SHABBAT: Treating a medical condition on Shabbat

Last week we discussed the cases of medical emergencies on Shabbat. We explained that when we know or even suspect that the patient's life is at risk, then ALL Shabbat restrictions are suspended, and we should do whatever necessary to save a life (see **here**).

Today we will begin exploring a second category known as □□□□ □□□□ □□ □□□□ , the case of a patient whose life is NOT at risk. I will refer to this category (arbitrarily) as "medical condition" as oppose to a "medical emergency".

First we need to know which conditions are included in this category. I present some examples discussed in Jewish law.

a. A person who rests in bed because of an illness related weakness or condition.
b. Someone who suffers from an acute pain that impairs his or her normal functioning.
c. A patient who suffers from a chronic disease (diabetes, asthma) which does not impair normal functioning but requires permanent treatment.

In all these cases, medical treatment might be needed, but there is no danger to the patient's life.

The general rule for this category is that, unlike the case of a medical emergency in which ALL Shabbat laws are suspended, in a medical condition only "Rabbinical" Shabbat laws are suspended, in order to take care of the patient or administer treatment.

It is beyond the scope of these brief lines to compare exhaustively Biblical and Rabbinical Law. So, I will present just one illustration.

AMIRA LEGOY: It would be forbidden for me to boil water to

assist a patient with a medical condition, which is not a medical emergency. Why? Because boiling water on Shabbat will imply the transgression of Biblical restrictions (a *melakha*, i.e., lighting a fire, boiling the water). However, if a gentile is available, I could ask him or her to boil the water for the patient. Why? Because asking a non-Jew to perform a *melakha* is forbidden by the Rabbis, not by Biblical Law. As a general rule then, we could ask a non-Jew to do everything needed to treat a medical condition on Shabbat.

There are other categories of activities which are considered Rabbinical and not Biblical prohibitions, many of them related to new technology. Next week BH we will see some examples of modern technology applied to the treatment of medical conditions.

SHABBAT SHALOM!

Candle lightning in NYC: **4:18 pm**
Shabbat ends in NYC: 5:18 pm