



Marvelous Mitzvot for “Stay at Home”

Any time is a good time to do a *mitzvah*. While being stuck at home might seem like a barrier to *mitzvot*, it could present opportunities to do *mitzvot* that you might not otherwise have the occasion to do. In fact, being home could mean having the chance to increase the number of *mitzvot* that a person can do. Included here are *mitzvot* for the individual and *mitzvot* that can help others. Pick one to focus on each day.

בֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבֶרֶוֹ (Bein Adam l’Haveiro, Interpersonal Relationships)

- Staying home can be lonely, especially for people who live by themselves; hearing a friendly voice (not reading a text) can help lift someone’s spirits. Call friends and family to say, “Hi.” Have a good joke, story, or question ready to help lift spirits.
- Read to a grandparent or a grandfriend over Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, or other videoconferencing app. Discuss the book after you read. Don’t have a grandparent or grandfriend available? Get in touch with a nursing home or assisted living facility and ask about reading to residents.
- While physically visiting people who are affected by the virus can be dangerous for the visitor, you can still perform the *mitzvah* of בִּיקּוּר חוֹלִים (*bikkur cholim*, visiting the sick) through chats and texts. You can create art, take a picture of it, and email the picture too.
- Make signs or posters and stand outside a loved one’s window.

שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת (Shelom Bayit, Keeping Peace in the Home)

- Being home with the same people all the time can be difficult. The Mishnah suggests that we דַּן לְכָף זְכוּת (*dan l’chaf zechut*, give people the benefit of the doubt) (*Pirkei Avot* 1:6). Do your best to remember that everyone is dealing with being at home for a long time and that everyone in your home wants what is best for each other. Next time you find yourself wanting to argue with someone in your family, *dan l’chaf zechut* and “let it go.”
- Sometimes a small gesture goes a long way. Offer to play a game that somebody else in your home enjoys, help with someone else’s chores, or think of something else that demonstrates how much you care about your family members.

צְדָקָה (Tzedakah, Just Giving)

- Food pantries are running out of food as grocery stores reduce their donations. Help your community by buying two extra cans of food and dropping them off outside the food pantry. If you cannot get to the store and/or drop off food, consider making a monetary contribution via your food pantry’s web site or sending them a grocery store gift card.



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- Box up clothes that you have not worn during the last year. Store the box until there is a good time to donate to a local shelter.

הַכָּרַת הַטּוֹב (Hakkarat Hatov, Showing Appreciation)

- 100 blessings each day! At least that is what the Talmud recommends (Tractate *Menachot* 43b). While saying that many blessings might be challenging, you can still show gratitude for all the good in your life. Make a gratitude graffiti board for your home and see how quickly you can fill it up. (Sometimes it can be hard to think of things to be grateful for when cooped up for too long.)
- When separated physically for long periods of time, it can be especially important to let friends and family know how much you appreciate them. Send texts to friends and family and tell them what you miss most about seeing them in person.
- In many places, teachers and school administrators are working extra hard to make sure that students can still learn in engaging ways while everyone is stuck at home. Send an email to your teacher expressing how much you appreciate everything they are doing for you.

שְׁמִירַת הַגּוּף (Shemirat Haguf, Protecting the Body/Staying Healthy)

- Have daily dance parties—get moving to stay healthy. FaceTime with friends and dance. Share playlists to keep things interesting.
- In most places, you can still go outside to get some fresh air. Take a walk. Be careful to maintain appropriate social distance if you see someone walking towards you.
- Find a good workout video online. Have you thought about taking up a new activity like [boxing](#) or [pilates](#)? Now is a good opportunity to start.

בְּנֵין בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת (Binyan Beit Hak'nesset, Building a Synagogue)

- While many synagogue buildings are closed to keep people at a safe distance, many synagogue communities are holding prayer services through Zoom or other social media. If your synagogue is holding prayer services, join them. If not, encourage your clergy to start them or join another community anywhere in the world that fits your needs.
- Dedicate one place in your home to be a holy space. Consider how you will treat that space differently from the other places in your home—it could be a place of prayer, learning, quiet reflection, music, etc. Make sure to use the holy space at least once each day.



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* The Mishnah is a collection of Rabbinic teaching compiled in the early 3rd century. It primarily consists of legal statements.

** Pirkei Avot is tractate of the Mishnah that includes primarily homiletic lessons about how to lead an ethical life.

*** The Talmud is a collection of the Mishnah and discussions about the ideas included.