

Bikkur Cholim
A Practical Teaching Guide
By Joel Levinson

The Academy for Jewish Religion
Senior Project

Bikkur Cholim

A Practical Teaching Guide

Introduction

We are taught in Avot 1:2, “The world is sustained by three things: the Torah, serving G-d, and by acts of loving kindness”.

Included in “acts of loving kindness” is Bikkur Cholim, visiting the sick. For the purpose of this guide, the term “sick” has been expanded to include people confined to their homes or nursing homes as a result of their physical or mental condition. This expanded definition is more in keeping with both traditional and current views on Bikkur Cholim.

This guide is divided into three parts. The first part contains traditional texts and sources concerning the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim. It allows the user to utilize, or customize their teaching to the level of the students being taught the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim. At the end of this section are suggested exercises for the teacher to use to reinforce the teachings.

The information contained isn’t meant to be all inclusive, but rather a starting point for text and source study.

I must emphasize that, while the study of texts is important, it is only the beginning. The goal of teaching is to enable a person to understand the mitzvah, and to want to participate in its performance. Judaism is an active religion, requiring our participation.

The second section is a practical approach to the performance of Bikkur Cholim. While common sense is usually a good starting point for all we do, Bikkur Cholim requires a heightened sense of awareness and respect for the person being visited. The point of the mitzvah, as stated in the texts, is for our visit to be of comfort. Needs and concerns of the sick should be the focus. While we get satisfaction from the performance of this special mitzvah, it should not be done at the expense of the person being visited. To this end, a series of exercises and a “do and don’t do” list is included at the end of this section.

The last section concerns prayers. There are a variety of prayers printed in siddurim and various religious guides that are appropriate for use in our visits. Additionally, during services, most synagogues set aside time for prayers for the sick within the community.

Many times, special healing services are held to help and guide the community. Included in this section are selections of prayers, psalms and readings that are useful in the performance of the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim. I have also included an exercise in creative prayer writing. This exercise allows individuals to be more intimately involved in the prayer and to express their feelings to both the person being visited as well as to G-d. Many of us have lost the ability to pray from the heart. Hopefully, the exercise will allow the individual to reclaim this wonderful asset.

The appendix contains many of the original Hebrew texts and sources. It is a good starting point for those who want to delve more deeply into our traditional texts. There is also an extensive list of modern sources on Bikkur Cholim which the reader should find useful.

My goal in writing this guide is a simple one. It is to motivate the individual to perform the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim frequently, comfortably and, most of all, respectfully.

From The Sources

We learn the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim from G-d. In Genesis 18:1 we read, “And G-d appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to the tent, in the heat of the day.” (Author’s translation of original Hebrew text). Our sages tell us that this was the third day after Abraham’s circumcision. The wound was at its most painful stage, and Abraham was weak. G-d sends “3 men”, one to specifically heal Abraham. The “men” are really angels doing G-d’s bidding. It is from this text that we learn the importance of visiting the sick. When we perform the mitzvah, we too are like G-d’s angels, doing G-d’s work, here on earth. (See Chapter 18, opening comments-The Stone Edition, The Chumash page 78, Mesorah Publications; also “Doing Mitzvah” by Rabbi R. H. Olitzky). Based on the Mishna in Pe’ah 1:1, the rabbis in the Talmud, Shabbat 127A formulated the following, which is said as a prayer each morning, “These are the things whose fruit a person enjoys in this world, but whose principal remains intact for him in the world to come. They are honoring one’s father and mother, acts of loving kindness....**visiting the sick**....bringing peace between man and his fellow; but the study of Torah exceeds them all”. (Adapted from the Artscroll Siddur, page 17; Mesorah Publications). Here, the rabbis in the Talmud have set the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim as a category unto itself. It is obvious that they saw Bikkur Cholim as an exceedingly important mitzvah.

In Talmud Nedarim 39B we are taught: “Rabbi Hebo fell ill, and even though Rabbi Kahana went out and announced that Rabbi Hebo was ill, no one came to see him. So Rabbi Kahana said to the sages; “Did it not once happen that one of Rabbi Akiva’s disciples fell ill, and since the sages did not visit him, Rabbi Akiva himself went; and because Rabbi Akiva swept and sprinkled the ground before him, the disciple recovered and said, “Master, you have brought me back to life”. Afterward, Rabbi Akiva went out and proclaimed, “He who does not visit the sick is as one who sheds blood.

When Rabbi Dimi came from the land of Israel, he said, “He who visits the sick causes him to live; and he who does not visit the sick causes him to die.” (The Book of Legends, Bialik & Ravnitzky. Schocken Books, NY 684:398).

When someone is sick whether in the hospital or at home, they are effectively cut off from their community. They are not “seen” and sometimes become “forgotten”. This phenomena of “not seen and forgotten” is at times systemic in nursing homes. From my personal experience of visiting my grandmother in a nursing home, I saw residents there craving a friendly “outside” face. When I inquired of the staff, I was sadly informed that many of the residents are either “left” there by relatives or, in fact, don’t have any surviving relatives. These people were truly cut off from the outside world. The sages in the Talmud clearly understood the impact on a person of being alone, especially when ill. Visiting brings them renewed contact with community, dissipates aloneness and introduces communal caring.

Halakah, law, guides much of what we do and how we act. The laws of Bikkur Cholim date back hundreds of years. The following is a brief synopsis of these laws, based on The Laws and Customs of Israel, NYC, Pardes Publishing House, 1952. Pages 194-196.

1. It is an obligation to visit the sick. Relatives and friends can visit immediately while others should wait 3 days before visiting unless the person is gravely ill. Even a great person should visit a less important person, and visit him frequently. The more visits the better, **provided they don't inconvenience the sick person.**
2. The essential part of Bikkur Cholim is attending to the needs of the sick person whatever they may be. You should pray for their recovery. You should not visit a sick person during the early morning nor late at night.
3. You should not visit an enemy in the hospital because it may appear that you are happy about his illness. A sick person shouldn't rise up in the presence of a great sage, but if he does, he shouldn't be told to sit or lie down.
4. You shouldn't stand over a sick person, nor sit in a chair or on a bench that is higher than his bed.
5. You may pray for a sick person in any language, though it is preferable in Hebrew.
6. You should monitor your speech with a sick person, neither giving false hope nor depressing him with your speech.
7. You should not visit a person suffering from abdominal troubles, so as not to put him to shame.

We visit non-Jews, who are ill, because it brings peace (Kitzor Shulchan Aruch 193:12-translation by the author).

קצג. הלכות בקור חולים

ובו י"ד סעיפים:

א. כשחלה האדם, מצוה על כל אדם לבקרו, שכן מצינו בהקב"ה שמבקר חולים, כמו שדרשו רז"ל (ע"י סוטה יד, א) בפסוק (בראשית יח, א) וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, מלמד שבא לבקר החולה. הקרובים והחברים שרגילים ליכנס לביתו תמיד, המה הולכים לבקרו מיד כששמעו שהוא חולה, אבל הרחוקים שאינם רגילים בביתו, לא יכנסו מיד כי היכי דלא ליתרע מזליה להטיל עליו שם חולה. ואינם נכנסים עד לאחר ג' ימים. ואם קפץ עליו החולי, גם הרחוקים נכנסים מיד. אפילו הגדול ילך לבקר את הקטן ואפילו כמה פעמים ביום. וכל המוסיף הרי זה משובח. ובלבד שלא יהיה למורח על החולה. השונא לא יבקר את שונאו החולה, ולא ינחמנו כשהוא אבל, שלא יחשוב ששמח לאידו, אבל מותר ללוותו וליכא למיחש שיאמרו כי שמח לאידו, באשר זהו סוף כל אדם. (ע' לקמן סי' ר"ז ס"ב דהחולה אינו צריך לעמוד אפילו מפני נשיא, ואם רוצה לעמוד, אין אומרים לו שב).

ב. כשהחולה שוכב על הארץ, לא ישב המבקר על גבי כסא הגבוה ממנו, לפי שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה, שנאמר (תהלים ^{ענ} ~~ענ~~ ד) ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי. אבל כשהחולה שוכב במטה, מותר למבקר לישב על כסא וספסל (עיין לקמן סימן ר"ז סעיף ב').

ג. עיקר מצות בקור חולים הוא לעיין בצרכי החולה מה הוא צריך לעשות לו, ושימצא נחת רוח עם חבריו, וגם שיתן דעתו עליו ויבקש רחמים עליו. ואם ביקר ולא ביקש, לא קיים את המצוה. ולכן אין מבקרין בג' שעות הראשונות של היום, מפני שאז כל חולה מיקל עליו חליו ולא יחוש לבקש עליו רחמים. ולא בג' שעות האחרונות של היום, שאז מכביד עליו חליו ויתיאש מלבקש רחמים.

ד. כשמבקש עליו רחמים, אם מבקש לפניו, יכול לבקש בכל לשון שירצה, שהרי מבקש כביכול לפני השכינה שהיא אצל החולה. אבל כשמבקש שלא בפניו דאז מלאכי השרת נזקקין להעלות תפלתו ואינם נזקקין לכל הלשונות, על כן יבקש בלשון הקודש. ויכלול אותו בתוך כל חולי ישראל, שמתוך שכוללו עם האחרים, תפלתו נשמעת יותר בזכותן של רבים. ויאמר, המקום ירחם עליך בתוך כל חולי ישראל. וכשבת יאמר שבת היא מלזעוק, ורפואה קרובה לבא, ורחמיו מרובים, ושבתו בשלום.

ה. המבקרים ידברו אתו בהשכל ודעת ויאמרו לו דברים מחיים ולא דברים ממיתים, ויאמרו לו שיתן דעתו על עניניו אם הלוח או הפקיד אצל אחרים או אחרים אצלו, ואל יפחד מפני זה מהמות.

ו. חולה שמת לו מת, אין מודיעין לו, שלא תטרף דעתו עליו. ואפילו נודע לו, אין אומרים לו לקרוע, שמא תגדל דאגתו, ואין בוכין ואין מספידין בפניו בין על מתו בין על מת אחר אע"פ שאינו קרובו, פן יפחד שגם הוא ימות. ומשתיקין את המנחמים בפניו. (יו"ד סי' של"ז)

ז. אין מבקרין לא לחולי מעים, משום כיסופא, ולא לחולי העין, ולא לחולי הראש. וכן כל חולה דתקיף ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דיבורא, אין

מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין לבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריך לאיזה דבר, ושומעין צערו, ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

יא. מי שיש לפניו שתי מצוות, בקור חולים וניחום אבלים, אם אפשר לו לקיים שניהם, בקור חולים קודם, כדי לבקש רחמים עליו. ואם אי אפשר לו לקיים שניהם, ניחום אבלים קודם, שהוא גמילות חסד עם החיים ועם המתים.

יב. מבקרין חולה עכו"ם מפני דרכי שלום. (סי' של"ה)

יג. תניא בספרי (במדבר ה' ו'), רבי נתן אומר, ואשמה הנפש ההיא והתודו, זה בנה אב על כל המתים שיטענו וידוי. ואיתא במשנה (סנהדרין מג, ב'), שכל המתודה יש לו חלק לעולם הבא, שכן מצינו בעכן שאמר לו יהושע (יהושע ה' יט) בני שים נא כבוד לה' אלהי ישראל ותן לו תודה והגד נא לי מה עשית אל תכחד ממני. ויען עכן את יהושע ויאמר, אמנה אנכי הטאתי וגו' וכזאת וכזאת עשיתי. ומנין שכיפר לו וידויו. שנאמר ויאמר יהושע מה עכרתנו יעכרך ה' ביום הזה. ביום הזה אתה עכור, ואי אתה עכור לעולם הבא. לכן חולה שרואין בו שהוא נוטה למות, מסבבים עמו בדברים ואומרים לו, התודה ואל תדאג מזה. הרבה התודו ועמדו מחליים והמה בחיים, והרבה שלא התודו ומתו. ובשכר שאתה מתודה, אתה חי. וכל המתודה, יש לו חלק לעולם הבא. ואם אינו יכול להתודות בפיו, יתודה בלבו. ואם יכול לדבר אך מעט, אומרים לו אמור תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל עוונותי. וגם יאמרו לו שיבקש מחילה מכל אדם שחטא כנגדו בין בממון בין בדברים. וכל אלו הדברים אין אומרים לו לא בפני עמי הארץ ולא בפני נשים, ולא בפני קטנים, שמא יבכו וישברו לבו.

יד. סדר הוידוי בקצרה. מודה אני לפניך ה' אלהי ואלהי אבותי שרפואתי בידך, ומיתתי בידך. יהי רצון מלפניך שתרפאני רפואה שלימה. ואם אמות, תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל חטאים ועוונות ופשעים שחטאתי ושעויתי ושפשעתי לפניך. ותן חלקי בגן עדן, וזכני לעולם הבא הצפון לצדיקים. ואם רוצה להאריך בוידוי יום הכפורים הרשות בידו. וכבר מסודרים הוידוים בספר היקר מעבר יבק. ובספר חכמת אדם העתיק גם כן סדר הוידוי מהרמב"ן ז"ל. (סי' של"ח)

LAWS CONCERNING VISITING THE SICK.

1. It is a religious duty to visit the sick. Relatives and friends should visit immediately, but strangers should not call until three days (of the illness) have elapsed, in order not to spoil his chance of recovery by casting upon him the designation of an invalid. If, however, one became suddenly seriously ill, even strangers should visit him immediately, and even a great man should visit a less important person than he is, and visit him even many times a day. He who visits the sick frequently is praiseworthy, but his calls must not trouble the invalid.

2. The essential feature in the religious duty of visiting the sick is to pay attention to the needs of the invalid, to see what is necessary to be done for his benefit, and to give him the pleasure of one's company, also to consider his condition and to pray for mercy on his behalf. If one visited a sick person and did not pray for mercy for him, he did not do his religious duty, therefore one should not visit a sick person during the first three hours of the day, since the sickness then assumes a milder form, the visitor will not be sufficiently impressed to pray for mercy for the sick person, nor should one visit him during the three closing hours of the day, as the sickness then takes a turn for the worse, and the visitor will despair of his recovery and will not pray for mercy on his behalf.

3. One should not visit an enemy in his sickness, nor comfort him when mourning, that the latter may not think that he is rejoicing on account of his misfortune, and that he came only to vex him. He is, however permitted to follow the dead to the grave, as that is the end of man. In the foregoing one must consider what sort of men the enemies are and what is the nature of the enmity that exists between them. The sick person should not rise up even in the presence of a great sage, but should he desire to do so, he should not be told to sit down or to lie down.

4. If the sick person lie upon the ground, the visitor should not sit upon a chair or a bench higher than the former, if, however, the sick person be in bed, the visitor is permitted to sit on a chair or bench.

¹See T. B. Synhedrin 57b.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF ISRAEL

5. One who prays for the sick may say his prayers in any language he desires in his presence, if, however, he pray in the absence of the sick person, he should do so in Hebrew, and include him amongst all the sick of Israel, for by thus including him with the others, his prayer will be more readily heard for the sake of the many. The visitor should say to the sick person, *המקום ירחם עליך בתוך כל חולי ישראל*, and on Sabbath he should add *ורחמי*, ורחמי קרובה לבוא, ושבתו בשלום.

6. All who visit the sick person should speak to him with judgment and tact, they should speak in such a manner so as neither to revive him (with false hopes) nor to depress him (by words of despair), but they should tell him to concern himself with his affairs, indicating that if he had granted a loan to others, or had deposited anything with others or others with him (he should mention the fact). The sick person should not fear on this account that he will die.

7. One should visit neither a person who is suffering from abdominal troubles so as not to put him to shame, nor one who is troubled with his eyes, nor one who has headache, nor any person who is very ill and to whom conversation is difficult; one should not visit any of the foregoing, but should call at the door of the house to make inquiries regarding his condition, and to ascertain if he be in need of anything; he should also pay heed to his distress and pray for mercy on his behalf.

8. One who can discharge two religious duties, namely, visiting the sick and comforting the mourners, and it is possible for him to fulfil both, he should first visit the sick in order that he may pray for mercy on his behalf. But if he find it impossible to fulfil both duties he should rather fulfil that of comforting the mourners, as this is an act of loving service towards the living and the dead.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF ISRAEL

11. If a member of the family of the invalid had died he should not be informed thereof that it may not worry him, and even if he became aware thereof he should not be told to rend his garment, lest it increase his distress. One should neither weep nor mourn in the presence of the sick person, whether the dead be a member of the sick person's family or a stranger, lest he fear that he also will die. All who comfort mourners in the presence of the sick person should be compelled to remain silent.

12. The great exponents of the Law have written, that it is proper to institute in any city whenever one is sick the custom for the Treasurer of the Holy Association (חברה קדישה) or other people to visit him on the third day of his illness and to say to him: "Thou art aware that it is customary to remind all sick people to write their wills as they desire, therefore tell us and we will write your will, mentioning what you owe and what others owe you." He is furthermore told to confess his sins, for whosoever confesses, his sins are forgiven. This course is to be followed only where this is the usual custom familiar to all, where, however, this custom does not obtain, the sick person should not be spoken to in that manner, lest he become anxious that he is about to die, for it is characteristic of the people generally to be very nervous when told to confess. Nevertheless if the visitors perceive that he is dying they should tactfully turn the conversation so that they are led to tell him to confess and they should add: "Do not fear that evil will ensue, for many have confessed and did not die. On the contrary, as a reward for having confessed, thy life will be prolonged. Moreover all who confess have a share in the world to come." If he be unable to confess verbally, he should make a mental confession, and if he know not how to confess he should be told to say יהי רצון ("May my death atone for all my sins.") These words should be spoken neither in the presence of ignorant people nor before women and children for it may cause them to cry and thus make the sick person broken-hearted but they should be excluded from the room. The sick person should also be reminded to ask the pardon of all against whom he had sinned, whether in money or by words.

13. A brief form of confession is as follows: "I acknowledge unto Thee, O Lord, my God and the God of my fathers, that my healing and my dying are in Thy hands. May it be Thy will to heal me with a perfect healing, and if I should die, may my death be an atonement for all the sins, iniquities and transgressions which I have sinned and perversely committed and transgressed before Thee, and grant my portion in Paradise and cause me to merit the life of the world to come, which it stored up for the righteous." If he desire to prolong the confession in a similar manner to the confession on the Day of Atonement, he is permitted to do so.

LAWS CONCERNING ONE WHO IS DYING.

1. One who is dying is to be considered as a living being¹ in all

¹See Semachoth 1.

396. We have been taught: There is no measure for visiting the sick. What is meant by "There is no measure for visiting the sick"? R. Joseph thought it meant: "There is no measure for the reward given for it." But is there a definite measure of reward for any precept? Have we not been taught: "Be heedful of a light precept as of a weighty one, for you know not what is given as reward for any precept" (Avot 2:1)? Rather, said Abbaye, it means that a great person should visit a humble one. Rava said: Even a hundred times a day.

R. Aha bar Hanina said: He who visits a sick man takes away one-sixtieth of his illness. So Abbaye said to Rava: If that is the case, let sixty persons come in and thus make the man rise up [well from his sickbed]. Rava replied: The sixtieth part spoken of here is analogous to the tenth part in the school of Rabbi [Judah I, the Patriarch], where the fraction is taken not from the original amount but from the remainder.¹ And besides, each visitor must be of the same age group as the sick man.²

397. R. Huna said: When a person visits the sick, the sick man's illness is diminished by one-sixtieth. At this, R. Huna was challenged: If so, let sixty persons visit the sick man, and he immediately will be able to go down with them into the marketplace. R. Huna replied: [It would work] only if each of the sixty loved him as a man loves himself. In any event, they will afford him some relief.³

398. R. Helbo fell ill, and even though R. Kahana went out and announced that R. Helbo was ill, no one came to see him. So R. Kahana said to the sages: Did it not once happen that one of R. Akiva's disciples fell ill, and since the sages did not go to visit him, R. Akiva himself went; and because R. Akiva swept and sprinkled the ground before him, the disciple recovered and said, "Master, you have brought me back to life"? Afterward, R. Akiva went out and preached: He who does not visit the sick is as one who sheds blood.

When R. Dimi came [from the Land of Israel], he said: He who visits the sick causes him to live; and he who does not visit the sick causes him to die.⁴

399. R. Anan said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Presence sustains a sick man? From the verse: "The Lord will sustain him upon his sickbed" (Ps. 41:4).

R. Avin said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Presence abides over a sick man's bed? From the verse "The Lord over his sickbed will sustain him."

He who visits the sick should sit neither on the bed nor on a chair nor on a bench, but must wrap himself in his robe and sit on the ground, because the Presence abides over a sick man's bed.⁵

400. Our masters taught: He who visits the sick on a Sabbath should say, "It is the Sabbath, when one may not cry out, but recovery will come soon." R. Meir said: One should say, "The Sabbath can have compassion." R. Judah said: "May He who is everywhere have compassion on you and on the sick of Israel." R. Yose said: "May He who is everywhere have compassion on you among [all] the sick of Israel." When Shebna of Jerusalem entered [a sick man's chamber], he would say, "Peace"; and when he left, he would say, "It is the Sabbath, when one may not cry

out, but recovery will come soon, for His compassions are abundant. So enjoy the Sabbath in peace."⁶

401. R. Yose bar Parta said in the name of R. Eliezer: One should not visit those ill with sickness of bowels or sickness of eyes, or those who suffer from headaches.⁷

402. Samuel said: A sick person should be visited only after the fever has left him.⁸

403. Whenever Rava fell ill, he would ask on the first day that his sickness not be made known, lest his future be hurt.⁹ After that, he would say [to his servants]: Go out to the marketplace and announce, "Rava has fallen ill." [Upon hearing the announcement], my enemies will rejoice, despite being told, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth . . . lest the Lord see it and it displeases Him, and He turn away His wrath from him" (Prov. 24:17-18) [so that I will recover]. And they who love me, [hearing of my illness], will entreat mercy on my behalf.¹⁰

Exercises

- 1- Review the texts and laws of Bikkur Cholim either in a group or with a study partner.

Today the average hospital stay is approximately 3 days. How would you revise the laws of Bikkur Cholim for our times? Keep in mind that we want to perform the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim without inconveniencing the person being visited.

- 2- In the Kitzor Shulchan Aruch 194:2 we are taught that we should not sit higher than the person we are visiting. This law is based on a sentence in Psalms 41:4, that implies that the Divine Presence rests above the head of the person who is ill.

A. Read the entire Psalm, with emphasis on sentence 4.

B. If the rabbis are correct in their understanding of this sentence, then are we ever really alone? Discuss.

- 3- Write 1 “new law” that you feel we should follow in order to improve on our performance of the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim.

- 4-We read in the “The Book of Legends” (op cit.300:563), “When Samuel and Mar Ukba were sitting together over a theme in halakah, Mar Ukba sat deferentially before him at a distance of 4 cubits. But at a judicial session, Samuel sat deferentially before Mar Ukba at a distance of 4 cubits. Nevertheless, in order that (his seat might not be on a level higher than Samuel’s and also that) Samuel’s words might be well heard, a place was hollowed out in the ground and a mat spread there for Mar Ukba the Exilarch to sit on.”

We see from this midrash that where and how we sit reflects power and respect.

Review this midrash in groups and describe how you feel when someone stands over you instead of sitting near you. Then express your feelings as if you are a patient in a hospital bed and a visitor stood over you and a second visitor sat next to or near you.\

5-The mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim isn't limited to hospital visits. It can and should be performed by visiting a person in their home. Review the texts and discuss how;

- a- the laws of Bikkur Cholim apply to a home visit.
- b- a temple based Bikkur Cholim group that includes members of the temple community, can participate in this mitzvah.

The Visit

Preparation:

It is extremely important that you prepare for the visit. This entails knowing whom you are visiting, and understanding why they are in the hospital etc. Visiting a woman who gave birth to a healthy baby is not the same as visiting a teenager being treated with chemotherapy for cancer. Visiting people who survived car crashes varies from case to case. One person may have minor injuries, the other may be disfigured for life or be permanently crippled. By preparing, by knowing in advance what we are about to encounter, we are better able to control our emotions. Entering a hospital room and gasping in horror will only serve to hurt the person we are visiting.

Preparation also allows for more meaningful, intelligent conversation. Remember, the person you are visiting existed as a person before entering the hospital. Previous interests and concerns do not vanish with the hospital stay. Try to find out what the patients' interests are. By focusing on their interests, you are telling them that they count, that you care about what is important to them.

Entering The Room

Always knock and announce yourself before entering the patients' rooms. This affords them time to prepare themselves. Additionally, they may be attending to a bodily function, or in the midst of a procedure with a doctor or nurse, and require privacy. Ask for the patients' permission to enter and sit with them. Let them make the choice of

allowing you to enter. When you do enter and sit with patients, choose a place that is convenient. Make sure they can see you without having to re-position themselves.

My mother was in the hospital having a heart valve replaced. Her surgery, thank G-d, was successful. I was visiting her in the cardiac recovery unit for the second time after her surgery. As I entered this large room, I saw that my mother was seated by her bed facing me. In front of her, blocking all but her head, was a nurse. All that I saw from my vantage view was bloody bandages being tossed into a bucket. My fear overwhelmed me and I rushed over, without thinking. As I came within 5 feet of my mother, I saw that she was naked from the waist up. There was no emergency; the nurse was simply putting on a clean bandage on my mother. I felt foolish and embarrassed for violating my mother's privacy. Fortunately, she was still groggy from the anesthesia, and has no recollection of this event.

Walkers, portable toilets etc. are positioned so that the patient can easily access them.

Don't move these items without the permission of the patient; always return the moved equipment to its' original position.

The Actual Visit

Many of us bring presents with us when we visit loved ones' or friends in the hospital.

We may bring a balloon bouquet, or the person's favorite magazine. We forget that we bring with us a truly special gift with each visit. This gift is our presence. By our visit alone, we are telling the person that we care; that they are special and not forgotten.

When we bring them "regards" from their community, we are telling them that they are not alone; that they are an important part of the community.

While we may be very adept at everyday conversation, a visit to a hospital or nursing home requires different skills and sensitivities. The hospital patient or nursing home resident should be the focus of our conversation. A visit, simply put, is a time for the patient to talk and a time for us to listen. Let the patient decide on the direction of the conversation. Make sure that **they** are speaking and **you** are listening. This doesn't mean that you have to be silent, but if you think that you're talking too much you probably are. Many times a patient will complain about a doctor or a procedure. Listen to is being said, but don't add "fuel to the fire". You're not a doctor, nor does the patient want you to be one. They are in need of a sympathetic ear-be that for them.

When visiting seriously ill people, keep in mind the Jewish law that we studied in the previous section. Do not give false hope, but don't discuss things that will diminish the patient's hope. Stay away from telling stories of people you know who went through the same procedure, or had the same ailment as the person you're visiting. Each person is special. By telling "war stories" you may give false hope, or worse, depress the patient. Pay attention to the patient's room. If there are many cards etc., they are probably in contact with family and friends. They may have a very strong support group. If there are no cards or signs that there is a support group for this person, you may want to visit them more often, or organize visits from other members of the community.

After teaching my ninth grade class about Bikkur Cholim, I decided to take them to a local hospital to put into practice what they had learned. The class entered a semi-private room of 2 women being treated for cancer. The woman in the "A" bed had balloons, cards and photos by her part of the room. She was glad to see us, and welcomed my class.

Her roommate in the “B” bed quietly looked over to us and turned away. I noticed that her side of the room was devoid of any cards or photos. I walked over to her with one of my students. After a few moments of speaking with her, I realized that we were the first non hospital staff to visit her during her 2 week stay at the hospital.

When you see cards, photos etc., inquire about them. This gives the person a chance to tell you about themselves. Some of the most fantastic and interesting stories that I’ve heard came about because I asked about a photo or a card on the patient’s night table.

Exiting Gracefully And Dealing With Rejection

Many times, a hospital patient gets tired suddenly and unexpectedly. One moment everything is going great, and the next, the patient looks exhausted, or worse, irritable and angry. IT ISN’T YOU!!! Be aware that the person’s physical state can change very quickly. Many ailments and operations leave the patient in a much weakened state.

When you see such a change in the person you are visiting, suggest to them that you want to give them a chance to rest, and that you will stop by at another time for another visit. A patient may even fall asleep in the middle of a visit. This isn’t a reflection on you or the quality of your visit.

A simple, practical solution is to keep your visits short. I realize that you may have traveled far and rearranged your schedule for this visit. The visit isn’t about the length of time, but rather about the quality of your visit. A “good” 15-20 minute visit can be of tremendous benefit to the person you are visiting. It will also give you a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Sometimes, no matter how hard we prepare and try, we “fail”. We called in advance to arrange our visit at the patient’s convenience. We showed up on time, all prepared to perform the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim, and lo and behold, the patient is asleep. Or worse, they don’t want us to visit with them.

If a person is asleep, you may want to sit quietly with them, just physically being there. If you leave before they wake up, leave a note for them telling them that you stopped by and will call them later. It should be noted that visiting by phone, when physical visiting is impossible, is acceptable and should be encouraged. But what about rejection? You’ve traveled 47 miles, changed your schedule twice to accommodate the person you are visiting, and now they don’t want to see you. The sheer nerve of them!!!! It is crucial for you to realize that you personally are not being rejected. The patient may have taken a turn for the worse or have just had an emergency procedure done. Or they may be so tired that they can’t tolerate a visitor “right now”. They just need to be alone, perhaps to get some sleep.

They probably feel just as badly as you do about their sending you away. Respect their wishes. You may want to tell them that you will call them the next day and that you hope they feel better. By doing this, you are telling them that you care and, more importantly, understand.

Visiting An Unconscious Person

Visiting an unconscious person is very easy and at the same time, very hard. After all, you get to do all the talking. By all means, speak to the person as if they are conscious, aware, and awake. Introduce yourself to them, "Hi Mark! It's Barry. I wanted to stop by and see how you are doing. I'm going to sit here with you and spend some time with you." This sounds fairly easy until you try it. The first time you try it, it will feel strange; speaking to someone who can't reply. Yet many times patients "awake" and recount conversations they heard while they were in a coma. Never speak about a person in front of them and say something that you might regret at a later time. This is good advice whether the person is awake or in a coma.

A good way to spend time with an unconscious person is to sing or hum a melody. Remember, the purpose of your visit is to be present. When you are ready to leave, say goodbye. Visiting an unconscious person may be awkward, but it is just as important as visiting any other person who is ill.

Role Playing Exercises

1. Pair off in groups of patients and visitors. The visitor is to practice their listening skills. Afterwards, have the “patient” tell if they felt they were “heard” by their visitor. Gentle constructive criticism will benefit all participants.
2. In front of the group, have one person lie on a bench etc., pretending to be unconscious. The visitor must do all the talking, singing or whatever she/he chooses. Let this go on for 5-6 minutes. Have each “actor” describe how she/he felt.
3. Practice dealing with a patient falling asleep and “rejection”. Use role playing techniques. Have participants discuss how they feel. Practice writing a note to someone who either was asleep when visited, or who fell asleep during the visit.

Role Playing Examples

Bikkur Cholim Visitor (BKV)- “How are you feeling today, Mr. Stein?”

Patient (P)- “Not good today.”

BKV- “Not good?”

P- “I didn’t sleep well last night...”

BKV- “That’s a beautiful get well card! Who made it for you?”

P- “My granddaughter Suzy.”

BKV- “You must be very proud of her. Tell me about Suzy.”

BKV- "Good morning Mrs. Katz. I'm Harry from the Bikkur Cholim committee. Can I come in?"

P- "No, I just don't feel up to a visit."

BKV- "I'm sorry you're not feeling up to a visit. I'll call you in a day or so. Here's our phone number. Please call us when you feel up to a visit, or just want to talk. I hope you feel better soon."

Take turns practicing the parts and when possible, complete the conversations.

A Visitor's List of Do's & Don'ts

Do:

A) Prepare for the visit-

- 1. Know who you are visiting.**
- 2. Why they are in the hospital.**
- 3. What to expect, whenever possible**

B) Visit during scheduled visiting hours.

C) Visit on Shabbat and holidays.

D) Announce yourself and ask permission to enter.

E) Make the person being visited be the focus of the visit.

F) Listen proactively.

G) "Hear" their pain or anger, knowing it isn't directed at you.

H) Remember that you are there to be with the person, not to "fix" anything.

I) Pray with the person you are visiting-

- 1. Only if they ask you to.**
- 2. In a loud clear voice so that they can hear you.**
- 3. Pray for the patient outside their presence-**
 - a. In a synagogue.**
 - b. At a healing service.**
 - c. In a spiritual place where you are comfortable.**

- J)** Offer to hold their hand etc., but only with permission.
- K)** Call the person when you can't visit.
- L)** Leave a note that you were there if the patient was asleep.
- M)** Listen for signs of fatigue and shorten your visit.
- N)** Let the patient know they matter to you and to the community.
- O)** Offer to help when you can help, eg. with driving their child to Hebrew school, babysitting, or bringing a cooked meal to the house.

Don't:

- A)** Force yourself on the patient.
- B)** Wear perfume or after shave lotion-illness often heightens a person's sense of smell.
- C)** Stay too long, unless the patient requests you to.
- D)** Take "sides", give medical advice, or question the decisions of the doctors or hospital staff.
- E)** Monopolize the conversation.
- F)** Be afraid to sit in silence.
- G)** Touch or move equipment without permission.
- H)** Sit on the bed without permission.
- I)** Give false hope or speak about things that will upset or depress the patient.
- J)** Talk about your own problems or illnesses.

K) Speak about an unconscious person in their presence as if they “can’t really hear”.

L) Speak about patients in the corridor or elevators.

The above lists are based on lists in “Acts of Loving Kindness”, (op cit), “Give Me Your Hand”, (op cit), many are common sense, an invaluable asset when performing the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim.

Prayer

The shortest prayer in our Bible, was recited by Moses for his sister Miriam. In Numbers, chapter 12, we are told of Miriam being stricken with leprosy. Moses prayer to G-d is but 3 words: "Heal her please" (Numbers 12:13). G-d hears the prayer of Moses, and Miriam is healed of her affliction.

The commentator, Rashi, asks an obvious question: "Why didn't Moses pray more extensively for Miriam?" His reply is that Moses prayed as he did "so that all Israel wouldn't say that his sister is standing and suffering, while he is standing and praying excessively". Clearly, Rashi understood that a prayer for a person suffering should be to the point. It should never become a burden to the person being prayed for. Simplicity and sincerity should be our guiding principles in any prayer, especially for one who is ill.

We are taught that it is a mitzvah to pray for the sick, especially in their presence.

Common sense tells us that we should ask permission first. Sometimes people feel uncomfortable hearing a prayer for themselves. We must always respect their wishes.

In the Shulchan Aruch 330:5 we are taught: "When asking for mercy for them (a sick person), we may ask in any language, whether in the "holy language" (Hebrew) or not, if they (the sick person) are before us... (Author translation). The sound of Hebrew in prayer has a mystical quality that effects most people very positively. Even when a prayer is said in English a few words at the beginning or end in Hebrew, has a tremendous effect on the person we are visiting with.

I had visited with an older woman in the hospital. She immediately informed me that she never goes to shul anymore, that she isn't religious. She never learned to read Hebrew.

Towards the end of my visit, I asked her if she would like me to say a prayer for her. She said, somewhat hesitantly, "Yes, please". She remembered her "Jewish" name, and I recited a simple "Mi sheberakh" for her, repeating it in English. When I had come to the part of the prayer that incorporates the person's name, I noticed a physical change in her. Hearing her own "Jewish" name brought tears to her eyes. She tightly held my hand for several minutes, thanking me over and over for my prayer.

Many of our prayer books have prayers for the sick in Hebrew, transliterations in Hebrew and English translations, as well. It takes a little practice, but it is worth the effort for anyone performing the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim to learn to recite a prayer in flawless Hebrew. The impact of our holy language can't be over stated.

When visiting someone who doesn't know Hebrew, the prayer said should be repeated, or summarized, in English. Let the person being visited understand what we are praying for them.

There are many "healing service" booklets, or abbreviated prayer service booklets, that are available. Many booklets are intended to be given to the person being visited, for their use later on. I suggest that you stamp the name of your temple or organization on these booklets. Let the people being visited know that there is a community that cares about them, that ~~hasn't~~ hasn't forgotten them.

We have a tradition of “teffillat halev”, or prayers from the heart. This a skill that most of us have lost, but that skill can be reclaimed with a bit of practice. Sometimes spontaneous prayer has a greater impact than reciting a “formula” prayer from a siddur.

I was visiting a Jewish patient in the hospital. His “roommate” was Christian. After I had finished my visit with my congregant and said a prayer for him, his roommate turned to me and said: “Rabbi, can you please say a prayer for me?”. I was startled; the man and his wife looked so frightened! I sat with them, getting to know them. I find it easier to pray for someone I know. I asked them: “What shall we pray for?”. They said they wanted G-d to watch over him during the operation; they wanted the surgeon to do a good job; and they wanted him to return home healthy in a short time. From within me came: “G-d, Harry is going to be operated on. Watch over him, protect him. Grant his doctors the knowledge and ability to perform this surgery successfully, and return him to his family quickly, in good health. Amen”. After a few moments of silent reflection, both the patient and his wife thanked me profusely.

Sometimes we visit people who are terminally ill, and suffering terribly. In reply to a simple “What shall we pray for?”, I have had patients and their family tell me: “Tell G-d to end the suffering, pray for me to die already.. We are not psychologists nor family therapists; hospitals have qualified professionals to help patients and their families. We can only offer our presence.

I personally can not pray for a person to die, even if it means an end to their suffering. I have offered an alternate pray for someone who is terminally ill and suffering. Rather

than praying for a miraculous healing, I offer to pray that their spirit and body find peace and tranquillity. Most people find this not only acceptable, but helpful as well.

Sometimes the people we meet don't know their name in Hebrew. I still recite a prayer in Hebrew, using their English name when necessary. Lastly, always recite prayers clearly, in a voice that the patient can hear. Let them hear their own name; let them know that you are praying especially for them. Ultimately, "they" are what this visit and prayer is all about.

מִי שְׁבִירָה

May God who blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah grant you a Refuah Shelemah - a thorough healing - and bestow upon you blessings of health - of body, of mind, and of spirit.

מִי שְׁבִירָה

אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרָהִם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיַרְפָּא אֶת הַחוּלִים

...

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
יִמְלֵא רַחֲמִים עֲלֵיהֶם
לְהַחְלִימָם וּלְרַפְּאֵתָם
לְהַחְיֵקָם וּלְהַחְיִיתָם
וְיִשְׁלַח לָהֶם מִהֲרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וּרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף
בְּתוֹךְ שָׁר חוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
הַשָּׂתָא בְּעִגְלָא וּבְזִמְנו קָרִיב
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.



PSALM 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד. יְיָ רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחָסֵר. בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצָנִי, עַל־מֵי מְנוּחֹת
יְנַהֲלָנִי. נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב. יִנְחָנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ. גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶּךְ
בְּגִיא צִלְמוֹת לֹא־אִירָא רָע, כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי; שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הִקְּמָה
יְנַחֲמָנִי. תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׁלָחַן נֶגֶד צָרָתִי. דִּשְׁנָתָּ בַשֶּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רְוִיָּה.
אֵךְ טוֹב וַחֲסֵד יְרֻדְפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי, וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְיָ לְאָרְךָ יָמִים.

God is my shepherd, I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures,
Leads me beside still waters, and restores my soul.
You lead me in right paths for the sake of
Your Name.

Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
You have set a table before me in the presence of my
enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of God forever.

🕊 *Baruch Atah AdoShem, Elokeinu Melech Ha-olam* (Praised are You, God, Ruler of the Universe), who gave me the strength yesterday to help another and myself. May I find the strength today to help myself.

🕊 Blessed art Thou...thank You...the warmth of Your love as it courses through my body and soul...and for the ability to recognize and count your blessings...

🕊 *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melch Ha-olam* (Praised are You, God, Ruler of the Universe), that from this place of darkness I have even the ability to shut my eyes to the light.

🕊 Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has allowed me to experience both great pleasure and the chance to learn of life, for the hope offered by this new day.

🕊 Praised be Thou, O Lord our God! Please give me the courage and strength to live this day, and ease my pain. I am Your child and worthy of better.

🕊 Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has made me as He/She wanted me, so that I may open my heart to love my body/self as I am. Thank You for opening my heart.

🕊 "Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has made our bodies in wisdom, combining veins, arteries, and vital organs into a finely balanced network."
If any one of those veins, arteries or organs were to malfunction, I would be reminded of how much I rely on You for my health and well being.

"Wondrous Fashioner and Sustainer of life, Source of our health and our strength, we give You thanks and praise."

🕊 Blessed are You, Source of Life and Love. Thank You for creating a world with the possibility of healing.
May it be Your will that I should be healed in body and soul.
Blessed are You, Sustainer of life and Guide through the valley of death.

The Lord Our Protector

(Psalm 121)

I will lift up my eyes unto the hills:
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot stumble,
He that keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, the God that keeps Israel
Neither slumbers nor sleeps.

The Lord is your keeper,
The Lord is your protection at your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
He will keep you, body and soul.
The Lord will guard your going and coming,
Now and forever more.

קבא

This song differs from all others in this series because it is not called *שיר המעלות*, a song of ascents; but is dedicated *למעלות*, to the ascents. It describes the means whereby Israel finds the strength to attain godly heights and ascend to His glorious Presence. It speaks of God's constant protection, and its recitation is especially appropriate in times of crisis.

א שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת; אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים, מֵאֵן יְבֵא
עֲזָרִי. ב עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה, עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

ג אֵל יִתֵּן לְמוֹט רַגְלִי, אֵל יְנוּם שְׁמִרָה. ד הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם
וְלֹא יִישָׁן, שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל. ה יְהוָה שְׁמִרָה, יְהוָה צִלָּה עַל
יָד יְמִינִי. ו יוֹמָם הִשְׁמֵשׁ לֹא יִכְבֶּה, וְלַיְלָה בִּלְוִלָה. ז יְהוָה
יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע, יִשְׁמַר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ. ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר צֵאתְךָ
וּבֹאֶךָ, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.



A PRAYER OFFERED BY ONE AT THE BEDSIDE

O God, who are aware of my thoughts and feelings even before I share them, You know my concern for my loved one who is hospitalized. You know my apprehension and anxiety. You know how much I want my loved one to get well and be back home.

As You will be with my loved one during these days, be with me, too. Just as I will not neglect my dear one, may I not neglect myself. May I remember to eat enough and sleep sufficiently so that my health will be maintained, so that I can manage our household, and so that I can continue to attend to the needs of the one at whose bedside I pray. Amen.

When all within is dark,
and former friends misprise;
From them I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all within is dark,
and I my soul despise;
From me I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all Your face is dark,
and Your just angers rise;
From You I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

Israel Abrahams
based on Ibn Gabirol

GABIROL, SOLOMON IBN (1020-1057?). It was said of Ibn Gabirol: "All the poets before him were as nothing and after him none rose to equal him. All those who followed learned and received the use of poetry from him." Yet, Ibn Gabirol was not only poet. His ethical and philosophical works were first rate and influenced succeeding generations.

Born in the Spanish city of Malaga, Ibn Gabirol suffered as a child. He complained of his weak physique and ugliness; he was frequently ill, suffering particularly from a serious skin disease. His parents died when he was a young boy, and as a writer of philosophy and poetry he was forced to rely on support from others.

Ibn Gabirol wrote both religious and non-religious poetry. He considered the position of poet to be very high in society, and referred to himself as a "violin unto all singers and musicians." Many of his religious poems have been included in Ashkenazi and Sephardi prayer books. In his shorter poems he spelled his name "Shelomo" in the first letters of each verse (see *Acrostics). Other poems were composed alphabetically, but even in these he placed his name. In his non-religious poetry Ibn Gabirol often emphasized the differences between himself and the society in which he lived, complaining that he was unable to find a place among his fellows.

His basic philosophical work is *Mekor Hayyim* ("The Source of Life"). Divided into five sections, it contains most of Ibn Gabirol's thought. The goal for which all men should strive, Ibn Gabirol wrote in *Mekor Hayyim*, is knowledge of the purpose for which they were created. Indeed, he considered this knowledge the "source of life."

Historians are unsure when Ibn Gabirol died. However, the many legends about his life indicate the respect in which he and his works were held after his death.

Exercises

1. Learning prayers

- A)** Learn one Hebrew prayer appropriate for a Bikkur Cholim visit. Practice reciting it out loud until you are comfortable with it.
- B)** Practice reading English prayers, psalms, poems, etc. that you feel are comforting.
- C)** Choose 2 prayers that you will take with you on your Bikkur Cholim visits, one in Hebrew and one in English. Share with your group your feelings about your 2 selections. Hear how others react to your choices. Do they find these prayers comforting? appropriate?

2. Practice writing your own prayers.

Have some gentle Jewish/Hebrew music playing in the background. Think of something you want to pray for. List what you want, and then turn it into a prayer.

For example: My daughter will be spending the summer in Israel. I want her:

- A)** to get there safely.
- B)** to be spiritually nourished by this trip.
- C)** to return home safely and in good health.

Prayer: "Mi sheberakh avoteinu v'emoteinu. May G-d who blessed our ancestors bless and protect my daughter, Elana Batsheva bat Yehuda V'Channalah, on her journey to

Israel. May your holy spirit renew in her a love of Judaism and Israel. May she return to us safely and in good health. Amen.”

Using this as a model for creating a prayer for someone who is ill or about to be operated on, write a prayer for healing.

3. Sharing with the patient.

Read out loud the prayer “A Prayer Offered By One At The Bedside.” In this prayer, we are praying for the person we are visiting, and for ourselves as well. Discuss how you, the visitor feels reading this prayer. How do you think the person being visited will react to this prayer?

I have included examples of appropriate prayers from a variety of sources. I believe that you should choose prayers that speak to you. If you find them meaningful, you will be able to more fully use them. Also, every now and then, change the prayers you use. Don’t allow them to become “rote prayers”. Stale prayers sound stale, just as prayers from the heart sound meaningful!

Conclusion

When we perform the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim, we join together with G-d in the healing process.

Each of us is “Kliy kodesh”, a holy vessels. Within each of us is a spark of the Divine.

Each of us brings our own unique, special gifts to the Bikkur Cholim visit.

The strength of our visit comes simply from our being there with the person who is sick.

Our presence tells them that they too, are “Kliy kodesh”, that they are special, in the eyes of G-d and humanity. After a visit, take a few moments to reflect on the wonderful mitzvah that you have just fulfilled. Share your experience with others. Teach your family and friends the mitzvah of Bikkur Cholim. Take pride in knowing that you have touched another person as only G-d can; that you are a blessing to others!

Bibliography

Artscroll Siddur. Brooklyn, N.Y. Mesorah Publications. 1990.

Bialik, Hayim Nahman & Ravnitzky, Yehoshua Hanna. The Book of Legends. N.Y.C.

Schoen Books. 1992.

The Chumash. Brooklyn, N.Y. Mesorah Publication. 1993.

A Daily Prayer. The Chaplaincy Committee of the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey.

Flam, Rabbi Nancy, Offel, Janet. Eilberg & Rabbi Amy. Acts of Loving Kindness.

N.Y.C. The Center for Jewish Healing.

Gates of Healing. N.Y.C. CCAR Press. 1997.

Handler, Jane. Hetherington, Kim & Kelman, Rabbi Stuart. Give Me Your Hand. Berkley Ca. Congregation Netivot Shalom. 1997.

The Laws and Customs of Israel. N.Y.C. Pardes Publishing House. 1952.

On the Doorposts of Your House. N.Y.C. CCAR Press. 1994.

When the Body Hurts, The Soul Still Longs To Sing. N.Y.C. The National Center for Jewish Healing. 1998.

Wittenberg, Jonathan. With Healing on Its Wings. Silver Springs, Md. Masorti Publications.

Additional Resources

At Bedside. Palm Springs, Ca. National Institute for Jewish Hospice, n.d.

Caring for the Jewish Terminall Ill-A Primer. Los Angeles, Ca. The National Institute for Jewish Hospice, n.d.

Blanchard, Rabbi Tzvi. Joining Heaven and Earth: Maimonides and the Laws of Bikkur Cholim. New York: National Center for Jewish Healing. 1994.

Geffen, Rela, ed. Celebration and Renewal. Philadelphia, Pa: Jewish Publication Society. 1993.

Kushner, Harold S. "The Spiritual Dimensions of Improving the Quality of Life: How the Rabbi Helps." In Proceedings of the First National Conference on Hospice for the Jewish Community. New York. Synagogue Council of America.. 1984.

Schur, Rabbi Tzvi F. Illness and Crisis/Coping the Jewish Way. New York: National Council of Synagogue Youth, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1987.

Strassfeld, Meyer. "Visiting the Sick" In The Third Jewish Catalogue, compiled and edited by Sharon Strassfeld and Michael Strassfeld. Philadelphia, Pa: Jewish Publication Society, 1980.

Footnotes

1. Kitzor Shulchan Aruch.
2. The Laws and Customs of Israel. NYC. Pardes Publishing House. 1952.
3. Bialik, Haylim Nahman & Ravnitzky, Yehoshua Hanna. The Book of Legends. NYC. Shoen Books. 1992.
4. A Daily Prayer. The Chaplaincy Committee of the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey.
5. Gates of Healing. NYC. CCAR Press. 1997.
6. When The Body Hurts, The Soul Still Longs To Sing. NYC. The National Center for Jewish Healing. 1998.
7. The Artscroll Tehillim. Brooklyn, NY. Mesorah Publications. 1996.
8. Wittenberg, Jonathan. With Healing On Its Wings. Silver Springs, Md. Masorti Publications.

קצג. הלכות בקור חולים

ובו י"ד סעיפים:

א. כשחלה האדם, מצוה על כל אדם לבקרו, שכן מצינו בהקב"ה שמבקר חולים, כמו שדרשו רז"ל (ע"י סוטה יד, א) בפסוק (בראשית יח, א) וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, מלמד שבא לבקר החולה. הקרובים והחברים שרגילים ליכנס לביתו תמיד, המה הולכים לבקרו מיד כששמעו שהוא חולה, אבל הרחוקים שאינם רגילים בביתו, לא יכנסו מיד כי היכי דלא ליתרע מזליה להטיל עליו שם חולה. ואינם נכנסים עד לאחר ג' ימים. ואם קפץ עליו החולי, גם הרחוקים נכנסים מיד. אפילו הגדול ילך לבקר את הקטן ואפילו כמה פעמים ביום. וכל המוסיף הרי זה משובח. ובלבד שלא יהיה למורח על החולה. השונא לא יבקר את שונאו החולה, ולא ינחמנו כשהוא אבל, שלא יחשוב ששמח לאידו, אבל מותר ללוותו וליכא למיחש שיאמרו כי שמח לאידו, באשר זהו סוף כל אדם. (ע' לקמן סי' ר"ז ס"ב דהחולה אינו צריך לעמוד מפני נשיא, ואם רוצה לעמוד, אין אומרים לו שב.)

ב. כשהחולה שוכב על הארץ, לא ישב המבקר על גבי כסא הגבוה ממנו, לפי שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה, שנאמר (תהלים ^{כ"ד} ד') ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי. אבל כשהחולה שוכב במטה, מותר למבקר לישוב על כסא וספסל (עיין לקמן סימן ר"ז סעיף ב').

ג. עיקר מצות בקור חולים הוא לעיין בצרכי החולה מה הוא צריך לעשות לו, ושימצא נחת רוח עם חבריו, וגם שיתן דעתו עליו ויבקש רחמים עליו. ואם ביקר ולא ביקש, לא קיים את המצוה. ולכן אין מבקרין בג' שעות הראשונות של היום, מפני שאז כל חולה מיקל עליו חליו ולא יחוש לבקש עליו רחמים. ולא בג' שעות האחרונות של היום, שאז מכביד עליו חליו ויתיאש מלבקש רחמים.

ד. כשמבקש עליו רחמים, אם מבקש לפניו, יכול לבקש בכל לשון שירצה, שהרי מבקש כביכול לפני השכינה שהיא אצל החולה. אבל כשמבקש שלא בפניו דאז מלאכי השרת נזקקין להעלות תפלתו ואינם נזקקין לכל הלשונות, על כן יבקש בלשון הקודש. ויכלול אותו בתוך כל חולי ישראל, שמתוך שכוללו עם האחרים, תפלתו נשמעת יותר בזכותן של רבים. ויאמר, המקום ירחם עליך בתוך כל חולי ישראל. ובשבת יאמר שבת היא מלזעוק, ורפואה קרובה לבא, ורחמיו מרובים, ושבתו בשלום.

ה. המבקרים ידברו אתו בהשכל ודעת ויאמרו לו דברים מחיים ולא דברים ממיתים, ויאמרו לו שיתן דעתו על עניניו אם הלוח או הפקיד אצל אחרים או אחרים אצלו, ואל יפחד מפני זה מהמות.

ו. חולה שמת לו מת, אין מודיעין לו, שלא תמרף דעתו עליו. ואפילו נודע לו, אין אומרים לו לקרוע, שמא תגדל דאגתו, ואין בוכין ואין מספידין בפניו בין על מתו בין על מת אחר אע"פ שאינו קרובו, פן יפחד שגם הוא ימות. ומשתיקין את המנחמים בפניו. (יו"ד סי' של"ז)

ז. אין מבקרין לא לחולי מעים, משום כיסופא, ולא לחולי העין, ולא לחולי הראש. וכן כל חולה דתקיף ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דיבורא, אין

מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין לבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריך לאיזה דבר, ושומעין צערו, ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

יא. מי שיש לפניו שתי מצוות, בקור חולים וניחום אבלים, אם אפשר לו לקיים שניהם, בקור חולים קודם, כדי לבקש רחמים עליו. ואם אי אפשר לו לקיים שניהם, ניחום אבלים קודם, שהוא גמילות חסד עם החיים ועם המתים.

יב. מבקרין חולה עכו"ם מפני דרכי שלום. (סי' של"ה)

יג. תניא בספרי (במדבר ה' ו'), רבי נתן אומר, ואשמה הנפש ההיא והתודו, זה בנה אב על כל המתים שיטענו וידויו. ואיתא במשנה (סנהדרין מג, ב'), שכל המתודה יש לו חלק לעולם הבא, שכן מצינו בעכן שאמר לו יהושע (יהושע ז' יט) בני שים נא כבוד לה' אלהי ישראל ותן לו תודה והגד נא לי מה עשית אל תכחד ממני. ויען עכן את יהושע ויאמר, אמנה אנכי חמאתי וגו' וכזאת וכזאת עשיתי. ומנין שכיפר לו וידויו. שנאמר ויאמר יהושע מה עכרתנו יעכרך ה' ביום הזה. ביום הזה אתה עכור, ואי אתה עכור לעולם הבא. לכן חולה שרואין בו שהוא נוטה למות, מסבבים עמו בדברים ואומרים לו, התודה ואל תדאג מזה. הרבה התודו ועמדו מחליים והמה בחיים, והרבה שלא התודו ומתו. ובשכר שאתה מתודה, אתה חי. וכל המתודה, יש לו חלק לעולם הבא. ואם אינו יכול להתודות בפיו, יתודה בלב. ואם יכול לדבר אך מעט, אומרים לו אמור תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל עוונותי. וגם יאמרו לו שיבקש מחילה מכל אדם שחטא כנגדו בין בממון בין בדברים. וכל אלו הדברים אין אומרים לו לא בפני עמי הארץ ולא בפני נשים, ולא בפני קטנים, שמא יכבו וישברו לבו.

יד. סדר הוידו בקצרה. מודה אני לפניך ה' אלהי ואלהי אבותי שרפואתי בידך, ומיתתי בידך. יהי רצון מלפניך שתרפאני רפואה שלימה. ואם אמות, תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל חטאים ועוונות ופשעים שחמאתי ושעויתי ושפשעתי לפניך. ותן חלקי בגן עדן, וזכני לעולם הבא הצפון לצדיקים. ואם רוצה להאריך בוידוי יום הכפורים הרשות בידו. וכבר מסודרים הוידוים בספר היקר מעבר יבק. ובספר חכמת אדם העתיק גם כן סדר הוידוי מהרמב"ן ז"ל. (סי' של"ח)

LAWS CONCERNING VISITING THE SICK.

1. It is a religious duty to visit the sick. Relatives and friends should visit immediately, but strangers should not call until three days (of the illness) have elapsed, in order not to spoil his chance of recovery by casting upon him the designation of an invalid. If, however, one became suddenly seriously ill, even strangers should visit him immediately, and even a great man should visit a less important person than he is, and visit him even many times a day. He who visits the sick frequently is praiseworthy, but his calls must not trouble the invalid.
2. The essential feature in the religious duty of visiting the sick is to pay attention to the needs of the invalid, to see what is necessary to be done for his benefit, and to give him the pleasure of one's company, also to consider his condition and to pray for mercy on his behalf. If one visited a sick person and did not pray for mercy for him, he did not do his religious duty, therefore one should not visit a sick person during the first three hours of the day, since the sickness then assumes a milder form, the visitor will not be sufficiently impressed to pray for mercy for the sick person, nor should one visit him during the three closing hours of the day, as the sickness then takes a turn for the worse, and the visitor will despair of his recovery and will not pray for mercy on his behalf.
3. One should not visit an enemy in his sickness, nor comfort him when mourning, that the latter may not think that he is rejoicing on account of his misfortune, and that he came only to vex him. He is, however permitted to follow the dead to the grave, as that is the end of man. In the foregoing one must consider what sort of men the enemies are and what is the nature of the enmity that exists between them. The sick person should not rise up even in the presence of a great sage, but should he desire to do so, he should not be told to sit down or to lie down.
4. If the sick person lie upon the ground, the visitor should not sit upon a chair or a bench higher than the former, if, however, the sick person be in bed, the visitor is permitted to sit on a chair or bench.

¹See T. B. Synhedrin 57b.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF ISRAEL

5. One who prays for the sick may say his prayers in any language he desires in his presence, if, however, he pray in the absence of the sick person, he should do so in Hebrew, and include him amongst all the sick of Israel, for by thus including him with the others, his prayer will be more readily heard for the sake of the many. The visitor should say to the sick person, המקום ירחם עליך בתוך כל חולי ישראל, and on Sabbath he should add שבת היא מלועוק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, ורחמי, and on Sabbath he should add שבת היא מלועוק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, ורחמי, and on Sabbath he should add שבת היא מלועוק ורפואה קרובה לבוא, ורחמי.

6. All who visit the sick person should speak to him with judgment and tact, they should speak in such a manner so as neither to revive him (with false hopes) nor to depress him (by words of despair), but they should tell him to concern himself with his affairs, indicating that if he had granted a loan to others, or had deposited anything with others or others with him (he should mention the fact). The sick person should not fear on this account that he will die.

7. One should visit neither a person who is suffering from abdominal troubles so as not to put him to shame, nor one who is troubled with his eyes, nor one who has headache, nor any person who is very ill and to whom conversation is difficult; one should not visit any of the foregoing, but should call at the door of the house to make inquiries regarding his condition, and to ascertain if he be in need of anything; he should also pay heed to his distress and pray for mercy on his behalf.

8. One who can discharge two religious duties, namely, visiting the sick and comforting the mourners, and it is possible for him to fulfil both, he should first visit the sick in order that he may pray for mercy on his behalf. But if he find it impossible to fulfil both duties he should rather fulfil that of comforting the mourners, as this is an act of loving service towards the living and the dead.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF ISRAEL

11. If a member of the family of the invalid had died he should not be informed thereof that it may not worry him, and even if he became aware thereof he should not be told to rend his garment, lest it increase his distress. One should neither weep nor mourn in the presence of the sick person, whether the dead be a member of the sick person's family or a stranger, lest he fear that he also will die. All who comfort mourners in the presence of the sick person should be compelled to remain silent.

12. The great exponents of the Law have written, that it is proper to institute in any city whenever one is sick the custom for the Treasurer of the Holy Association (חברה קדישה) or other people to visit him on the third day of his illness and to say to him: "Thou art aware that it is customary to remind all sick people to write their wills as they desire, therefore tell us and we will write your will, mentioning what you owe and what others owe you." He is furthermore told to confess his sins, for whosoever confesses, his sins are forgiven. This course is to be followed only where this is the usual custom familiar to all, where, however, this custom does not obtain, the sick person should not be spoken to in that manner, lest he become anxious that he is about to die, for it is characteristic of the people generally to be very nervous when told to confess. Nevertheless if the visitors perceive that he is dying they should tactfully turn the conversation so that they are led to tell him to confess and they should add: "Do not fear that evil will ensue, for many have confessed and did not die. On the contrary, as a reward for having confessed, thy life will be prolonged. Moreover all who confess have a share in the world to come." If he be unable to confess verbally, he should make a mental confession, and if he know not how to confess he should be told to say יהי רצון ("May my death atone for all my sins.") These words should be spoken neither in the presence of ignorant people nor before women and children for it may cause them to cry and thus make the sick person broken-hearted but they should be excluded from the room. The sick person should also be reminded to ask the pardon of all against whom he had sinned, whether in money or by words.

13. A brief form of confession is as follows: "I acknowledge unto Thee, O Lord, my God and the God of my fathers, that my healing and my dying are in Thy hands. May it be Thy will to heal me with a perfect healing, and if I should die, may my death be an atonement for all the sins, iniquities and transgressions which I have sinned and perversely committed and transgressed before Thee, and grant my portion in Paradise and cause me to merit the life of the world to come, which it stored up for the righteous." If he desire to prolong the confession in a similar manner to the confession on the Day of Atonement, he is permitted to do so.

LAWS CONCERNING ONE WHO IS DYING.

1. One who is dying is to be considered as a living being¹ in all

¹See Semachoth I.

396. We have been taught: There is no measure for visiting the sick. What is meant by "There is no measure for visiting the sick"? R. Joseph thought it meant: "There is no measure for the reward given for it." But is there a definite measure of reward for any precept? Have we not been taught: "Be heedful of a light precept as of a weighty one, for you know not what is given as reward for any precept" (Avot 2:1)? Rather, said Abbaye, it means that a great person should visit a humble one. Rava said: Even a hundred times a day.

R. Aha bar Hanina said: He who visits a sick man takes away one-sixtieth of his illness. So Abbaye said to Rava: If that is the case, let sixty persons come in and thus make the man rise up [well from his sickbed]. Rava replied: The sixtieth part spoken of here is analogous to the tenth part in the school of Rabbi [Judah I, the Patriarch], where the fraction is taken not from the original amount but from the remainder.¹ And besides, each visitor must be of the same age group as the sick man.²

397. R. Huna said: When a person visits the sick, the sick man's illness is diminished by one-sixtieth. At this, R. Huna was challenged: If so, let sixty persons visit the sick man, and he immediately will be able to go down with them into the marketplace. R. Huna replied: [It would work] only if each of the sixty loved him as a man loves himself. In any event, they will afford him some relief.³

398. R. Helbo fell ill, and even though R. Kahana went out and announced that R. Helbo was ill, no one came to see him. So R. Kahana said to the sages: Did it not once happen that one of R. Akiva's disciples fell ill, and since the sages did not go to visit him, R. Akiva himself went; and because R. Akiva swept and sprinkled the ground before him, the disciple recovered and said, "Master, you have brought me back to life"? Afterward, R. Akiva went out and preached: He who does not visit the sick is as one who sheds blood.

When R. Dimi came [from the Land of Israel], he said: He who visits the sick causes him to live; and he who does not visit the sick causes him to die.⁴

399. R. Anan said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Presence sustains a sick man? From the verse: "The Lord will sustain him upon his sickbed" (Ps. 41:4).

R. Avin said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Presence abides over a sick man's bed? From the verse "The Lord over his sickbed will sustain him."

He who visits the sick should sit neither on the bed nor on a chair nor on a bench, but must wrap himself in his robe and sit on the ground, because the Presence abides over a sick man's bed.⁵

400. Our masters taught: He who visits the sick on a Sabbath should say, "It is the Sabbath, when one may not cry out, but recovery will come soon." R. Meir said: One should say, "The Sabbath can have compassion." R. Judah said: "May He who is everywhere have compassion on you and on the sick of Israel." R. Yose said: "May He who is everywhere have compassion on you among [all] the sick of Israel." When Shebna of Jerusalem entered [a sick man's chamber], he would say, "Peace"; and when he left, he would say, "It is the Sabbath, when one may not cry

out, but recovery will come soon, for His compassions are abundant. So enjoy the Sabbath in peace."⁶

401. R. Yose bar Parta said in the name of R. Eliezer: One should not visit those ill with sickness of bowels or sickness of eyes, or those who suffer from headaches.⁷

402. Samuel said: A sick person should be visited only after the fever has left him.⁸

403. Whenever Rava fell ill, he would ask on the first day that his sickness not be made known, lest his future be hurt.⁹ After that, he would say [to his servants]: Go out to the marketplace and announce, "Rava has fallen ill." [Upon hearing the announcement], my enemies will rejoice, despite being told, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth . . . lest the Lord see it and it displeases Him, and He turn away His wrath from him" (Prov. 24:17-18) [so that I will recover]. And they who love me, [hearing of my illness], will entreat mercy on my behalf.¹⁰

מִי שְׁבִירָה

May God who blessed Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah
grant you a Refuah Shelemah - a thorough
healing - and bestow upon you blessings
of health - of body, of mind, and of spirit.

מִי שְׁבִירָה

אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבֹרָהם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיִרְפָּא אֶת הַחוּלִים

...

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
יִמְלֹא רַחֲמִים עֲלֵיהֶם
לְהַחֲלִימָם וּלְרַפְּאֵתָם
לְהַחְיֵיָם וּלְהַחֲיוֹתָם
וְיִשְׁלַח לָהֶם מִהֲרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וּרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף
בְּתוֹךְ שָׁאֵר חוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
הַשָּׂתָא בְּעִגְלָא וּבְזִמְנו קָרִיב
וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן.



PSALM 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד. יְיָ רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחָסֵר. בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצָנִי, עַל-מֵי מְנוּחֹת
יִנְהַלְנִי. נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב. יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ. גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶּה
בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא-אֵירָא רָע, כִּי-אַתָּה עֲמָדִי; שִׁבְטְךָ וּמַשְׁעֲנֶתְךָ הֵמָּה
יִנְחֵמֵנִי. תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׁלֹחַן נֶגֶד צָרָתִי. דִּשְׁנָתְךָ בַּשָּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רְנוּחָה.
אֵךְ טוֹב וְחָסֵד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי, וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְיָ לְאָרְךָ יָמִים.

God is my shepherd, I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures,
Leads me beside still waters, and restores my soul.
You lead me in right paths for the sake of
Your Name.

Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
You have set a table before me in the presence of my
enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of God forever.

Baruch Atah AdoShem, Elokeinu Melech Ha-olam (Praised are You, God, Ruler of the Universe), who gave me the strength yesterday to help another and myself. May I find the strength today to help myself.

Blessed art Thou...thank You...the warmth of Your love as it courses through my body and soul...and for the ability to recognize and count your blessings...

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melch Ha-olam (Praised are You, God, Ruler of the Universe), that from this place of darkness I have even the ability to shut my eyes to the light.

Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has allowed me to experience both great pleasure and the chance to learn of life, for the hope offered by this new day.

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God! Please give me the courage and strength to live this day, and ease my pain. I am Your child and worthy of better.

Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has made me as He/She wanted me, so that I may open my heart to love my body/self as I am. Thank You for opening my heart.

"Blessed is our Eternal God, Creator of the Universe, who has made our bodies in wisdom, combining veins, arteries, and vital organs into a finely balanced network."

If any one of those veins, arteries or organs were to malfunction, I would be reminded of how much I rely on You for my health and well being.

"Wondrous Fashioner and Sustainer of life, Source of our health and our strength, we give You thanks and praise."

Blessed are You, Source of Life and Love. Thank You for creating a world with the possibility of healing.

May it be Your will that I should be healed in body and soul.

Blessed are You, Sustainer of life and Guide through the valley of death.

(6)

The Lord Our Protector

(Psalm 121)

I will lift up my eyes unto the hills:
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot stumble,
He that keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, the God that keeps Israel
Neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4

The Lord is your keeper,
The Lord is your protection at your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
He will keep you, body and soul.
The Lord will guard your going and coming,
Now and forever more.

קבא

This song differs from all others in this series because it is not called *שיר המעלות*, a song of ascents; but is dedicated *למעלות*, to the ascents. It describes the means whereby Israel finds the strength to attain godly heights and ascend to His glorious Presence. It speaks of God's constant protection, and its recitation is especially appropriate in times of crisis.

א שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת; אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים, מֵאֵן יְבֹא
עֲזָרִי. ב עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה, עָשָׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

7

ג אֵל יִתֵּן לְמוֹט רַגְלִי, אֵל יְנוּם שְׁמִרָה. ד הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם
וְלֹא יִישָׁן, שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל. ה יְהוָה שְׁמִרָה, יְהוָה צִלָּה עַל
יָד יְמִינִי. ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא יַכֶּכָּה, וַיָּרֶחַ בַּלְיִלָה. ז יְהוָה
יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע, יִשְׁמֹר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ. ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמֹר צֵאתְךָ
וּבֹאֶךָ, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.



A PRAYER OFFERED BY ONE AT THE BEDSIDE

O God, who are aware of my thoughts and feelings even before I share them, You know my concern for my loved one who is hospitalized. You know my apprehension and anxiety. You know how much I want my loved one to get well and be back home.

As You will be with my loved one during these days, be with me, too. Just as I will not neglect my dear one, may I not neglect myself. May I remember to eat enough and sleep sufficiently so that my health will be maintained, so that I can manage our household, and so that I can continue to attend to the needs of the one at whose bedside I pray. Amen.

When all within is dark,
and former friends misprise;
From them I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all within is dark,
and I my soul despise;
From me I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.

When all Your face is dark,
and Your just angers rise;
From You I turn to You,
and find love in Your eyes.