



BEAR FEELS SICK

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Poor Bear. He's home in bed, feeling absolutely crummy. But look – his friends all visit to help him feel better. That's what the mitzvah of bikur cholim is all about.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Gemilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness)

We read in *Pirke Avot*, an ancient Jewish text of ethical teachings, that “the world is sustained by three pillars – Torah, service, and acts of loving kindness.” 12th-century scholar Maimonides taught: “Loving kindness means we go beyond monetary help and use our entire being.” Bear’s friends show us that loving kindness outweighs all else.

Bikkur Cholim (Visiting the Sick)

A prime example of *gemilut chasadim* is *bikkur cholim*. While literally translated as visiting the sick, it encompasses so much more. Once again, Bear’s friends show the healing power of a generous spirit.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING

- Look at the first picture of Bear in his cave. How might he be feeling?
- In what ways do Bear’s friends help him?
- What can you do to cheer a sick friend or relative?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

If it’s appropriate for you to take your children to visit a sick friend, your presence – not your presents! – is all that’s really needed. Of course, a pot of soup or hand-picked flowers is sure to be appreciated.

While thoughtful and meaningful, visiting sick friends or relatives with young children can be impractical. There are still ways, however, for little ones to participate in the important mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*.

It takes very little to bring a smile to someone who’s feeling under the weather. Here are some suggestions of simple projects your children might enjoy, some of which you might need to deliver:

- a colorful drawing or tracing of a little hand
- a popsicle stick picture frame – the perfect setting for your child’s photo
- a homemade get-well card
- a cheery phone call – extra points for a song!