

Medical Treatment on Shabbat II #27: Getting Help on Shabbat, Part 3

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Getting to the hospital (continued)

1. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20th century USA), Igrat Moshe Orach Chaim 1:131

כשיודע הרופא מזה ערב שבת מחוייב הרופא להשאיר ללון באיזה בית הסמוך לבית החולים שודאי אפשר להשיג מקום ללון ואף אם יצטרך לשלם דמי שכירות בעד הלינה אין להתיר לו לבא לביתו שיביאנו זה לחלל שבת למחר ליסע לבית החולים. ואף אם אין מקום סביבות בית החולים ללון שם הרי יכול ללון בבית החולים גופיה ואף שלא יהיה לו שם יין לקדוש וסעודה חשובה לכבוד השבת נמי היה צריך להשאיר שם דמצות סעודת שבת וקדוש לא תדחה איסור מלאכה דשבת

When the physician knows this on Friday, he is obligated to stay in a house close to the hospital; certainly, he will be able to acquire a place to stay, even if he must pay rent to stay there. One may not permit him to go home, for this would bring him to violate Shabbat the next day, to travel to the hospital. Even if there is no place to stay near the hospital, he can stay in the hospital itself – even if he will not have wine for kiddush and a good meal in honour of Shabbat, he must remain there; the mitzvot of Shabbat meals and kiddush do not override the prohibition against melachah on Shabbat.

2. Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth (20th-21st century Israel), Shemirat Shabbat k'Hilchatah (3rd ed.) 40:26

רופא תורן או כונן בבית החולים שבו נמצא חולה שיש בו סכנה אל לו לעזוב את בית החולים לביתו הרחוק מבית החולים על דעת שיצטרך לנסוע בשבת כדי לעמוד על משמרתו. אך אם נכרי יסיע אותו לית לן בה...

A doctor on duty or on call in a hospital where there is a dangerously ill patient may not leave the hospital to go home far from the hospital, intending to need to drive on Shabbat to serve his shift. But if a non-Jew will drive him then there is no concern...

3. Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth (20th-21st century Israel), Shemirat Shabbat k'Hilchatah (3rd ed.) 36:6-7

אשה שהגיעה לחודש התשיעי להריונה מן הראוי שתכין מערב שבת את כל הדרוש לה למקרה שהלידה תהיה בשבת כדי למעט בחילול שבת עד כמה שאפשר... אין האשה חייבת להימצא בקרבת בית החולים כבר סמוך לשבת כדי להימנע מנסיעה בשבת אם יש קושי בדבר (יג).

When a woman's ninth month of pregnancy arrives, she should prepare on Friday all that she will need in case the birth will be on Shabbat, to reduce overriding of Shabbat as much as possible... She is not required to be near the hospital closer to Shabbat to avoid driving on Shabbat, if that would involve a hardship (13).

(13) Testimony of the Chazon Ish, and so I heard from Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

4. R' Yisroel Pinchas Bodner/R' Dr. Daniel Roth (contemporary USA), Halachos of Refuah on Shabbos pp. 344-5

The Poskim recommend that, as the ninth month approaches, one prepare before every Shabbos anything that will help minimize overriding Shabbos prohibitions, should labor begin on Shabbos. One should sign and submit the hospital pre-admission forms, prepare the phone numbers of available non-Jewish taxis, prepare money for the taxi fare, and make necessary arrangements, all before Shabbos.

Although one should try to prepare whatever is possible before Shabbos, nevertheless, one is not required to put oneself through much inconvenience and discomfort in order to avoid having to possibly override a Shabbos prohibition the next day.

For example, during the ninth month, one who lives in an area where there is no hospital is not required to spend Shabbos with relatives or friends who live in the proximity of a hospital.

Furthermore, even if a pregnant woman suspects that she will have to travel to the hospital on Shabbos (for example, if her labor has begun), she is not required to arrive at the hospital before Shabbos and wait in the lobby until she is ready to be admitted.

5. Rabbi Doniel Yehudah Neustadt (contemporary USA), *The Yoledes on Shabbos, Part 2*

<https://outorah.org/p/64276/>

The following protocol applies to a yoledes being driven to the hospital by a non-Jew:

- As soon as the doctor instructs her to go the hospital, she (or any other person) should call the designated driver. The rules mentioned earlier regarding making a phone call to the doctor apply here as well.
- When time allows, the door to the vehicle should be opened and closed by the non-Jewish driver.

- If no baby-sitter for the other children is present, it is permitted to ask the non-Jewish driver to drive the children to another person's home or to pick up a baby-sitter from another location.
- Any item which the yoledes will need on Shabbos may be taken along to the hospital. If there is no eiruv or if the item is muktzeh, the non-Jew should be asked to carry the woman's bag to the vehicle, time permitting. When they reach the hospital, the driver should carry the items inside.
- If it is the wish of the yoledes and it would help to relax her, her husband, her labor coach (doula) or another person may accompany her to the hospital, even if their assistance is not medically warranted. The person going along may take along basic food necessities that will be needed on Shabbos. The non-Jew should be asked to carry the food into the vehicle and from the vehicle into the hospital.
- If, during the drive, labor stopped and the woman feels that she does not need to go to the hospital, it is permitted to tell the non-Jew to take her and her companion back home if they cannot return safely and comfortably on foot - which is generally the case.

In the absence of any other alternative or if arrangements were not made in advance, it is permitted for a Jew (the husband or any other person) to drive the woman to the hospital. A couple who is aware before Shabbos that the driver may be a Jew, should prepare before Shabbos for that eventuality. Therefore:

- The shortest possible route to the hospital must be planned. Exact change for any possible tolls should be prepared and placed in the car. If EZ-Pass is available, it is preferable to paying cash.
- The car which is designated to be driven should not be blocked by other cars or other obstructions.
- The dome light bulb in the car should be loosened or removed before Shabbos; the air conditioner, radio and audio system should be on the "off" position.
- Driver's license, registration, and other papers that are required for driving or that will be needed for identification at the hospital should be placed in the car before Shabbos.
- Where there is no eiruv, clothing, food, and other items that will be needed at the hospital should be placed in the car before Shabbos. [Unless an eiruv exists, a siddur or a sefer Tehillim should not be taken to the hospital on Shabbos, for the merit of keeping Shabbos is greater than saying Tehillim. This should be explained to the woman.]
- If the hospital is out of the techum Shabbos, any unnecessary items in the car (e.g., car seat) should preferably be removed from the car.
- One who failed to properly prepare himself or the car as outlined above must nevertheless proceed to the hospital in the safest, quickest way he can.
- One may drive to the hospital that the yoledes' doctor directed her to go to, even if there is another hospital which is closer.
- If, during the drive, labor stopped and the woman feels that she does not need to go to the hospital, it is not permitted for the driver to continue driving. They must find a non-Jew who will take her (and her companion) back home if they cannot return safely and comfortably on foot - which is generally the case.
- Once the driver arrives at the hospital emergency room, the car may be placed in the "park" position, but the ignition and the lights may not be turned off. The car door may not be closed upon leaving the car, if closing the door will cause the light to be turned off. The driver may ask a non-Jew to take the car, park it, and return the keys to him after Shabbos or leave them at the front desk or nurse's station.

Bikur Cholim on Shabbat

6. Talmud, Shabbat 12a

וכן היה רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר משום רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אין משדכין את התינוקות לארס ולא את התינוק ללמדו ספר וללמדו אומנות ואין מנחמין אבלים ואין מבקרין חולין בשבת דברי בית שמאי ובית הלל מתירין.

And so Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said, citing Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel: We don't make *shidduch* agreements for children, or education agreements for children to learn Torah or a trade, and we don't comfort mourners or look after the sick on Shabbat, per Beit Shammai. And Beit Hillel permit.

7. Talmud, Shabbat 12b

ואמר רבי חנינא בקושי התירו לנחם אבלים ולבקר חולים בשבת.

And Rabbi Chanina said: With great difficulty they permitted comforting mourners and looking after the sick on Shabbat.

8. Talmud, Succah 41b

תניא רבי אלעזר בר צדוק אומר כך היה מנהגן של אנשי ירושלים: אדם יוצא מביתו ולולבו בידו, הולך לבית הכנסת לולבו בידו, קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל ולולבו בידו, קורא בתורה ונושא את כפיו מניחו על גבי קרקע, הולך לבקר חולים ולנחם אבלים לולבו בידו...

Rabbi Elazar bar Tzaddok taught: This was the practice of Jerusalemites: One would leave his house, lulav in hand, and go to the synagogue with his lulav in hand, and recite Shema and daven [shemoneh esrei] with lulav in hand, and read from the Torah and perform birkat kohanim placing it on the ground, and go to look after the sick and comfort mourners with lulav in hand...

9. Rav Achai (7th-8th century Bavel/Israel), Sheiltot Vayikra 93

בשבת מהו לשיולי בקצירא? מי אמרינן כיון דאזיל וחזיה ליה דאית ליה צערא חלש דעתיה וקא עקר עינוגא דשבתא ורחמנא אמר וקראת לשבת עונג, או דלמא כיון דאמר מר כל מאן דאזיל ומשאיל בקצירא דמי כמאן דיהב ליה חיי והלכך שפיר דמי?

On Shabbat may one look after the sick? Do we say that going to see him will involve pain and make him upset and uproot pleasure of Shabbat, and the Torah says, "You shall call Shabbat 'enjoyment'," or perhaps since we were taught, "Anyone who goes to look after the ill is as though he gives the patient life," therefore it is appropriate?

10. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 24:4-5

...ואסור להרבות בשיחה בטלה בשבת שנאמר ודבר שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול. מותר לרוץ בשבת לדבר מצוה... ופוסקין צדקה לעניים, והולכין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות, ואפילו לטרטיאות וטרקלין של גוים, לפקח על עסקי רבים בשבת, ומשדכין על התינוקת ליארס ועל התינוק ללמדו ספר וללמדו אומנות, ומבקרין חולין ומנחמים אבלים... שכל אלו וכיוצא בהן מצוה הן ונאמר עשות חפצין וכו' חפצך אסורין חפצי שמים מותרין.

...And one may not increase empty speech on Shabbat, as it says, "and speaking of matters," that your Shabbat speech should not resemble your weekday speech.

One may run for a mitzvah on Shabbat... And one may levy tzedakah for the needy, and one may go to the synagogues and study halls, and even the theaters and plazas of non-Jews, to manage public needs on Shabbat, and one may make *shidduch* agreements for children, or education agreements for children to learn Torah or a trade, and one may look after the sick or comfort mourners... for all of these and the like are mitzvot, and it says, "do not pursue your needs" – your needs are prohibited, Heavenly needs are permitted.

11. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel), Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 287:1

יכולים לנחם אבלים בשבת, וכן יכולים לבקר את החולה.
One may comfort mourners on Shabbat, and likewise one may look after the ill.

12. Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (17th century Poland), Magen Avraham Orach Chaim 287

...שחששו שמא יבא לזעוק, ודלא כאותן שכל ימות השבוע אין הולכין רק בשבת.
...They were concerned lest one be moved to cry out. And not like those who don't go all week, only on Shabbat.

13. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir (16th century Israel), Seder haYom, Seder Seudat Shabbat v'Seder HaLimud b'Shabbat

וקודם שילך לביתו אם יש איזה חולה לבקר או איזה אבל לנחם או איזה חתן לשמה ילך אליהם אחרי צאתו. ונהגו בזה ביום שבת יותר מבימי החול לשני ענינים: הא' מפני שאינו עסוק בשום מלאכה וענין שיתבטל מן המצוה מפני כן. הב' מפני שהוא מכובד היום משאר הימים ויש לו מלבושים נקיים ונפש יתירה והוא ראוי להתכבד והלה יש לו נחת רוח עמו. ועוד שבסבת כבוד השבת והדרתו הוא סיוע לו לנחם ולשמה והוא ליה כאלו אחר עמו וטובים השנים מן האחד...

And before one goes home, if there is an ill person to look after, or a mourner to comfort, or a chatan to gladden, go to them after leaving [the synagogue]. And they do this more than during the week, for two reasons: 1) Because they are not involved in work or matters which prevented the mitzvah until now. 2) Because they are more honored today than on other days, and they have clean clothing and an "extra neshamah," and he is suited for honor and the other will be pleased with him. Also, because the honor and beauty of Shabbat will help him to comfort and gladden, as though someone else is with him, and two are better than one...

14. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu (20th-21st century Israel), Maamar Mordechai III Yoreh Deah 21

הנה מוסכם באחרונים שאינו ראוי לכתחילה לכוון את ביקורו לשבת שאז פנוי ממלאכתו, בפרט שאינו יכול להתפלל עליו כבימות החול, ואולי יצטער מיסורי החולה... אמנם אם למעשה היה טרוד במלאכתו וכיו"ב, ילך לבקרו בשבת כדי לקיים מצוות ביקור חולים...

ומנהג טוב נהגו בירושלים שבליל שבת היו הולכים לבקר את החולה. והטעם למנהג זה כדי שהמלאכים המלווים את האדם מבית הכנסת לביתו יצטרפו אף הם לברכת המבקר ויענו אמן...

The Acharonim agree that ideally one should not plan to look after him on Shabbat, when he is free of work, especially as he cannot pray for him as he would during the week, and he might be pained by the patient's pain... But in practice, if he is burdened with work and the like during the week, he should go look after him on Shabbat in order to fulfill the mitzvah of looking after the sick...

And they had a good practice in Jerusalem that on Friday night they would go look after the sick. This was so that the malachim who escort people home from the synagogue to their homes could also join the berachah of the visitor and say Amen...

15. Rabbi Zvi Goldberg, *The Visitor's Halachic Guide to Hospitals*

<https://www.star-k.org/articles/articles/medicine/43/the-visitors-halachic-guide-to-hospitals1/>

Doors – Hospitals generally have one of three types of entrance doors: manual, electric eye, or revolving. Ideally, one should use a manual door when entering or leaving a hospital on *Shabbos*. If there are none available, he should wait until a non-Jew triggers the electric-eye door with his movement, and then immediately walk through the doorway. He should not linger near the door.

A manually operated revolving door does not present difficulty on *Shabbos*, nor does an electrically powered door that revolves continuously, since walking through such a door does not affect its operation. However, an electric eye which continuously checks for the presence of people is a problem on *Shabbos*. When someone approaches this kind of door, he may cause it to activate. Therefore, one should wait until a non-Jew activates the door and then immediately walk through the doorway.

Interior doors may also be motorized. They are activated by pressing a button on the wall, or by pulling slightly on the door; they may also be controlled by an electric eye. One hospital door that was evaluated was triggered by a person standing as far as 15 feet from the door. One should be on the alert for these types of doors and walk through them only when they are already opened, as stated above.

Robots – Hospital robots (which may look like mechanized carts) may be used to deliver medicine and supplies throughout the building. They navigate to their destination and can activate doors and elevators, using sensors to avoid a collision. One should avoid walking near the robots, since this will cause them to change direction, stop, or ask that one move to a different area.

Stairwell – The door to the stairwell may be hooked up to either an alarm or electromagnetic lock mechanism. Some hospitals and nursing homes prefer locks that incorporate electronics which alert the security personnel so they can determine whether or not to let a person leave a particular ward or floor. Pressing the bar or turning the handle on this kind of door may activate a mechanism which will sound an alarm or use electricity to unlock the door. If one needs to use such a door on *Shabbos*, he is permitted to ask non-Jewish personnel to open the door for him.

There may also be a security camera in the stairwell. It is best to avoid being videoed by such cameras on *Shabbos*, since the image is projected onto a screen. In a hospital, however, it is difficult to avoid this and one is permitted to walk past the cameras.

Beds – Some hospital beds, particularly in the intensive care unit, are responsive to movement and adjust automatically. A visitor should be aware that sitting down or resting his hand on this type of bed will cause it to move.

Washrooms – Hospitals may be equipped with toilets that are controlled by an electric eye. In a situation where there is no alternative, one may use the toilet on *Shabbos* due to the *kavod habrios* (human dignity) involved.