



# **CRASH COURSE ON THE JEWISH LIFECYCLE**

**THE WHAT, HOW AND WHY WE DO**

**SERIES OF SHIURIM FINDING MEANING AND  
STRUCTURE FROM BIRTH TO DEATH**

**WITH RABBI YA'AKOV TRUMP  
SUNDAYS 8:00AM**

***“ILLNESS & BIKUR CHOLIM”***  
**APRIL 14TH**

*This series is sponsored by Suri Stern*

# FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions



## What are we supposed to think when we are healthy?

The gemara, TB Shabbos 32a, teaches that one should daven that one remains healthy at all times.

אמר רב יצחק בריה דרב יהודה: לעולם יבקש אדם רחמים שלא יחלה, שאם יחלה אומרים לו: הבא זכות והפטר.

In a similar vein, Rav Yitzhak, son of Rav Yehuda, said: A person should always pray that he will not become ill, as if he becomes ill they say to him: Bring proof of your virtue and exempt yourself.

## What should the emotional/spiritual response be to illness?

The gemara, TB Shabbos 32a, explains that a person who is sick should view themselves guilty of some misdeed, which requires them to find protection.

תנו רבנן: מי שחלה ונטה למות, אומרים לו: התודה, שכן כל המומתין מתודין. אדם יוצא לשוק, יהי דומה בעיניו כמי שנמסר לסרדיוט. חש בראשו — יהי דומה בעיניו כמי שנתגוהו בקולר. עלה למטה ונפל — יהי דומה בעיניו כמי שהעלוהו לגרדום לידון, שכל העולה לגרדום לידון אם יש לו פרקליטין גדולים — ניצול, ואם לאו — אינו ניצול.

The Sages taught: One who became ill and tended toward death, they say to him: Confess, as all those executed by the courts confess. Even if he is dying of natural causes, it is worthwhile for him to consider his death atonement for his sins. The Sages said: When a person goes out to the marketplace where there are fights and disputes, he should consider himself as someone who has been handed over to a soldier [seradiyot]. If his head hurt, he should consider it as if they placed him in a chain [kolar] around his neck. If he climbed into bed and fell ill, he should consider himself as if they took him up to the gallows to be judged, as with regard to anyone who goes up to the gallows

to be judged, if he has great advocates [peraklitin], he is spared, and if not, he is not spared.

## What are those protective agencies a person can seek out?

The gemara, TB Shabbos 32a, goes on to explain that the protective agencies that help one are repentance and good deeds.

ואלו הן פרקליטין של אדם: תשובה ומעשים טובים. ואפילו תשע מאות ותשעים ותשעה מלמדים עליו חובה ואחד מלמד עליו זכות — ניצול, שנאמר: "אם יש עליו מלאך מליץ אחד מני אלף להגיד לאדם ישרו. ויחננו ויאמר פדעוהו מרדת שחת וגו'".

And with regard to divine judgment, these are a person's advocates: Repentance and good deeds.

The Gemara comments: And even if there are nine hundred ninety-nine asserting his guilt and only one asserting his innocence, he is spared, as it is stated: "If there be for him an angel, an advocate, one among a thousand, to vouch for a man's uprightness; then He is gracious unto him, and says: Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom" (Job 33:23–24).

## What should my attitude be to the doctors?

One the one hand, one needs to realize that Hashem provided humanity with wisdom and innovation obliged us to listen to the advice and regimen provided by doctors even though every intervention carries risk. This is clear in TB Bava Kama 85a. It is clear that those who are qualified are seen as agents of Hashem's will and one must listen to them.

דמניא, דבי רבי ישמעאל אומר: "ורפא ירפא" — מקאן שניתן רשות לרפא לרפאות.

As it is taught in a baraita that the school of Rabbi Yishmael says: When the verse states: "And shall cause him to be thoroughly healed [verappo yerappe]" (Exodus 21:19), it is derived from here

that permission is granted to a doctor to heal, and it is not considered to be an intervention counter to the will of God.

written: “And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab” (Deuteronomy 34:6), so too, should you bury the dead.

On the other hand, one needs to remember that that their skill and success is in the hands of Hashem. King Asa missed this idea and died in Il Divrei Hayamim 16:12

Mishna Torah, Hilchos Avel 14:1

וַיִּחַלֵּא אֲסָא בְּשָׁנָתוֹ שְׁלוּשִׁים וְתִשְׁעִי לְמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּרַגְלָיו עַד-לְמַעְלָה חֲלִי וְגַם-בְּחִלְיוֹ לֹא-דָרַשׁ אֶת-יְהוָה כִּי בִרְפָאִים:

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa suffered from an acute foot ailment; but ill as he was, he still did not turn to the LORD but to physicians.

וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֲסָא עִם-אֲבוֹתָיו וַיָּמָת בְּשָׁנַת אַרְבָּעִים וְאַחַת לְמַלְכוֹ:

Asa slept with his fathers. He died in the forty-first year of his reign

מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל דְּבָרֵיהֶם לְבָקֵר חוֹלִים. וְלִנְחָם אֲבֵלִים. וְלְהוֹצִיא הַמֵּת. וְלְהַכְנִיחַ הַפְּלֵה. וְלִלְווֹת הָאוֹרְחִים. וְלְהִתְעַסֵּק בְּכָל צָרְכֵי הַקְּבוּרָה. לְשֵׂאת עַל הַכֶּתֶף. וְלִילָף לְפָנָיו וְלִסְפֹּד וְלַחְפֹּר וְלִקְבֹר. וְכֵן לְשִׂמַח הַפְּלֵה וְהַחֲתָן. וְלִסְעֻדָּם בְּכָל צָרְכֵיהֶם. וְאֵלוֹ הֵן גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים שְׂבִיבוּפוֹ שְׂאִין לָהֶם שְׂעוֹר. אִף עַל פִּי שְׂכָל מִצְוֹת אֵלוֹ מִדְּבָרֵיהֶם הֲרִי הֵן בְּכֻלָּל (וַיִּקְרָא יִשׂ יח) "וְאַהֲבַת לְרַעְיָךְ כְּמוֹךָ". כָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁאַתָּה רוֹצֵה שֶׁיַּעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם לְךָ אַחֲרֵיכֶם. עֲשֵׂה אֶתָּה אוֹתָן לְאַחֲיֶיךָ בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת:

It is a positive commandment of Rabbinic origin to visit the sick, comfort mourners, to prepare for a funeral, prepare a bride, accompany guests, attend to all the needs of a burial, carry a corpse on one's shoulders, walk before the bier, mourn, dig a grave, and bury the dead, and also to bring joy to a bride and groom and help them in all their needs. These are deeds of kindness that one carries out with his person that have no limit.

Although all these mitzvot are of Rabbinic origin, they are included in the Scriptural commandment Leviticus 19:18: "Love your neighbor as yourself." That charge implies that whatever you would like other people to do for you, you should do for your comrade in the Torah and mitzvot.

### What am I achieving by visiting the sick?

Visiting the sick is both a mitzva between oneself and Hashem and between oneself and others.

TB Sotah 14a

אֵלָּא, לְהִלָּף אַחֲרַי מְדוּתָיו שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: מָה הוּא מְלַבֵּשׁ עֲרוּמִים, דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹהִים לְאַדָּם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם" — אִף אֶתָּה הַלְּבַשׁ עֲרוּמִים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בִּיקָר חוֹלִים, דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בְּאַלְנֵי מִמְרָא" — אִף אֶתָּה בִּיקָר חוֹלִים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִיחָם אֲבֵלִים, דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנֵוֹ" — אִף אֶתָּה נִחָם אֲבֵלִים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קָבַר מֵתִים, דְּכַתִּיב: "וַיִּקְבֹּר אוֹתוֹ בְּנֵי" — אִף אֶתָּה קָבַר מֵתִים.

He explains: **Rather, the meaning is that one should follow the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed be He.** He provides several examples. **Just as He clothes the naked, as it is written: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21), so too, should you clothe the naked. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, visits the sick, as it is written with regard to God’s appearing to Abraham following his circumcision: “And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre” (Genesis 18:1), so too, should you visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, consoles mourners, as it is written: “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” (Genesis 25:11), so too, should you console mourners. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, buried the dead, as it is**

### What must I do in order to fulfil this mitzva?

TB Nedarim 40a tells how Rabbi Akiva visited a sick student and took care of all the physical needs of his ill student.

אָמַר לְהוֹ: לֹא כָּף הָיָה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּתַלְמִיד אֶחָד מִתַּלְמִידֵי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא שְׁחָלָה. לֹא נִכְנְסוּ חֲכָמִים לְבַקְרוֹ, וְנִכְנְסוּ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא לְבַקְרוֹ, וּבִשְׂבִיל שְׂפִיבָדוֹ וְרִיבְצוֹ לְפָנָיו, חָזָה. אָמַר לוֹ: רַבִּי, הֲחִייתָנִי. יָצָא רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְדָרַשׁ: כָּל מִי שְׂאִין מְבַקֵּר חוֹלִים כְּאֵילוֹ שׁוֹפֵף דָּמִים.

**Rav Helbo fell ill. There was no one who came to visit him. Rav Kahana said to the Sages: Didn’t the incident involving one of the students of Rabbi Akiva who became sick transpire in that manner? In that case, the Sages did not enter to visit him, and Rabbi Akiva entered to visit him and instructed his students to care for him. And since they swept and sprinkled water on the dirt floor before the sick student, he recovered. The student**

**said to Rabbi Akiva: My teacher, you revived me. Rabbi Akiva went out and taught: With regard to anyone who does not visit the ill, it is as though he is spilling blood,** as it could be that the sick person has no one to care for him. If there are no visitors, no one will know his situation and therefore no one will come to his aid.

We see from here that part of visiting the sick includes:

- Assessing the physical needs they have.
- Praying for their wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

### Is there a spiritual impact of visiting this sick?

Yes, one does lighten the load of illness. This is true of a person who shares the same zodiac of the ill person. TB Nedarim 39b

אמר רבי אחא בר חנינא: כל המבקר חולה, נוטל אחד מששים בצערו. אמרי ליה: אם כן ליעלון שיתין ולוקממה! אמר ליה: כעשוריתא דבי רבי, ובבין גילוי.

**Rav Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: Anyone who visits an ill person takes from him one-sixtieth of his suffering. The Sages said to him: If so, let sixty people enter to visit him, and stand him up, and restore him to health. Rav Aḥa bar Ḥanina said to them: It is like the tenths of the school of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, who said that each of one's daughters inherits one-tenth of his possessions. His intent was that each daughter would receive one-tenth of the remainder after the previous daughter took her portion. Here too, each visitor takes from the ill person one-sixtieth of the suffering that remains, and consequently a degree of suffering will always remain with the ill person. Furthermore, visiting is effective in easing the suffering of the ill person only when the visitor is one born under the same constellation as the ill person.**

### When can I start visiting the sick?

Family and close friends can go immediately but others should wait 3 days before going.<sup>2</sup> In general, one should only go if it helps the person

and is not a burden upon them.<sup>3</sup> If it is a sudden issue, one may go right away.

### Can I visit a few times a day?

Yes, as long as it is not a burden on the sick person.<sup>4</sup>

### Are there restrictions about what time of day I can visit?

Yes. Outside of hospital/nursing home regulations, ideally, one should not visit in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 hours of the day because the person is usually more upbeat, or in the last 3 hours of the day because the person is more down.<sup>5</sup> Many are not makpid on this today.<sup>6</sup>

One should be careful about visiting those who have intestinal issues because of their dignity nor those who have trouble speaking and will be burdened by trying to speak.<sup>7</sup>

### Do I achieve anything by a phone call?

Of course a call is better than no call, but a visit is always better than a call.<sup>8</sup>

### Why don't I say a bracha on bikur cholim?

There are a few reasons:

- One doesn't say a bracha on a mitzva which one is always obligated in.<sup>9</sup>
- One does not say a bracha which is dependent on another person accepting the favor.<sup>10</sup>
- One only says a bracha which is unique to the Jewish experience not a universal mitzva.<sup>11</sup>

### When I daven for the sick, may I use any language?

In the presence of the patient one may use any language. If not in their presence, one should daven in Hebrew.<sup>12</sup>

### What if I don't know their full Hebrew name?

<sup>1</sup> Toras Ha'adam, Shaar Hamichush 6

<sup>2</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:1

<sup>3</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:8

<sup>4</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:2

<sup>5</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:4

<sup>6</sup> Aruch Hashulchan YD 335:8

<sup>7</sup> Aruch Hashulchan YD 335:4

<sup>8</sup> Igros Moshe YD I:223

<sup>9</sup> Ohr Zarua, Hilchos Birkas Hamotzi 140

<sup>10</sup> Responsa Rashba I:18

<sup>11</sup> Responsa Binyamin Zeev 169

<sup>12</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:5



If one doesn't know their full Hebrew name one may still daven for them using their first and last name. In their presence one does not need to use their name to pray for them.<sup>13</sup>

### Can I visit the sick on Shabbos?

Yes, as long as it won't make one terribly and sad and ruin Shabbos.<sup>14</sup>

### Can I daven for the sick on Shabbos?

Yes, but if they are not in mortal danger one should add the phrase: **שבת היא מלזעוק**.<sup>15</sup> If they are in mortal danger, one need not add that phrase.<sup>16</sup>

### Can I visit someone I have a really bad relationship with?

It depends. If one can ask permission and get it, that would be ideal to avoid it seeming like one is gloating. It can be an opportune moment to help make amends.<sup>17</sup>

### What if the person is terminally ill? Do I continue to daven for them?

There are times that a person is suffering terribly and there is no possible recovery, there is room to stop davening for them actively.<sup>18</sup> I would suggest that instead of davening for a **רפואה שלימה** - a full recovery, one changes it to daven for **רחמי שמים** - mercy from heaven, which can take many different forms.

### What is the reward for visiting the sick?

The gemara, TB Nedarim 40a, teaches that the reward in this world is avoiding lust and suffering and in the world to come avoiding certain aspects of suffering.

אמר רב: כל המבקר את החולה ניצול מדינה של גיהנם, שנאמר: "אשרי משכיל אל דל ביום רעה ימלטהו ה'", אין דל אלא חולה, שנאמר: "מדלה יבצעני", אי נמי מן הדין קרא: "מדוע אתה ככה דל בן המלך בבקר בבקר וגו'". אין רעה אלא גיהנם, שנאמר: "כל פעל ה' למענהו וגם רשע ליום רעה".

**Rav said: Anyone who visits the ill is spared from the judgment of Gehenna, as it is stated: "Happy is he that considers the poor; the Lord will deliver**

**him in the day of evil"** (Psalms 41:2). In this verse, the term **poor [dal]** means **nothing other than ill, as it is stated** in the prayer of Hezekiah when he was ill: **"He will cut me off from the illness [middalla]"** (Isaiah 38:12). Alternatively, it may be derived from this verse in which Jonadab asked his sick friend Amnon, son of King David: **"Why, son of the king, are you so sick [dal] from morning to morning?"** (II Samuel 13:4). And the term **evil** means **nothing other than Gehenna, as it is stated: "The Lord made everything for His own purpose, and even the wicked for the day of evil"** (Proverbs 16:4), and the ultimate punishment of the evildoer is Gehenna.

ואם ביקר מה שקרו? מה שקרו?! כדאמר: ניצול מדינה של גיהנם!  
אלא: מה שקרו בעולם הזה —

**And if one visited the ill, what is his reward?** The Gemara wonders at that question: **What is his reward?** It is as Rav said: **He is spared from the judgment of Gehenna. Rather, the question is: What is his reward in this world?**

"ה' לשמרהו ויחיהו ואשר בארץ ואל תתנהו בנפש איביו".  
"ה' לשמרהו" — מיצר הרע, "ויחיהו" — מן היסורין, "ואשר בארץ" —  
שיהו הכל מתכבדין בו, "ואל תתנהו בנפש איביו" — שיודמנו לו  
ריעים כנעמן שריפו את צרעתו

Rav continues: His reward is as it is written: **"The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, let him be called happy in the land; and deliver not You him unto the greed of his enemies"** (Psalms 41:3). He elaborates: **"The Lord will preserve him" from the evil inclination; "and keep him alive" and spare him from suffering; "let him be called happy in the land" means that everyone will be honored from their association with him; "and deliver not You him unto the greed of his enemies," so that companions like those who counseled Naaman to seek a cure for his leprosy from Elisha (II Kings 5:3)**

<sup>13</sup> Orchos Rabbeinu I:64

<sup>14</sup> Shulchan Aruch OC 287

<sup>15</sup> Shulchan Aruch YD 335:6

<sup>16</sup> Shulchan Aruch OC 288:10

<sup>17</sup> Aruch Hashulchan YD 335:6

<sup>18</sup> Igros Moshe CM II:73:1