

J-SERVE *Bikur Cholim*: Visiting the sick

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Genesis 17,26-18,1

"Thus Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on that very day...The LORD appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot."

Rashi (commentary):

"AND THE LORD APPEARED UNTO HIM": to visit the sick man. Rabbi Hama the son of Hanina said: it was the third day after his circumcision and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and enquired after the state of his health (based on Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 86b).

Discussion:

This is the first case in Jewish sources about the importance of visiting the ill.

What do you think can be learned to our life from this story?

Talmud Bavli Nedarim 39

"The Mitzva of visiting the ill has no fixed measure. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of 'Has no fixed measure'?"

Rav Yosef thought to say: There is no fixed measure for the granting of its reward...

Abaye said: There is no fixed measure for the disparity between the ill person and his visitor, as even a prominent person pays a visit to a lowly person and should not say that doing so is beneath a person of his standing.

Rava said: There is no fixed measure for the number of times that one should visit the ill, as even one hundred times a day is appropriate.

Rav Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: Anyone who visits an ill person takes from him one-sixtieth of his suffering.

Discussion:

1. Three Rabbis (Rav Yosef, Abaye and Rava) each understood the saying that "The Mitzva of visiting the ill has no fixed measure" in a different way. Which one do you most connect to?
2. Do you think any of these Rabbis was inspired from G-D visiting Abraham? If so, who?



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