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Life trumps all

One of the most important lessons in Judaism is that life comes first. Always. The Torah is full of commandments and values, but at its core, it's all about making life better, protecting it, and celebrating it.

Maimonides explains this very clearly. If someone is ever forced to choose between following a mitzvah or saving a life, the choice is simple—save the life. G-d gave us the mitzvahs to help us live, not to cause us harm.

There are only three situations where this rule doesn't apply: if someone is asked to murder another person, commit adultery, or worship idols, they must refuse—even if it costs their life. But for everything else, choosing life isn't just allowed—it's the right thing to do.

Let's talk about Shabbat for a minute. It's a big deal in Judaism—a sacred day to rest, recharge, and connect with G-d. There are a lot of rules about what we can and can't do on Shabbos, but here's the surprising part: if someone's life is in danger, those rules go out the window.

Imagine someone gets seriously sick on Shabbos and needs help. Driving them to the hospital or even calling an ambulance might seem like breaking Shabbat rules, but it's not. In fact, it's the exact opposite. Taking action to save their life is considered an act of honoring Shabbat.

Why? Because Shabbat is about celebrating life and our connection to G-d. And what better way to honor G-d than by protecting the life of one of His creations? Saving a life doesn't break Shabbat—it fulfills it.

This isn't just a rule for emergencies; it's a reminder about what really matters. Judaism isn't about blindly following rules for the sake of rules. It's about living with purpose and caring for each other.

The Torah is there to help us build a world that's kinder, safer, and more meaningful. And at the heart of it all is the value of life. Without life, there's no mitzvah, no Shabbat, no connection to G-d.

Think about what this means in everyday life. Let's say you see someone struggling—physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Whether it's supporting a friend through a tough time, teaching someone a new Torah concept, or simply being kind to a stranger, Judaism teaches us to step up. It's not just a nice thing to do; it's part of who we are.

Even in the hustle of modern life, when it feels like we're juggling a million things, this lesson is grounding. Life comes first. It's more important than the to-do lists, the schedules, or even the rules we try so hard to follow.

So, this week as we're lighting Shabbat candles, take a moment to think about this: Shabbat isn't just about the things we don't do—it's about the life we celebrate. And if the opportunity comes to protect or uplift someone else's life, don't hesitate.

Because when you choose life, you’re choosing everything Judaism stands for: love, connection, and the infinite value of every soul.

Shabbat shalom!



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