

HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

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{ TOPIC }

The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim Visiting the Sick Part 1



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The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim - Visiting the Sick Part 1

לרפ"ש שלמה בן חנה

Many times one hears that a person he knows is not well *r"l* and he wishes to go visit him in the hospital or at home. There is a *mitzvah* to visit a sick person, but the rules are not well known. What is this *mitzvah*? When should one visit? Whom should you visit? What should be said? What should not be said? How should he visit the sick person? Can one visit a sick person on *Shabbos*? Is calling, writing or emailing a sick person a fulfillment of the *mitzvah*? In the next two issues we will deal with the *halachos* of *bikur cholim* in depth.¹

Davening Not to Get Sick

One should always *daven* that he should not get sick, because once he falls ill, he needs a *zechus* to recover.²

When a person falls ill, it is a *mitzvah* to visit him;³ this is known as *bikur cholim*.

Why the *Mitzvah*

The *Toras Hamincha*⁴ gives the following reason for the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*: *Hashem* gives a person *yesurim* in

1. The Taamei Haminhagim page 425 says the reason why it is called "*bikur*" *cholim* and not *reih* (seeing) or *halicha* (going) is because one is supposed to teach the sick person to look into his ways. Also see Medrash Seichel Tov Bereishis 19:34, Mavar Yabak page 219 (new), Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 353-357.

2. Meseches Sotah 14a, Levush Y.D. 335:1, Yaavetz 2:page 588:1. Refer to Meseches Shabbos 32a, Bava Metziah 30a, Bava Kama 100a.

3. Levush 1.

4. Parshas Vayeira.

order to atone for his or her sins. This will allow the person to receive the maximum award in *Olam Haba*. When the visitor observes the patient's suffering, he is inspired to change his ways, and will not need any *yesurim*.

The *Mitzvah*⁵

As mentioned above, there is a *mitzvah* to visit the sick.⁶ This *mitzvah* is for everyone (see below).⁷ There is a discussion in the *poskim* if this *mitzvah* is *d'oraisa* or *rabbinic* in nature.⁸ The overwhelming opinion is that this is a *rabbinic mitzvah*.⁹ The *Gemorah*¹⁰ says that we should follow in the *middos* of *Hashem*, and one of those *middos* is to visit the sick,¹¹ as we find that *Hashem* visited *Avraham Avinu* after he had a *bris milah*.¹² According to some, the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* is included in the *mitzvah* of *gemilas*

5. The Chazon Ish zt"l said that the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* applies to a sick person as well on himself, to make sure he is taking care of himself (Massei Ish 2:page 162). However, some opine that this is not exactly doing *bikur cholim* to a sick person. The reason why it is considered *bikur cholim* on some level is because when one *davens* for himself he is making the sickness lighter on him (Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 244). In regard to whether there is a *mitzvah* to visit the sick in place of learning Torah refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 418-429 in depth.

6. Meseches Nedarim 39b, Bava Metziah 30b, Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:4, Shulchan Aruch 335:1, Chochmas Adom 151:1. Refer to Medrash Tanchuma Toldos 12.

7. Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:4, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:1. This is for simple people even if one is unsure if their *tefillos* will be accepted for the sick person to get better. In addition, it applies to those who sin.

8. Refer to Ran Meseches Berochos 3 who says it is a *d'oraisa*, Rabbeinu Yonah Meseches Berochos 11b, see Sdei Chemed mareches Bais 116 (1:pages 150-151), Ze Hashulchan 335:1, Teshuvos V'hanugos 2:592, Yabea Omer Y.D. 3:22:23, Halichos (journal) 118-120 pages 37-38.

9. Kol Bo 112, Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:1, Meiri Meseches Nedarim 39b, Tur 335, Levush 1, Beer Moshe 2:104. Refer to Maharitz Chiyas Meseches Nedarim 39b who says it is a *halacha* Moshe M'Sinai. See Rambam sefer hamitzvahs shoreish 1 and 2.

10. Meseches Sotah 14a. Refer to Meseches Bava Metziah 30a.

11. Refer to Toras Haodm shar hameicosh 1, Tur 335, Bais Yosef, Bach, Levush 1, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:1, Torah Temimah Bereishis 18:1, Aruch Hashulchan 2. See Beer Mayim Chaim Vayeira 18:1.

12. Vayeira 18:1. Refer to Meseches Bava Metziah 86b, see Meseches Tanchuma Vayeira 1. Refer to Baal Haturim Vayeira 18:1.

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

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chasadim.¹³ No *beracha* is recited on this *mitzvah*.¹⁴ First, it is possible to nullify this *mitzvah* if the sick person does not want visitors.¹⁵ Second, we do not recite a *beracha* for an action that is also practiced by other nations.¹⁶

The Focus of Visiting the Sick

A number of things are accomplished by visiting the sick.¹⁷ One of the main purposes is to pray for the sick person; it is like giving him life.¹⁸ In addition, one should see to it that the sick person has all his needs taken care of (i.e. telling someone¹⁹ to fix his bed, cleaning around the room, etc.),²⁰ and make sure he has all the necessary medical supplies.²¹ This includes shopping for the person.²²

13. Maharsha Meseches Nedarim 39b "bikur," Seder Hayom page 90, Yosef Ometz perek bikur cholim page 323, Ahavas Chesed 3:3. For more on this issue see Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 2. Refer to Meseches Bava Metziah 30b. Others say it is included in V'ohavta L'reiacha K'mocha (Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:1). Since *bikur cholim* is part of *gemilas chasadim* we have the following question: Why in the first Mishnah in Meseches Peah does it list *gemilas chasadim* and *bikur cholim* if it is the same? The answer is that there are two kinds of *gemilas chasadim*. One is with ones money, like lending people money feeding people, and clothing people. The other kindness is with one's body – going to visit a sick person and consoling the bereaved.

14. Refer to Miyum Halalacha 4:56, Yalkut Yosef 7:page 23.

15. Refer to Rashba 1:18.

16. Binyomin Zev 1:169.

17. Refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 111-120.

18. Toras Haodm shar hameichosh 1, Kol Bo 112, Bais Yosef, Levush 1, 4, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:3, Chochmas Adom 151:3, Yaavetz 2:page 589:15, Aruch Hashulchan 3, Pela Yoetz Choleh page 232, Igros Moshe Y.D. 4:51, Yechaveh Daas 3:83.

19. There is no need for the one visited to fix or clean himself (Prisha 335:4, see Meiri Meseches Nedarim 40a).

20. Meseches Nedarim 40a, Bais Yosef 335, Prisha 4, Levush 1, Tocheches Chaim Parshas Vayichei, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:3, Chorev page 408, Aruch Hashulchan 2, Kaf Hachaim O.C. 287:6, Minchas Yitzchok 2:84:6, see Gesher Hachaim 1:1:2. This is even in a hospital where they clean, it can happen that a bed needs to be changed or a room is dirty. The Chazzan Ish zt"l brought food to a sick person (Massei Ish 2:page 133).

21. Refer to Pela Yoetz Refuah page 540. One is not allowed to give a sick person something which is not good for him even if it will make him happy (Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 274, see Yehuda Yaleh O.C. 160, Pnei Boruch – Bikur Cholim K'hilchoso 1:32).

22. Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 223.

כל השווה הלכות בכל זום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הנא... (גדה עב)

Some opine that this aspect of the *mitzvah* may not apply today, since hospitalized patients have medical staff that cares for all their needs.²³ Making the sick person happy is also included in the focus of the *mitzvah*.²⁴ Hashem visited Avraham after the *bris*, but we do not find that He said anything to him. *Harav Moshe Feinstein zt"l*²⁵ proves from here that one does not have to say anything to the sick person.

One who visits a sick person has to *daven* for him,²⁶ and one who fails to do so has not fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*²⁷ in its entirety.²⁸ Based on this, some explain that the term *bikur cholim* signifies that the point of the *mitzvah* is to ask what he needs. It is nice to send other visitors to see how a sick person is doing, but the main *mitzvah* is to go himself and *daven* for the recovery of the patient.²⁹

23. Tzitz Eliezer 5:ramat Rochel 3. Refer to Tzohar 5:pages 345-348 who says based on this people do not go visit if all the needs are taken care of since one can *daven* for them even when one is not in front of them (Tzohar *ibid*).

24. Rambam Toras Haodm shar hameichosh, Bais Yosef 335. Refer to Avnei Yushfei 1:230. See Michtav M'Eliyahu 4:page 296, Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 268-277 in great depth.

25. Dorosh Moshe Parshas Vayeira beginning. Refer to Maharsha Meseches Bava Metziah 30b.

26. Rambam Hilchos Ovel 14:6, Shulchan Aruch 4.

27. Bais Yosef 335, Shulchan Aruch *ibid*, Levush 4, Yosef Ometz perek bikur cholim page 323, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:3, Chochmas Adom 151:3, Aruch Hashulchan 8.

28. However, one has fulfilled some part of the *mitzvah* (see Ahavas Chesed 3:3, Avnei Yushfei 1:230, V'ein Lamo Michshal 6:page 219:footnote 2). Refer to Pnei Boruch – Bikur Cholim K'hilchoso *haskama* from Harav Fisher zt"l 1. See Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 121-133 in great depth.

29. Be'er Mayim Chaim Bereishis 18:page:134.

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Who is Considered a Sick Person Regarding This Mitzvah

The *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* certainly applies to anyone who is dangerously ill.³⁰ It also applies to a sick person who is not in danger.³¹ However, it does not apply to someone who has a minor headache or a slight ailment. Some are of the opinion that it applies to someone who is bedridden and cannot fend for himself and needs people to help him/her.³² The *Maharal of Prague*³³ asks why *Hashem* didn't visit *Avraham* until the third day. He answers that until then the operation only affected one organ of *Avraham's* body, while his entire body was affected on the third day. According to this opinion, one who broke his foot and is not bedridden would not be considered a sick person.³⁴ Others maintain that if the illness has not lasted for three days there is no need to visit him or *daven* for him.³⁵

It should be noted that the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* also applies to woman on bed rest³⁶ or other people who are home bound.³⁷ There is a discussion in the *poskim* if the *mitzvah* applies to one who is mentally ill.³⁸

30. Refer to Meseches Nedarim 40a. Also refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 186-192.

31. Refer to Meseches Nedarim 41a, Meseches Shabbos 12a, Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:263.

32. V'ei Lamo Michshal 6:pages 2215-216. Refer to Birchei Yosef 335:2 who is lenient that it can apply to any weakness. It does not only apply to a sick person who is in danger (Shevet Hakehusi 6:394). See Ohr Hachaim on Vayeira 18:1. Also refer to Asya 67-68:pages 80-92 in great depth. See Meseches Nedarim 41a.

33. Bereishis 18:page 50-50b. See Piskei Teshuva 242.

34. Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 331.

35. Refer to Biur Halacha O.C. 219 "kegon." Also see Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim oages 333-335.

36. Regarding visiting a woman who just gave birth see Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 26:footnote 21.

37. Visiting the Sick page 22 (Glatt). Refer to Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'Bagadah page 28:footnote 18 quoting the opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita.

38. Refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 117-118.

איך ללמוד ולהלכה בלבד... (ברכות ח)



Reward

Bikur cholim is one of the *mitzvos* which gives a reward this world and retains the main reward for the next world.³⁹ The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁴⁰ calls it one of the greater *mitzvos*.⁴¹ The *Gemorah*⁴² says one who visits a sick person is saved from the *din* of *gehonim*.⁴³ In addition, *Hashem* saves you from *yesurim*, from the *yetzer hara*, and it makes the sick person live.⁴⁴ Some explain the power of this particular *mitzvah* is that one merits exposure to the *Shechina*, which is on top of the sick person.

Being Lax With This *Mitzvah*

It is unfortunate that today people are lax with the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*. This is especially true if the patient is a poor person.⁴⁵ Many times the poor person will not have money to buy medicine, and coming to his aid will bring you great reward.⁴⁶ This is also included in the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*.⁴⁷

39. Mishnah Meseches Peah 1:1, Meseches Shabbos 127a (it is included in *gemilas chasadim*). Refer to Rambam Peirush Hamishnayos Peah 1:1.

40. 335:2.

41. Refer to Levush 1, Menoras Hameor 7:page 550, Tocheches Chaim Parshas Vayichei.

42. Meseches Nedarim 40a.

43. Refer to Ahavas Chesed 3:3. See Maharal Nesivos Olom page 160 who explains the reason why one is saved from *gehonim* is because when one visits a sick person he wishes to save him from death so one is spared *gehonim* which is death of the soul. Also see Maharal Nedarim 39b, 40a and Tocheches Chaim Parshas Vayichei.

44. Meseches Nedarim *ibid*, Meiri Meseches Nedarim *ibid*, see Aruch Hashulchan 3. Refer to Maharsha Meseches Nedarim 40a 'ma.' Because of this some say one should even travel to another city for this *mitzvah* (*Derech Sicha* 2:page 25).

45. Ahavas Chesed 3:3, see Sefer Chassidim 361. Refer to Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 6.

46. Ahavas Chesed *Ibid*, Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:223.

47. Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:223.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תדה עב)

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How Many Times

The *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* has no set limit,⁴⁸ and one can go even one hundred times.⁴⁹ (This also applies to how much time is spent visiting the sick person, as long as it is not a bother to the sick person).⁵⁰ The more one goes, the better it is.⁵¹ This is true even if the medical staff takes care of the sick person, as it is still a *mitzvah* to *daven* for him.⁵² Nonetheless, one should be careful to avoid antagonizing the staff by visiting too many times.⁵³ It is better to visit two sick people for a small time than to visit one sick person for a long time.⁵⁴

At Night

It is good to visit frequently even at night (as long as it is during visiting hours and the sick person is awake or willing to accept visitors).⁵⁵

48. For an in depth discussion on this refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 142-150.

49. Meseches Nedarim 39b, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 335:2, Chochmas Adom 151:1, Aruch Hashulchan 5, Ahavas Chesed 3:3.

50. Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 8.

51. Kol Bo 112, Meiri Meseches Nedarim 39b "mitzvahs," Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:4, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 335:2, Chochmas Adom 151:1, Aruch Hashulchan 5. Refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 134-141 in great depth. Based on this some say this is why you do not generally see people visiting a sick person at home since it is a bother to them (Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 140:9, 225:6). However, in this situation one should call (Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 225).

52. Refer to V'ein Lamo Michshal 6:pages 214-215. Yalkut Yosef Y.D. 335:2, Divrei Sofrim page 3.

53. Divrei Sofrim 335:footnote 9.

54. Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 54:19:footnote 30.

55. Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 52:12:footnote 20, Divrei Sofrim 335:11. Refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 132:12.

איז ער להקציף? הא בעולמו אלץ די אמתו של הלכה בלביד... (ברכות ח)

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Going Alone – Many People

The *Shiltas*⁵⁶ says that one should visit a sick person alone.⁵⁷ However, this is not the overwhelming custom.⁵⁸ In any case, if one wishes to go with a lot of people he should ask the doctor first if this is beneficial for the sick person.⁵⁹

What to Say

One should be prepared with the right words to say, if the sick person wants to converse. If one goes without a plan on how to make him feel better he is not fulfilling the *mitzvah* completely.⁶⁰ As mentioned before one should *daven* for the sick person, and tell him that everything will be ok.⁶¹ One should not show the sick person a sad face or an expression of worry.⁶² One should come with a happy face and say words which will ease his pain.⁶³

Certainly, one should not say that so and so died because of this sickness.⁶⁴ Part of your visit should be to cheer up the sick person. Prepare a joke, or simply have a mental list of neutral topics. Obviously, the content of the conversation must match the personality of the patient. A *talmid chacham* will appreciate a *devar torah*, while a simple person might discuss the weather. One should use his intellect when conversing. One should not discuss the

56. 93:page 86. See Tzafnas Paneach Vayechei 48:1, Ze Hashulchan 335:1. Refer to Meseches Berochos 28b, 54b, Nedarim 40a.

57. But one does not have to (Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 338).

58. Haemek Sheilah 93:7, Igros Moshe Y.D. 4:51, Yalkut Yosef 7:page 125. Refer to Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 64.

59. Igros Moshe Y.D. 4:51.

60. Gesher Hachaim 1:1:3.

61. Pela Yoetz Rofeh page 542.

62. Gesher Hachaim 1:1:3.

63. Tocheches Chaim Parshas Vayichei.

64. Refer to Mavar Yabak page 62 (new).

כל השומה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב.)

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sickness unless the patient brings up the topic and wishes to discuss it.⁶⁵

Helping the Sick Person With Your Visit⁶⁶

The visit removes one sixtieth of the disease.⁶⁷ Some say that only applies if the visitor was born in the same time⁶⁸ (under the same constellation)⁶⁹ as the patient (*ben gilo*)⁷⁰ or young or old).⁷¹ Why don't many people line up to visit a sick person and cure the sickness completely?⁷² The *Meiri*⁷³ explains that the concept of removing a sixtieth of the sickness is that the visitor talks to the patient and strengthens him, thus minimizing the impact of the disease. However, when the visitor leaves the sickness returns in force. Others explain that the disease is only diminished if one really loves the sick person.⁷⁴ The *Ben Yehoyada*⁷⁵ explains that the visitor does not adopt one sixtieth of the sickness, for there is no reason that he should suffer any

65. Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim page 273.

66. For a detailed explanation of this issue see Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 151-167.

67. Medrash Rabbah Vayikra 34:1 (only if he loves the sick person), Meseches Nedarim 39b, Bava Metziah 30a, Kol Bo 112, Tur 335, Levush 2, Shach 335:1, Chochmas Adom 151:1, Aruch Hashulchan 5. Refer to Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:4. See Maharal Nedarim 39b. See Rivevos Ephraim 4:page 355:8. The visitor takes it but since it is such a small amount it is *botel b'shishim* and has no effect on the visitor (Toras Chaim Meseches Bava Metziah 30a). Some say just going to visit a sick person without saying or doing anything is a *mitzvah* since one takes 1/60th of his sickness (Refer to Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 39:footnote 28).

68. Chochmas Adom 151:1.

69. Ran Meseches Nedarim 39b "v'ben," Ben Yehoyada Meseches Nedarim 39b:page 6. Refer to Chelkes Yaakov Y.D. 147:2.

70. Today this can be done by anyone who visits a sick person (Shevet Yehuda 335:2, Chasam Sofer Meseches Nedarim 39b).

71. Rashi Meseches Nedarim 39b "v'ben gilo."

72. Refer to Meseches Nedarim 39b. See Chasam Sofer Meseches Nedarim 39b.

73. Meseches Nedarim 39b 'mitzvahs.' Refer to Chofetz Chaim on Meseches Nedarim 41.

74. Divrei Sofrim 335:10.

75. Meseches Nedarim 39b:page 6.

ill effects.⁷⁶ Rather, a sixtieth of the pain is removed from *shomayim* when he relates to the suffering of the patient. The *Keren Orah*⁷⁷ explains that he removes some of the sickness from the patient, since he gives him strength.

One who does not visit the sick is like he kills him.⁷⁸

Taking Children

The *posuk* says that when *Yaakov* was ill, *Yosef* came to visit with his two children *Ephraim* and *Menashe*.⁷⁹ Based on this, some opine that one should take his child along to be *mechanech* him.⁸⁰ If he will disturb the sick person then the child should not go.⁸¹

Man Visiting a Woman and Vice Versa

A man may visit a sick woman and a woman may visit a sick man. However, one should be careful of the *issur* of *yichud*.⁸² Others are concerned about a lack of *tznius* (other than relatives for whom *yichud* is permitted).⁸³ Hospital gowns often do not provide adequate coverage, and one should not visit a woman if there is a breach of *tznius*.⁸⁴

76. Some do say that the visitor takes it and it is not an issue since it is such a small amount it is *botel b'ishshim* and has no effect on the visitors (Toras Chaim Meseches Bava Metzia 30a).

77. Meseches Nedarim 40a (page 445 new).

78. Meseches Nedarim 40a, Kol Bo 112, Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:2, Aruch Hashulchan 3. Refer to Maharal Meseches Bava Metzia 40a.

79. Bereishis 42:1.

80. Maver Yabak page 254 (new), Ze Hashulchan 335:1, V'ein Lamo Michshal 6:page 215. Refer to Reishis Chuchma shar gidol bonim 3:page 1003.

81. Ze Hashulchan 335:1.

82. Aruch Hashulchan 11, see Beer Moshe 2:107. This is the opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l as quoted in Nishmas Avraham Y.D. page 258 (English), and in Chuko Mamtakim 1:page 70. However, one should not stay too long to talk (ibid). Refer to Sdei Tzofim Meseches Nedarim 39b.

83. Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Roche 5:16. Refer to Miyum Hahalacha 2:27-28.

84. Beer Moshe 2:107.

Visiting a Wicked Person

One should visit a wicked person, since he may be inspired to do *teshuva* and become a better person.⁸⁵

Chosson and Kallah Visiting the Sick During Sheva Berachos

Although a *chosson* and *kallah* are supposed to be happy during *sheva berachos*, they are permitted to visit a sick person.⁸⁶

Where to Sit

The *Shechina* hovers over a sick person⁸⁷ (some say this means through *davening*).⁸⁸ Therefore, when the practice was that the sick person lay on the floor, then the visitor should not sit on a chair or bench, since he is higher than the sick person.⁸⁹ However, when the sick person is on a bed then the visitor may sit on a chair or bench⁹⁰ if it is not much higher than the bed.⁹¹ The *Meiri*⁹² explains that the sick person is doing *teshuva* and asking for mercy. When he sees the visitor sitting on a higher level he despairs of

85. Beer Moshe 5:151. Refer to Miyum Halachah 4:56. On the topic of *davening* for a wicked person see Meseches Berochos 10a, Sefer Chassidim 688, Ahavas Chesed 3:8, Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 315-318.

86. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halachah U'bagadah page 119, see Betzel Hachochma 2:44.

87. Meseches Nedarim 40a, Levush 3, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:2, Chochmas Adom 151:2. See Aruch Hashulchan 7. Refer to Vayikra Rabbah 34:1.

88. Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 10.

89. Meseches Shabbos 12b, Nedarim 40a, Rosh Meseches Shabbos 1:30, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 335:3 Levush 3, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:2. Refer to Meseches Nedarim 40a "lo." See Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 11. Some say one should not sit at his head (Shiurei Beracha 335:1).

90. Tosfas Meseches Shabbos 12b "lo," Meiri Meseches Shabbos 12b, Rama 335:3, Levush 3, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:2, Chochmas Adom 151:2, Aruch Hashulchan 7. Refer to Bais Lechem Yehuda 335. See Minhagei Yisroel 6:pages 74-80, Ze Hashulchan 335:3.

91. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halachah U'bagadah page 75:footnote 5.

92. Meseches Nedarim 40a "v'mekul mokom."

אין לל להקפיד ה בעולמו אלא י אמות של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ח)

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

davening. According to the writings of the *Zohar*, if the patient is an average person then the visitor should not sit at the sick person's feet, because the angel of death is there, and he should not sit at the head because the *Shechina* is present. If the sick person is a *tzadik gamur* then one should only sit at the sick person's feet since the *Shechina* is all around except his feet.⁹³ If the sick person asks you to sit near his head or feet you should do so.⁹⁴ If he is wicked, then danger can be found all around the body.

One is allowed to stand⁹⁵ or pace back and forth when visiting.⁹⁶

What to Wear

The visitor should dress in presentable clothing⁹⁷ that he would wear when he goes to *shul* to *daven*⁹⁸ since the *Shechina* hovers over the head of a sick person.⁹⁹ Therefore, one should do so out of fear for *Hashem* and be humble.¹⁰⁰ It is the opinion of some that those who wear a hat and jacket when they go to *shul* to *daven* should wear them when visiting a sick person. Those who do not should wear

93. Aruch Hashulchan 7.

94. Gesher Hachaim 1:1:5.

95. Tosfas Meseches Nedarim 39a "efsher," Ran, Chelkes Yaakov Y.D. 188.

96. Tzitz Eliezer 17:20. Refer to Pnei Boruch – Bikur Cholim K'hilchoso *haskama* from Harav Fisher zt"l 2.

97. Refer to Rambam Hilchos Ovel 14:6, opinion of Harav Korelitz Shlita quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 77:footnote 9.

98. Shevet Yehuda 335:3.

99. Meseches Shabbos 12b, Rashi "msateif," Tur 335, see Bach. Boruch – Bikur Cholim K'hilchoso *haskama* from Harav Fisher zt"l 2.

Refer to Rambam Hilchos Ovel 14:6, opinion of Harav Korelitz Shlita quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 77:footnote 9. See Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 10.

100. Meiri Meseches Shabbos 12b. Refer to opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita (who says the custom is to be lenient) in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah pages 124-125:8. However, on ibid:page 130:22 he says the custom is to wear a jacket to visit the sick.

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what they would wear when visiting an important person.¹⁰¹ *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita* maintains that since the *Shechina* is above the head of a sick person one should make sure his thoughts are pure when visiting.

When to Visit – Days - Relatives Friends and Everyone Else

Relatives and friends (some say this means even a *talmid chacham*)¹⁰² of the sick person can visit him/her right away, while others should wait three days before visiting. One reason is to make sure not to spoil the *mazal*¹⁰³ of the patient by letting everyone know he is sick.¹⁰⁴ The *Meiri*¹⁰⁵ explains that we do not want to frighten him into thinking that he is in worse condition than he actually is. If the situation deteriorates, then anyone can enter right away.¹⁰⁶ The *Levush*¹⁰⁷ says that relatives and friends may enter right away because the patient knows them and their presence will comfort him and help him feel at ease.

There is an opinion that this only applies for the first two complete days, and all friends can visit at the beginning of the third day.¹⁰⁸ Others permit a phone call right away.¹⁰⁹ If

101. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in *Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah* page 77:footnote 9.

102. Opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita quoted in *Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah* page 62:footnote 12 and page 127:15. Refer to *Ruach Chaim* 335:1 in depth.

103. Refer to *Maharsha Meseches Nedarim* 40a this is the same idea as "not to open ones mouth to the *sotton*" and say he is sick.

104. *Yerushalmi Meseches Peah* 3:9, *Tur* 335, *Shulchan Aruch* 335:1, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 193:1, *Chochmas Adom* 151:1, *Aruch Hashulchan* 5. Refer to *Taz* 1, *Biur Halacha* O.C. 219 "kegon."

105. *Meseches Nedarim* 40a "v'mekul mokom."

106. *Rambam Hilchos Ovel* 14:5, *Shulchan Aruch* YD. 335:1, *Chochmas Adom* 151:1, *Aruch Hashulchan* 5.

107. 335:1.

108. *Tzitz Eliezer* 5:Ramat Rochel 7.

109. *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah* page 43:footnote 13.

איך ללמוד להלכה של האמת... (ברכות ה')

the sick person needs people to tend to him, then anyone may visit right away.¹¹⁰

Older Person Visiting Younger Person

An older or wiser person should go to visit,¹¹¹ and should not consider it degrading.¹¹² This is clear from the fact that *Hashem* Himself went to visit *Avraham*.¹¹³ This applies even to a *talmid chacham* visiting one who is less learned.¹¹⁴ When a *talmid chacham* goes to visit he should bring people along so that they can take care of any menial tasks.¹¹⁵

When to Visit – Which Hours

It is not advisable to visit a sick person the first three hours of the day (*shaos zemanios* – not regular sixty minute hour)¹¹⁶ because then the sickness eases then, and the visitor will not be concerned enough to *daven* for him.¹¹⁷ One should not visit the last three hours of the day (also *shaos zemanios*)¹¹⁸ because then the sickness is strong and

110. Divrei Sofrim 335:5.

111. Meseches Nedarim 39b, Kol Bo 112, Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:4, Tur 335, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 335:2, Levush 2, Chochmas Adom 151:1, Aruch Hashulchan 5. Refer to V'ein Lamo Michshal 6:pages 207-208 if this applies to a *talmid chacham* visiting a simple person. See Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:222. For a reason why this is not an issue of a lowering of honor to the greater person see Shalmei Nedarim 39b:page 33.

112. Ahavas Chesed 3:3 in footnote, Beer Moshe 2:106, Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 8. See Rashi Meseches Nedarim 39b "v'afilu," Shita Mekubetzes Meseches Nedarim 39b.

113. Shevet Yehuda 335:2.

114. Opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 48:footnote 4.

115. Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:222, opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 124:7.

116. Ahavas Chesed 3:3:page 262. There is an uncertainty if these hours start from *alos hashachar* or *netz hachama* (Ze Hashulchan 335:4, Al Pi Hatorah Shemos page 375). Refer to Divrei Sofrim 335:footnote 36.

117. Shulchan Aruch 4, Levush 4, Chochmas Adom 151:3, Aruch Hashulchan 8.

118. Ahavas Chesed 3:3:page 262.

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

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the visitor will despair of *davening* for him.¹¹⁹ The *Rambam*¹²⁰ explains that the sick person is usually tended to at those times, and the visit might interfere with the attendants. The *Aruch Hashulchan*¹²¹ says that this is good advice, but it is not forbidden to visit then. Others maintain that it is forbidden by *halacha*.¹²² Even according to this view, if there is no other time available, one may visit then.¹²³

There are a few differences between the *Rambam's* reason and the first reason.¹²⁴ If it is a minor illness that does not progress in stages, the first reason would not offer any restrictions, while the *Rambam* would. Similarly, if the visitor commits himself to *daven* for the sick person no matter what, then the first reason would permit the visit, but the *Rambam* would not.¹²⁵

It would seem that calling on the phone (see part 2) during these hours would be permitted according to all opinions, since one does not *daven* then, and the call will not interfere with the medical staff. However, each situation should be assessed beforehand.¹²⁶

119. Meseches Nedarim 40a, Tosfas "b'tlas," Shita Mekubetzes Meseches Nedarim 39b, Tur 335, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 335:4, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:3. Refer to Rambam Hilchos Avel 14:5, and Bais Yosef 335. In regard to whether to tell a sick person how severe his sickness is see Miyum Hahalacha 2:26, Betzel Hachochma 2:55.

120. Hilchos Avel 14:5. See Bach who questions why the Rambam mentions a different reason than the Gemorah. The Meiri in Meseches Nedarim 40a quotes same reason as the Rambam. Refer to Ze Hashulchan 335:4.

121. 335:8. Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita holds that if one is not a relative he should not visit within the first or last three hours of the day.

122. Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 12.

123. Ahavas Chesed 3:3.

124. Refer to Shevet Yehuda 335:4.

125. Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah pages 65-66.

126. Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 65:footnote 13.

איזן לל להקצי"ה בעולמו אלאי יאמות של הלקה בלביד... (ברכות ח)



The *Aruch Hashulchan*¹²⁷ (and others)¹²⁸ says that today we are not concerned with the above restrictions. According to the *Rambam*, if we know that the attendants are not busy with the needs of the sick person at those times,¹²⁹ or if they are not bothered by the presence of visitors, there is no restriction.¹³⁰ Therefore, if there are specific visiting hours in a hospital, the patient and medical staff are prepared to work around the presence of visitors, and there is no need to refrain from visiting.

Asking for Mercy for the Sick Person

One who is asking for mercy from *Hashem* for the sick person in his presence can *daven* in any language.¹³¹ The reason is that the *Shechina* rests above the head of a sick person¹³² and *Hashem* knows any language.¹³³ However, if the patient is not present, then one should only say it in *lashon kodesh*.¹³⁴ If ten people are present, one can *daven* in any language since *Hashem* is present¹³⁵ (even if the sick person is not there.)¹³⁶ When one asks for mercy he should say that, “*Hashem* should have mercy on you and other sick

127. *Aruch Hashulchan* 8. Refer to opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita quoted in *Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah* page 125:10.

128. *Ze Hashulchan* 335:4. Refer to *Salmas Chaim* 661 (old).

129. *Tzitz Eliezer* 5:Ramat Rochel 12.

130. *Birchei Yosef* 335:2.

131. *Toras Haodom shar hameicosh* 1, *Tur* 335, *Shulchan Aruch* 5, *Levush* 5, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 193:4, *Chochmas Adom* 151:3, *Aruch Hashulchan* 9, *Mishnah Berurah* O.C. 101:16. Refer to *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 101:4.

132. *Meseches Shabbos* 12b, *Bach*, *Shach* 3, *Taz* 3.

133. *Rashi Meseches Shabbos* 12b “d’Shechina,” *Bach*, *Levush* 5, *Shach* 3, *Taz* 3, *Prisha* 10. Refer to *Tzitz Eliezer* 5:Ramat Rochel 13. Refer to *Maharil Diskin* (*Kuntres Achron*) 182:page 162 who says to *daven* in *lashon kodesh* even in front of the sick person.

134. *Shulchan Aruch* 5. Refer to *Taz* 4. See *Ahavas Chesed* 3:3.

135. *Meseches Sanhedrin* 39a.

136. *Shevet Yehuda* 335:5, *V'ein Lamo Michshal* 6:page 247.

people in *Klal Yisroel*,¹³⁷ since *tefillos* have a better chance to be heard when they include other members of *klal yisroel*.¹³⁸ The opinion of *Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l*¹³⁹ is that wishing a *refuah sheleima* is also considered *davening* for the sick person.

One who is *davening* in front of the sick person does not mention the person's name.¹⁴⁰ This is how *Moshe Rabbeinu* acted when *davening* in front of *Miriam* on her behalf.¹⁴¹ Based on *kabbalah*, the reason is that mentioning the name awakens the *middas hadin*.¹⁴²

If one will not *daven* with *kavana* for a sick person, it is better that he does not go.¹⁴³

If one cannot visit, then *davening* for him is a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*.¹⁴⁴

Settling Accounts With Others and Doing *Teshuva*

As mentioned above, one has to be very careful about what he says to a sick person. *Halacha* states that one should ask him¹⁴⁵ if he in possession of someone else's belongings, or if his items are held by others, or what he wishes to tell his children. This is by no way a means of

137. Tur 335, Shulchan Aruch 6, Levush 6.

138. Shach 4. Rashi Meseches Rosh Hashanah 16a "keman".

139. Halichos Shlomo Tefillah 8:footnote 63, Shevet HaLevi 5:184. Refer to Toraso Yeheigei 12:3:footnote 11 who quotes *poskim* who disagree.

140. Meseches Berochos 34a, Magen Avraham O.C. 119:1, Mishnah Berurah 2, Rivevos Ephraim 7:335. Refer to Chasam Sofer Meseches Nedarim 39b, Pri Temarim 7:pages 73-74:3. Refer to Pri Chadash O.C. 119 who says one can say the name of the sick person in front of him as well.

141. Bamidbar 12:13.

142. Chasam Sofer Meseches Nedarim 40a. Refer to Ben Yehoyada Meseches Berochos 34a. See Yalkut Revuenei Parshas Vayeira 18:1.

143. Toras Hamincha parshas vayeira 9:page 50.

144. Refer to Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 230-243 in great depth.

145. The opinion of some *poskim* is that this should be done right when the person gets sick and it should not wait until the situation is serious (Shevet Yehuda 335:7).

איך ללמוד ולהתנהגות עם חולה? (פרק 10)

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תדה עב)

scaring the sick person that he will die,¹⁴⁶ since even a healthy person should have his life organized. In the merit of discussing this *Hashem* will send the sick person a *refuah sheleima*.¹⁴⁷ This should be done once the illness lasts three days.¹⁴⁸

One should discuss *teshuva* as well.¹⁴⁹ This may be a touchy topic if you are not too friendly with the patient.

When the Visitor Does Not Know You Visited Him

As mentioned above, one of the main points of visiting the sick is to *daven* for him. Accordingly, one could visit a total stranger, or someone who is unaware of the visit. The same is true for visiting a young baby¹⁵⁰ (i.e. just after his *bris milah*).¹⁵¹ Obviously, the other aspects of *bikur cholim* such as cheering him up would not be fulfilled in this situation.¹⁵²

Asleep

If the sick person is asleep one has still fulfilled the *mitzvah* since he can *daven* for him and speak to people to make sure his needs are taken care of.¹⁵³ This is proved

146. Shulchan Aruch 7, Levush 7, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:5, Chochmas Adom 151:5, Aruch Hashulchan 10.

147. Aruch Hashulchan 10.

148. Refer to Chuchmas Adom 151:11, Ahavas Chesed 3:3, Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 15.

149. Yosef Ometz perek bikur cholim page 323, Keren Orah Meseches Nedarim 40a, Tzitz Eliezer 5:Ramat Rochel 27.

150. Avnei Yushfei 1:230, Derech Sicha 1:page 65.Refer to Rivevos Ephraim 8:291:1, V'ein Lamo Michshal 6:pages 211-212. If one visits a child who is sick just to make the parents feel good he has not fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* (opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 46:footnote 1).

151. Mitzvahs Bikur Cholim pages 184-185:15.

152. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah page 38:footnote 26.

153. Rosh on Parshas Vayeira 18:1.

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from the fact that *Hashem* came to visit *Avraham* but did not speak or do anything.¹⁵⁴

Giving Blood

Since *bikur cholim* involves making sure that the sick person has what he needs, some *poskim* maintain that one can fulfill part of the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* by giving blood to a sick person, even though he does not visit him.¹⁵⁵

154. Refer to *Derech Sicha* 1:pages 65-66.

155. Opinion of Harav Ephraim Greenblatt zt"l quoted in *Bikur Cholim B'halacha U'bagadah* page 31:footnote 5. See *ibid*:pages 130- 131:23:footnote 27 and page 131:23.

אין על להקדיף"ה בעולמו אלא די אמות של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ח')





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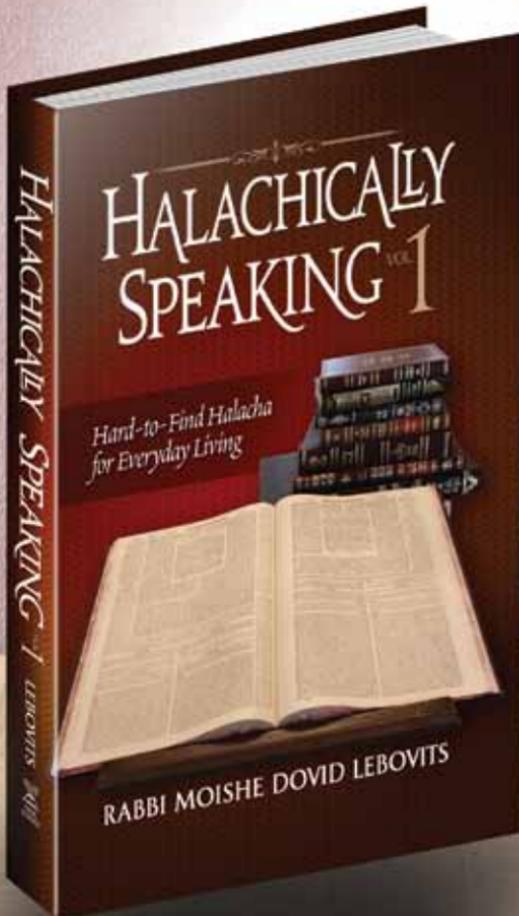
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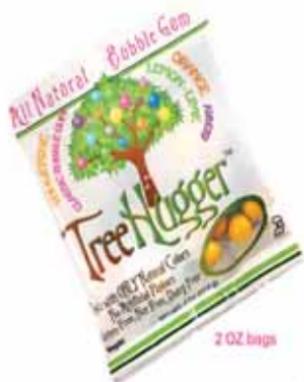
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