

Mandatory Medical
July 29, 2022

Q Is there an obligation to study medicine in order to be able to save someone's life in an emergency?

A Sefer Chassidim (1469) says that if one could have studied medicine and didn't, and he was therefore unable to save a dying person, it is as if he killed him. But R' Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:151) rules that one is not obligated to study medicine in order to save others, just as one isn't required to earn extra money in order to save others. But if he does have the medical knowledge, he is obligated to apply it when the need arises, as it says, "Lo sa'amod al dam reiecha" and "vechei achicha imach." The Chelkas Yaakov (1:84) writes that it is praiseworthy, but not obligatory, to study medicine.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is quoted as saying (Nishmas Avraham Y.D. 336) that although studying Torah is obligatory and studying medicine isn't, if one needs a profession, and he is cut out for medicine, he should preferably choose it.

