies.

Similarly, if a person's enemies will kill him if they see a candle lit in his window (as in the cases listed in Bameh Madlikin), then he may extinguish that light in order to save his life.

Here, we see one of the greatest principles in our observance of Shabbat: *Saving a life-- even if it means breaking Shabbat-- is essential to keeping Shabbat.*

Many of us know that pikuach nefesh is the ultimate halachic trump card, but we may not realize that we bring in Shabbat by enumerating this value. In doing so, we communicate that Shabbat, like all mitzvot, is not only meant to enhance but also to protect life, and that our experience of Shabbat should reflect as much.

If, God forbid, you are in a situation where a life is in danger, Shabbat may be broken. Please consult Rav Yosef or me with any questions you may have regarding this.

Next time on Shabbat Shorts, we will explore perhaps one of the most challenging texts in Bameh Madlikin: the three things that keep a woman from dying in childbirth. So suffice it to say-- stay tuned!

I love feedback!
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