

Bais HaVaad on the Parsha, Parshas Vayeira

Sick Visit

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Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by Dayan Yosef Greenwald

https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/BER81_004_Vayera_Angels_Work_Here_Laws_of_Bikur_Cholim.mp3

And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamrei while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.

Bereishis 18:1

According to the Midrash, Hashem visited Avraham following his *bris milah* to perform the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*. Although the Rambam (Hilchos Avel 14:1) says that *bikur cholim* is a mitzvah *deRabanan*, he says it also fulfills the mitzvah *de'Oreisa* of *ve'ahavta lereicha kamocho*.

The Gemara (Nedarim 39b) explains that *bikur cholim* comprises two elements: taking care of the patient's physical needs, like cleaning, food, clothing, and medical care; and addressing his spiritual needs, including sharing in his suffering and davening for him. The Ramban says that one who visits the sick but does not daven for him has not fulfilled the mitzvah properly.

This spiritual component may explain why the Gemara (ibid.) has to say that the mitzvah applies even to a prominent person visiting a less prominent one. Although certain financial mitzvos do not apply when it is beneath one's dignity (e.g., returning certain lost objects), the Ahavas Chesed (3:3) explains that *bikur cholim* applies in all cases. This may be due to the spiritual component, which distinguishes it from other mitzvos *bein adam lachaveiro*.