



think about reflection

Jewish learning

service opportunities

## Bikkur Cholim- Lesson Part 1

### By: Lev Metz

This guided lesson is a way for you to learn to about the value of *Bikkur Cholim* - visiting the sick.

Before we start, here are a couple of important things to understand:

- Judaism as a whole provides us with opportunities for working on being better people.
- Jewish texts can help to give personal meaning and insight into the community service that we do.

Directions:

1. Ask yourself the following questions:

Have you ever had to stay overnight in a hospital?

What was that like? If not, what do you think it would be like?

Have you ever visited someone who is ill in the hospital?

If visiting a sick person in the hospital makes us feel uncomfortable (and it does for most of us), why do we do it? Why should we do it?

2. Read the following quote:

**“The visitor relieves an ill person of one sixtieth of their suffering.”**  
- Leviticus Rabbah 34

According to the text, what effect does the visitor have on the ill person?

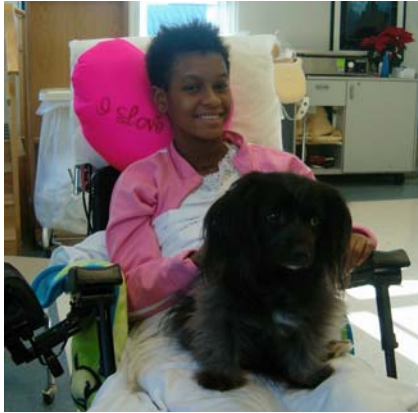
Do you think one sixtieth is a lot or a little?

Doctors and nurses are responsible for physical comfort. What sort of comfort can a visitor provide to a patient?

How can visiting a sick person bring them comfort? Are there certain things that a visitor do to bring more comfort?

- 1 -What kind of impact does this have on a sick person? Is it only psychological, or can the visit impact other needs for the patient?





Have you ever heard of Pet Therapy? There are a number of programs around the country that bring pets (usually puppies) to hospitals and nursing homes. Studies have shown that these visits can dramatically help patients to feel better and even recover from their illnesses.

How do you think the presence of puppies can help someone to feel better?

If people could exhibit positive puppy personality traits, what would they be?

How can we use the healing power of the puppy in our visits but keep a sense of human dignity for both the patient and ourselves?

Conclusion:

This text seems to be saying that visiting the sick will help the sick person to feel better. By spending time with someone who is bedridden, we can show the person that they are not forgotten and that the outside world cares for their health and well being.

Even though it may be awkward or difficult, *Bikkur Cholim* - visiting the sick - is an important Jewish value. We may never know what "one sixtieth" of a sick person's suffering is, but we do know that it can make a difference in someone's life.

How will you apply this teaching? For suggestions on places to visit the sick, visit [sulamcenter.org](http://sulamcenter.org) and find the Health Care/*Bikkur Cholim* option in the first drop-down menu.

Did you find this helpful? For suggestions or feedback, write to [Imetz@bjela.org](mailto:Imetz@bjela.org).

**Sulam: The Center for Jewish Service Learning**

Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles, 6505 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90035  
Office: (323)761-8607 Fax: (323)761-8640 Email: [dgold@bjela.org](mailto:dgold@bjela.org)