



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Last time we explored the halachic concept of 'oneg Shabbat' and how we fulfill it by doing things we enjoy (eating, napping) on Shabbat.

Now, as promised, we will explore how far this principle goes.

The Shulchan Aruch teaches: , דאז עונג הוא שלא לאכול, "א שאדם שמזיק לו האכילה, לא יאכל", "There are those who say that a person who is hurt by eating, and so he gets pleasure from not eating, should not eat" (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 288:2). *It's important to understand that this is not a halacha that allows for restriction and disordered eating, as we may imagine with eating disorders today. 'Oneg Shabbat' should never put a life in danger.*

This halacha instead allows someone who is pained by eating-- for example a person who cannot eat solid food for medical reasons or someone with allergies-- to limit food intake if needed because doing so will fulfill 'oneg Shabbat' more than forcing himself/herself to eat whatever food is on the Shabbat table.

It also allows someone who has taken on a spiritual fast for God for a day to do so on Shabbat as long as it will not take away from his/her experience of Shabbat, but instead will add enjoyment to it. Seemingly for this person the enjoyment of fasting for God surpasses any need for food (back in the day voluntary fasting was way more common than it is now).

What's so striking about this halacha is that 'oneg Shabbat' takes overall enjoyment into account even when the circumstances seem less than enjoyable. The halacha is nuanced and creative even with a case that may seem antithetical to Shabbat observance.

A final example regarding the extent of 'oneg Shabbat' appears in the Rema's comment on the above halacha. He adds: כדן מי שיש לו עונג אם יבכה, כדי שילך, "This is also the case with someone who gets serenity from crying, in order that the sorrow will go out from his heart, he is permitted to cry on Shabbat" (Ibid).

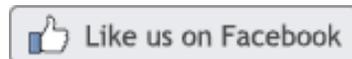
Just reading this halacha makes me want to cry! We again see the nuance in our tradition that sometimes something that seems 'not Shabbos-dik' is actually davka a fulfillment of 'oneg Shabbat'. Like an avel who hurts more when he/she tries to 'put on a happy face' and fight the tears. If a good cry provides relief and the ability to enjoy Shabbat for what it is-- a day of relief-- then tears should fall.

And so, 'oneg Shabbat' is a mitzvah that extends in directions we may never expect, and one which reveals the holy sensitivity and creativity of our tradition.

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