

## Hebrew Day School / Middle School Grades

### Curriculum For Bikur Cholim

*Using resources from the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council, including: the comic book Good Company: Facts and Fictions of Bikur Cholim Bikur Cholim Resource Guide and The Meaning of Bikur Cholim by Dr. Norman Lamm*

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Suggested curriculum (p. 1-2) and student handouts (p. 3-10) are attached.

#### Purpose:

To teach students the practical How-To's of Bikur Cholim through:

- Understanding the importance of the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim by studying Biblical and Halachic (Jewish legal) sources.
- Role playing Bikur Cholim Do's and Don'ts.
- Practicing active listening skills, visual cues and conversation do's and don'ts... skills relevant beyond the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim.

## LESSON ONE: VOCABULARY AND MEANING

### 1. Derivation of word ביקור (“visiting”):

ביקור –comes from word בקר (morning) when we visit we bring light and hope to the person we are visiting.

### 2. Who is a חולה (“ill person”)?

It doesn't have to be someone who is physically sick.

It can also be someone who is emotionally “sick” and going through a hard time, i.e. an elderly person who is lonely and depressed, a friend who has just experienced something difficult...

Allow students to give their own examples...

### 3. Significance of *Bikur Cholim*

*Tefilla (prayer)*: We mention it each morning in *Birchot HaTorah* (the blessings on the Torah) as one of the few mitzvot for which we receive a reward in this world and the world to come.

אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה...ובקור חולים

*These are the precepts of which a person enjoys their fruits in this world...visiting the sick.*

*Torah*: Hashem personally visited Avraham after his *Brit Mila (circumcision)*. When we visit the sick, we are walking in G-d's ways and emulating G-d.

**JOURNAL**: Students should share their own *Bikur Cholim* story which demonstrates the impact of a *Bikur Cholim* visit.

## LESSON TWO: STUDY SOURCES AND ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM HALACHA

More advanced students can study actual texts. Others can study sources contained in *Bikur Cholim Resources*. (See HALACHA RESOURCES SHEETS)

Review answers to questions.

## LESSON THREE: REVIEW OF SOURCES THROUGH GOOD COMPANY

Show FICTION side of cartoon.

Have students anticipate what the FACT side should be based on the sources they have learned. Try to have students identify the *Halachot* described in the cartoon scenarios.

## LESSON FOUR: BEING A GOOD LISTENER

### 1. Begin with a game of telephone.

Discuss the difference between Listening and Hearing.

*Listening* is a form of communication. When we listen, we internalize what we are hearing. We reflect so we know how to respond.

Listening is active. Hearing is passive.

To Listen is to make a conscious effort to hear.

2. Discuss how we listen.

Do we only listen through our ears/by hearing or can we listen in other ways...i.e. body language, visual cues in a room. What can we learn from pictures in a room? A messy room?

3. Read poems by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov;  
Effective Words  
Effective Silence

Discuss the different types of response reflected by each of these poems.

4. Have students read through Conversation Do's and Don'ts and Active Listening at home and summarize main points.
5. In class, give out sheet "Less Helpful, More Helpful."  
Have students fold sheet in half. Read Less Helpful Response, guess the More Helpful response and discuss the difference between the two and why one is "more helpful" than the other.

## **LESSON FIVE: VISITING ETIQUETTE**

1. Have students read Visiting Etiquettes Do's and Don'ts.

2. VISITING SCENARIOS

Have students prepare with a friend a visiting scenario which incorporates Visiting and Listening Do's and Don'ts.

Classmates have to decide what was done right and what was done wrong in accordance with what they have learned.

## **FINAL PROJECT: BIKUR CHOLIM POWER POINT/HANDBOOK**

Teaching Bikur Cholim Halachot and Etiquette to fellow middle school students.  
Sample final projects available at <http://www.bikurcholimcc.org/humor.html>

## LESSON TWO: SOURCES AND QUESTIONS

*Sources compiled from the Shulchan Arukh (16th Century text) & Rabbinic Literature*

Visiting the sick is in emulation of the Almighty's own actions, when He visited Abraham after his circumcision: "The Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (Gen. 18:1).

Visiting the sick is included in the category of *Gemilut Hasadim*, "the performance of good deeds", but is singled out by the rabbis as something special. It is one of the mitzvot whose fruit is enjoyed in this world and principally in the world to come.

Some authorities maintain bikur cholim is one of the 613 commandments of the Torah, while others hold it a rabbinic command, derived from "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18).

One may not receive remuneration for bikur cholim.

Bikur cholim has no boundaries or limits, i.e., one may visit as frequently as he likes, provided he does not tax the ill; youth may visit the elderly and the elderly may visit the youth; men may visit women and women men, though they may not attend to the other's intimate needs.

One who visits removes a sixtieth of the patient's illness. One who should visit and doesn't, harms the patient and is regarded as "shedding blood".

The essence of the mitzvah of bikur cholim is to attend to the needs of the patient and pray for his recovery. In his presence, the visitor may pray for the patient in any language; in his absence, only Hebrew. The patient himself should be encouraged to pray, ask for forgiveness and repent.

One should not inform a patient of the death of a friend or relative, even one for whom the patient must sit Shivah, because of the obvious harm that might result.

Some authorities recommend that one not visit alone, but always with others.

A visitor should not spend time with those who are suffering from intestinal disorders, speech problems, or mental disturbances, when the visit is likely to prove difficult or embarrassing to the patient. Better to just say hello and inquire about his needs from a distance.

It is best not to visit in the early or late part of the day or at any other time a patient may be receiving treatment.

Some say one should not visit his enemy, but others permit it. The patient should never be allowed to feel that his enemy rejoices over his illness. Each case must be judged individually.

In case of a time conflict, the mitzvah of comforting the bereaved takes precedence over the mitzvah of visiting the sick, because comforting the bereaved is an act of lovingkindness performed for the living and the dead. Where no such conflict exists, however, visiting the sick takes precedence because that act is equivalent of adding life to the ill.

*"You shall love your neighbor as  
yself"  
—Leviticus 19:18*

## Questions

1. Briefly explain the Mitzvah.
2. Note any place in the TaNach in which we see (try to find the פסוק (verse)) the Mitzvah in action.
3. Who should do this Mitzvah?
4. When should this Mitzvah be done? Do you do this Mitzvah immediately or do you wait before performing this Mitzvah?
5. What should you say and how should you act when performing this Mitzvah? (What does it mean to be an effective listener?)
6. If you have a choice between this Mitzvah and another, what do you do?
7. Should you ever *not* perform this Mitzvah?

Cite any sources that you use in your handbook.

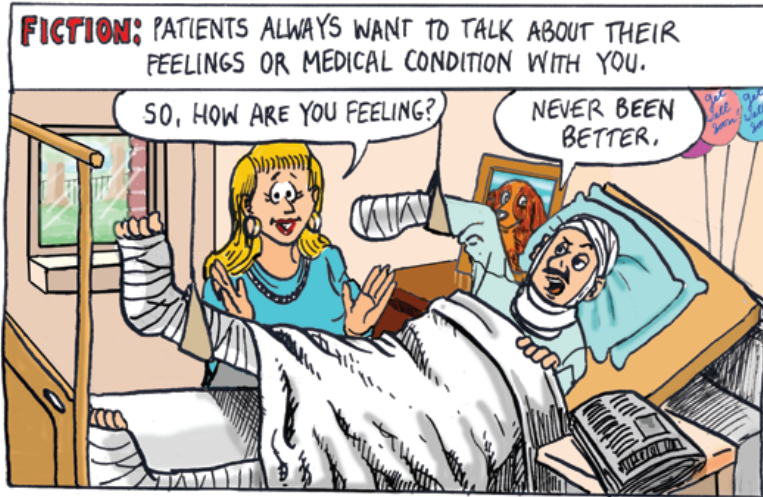
Sources:

משנה תורה: ספר שופטים : הלכות אבל:

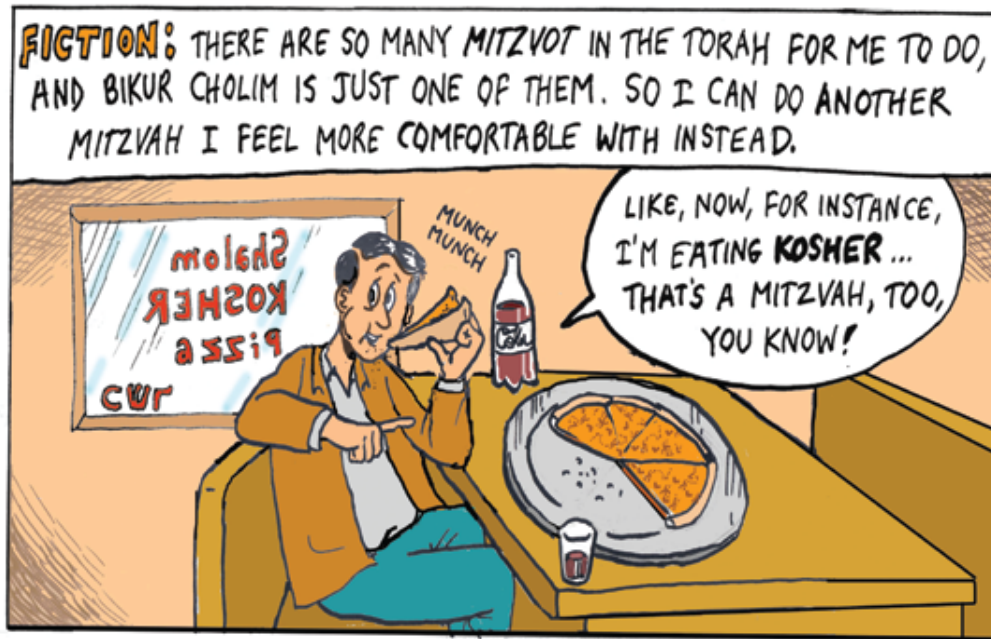
קיצור: הלכות בקור חולים: מימן קצג: א-ה,יא

קיצור: דיני נהום אבלים: סעיף ר'ז: א

**LESSON THREE: WHAT IS THE FACT?**



What is your reaction to these cartoons?



Did you know that the Talmud says that when you visit the sick you take away one sixtieth of their illness?

## **LESSON FOUR: ACTIVE LISTENING**

*Poems by Rabbi Nachman of Breslev, 18<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish Mystic*

### **Effective Words**

G-d of wisdom,  
Teach me the right words.  
Teach me the very words  
That will touch the hearts  
And souls of others.  
When a friend needs  
My understanding ear,  
Teach me the words to say  
That will strengthen,  
That will encourage,  
That will express  
Only my love  
And concern.

### **Effective Silence**

Teach me, Dear G-d,  
That often  
The most effective words  
Are no words at all.  
Teach me how and when  
To communicate  
With that most potent gift  
Of silence.

*Conversation Dos and Don'ts*

1. **Never say "I know how you feel."** Everyone experiences pain differently; even people who suffer the same ailments perceive it differently. You can say "It sounds like you think (feel) it's pretty bad (sad/mad/glad). I'm here and I'm listening."
2. **Use open-ended questions to keep up the conversation.** These begin with "How... What... Could you tell me more about...?" Closed-ended questions that are less likely to elicit conversation begin "Who, When, Where."

Examples:

- o How do you feel right now? (Open)
  - o Do you like to read? (Closed)
  - o What are some activities that you enjoy doing? (Open)
3. **Try not to mind-read and finish another person's sentences.** When you truly listen actively you may be surprised where the person was going with his/her thought.
  4. **The visitor should not minimize or laugh off fears expressed by patients,** even when they seem exaggerated.
  5. **Don't be afraid to clarify or gently explore what you are hearing.** When a person is willing, you may ask questions to get to the heart of the matter.

(How can you tell if the person is willing to talk about his or her illness?)

*Avoid these responses...*

1. "Oh, don't worry. Everything will turn out all right."
2. "Oh, yes, I know exactly how you feel. As a matter of fact, let me tell you about what happened to me once..."
3. "What a mistake. You must really regret what you did."
4. "Well, if I were you..."

*"Pleasant words  
are like a  
honeycomb,  
sweet to the  
palate and a  
cure for the  
body"  
—Proverbs  
16:24*

*Active Listening*

- Show that you have heard what the person said by summarizing briefly the meaning of what was said and checking by asking if you understood his or her feelings correctly.
- When you listen, just listen. Do not plan your reply while waiting for your turn to talk. Wait until the person talking finishes. This way you can gather all the information before responding.
- Make a restatement or paraphrase. Reflect the feeling or emotion behind what you think was said.

<b>LESS HELPFUL</b>	<b>MORE HELPFUL</b>
Hashem doesn't give you anymore than you can handle. It happened for the best. You need to daven more.	It sounds like this is really hard... I am so sorry this happened... I will be sending you my thoughts and prayers...
<b>BEING POSITIVE</b>	
You are going to be just fine. Keep a positive attitude.	I believe in you... It is amazing to see you smiling with all you are going through.
<b>SOME HAVE IT HARDER</b>	
You should feel lucky. What you are going through is nothing like what your grandparents went through...	I am sorry you're going through this. I am sorry this happened to you.
<b>GET OVER IT</b>	
It is time to put this behind you	This might take time... Take the time you need for yourself.
<b>I UNDERSTAND</b>	
I understand how you feel or	I can only imagine how hard this must be. Tell me more if you would like...
<b>YOU FILL IN</b>	
Be grateful it wasn't worse.	I know what that's like...



- Do you think the answers on the right are more helpful? Why?
- How can you tell if a person wants to talk?

*G-d's poet is silence! His song is unspoken,  
And yet so profound, so loud, and so far,  
It fills you, it thrills you with measures unbroken,  
And as soft, and as fair, and as far as a star.  
~Joaquin Miller*

## **LESSON FIVE: VISITING ETIQUETTE DO'S AND DON'TS**

### *Do's:*

1. Knock on a patient's door before entering. Do not enter suddenly.
2. Ask if the patient would like a visit. This question gives some control back to a patient.
3. Say hello to all patients in the room.
4. Do not shake hands. This is for the patient's sake.
5. Ask if you may sit down. Introduce yourself—who you are, where you're from, and the intention of your visit.
6. Sit on a chair, not on the bed so that you are at eye level with the person you are visiting.
7. If necessary, look around the room for cues to conversation. Ask about photographs, drawings, or other objects.

### *Don'ts:*

1. Don't wake up a sleeping patient. Instead, leave a note or card indicating that you were there.
2. Don't stare at a person's scar or disfigurement.
3. Don't fear using humor, if appropriate and sensitive to that person's situation.
4. Don't interrupt if the patient is with the doctor. Return at a different time.

## FINAL PROJECT

### בן אדם לחבירו

“A Joyful heart makes for good health” לב שמח ייטב גהה

משלי פרק יז פסוק כב

### BIKUR CHOLIM HOW TO...

Imagine you are instructed to teach a middle school class the reasons for and proper way to do the mitzvah of בקור חולים.

You are to create a comic book or power point geared to that age demonstrating the guidelines for performing the mitzvah. The project must include:

- a. a front cover/title page containing a quote relevant to the importance of this mitzvah.
- b. an introduction page listing the do's and don'ts of performing the mitzvah based on the Halachic sources and handouts you learned.
  - You must have at least ten “do's and don'ts.”
  - Note the source of your “do's and don'ts.”  
i.e. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, א, סעיף א, סימן א
- c. at least three comics/power point slides illustrating what to do and what not to do when performing the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim.
- d. at least two comics/slides highlighting the do's and don'ts of what to say and how to be a good listener when performing the mitzvah.



GRADE INCLUDES: Content, Creativity, Neatness and Teamwork