

Visiting the Sick:

A. What Mitzvos Are Involved?

1. Love Your Fellow as Yourself
2. Walking in Hashem's Ways
3. Saving a Life
4. Returning a Lost Object
5. Not standing Idly by while someone's blood is being shed
6. Laziness in visiting the sick is considered tantamount to murder

B. What Does the Mitzvah Entail ?

1. Taking care of the patient's physical needs.
2. Giving him emotional support by showing that you share his pain.
3. Praying for him in his presence. (in front of shechina with kavana)
 - It is a Mitzvah to sit with the patient and keep him company.
 - Since the Shechina hovers over the head of a sick person, we should be careful not to sit on a seat higher than his head.
 - If we can not sit beside the patient (e.g. patient is in ICU), we should come to the hallway outside his room to inquire after his welfare. If that is not possible, we should inquire after his health from his family and close friends.
 - If we are unable to visit the sick person, we should try to send a message or phone him.

C. Praying For the Sick:

1. You should generally not visit the sick person at a time when he looks much worse or much better than his actual condition, so that we pray properly for him.
2. When in the presence of the patient, we may pray in whatever language we choose. When we are not in his presence, the prayers should, ideally, be in Loshon Hakodesh.
3. The standard 'Mi Shebeirach' prayer can be adjusted to be said privately.

4. You do not have to mention the patients name when praying in his presence; in his absence, the name must be mentioned.
5. The custom is to mention the patient/s given hebrew name and his mother's hebrew name. We do not mention family names or honorary titles.
6. We should include the words 'Besoch Cholei Yisrael' - 'amongst all other sick people of Am Yisroel' when praying for the sick.
7. It is customary to pray for the sick publicly in Shul. Nowadays this is usually done during the Torah reading in the form of a "Mi Shebeirach."
8. On Shabbos we are not permitted to pray for the sick directly. Instead of conveying our prayer for his recovery with the regular expression of "Refuah Sheleimah". we should say "Shabbos Hi Milizok, Urefuah Kerovah lavo" - "On Shabbos we do not cry out, but recovery should soon be on the way."

D. Giving Precedence:

1. The Mitzvah of consoling mourners takes precedence over visiting the Sick, if you only have time to do one of these Mitzvos.
2. If you are able to do both Mitzvos, then go visit the sick first, because when we pray for the sick and take care of his needs, it is considered as if we are sustaining him.

E. Exemptions:

1. Some Poskim say that you should not visit a sick person with whom you are at odds. However, if you can first send a messenger to the sick person to say that you would like to visit him and "make peace", you can then visit the sick person if he is agreeable to it.
2. Do not visit a sick person who may find it a burden to have visitors. i.e. he suffers embarrassing stomach disorders, severe headaches, etc strain or other uncomfortable symptoms.
3. However, it is still important to show our concern. Therefore, we can remain outside his room, inquire warmly about how he

is feeling and whether all his needs are being taken care of, hear the patient's suffering, and pray for him from there.

F. Men & Women:

1. When a sick person is in need of assistance, men and women may attend to each other's needs, with some limitations, and may even make physical contact if necessary, since no amorous intentions are involved.
2. When a sick person suffers from a digestive disorder and requires assistance in matters related to elimination, women may assist male patients, but men may not assist women.
3. The same applies with any illness that may involve private parts of the body.
4. When a woman is a Niddah, if she or her husband is sick, they must try to adhere to all the laws that guide their behaviour at this time. When this is impossible, and there is no one else available to help, a Rabbinical authority must be consulted regarding how to proceed.

E. Deterioration of the Patient's Condition:

1. When a patient's condition becomes critical or life threatening, it is sometimes necessary to add a name in order to annul the Heavenly decree.
2. A seriously ill person should not be informed of the death of a close relative or friend, because in his weakened condition such news could lead to emotional collapse.
3. If he does hear about a death, others should not tear kriya, cry or give a eulogy in his presence, even if the person who passed away is not a close relative of the patient.
4. Therefore, all visitors should be warned not to offer their consolation, and if necessary one should even cover up the truth to prevent the patient from finding out about the death.
5. In case of a sudden deterioration, the patient should be advised to settle his financial affairs, such as 1) check to see if he has to

receive or pay back loans, 2) retrieve belongings that he deposited with others or return those that others deposited with him. This should be done in a way that will not frighten the patient.

F. Preparing for Death:

1. We must be careful to walk a fine line between the tremendous chesed of helping him approach his death spiritually prepared, and the risk of frightening him in a way that might accelerate his passing.
2. If the patient appears to be nearing death, or we have reason to be concerned that he might suddenly pass away, we should advise him to say Viduy. This should be done in a sensitive and tactful way. We can remind the patient that anyone who does Teshuvah and Viduy sincerely, is guaranteed a place in the World to Come.
3. The patient should not be told to say Viduy when in the presence of people with little emotional control or little tact, since they may break down in tears upon hearing the suggestion, and this could demoralize the patient. Therefore, these people should first be asked to leave the room.
4. If the patient is not capable of reciting the Viduy aloud, he may say it to himself in his heart.
5. If one is not capable of reciting Viduy, someone else should read this prayer aloud, so that the dying person could hear it and, if possible, answer Amen.
6. The accepted Viduy text is: "I acknowledge before You, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my fathers, in Whose Hands lie my healing and my death, may you allow me to have a complete recovery. If I die, let my death be an atonement for all my sins, transgressions, and rebellious behaviour that I have committed before You. Please grant me my portion in Gan Eden and provide me with the merits to take part in the World to Come, which is reserved for the righteous." מודה אני לפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי, שרפואתי ומיתתי בידך, יהי רצון מלפניך, שתרפאני

רפואה שלימה, ואם אמות תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל חטאים ועוונות ופשעים, שחטאתי ושעוויתי ושפשעתי לפניך, ותן חלקי בגן עדן, וזכני לעולם הבא הצפון לצדיקים

7. If the patient wishes to recite the full Viduy of Yom Kippur, he may do so.
8. At this point the patient should also be told to ask forgiveness from anyone he may have sinned against, whether these are personal sins or sins involving money.
9. The patient should be advised to give Tzedakah generously.

G. The Threshold of Death:

1. Part of this Mitzvah is to ease the patient's departure from this world.
2. When a person is deemed a "Gosess" - on the verge of death - he should not be left alone, since he can become very frightened at the moment the soul leaves his body.
3. The "Gosses" may not be moved, since any movement can hasten his death.
4. The custom is to light candles near the "Gosess" to fend off evil spirits.
5. It is a Mitzvah to stand near the person who is about to die.
6. It is of great significance that a person's children and relatives be present when his soul departs. However, they must refrain from crying.
7. Those standing by the bed should turn their thoughts to Teshuva, contemplating the unworthiness of man, and Hashem's mercy in caring about him. This also adds merit to the dying person.
8. One must be extremely careful not to engage in idle conversation when in his presence.
9. Those standing by the bed during the sick person's final moments should recite:
 - psalms 121, 130, and 91
 - "Yigdal" (Artscroll pg. 12)
 - "Adon Olam" (pg. 12)
 - "Ana B'koach" (pg. 314)
 - The second paragraph on the Alienu (pg. 160)

- 10.** At the moment the soul departs from the body, those around the person say the Pasuk of “Shema Yisroel” one time, “Baruch Shem...” three times, “Hashem Hu Ha’Elokim” seven times, and “ Hashem Melech...” one time.
- 11.** These verses should be said as close as possible to the actual moment of death; however, they should not be said loudly, in case the sick person is still alive. Also loud sounds prevent the soul from leaving the body.
- 12.** Once the person has died, the custom is to have people guarding the body continuously until the burial.