

**Stay
Healthy
&
Avoid Illness**

Based on 'Choosing Life'

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## **Preface**

Imagine you received 20 Torah-based guidelines and then this message -

“All those who follow these ways will be guaranteed not to become ill and not to need a doctor...”

These words of Rambam Deos 4:20 lead us to understand that just as every mitzvah has Torah instructions, so too the mitzvah to care for our health requires us to follow Torah guidelines every day of our lives.

## 1. Three in One

What can be better than fulfilling 3 mitzvos with one prayer?

We can try it now,

“Please, Hashem you are the Master Healer of all. Please help my friend... so and so... should not become ill, and I shall remain healthy and my family and all of my friends, community members and all others.”

We have just fulfilled 3 great mitzvos -

1- Bava Kama 92a, “All who plead for mercy for others and they also need that as well, they will be helped first.”

2- Shabbos 32a, “A person should always pray for mercy not to become ill.”

3- “Love others as yourself.”

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A bonus mitzvah - the great mitzvah of prayer.

2. The Underlying Principle

Why should a person always pray not to become ill?

The Rambam explains that maintaining one's good health is a great mitzvah because it enables a person to fulfill all the other mitzvos. Thus it is a form of loving Hashem Who created us and wants to help us live and connect with Him.

Mishlei teaches that our heart is like a mirror which reflects our thoughts. Thus when we pray for each person, we cause them to love us also.

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Why does Hashem Who loves us infinitely send many challenges our way? The Talmud explains the goal is to prompt us to pray to Hashem so that we develop an ongoing closeness to Him. Thus He loves us more when we pray for good health for us and for everyone we know and care about.

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3. Good Fortune

Now we can understand the good fortune we learn about in Mishlei 28,

“Fortunate is a person who is always afraid..”

Why is that considered good?

1- Rashi, Gittin 55b, explains: he always looks ahead to see what might develop before he does something.

2- Tosfos explains: he is always concerned not to forget his learning, thus he always reviews his learning.

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This fits with what we learned earlier - to always think, ‘If Chas V’Shalom, I ... , how will I learn, pray and do mitzvos. Please Hashem help me stay well in order to serve you better.’

#### 4. Daily Walks

“Be careful with three endeavors -

1- Don't sit too much, it can lead to ailments,

2- Don't stand too much, it can harm the heart and

3- Don't walk too much, it can harm the eyes.

Rather, divide one's time -

$\frac{1}{3}$  sitting,

$\frac{1}{3}$  standing,

$\frac{1}{3}$  walking.”

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This Gemara, Kesubos 111a, should be practiced daily.

While walking we can utilize a few moments of the time to pray to Hashem that we shall not become ill.

5. Thank for Breathing

How often should we thank Hashem for the gift of breathing? The very last verse of Tehillim is, "All souls should thank and praise Hashem." The Medrash offers an explanation, "For every breath, we should sing Hallel praises to Hashem."

One of the suggestions we should also include every day when we take a walk is to spend one block of time to thank Hashem for the gift of inhaling and exhaling.

→We can breathe on our own! "Thank You, Hashem, we love You."

One of the effects of coronavirus is breathing trouble, Chas V'Shalom. What a preventive measure this is - to thank Hashem for easy breathing!!

6. Ongoing Connection

The gift of breathing is remarkable in that we keep on breathing 24/7.

Why is it that by the miracle of eating, Hashem designed us with stomach containers to process food?... we are able to go for a few hours without becoming hungry to refuel our system. However for breathing, Hashem did not design us with a canister to contain the air in storage for a few hours.

One of the great lessons from breathing is the reminder that in Bereishis Hashem blew into man the breath of life. Thus we have a portion of the Divine within us called the 'neshama'/soul that is the core of our essence. Thus the goal of our lives should be to emulate Hashem's ways, "Just as He is, so too, we should strive to be in His shadow, so to speak."

7. Looking Ahead

Our Sages teach -

“Who is wise? One who sees the consequences.”

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“Death and life can depend on the tongue,”  
Mishlei 18:21.

Rambam, Deos 4:15 -

“Overeating for every person is like a deathly poison. It is also the main cause of illness. Most illness is due to -

1- harmful foods, or

2- filling one’s stomach and overeating even healthy foods.

Shlomo Hamelech teaches with his wisdom,  
Mishlei 21:23 -

“One who guards his mouth from eating harmful foods and from eating to fullness will be saved from troubles...”

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What if you see many other people overeating, what can you do to control yourself?

Think of a hospital... you may be visiting many who are sick in bed, but you have no desire to join them. You pray that they should recover.

8. Drink More Water

Water is so important that the Talmud, Bava Kama 17a declares - "Water actually represents Torah!"

The average human body contains about 70% water. So then, what would compare to air?

The answer is 'Emuna.' The 6 Constant mitzvos are like the air we breathe 24/7... we cannot live without it.

1- To believe that Hashem created us and saved us from slavery in Egypt,

2- There are no other powers besides Hashem,

3- He is the One and Only,

4- Love Him,

5- Fear Him, and

6- Do not follow temptations.

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## 9. Torah and Water

We have been touching briefly on some of the topics that we should be focusing on daily to benefit our health. As we study Torah and understand its power and greatness, the more we will also appreciate water.

Avos 5:22 says about Torah -

“Delve into it more and more for everything is in it.”

For drinking water when one is thirsty, we say a unique blessing -

“...for everything came into existence by His word”!

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The water we drink and the Torah we study both help improve our health and our lives in so many ways.

10. Mirror Reflections

As water can reflect one's face, so too, a person's heart reflects to other people," Mishlei 27:19.

If you think nice thoughts about an individual, that will generate a tendency for that person to reciprocate those feelings to you.

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When we delve into Torah study, we also generate a reflection of Torah thoughts from deep within us from the learning that Hashem implanted in us before we were born.

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