



Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue

Bikkur Cholim – Visiting the Sick

Halacha to Hospital Visits

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Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah: Laws of Visiting the Sick	שלחן ערוך, יורע דעה: הלכות ביקור חולים
<p>1. It is a mitzvah [positive commandment] to visit the sick – relatives and friends enter immediately [to visit], and more distant [acquaintances visit] after three days, if the [illness] fell suddenly on the sick than both these categories [relatives/friends and acquaintances] visit immediately.</p>	<p>א. מצוה לבקר חולים – הקרובים והחברים נכנסים מיד והרחוקים אחר ג' ימים, ואם קפץ עליו החולה אלו ואלו נכנסים מיד.</p>
<p>2. Even the great [higher status person] should go to visit the small [lower status person], even several times a day, and regardless of age and all backgrounds it is praiseworthy [to visit] as long as it does not trouble him [the sick person].</p>	<p>ב. אפילו הגדול ילך לבקר הקטן ואפילו כמה פעמים ביום, ואפילו בן גילו וכל המוסיף ה"ז משובח ובלבד שלא יטריח לו:</p>

<p><i>Rama [Moses Isserles]: There are those who say that an enemy can go and visit the sick but that does not seem [right] to me, rather [the enemy] should not visit the sick and not enter [visit] the mourner because he is his enemy and [the sick] should not think that he [enemy visiting] is rejoicing from his misfortune and only [causes] pain [to the sick person], thus it seems to me.</i></p>	<p>הגה: י"א [יש אומרים] דשונא יכול לילך לבקר חולה (מהרי"ל קצ"ז) ולא נראה לי אלא לא יבקר חולה ולא ינחם אבל שהוא שונאו שלא יחשב ששמח לאידו ואינו לו אלא צער. כן נראה לי.</p>
<p>3. The one visiting the sick should not sit on the sofa, or the chair, or the bench, rather wrap and sit before him [the sick, on the same eye level] because the Sechina [Divine] is above his head.¹</p> <p><i>Rama: And precisely when the sick is laying on the ground that the [visitor should not be] sitting higher than him [sick person], but when [the sick] is laying on the bed it is permissible [for the visitor] to sit on a chair and a bench, and thus is our custom.</i></p>	<p>ג. המבקר את החולה לא ישב ע"ג [על גבי] מטה ולא ע"ג כסא ולא ע"ג ספסל אלא מתעטף ויושב לפניו שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו.</p> <p>הגה: ודוקא כשהחולה שוכב על הארץ דהיושב גבוה ממנו, אבל כששוכב על המטה מותר לישב על כסא וספסל וכן נוהגין.</p>
<p>4. One should not visit the sick during the first three hours of the day because the illness is less severe in the morning and the visitor would not be concerned to request mercy [pray] for him [the sick person], [and the visitor should not visit] during the last three hours [of the day] because the illness is more severe on him [sick, at this later time] and [the visitor] would be despaired from requesting mercy [praying] for him [the sick]. (and everyone that visits and does not request mercy for the sick, i.e., pray for him, that visitor has not fulfilled the mitzvah)(Ramban).</p>	<p>ד. אין מבקרין החולה בג' שעות ראשונות של יום מפני שכל חולה מיקל עליו חליו בבקר, ולא יחוש לבקש עליו רחמים, ולא בג' שעות אחרונות של יום שאז מכביד עליו חליו ויתייאש מלבקש עליו רחמים. (וכל שביקר ולא ביקש עליו רחמים לא קיים המצוה)(ב"י בשם הרמב"ן).</p>
<p>5. If [visitor] requests mercy for him [i.e., prays for the sick] in the presence of the sick the visitor may pray in any language he wishes, and if the visitor prays outside the presence of the sick, the visitor should pray only in Hebrew.</p>	<p>ה. כשמבקש עליו רחמים אם מבקש לפניו יכול לבקש בכל לשון שירצה, ואם מבקש שלא בפניו לא יבקש אלא בלשון הקדש.</p>

¹ God makes a pastoral care visit to Abraham in Genesis, when God comes to check in on Abraham and see how Abraham is doing on the third day after Abraham's circumcision. See Rashi Commentary on Genesis 18:1.

<p>6. Include him [sick] with the sick of Israel when one says "The Divine heal him with the sick of Israel," and on the Sabbath say "Shabbat cries out and healing is close."</p>	<p>ו. יכלול אותו בתוך חולי ישראל שיאמר "המקום ירחם עליך בתוך חולי ישראל," ובשבת אומר "שבת היא מלזעוק ורפואה קרובה לבא."</p>
<p>7. Say to him [sick person i.e., to continue life as usual] to put his mind on his business dealings – if he lent or deposited [money] by other [people], or if others lent or deposited money by him [the sick person], and do not fear death.</p>	<p>ז. אומרים לו שיתן דעתו על ענייניו אם הלוה או הפקיד אצל אחרים, או אחרים הלוו או הפקידו אצלו ואל יפחד מפני זה מהמות</p>
<p>8. One should not visit the sick [suffering from] intestinal [illness], or eye illness, or head illness; and thus with all strong illnesses where it is hard [for the sick person] to speak – one should not visit before him [in his immediate presence] rather enter in the house's outer chamber and ask and talk there [from outer chamber] asking if they need tidying or smoothing, or anything else, and <u>hear his pain [hear sick person describe their pain]</u> and pray for the sick person.</p>	<p>ח. אין מבקרין לא לחולי מעים, ולא לחולי העין, ולא לחולי הראש, וכן לכל חולי דתקיף ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דיבורא – אין מבקרין אותו בפניו אלא נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלים ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרבע לפניו, וכיצא בו, <u>ושומעין צערן</u>, ומבקשים עליו רחמים.</p>
<p>9. One should visit sick idol worshippers [non-Jewish sick] because of ways of peace [promotes peace in community with others].</p>	<p>ט. מבקרין חולי עובדי כוכבים מפני דרכי שלום.</p>
<p>10. A Man should not care for a woman suffering from intestinal illness, but a woman can care for a man suffering from intestinal illness.</p> <p><i>Rama: Some say that one who has a sick person in his house should go to a wise [person, i.e., sage or rabbi] in the city that he should request mercy for him [sage should pray for the sick] and thus is our custom to bless the sick in the synagogue, to call them [sick person] by a new name because a change in one's name rips up the decree of his [sick person's] judgment; One should comfort [visit] a mourner's before visiting sick [people].</i></p>	<p>י. בחולי מעים אין האיש משמש את האשה, אבל האשה משמשת את האיש.</p> <p>הגה: י"א [יש אומרים] שמי שיש לו חולה בביתו ילך אצל חכם שבעיר שיבקש עליו רחמים וכן נהגו לברך חולים בב"ה, לקרא להם שם חדש כי שינוי השם קורע גזר דינו, ניחום אבלים קודם לבקור חולים.</p>
<p>Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 30b <i>[Gemorah analyzes "they shall walk" refers to visiting the ill]</i> The Master said: <u>[When one visits the sick] he takes [away] 1/60 of their illness.</u> <i>[Since visiting an ill contemporary involves contracting a bit of his illness] even so, he is</i></p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי, בבא מציעא ל:</p> <p>אמר ר' (אשר) זה ביקור חולים היינו גמילות חסדים לא נצרכה אלא לבן גילו דאמר ר' בן גילו נוטל אחד</p>

<p>required to go [and visit] him.</p>	<p>מששים בחליו ואילו הכי מבעי ליה למזיל לגביה</p>
<p>Chesbon HaNefesh – Accounting of the Soul <i>by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Levin of Satanov (1749-1826) (published 1809 based in part on ethical program described in autobiography circa 1770-90 of Ben Franklin (1706-1790)).</i> Section X – SILENCE: Before you open your mouth, be silent and reflect: What benefit will my speech bring me or others? <i>96. We have already explained (see subsection 50) that when the animal spirit – even if entirely serene – is in its “mode of sluggishness,” it leaps from sensation to idea, and from one idea to another idea, and then from the idea to action according to the order in which it is externally stimulated [i.e., not according to a pre-planned or pre-set pattern of behavior]. For example: When I see a father, I think of his son, which leads me in turn to think of his grandson, which in turn leads me to think about their possessions and on and on. Additionally, the animal spirit moves by instinctive responses – e.g., the skipping of calves or the jumping of goats. This kind of response is evidence in the animal spirit’s thought mode as well [i.e., the free association of thoughts without any pre-planned order of progression]. The reason for this is that the imagination of the animal spirit is totally devoid of the ability to link thoughts, for the progression of its thoughts proceeds according to the order of the stimuli which it experiences.</i> <i>97. The intellectual spirit, on the other hand, controls this “mode of sluggishness” whenever it so desires, and it can link specific ideas with either written or spoken words. . . . [Intellectual spirit also known as speaking</i></p>	<p>חשבון הנפש</p> <p>פרק י: שתיקה קדם שתפתח פיך – שתק והמלך בלבך, מה תועלת יהא בדבור ההוא לעצמך או לאחדים:</p>

<p><i>soul and through sight and sound people can learn from each other]. However, when speech is overused, it can itself become a yetzer ha-ra and an acquired desire, a maidservant to one's ego and search for personal prestige. Moreover, pointless speech can lead one to speak lashon ha-ra, to gossip, to scorning and to lying, as our sages said (Avot 1:17): One who speaks too much brings sin.</i></p>	
<p>Be Yourself and The Adaptive Unconscious, Blink: Whenever we meet someone for the first time, we use the adaptive unconscious part of our brain. Psychologist Nalini Ambady found student watching silent two second video clip of teacher he or she never met will reach conclusions about how good that teacher is similar to student who studied all semester with the teacher. That is the "power of our adaptive unconscious." See Malcolm Gladwell, <i>Blink</i> (Little, Brown, and Co., New York) 2005 at 12-13. God willing we strive in mussar to strive to make consistently conscious choices about middot character traits so that it hopefully moves at the higher levels from the conscious to the subconscious. First, however, we must start at very deliberate, conscious level.</p>	
<p>Listen: Sister Gallivan, a Roman Catholic nun with master of divinity degree and a Ph.D in pastoral psychology explained that chaplains are crucial part of movement known as patient-and family centered care: <u>"Everyone else has a task in health care, and our job is to listen,"</u> she says. See Laura Landro, <i>Medicine and Spirituality</i>, Chaplains are playing a larger role in helping hospital staffs and patients, <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>, 12/9/13 (emphasis added).</p>	