



Simcha *shel* Mitzvah!

Kidney Donors Know the Joy of Giving Life



Special Supplement - Sukkos 5776

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Kidney Donors Know the Joy of Giving Life

In this special supplement we introduce you to the world of living kidney donation and the special joy – *simcha shel mitzvah* – that the kidney donor experiences upon saving a life.

The Israeli non-profit organization Matnat Chaim has been involved in over 220 living kidney donations since 2009. A recent article in the *New York Times* named Israel as one of the countries that has undergone a significant change regarding living organ donations. Matnat Chaim was credited as an organization that has contributed to this shift. Numerous articles and news items in the Israel media in recent years have inspired more and more Israelis to make this altruistic gift.

Since Matnat Chaim's founding in 2009, over 220 Israelis have volunteered to give up a kidney in order to save the life of another, with minimal risk to themselves. The rate of living kidney donations has nearly doubled during that time, from just 69 per year to 135. Thanks to Matnat Chaim's activities, there are now more kidney donations from living donors in Israel than from deceased donors.

We spoke to some of the donors recently; not only do they not regret their donations, but they all said they would do it again if they could. **These stories appear in the following pages, and you can read about the elevated level of *simcha shel mitzvah* experienced by the kidney donors.**

Matnat Chaim has been highly successful in raising awareness for living kidney transplants in the *charedi* and national-religious sectors, with some 98 percent of its donors coming from these two population groups, half from each community. While most donors to Matnat Chaim are currently from the religious sector, recipients are from all segments of Israeli society, with 70 percent coming from the non-religious population.

Matnat Chaim's primary method of reaching potential donors is through newspaper and other media advertisements and promotional material. Matnat Chaim can accept donors not only from Israel but also from the UK and the rest of Europe.

We invite you to read and to be inspired by the stories of our life-saving living donors. We also present medical and halachic information about the inspiring world of living kidney donation.

Chag sameach!
The editor

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This publication does not purport to take the place of individual consultation in all medical matters.

Contents

- 3 Diary of a Hero
- 6 All in the Family
- 8 Chavrusa for Life
- 11 Gedolei Torah Are Unanimous
- 12 Dialysis is Pure Suffering
- 14 I've Returned from Gehinnom
- 16 To Save a Life
- 19 Matnat Chaim UK
- 20 Two Women, Kidney Donors
- 26 How Do I Donate a Kidney?
- 28 You're Donating What ?!
- 30 Medical panel



Harav Kanievsky *shlita* gives a brocho to a kidney donor prior to transplant, while Rabbi Heber (left) looks on



Three kidney donors (stories appear within)

Diary of a Hero

Yehuda Potash
(translated from the Hebrew)
photos: Yaakov Nachumi

If you were to meet R' Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld, you'd think he was just a regular *avrech* from Beitar Illit. But listen to his story, and you'll discover that not only did he save the life of a fellow Jew, but he was also responsible for a tremendous *Kiddush Shem Shamayim*. In this moving interview, he talks about giving life, describes the period before and after donating a kidney, and calls on everyone to follow his example.

An intravenous fluid infusion pump and three colored balloons hung over the head of R' Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld. The recovery room was quiet. His eyes were closed. He was still under the influence of the anesthetic. Only a few minutes ago he had been wheeled out of the operating theatre. The effect of the anesthetic would soon wear off and Yeshayahu would wake up to experience the most moving and exciting moments of his life.

His wife and small children were sitting by his bedside. His parents were also there, waiting anxiously for their dear son to regain consciousness. Standing, teary eyed, at the doorway, Ron and Dalit Alon, a non-religious couple from Modi'in, were looking at the man who had changed their lives.

Yeshayahu is a thirty-year-old Chassidic *avrech*, who serves as the secretary of a Chassidic *Talmud Torah* in his home town while maintaining regular *sedorim*. He's loved by all who know him. He is a young man with a giant heart and with two eyes, two ears – and one kidney. He donated his second kidney in order to save a life.

He was raised in an atmosphere of giving. His parents exemplify *chessed*. Learning from them, Yeshayahu went on



to practice *chessed* at its highest level. This did not involve donating money, but giving part of his body in order to give life to an 11-year-old girl. She was living on borrowed time and, thanks to Yeshayahu, is now functioning as a normal child.

The man in the newspaper

It all began with a notice in a *charedi* newspaper. Yeshayahu remembers it as if it were yesterday. He was reading in his living room when he noticed an article about a certain Rabbi Heber, who was making great efforts to enlist people to donate a kidney. Rabbi Heber explained that a kidney donation is a great *mitzvah*. It is a simple, lifesaving, medical procedure, involving minimal risk. Yeshayahu was convinced. He called his wife and announced: "I want to donate one of my kidneys." His wife was stunned: "Are you sure?" "Yes," came the reply; a clear, unequivocal affirmative. "I want to know that another Jew is walking around this world, living a normal life, because of me." He then began to relate to his wife what he had learned from the article he had just read. Rabbi Heber, a kidney recipient, founded Matnat Chaim after his *chavrusa*

during dialysis, aged only 22, died suddenly on his way to dialysis. Rabbi Heber set up Matnat Chaim with the purpose of finding, matching, guiding and supporting kidney donors and recipients as they make their way through the transplant process, as well as to promote kidney donations among the public at large.

The decision

By the time Yeshayahu had finished, his teary-eyed wife had given her unmitigated support for his decision.

A few months later, Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld was in surgery where the experienced medical staff carefully removed one of his kidneys. A few minutes later the kidney had already been transplanted into the body of 11-year-old Noa Alon. She had received the gift of life.

We asked him: "Where did you get the strength to take such a step, to undertake an operation in which your kidney is removed and given to a total stranger?" His reply astounded us: "I don't understand why more people don't do it! I am trying to instill in my children a love of *chesed*. They know that if someone comes to our door collecting, we also offer him a glass of water. Giving is part of our life. I really love to do *chesed*, but *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* hasn't made me a millionaire, so if I can't donate money, I'll donate a kidney. Can there be any better way of helping another, to literally save his life?! People always say: 'If only I had a million shekels I'd found a yeshiva, help the needy' and so on. And if you don't have a million, you can't help others? Sure you can – you can donate a kidney and save a person's life and the lives of his descendants for generations to come."

"And did you have any doubts?" we queried.

"No. I read extensively on the subject. Little risk is involved since a person can function on one kidney alone and most medical conditions involve both kidneys. Medical opinion is clear: after a kidney donation, the remaining kidney expands and functions like two. No major risk is involved. There is little pain, just some discomfort. The knowledge that you've saved someone stays with you for your entire life." Yeshayahu consulted his rebbe, the Admor of Erlau *shlita*, who gave him his blessing.

We asked "Why did *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* create man with two kidneys?"



Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld's reply came without hesitation: "One in order to live and one to donate."

Moving encounter

"Tell us about the days prior to the operation," we urged Yeshayahu.

With a winning smile on his face he answered. "I was seething with emotion. Surgery was scheduled for Sunday, and on Shabbos morning, at a *kiddush* that a friend of mine made for his newly-born daughter, I could barely swallow a mouthful of *kugel*!"

"Were you afraid?" we asked.

"No, it wasn't fear. I remember that on the day itself I was even joking around with the surgeon. There was this flood of emotion that was difficult to contain. But that was nothing compared to the feelings that overcame me after the operation. I got out of bed and felt as if I were in heaven on earth...I'll never forget that moment!"

Facing him, deeply moved and tearful, stood Noa's parents, Ron and Dalit. And before them stood this fine young *avrech*, who had given part of his body to enable their daughter to live. Everyone present was overcome with emotion. It was *Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5774*.

The first time they had met was in a chilly room in Beilinson Hospital, at 7 o'clock in the morning. They asked him: "Are you the man who is going to save our daughter's life?" Yeshayahu replied: "Yes, I have the privilege to be that person," and Ron embraced him long and hard, with tears in his eyes.

Noa's story

Last Chanuka, Noa celebrated her *bas mitzvah*. 200 guests - family and friends - were present, and the guest of honor was, naturally, R' Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld, accompanied by his wife. Noa's parents introduced the *avrech* to all their guests as the man to whom their daughter owed her life. The video presentation that was screened at the party told the story of this amazing young man and how he was sent like an angel from heaven to relieve the suffering of their daughter and turn her life around.

Noa tells us her story: "I was born a twin. My kidneys failed at birth. I couldn't eat or drink, had no appetite and was fed through a hole in my stomach. I was different from all the other girls; I couldn't play or go to school in a normal way. I was terribly unhappy. My parents didn't know what the future held for me. One day my parents told me that there was someone who was willing to give me his kidney and that in a few weeks I would have his kidney transplanted into my body. You can't imagine how excited I was!"

"Following the transplant, I was in isolation and intensive care for three weeks, but after that, I was like a new person, just like any normal girl, eating normally, playing with everyone, happy and cheerful. My parents tell me that it's all thanks to this *tzaddik* from Beitar Illit."

From Yeshayahu we learned that Noa's parents had contacted Matnat Chaim a year previously in order to apply for a kidney donation. After completing all the tests and interviews, R' Ehrenfeld was 'matched' with Noa.

Thanking Hashem at a *se'udas hodaya*

Three months after the transplant, the Ehrenfeld and Alon families held a *se'udas hodaya* in Jerusalem. It was a surrealistic sight, an unlikely mix of people: a Chassidic family from Beitar Illit and a non-religious family from Modi'in; on the one hand, a young, devout *avrech* and on the other, an 11-year-old girl, the daughter of an army lieutenant. Tears of emotion flowed freely on both sides.

When the hero of the celebration, Yeshayahu Ehrenfeld, was called upon to speak, a hush fell upon the crowd. Taking a deep breath, he addressed his listeners:

"*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* brought us down into this world with all that we need: two hands, two legs, two kidneys. Sometimes, for whatever reason, someone is lacking. We, his brothers, must come to his aid. If you're blessed with money, you must share it with the needy. If you're wise, you should let others benefit from your advice. And if you're blessed with two kidneys, you should give one to someone who needs it. That's what I had the privilege of doing!"

The storm of applause and looks of admiration that greeted Yeshayahu's words attested to the tremendous *Kiddush Shem Shamayim* that this young *avrech* had brought about.

'You gave me life'

The moving celebratory meal ended with a special letter read by Noa, the recipient of Rav Ehrenfeld's life-saving kidney:

Dear Shayah,

I can't describe my gratitude to you. I think and feel that without you I couldn't have gotten out of the condition I was in. Now, thanks to you, my life has changed for the better. I'm so, so happy to have met you and I'm certain that in return for having given me a new, better life, you and your family will be granted a good life.

You have made me happy and not just me, but my family too, and we all thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We cannot believe the extent to which you are willing to give and contribute to others.

I hope that you too will enjoy a life of happiness and joy, health and good *parnasa*, and that you'll always continue to be just the way you are.

Noa

It's late at night in Beitar Illit but Yeshayahu has one last message to convey to his fellow Jews: "It's time for each one of us to donate a kidney and have the privilege of granting life to another person."

And then adds: "And you'd better hurry. Soon there will probably be so many donors that there will be no more potential recipients left."



All in the Family:

Giving Kindness - and Kidneys - Family-Style

By Malka Winner

Brothers' Keepers

When he worked as a paramedic for Magen David Adom, **Gavi Rebibo** saw his share of heartbreak, tragedy and medical trauma. It pained him to witness the suffering of other Jews – after all, there's so little that can be done to help some of those enduring chronic illness. But when he saw people with chronic renal failure, he knew there was something he could do: donate a kidney.

To Gavi, there was never a question about whether it was the right thing to do. After all, giving a kidney meant he was literally saving someone's life. He knew he would donate a kidney to any family member, neighbor or community member. So why not give one to any other Jew? After all, all Jews are brothers...

The choice simply seemed logical. Gavi reached out to Matnat Chaim, and began the process. Almost immediately, they found someone on the transplant list who was a 100-percent match. He went through the rigorous approval process, which involves extensive physical and mental health checks and more. And thus began the relationship between Gavi and his "kidney partner," Lior.

Gavi, a 35-year-old father of six, came to Israel as a child when his family made *aliyah*. Lior was a born-and-bred Sabra, 34 years old and a father of three. Gavi was working, active, healthy and living in Peduel, a *yishuv* in the Shomron. Lior, from northern Israel, was suffering from kidney failure, enduring a grueling dialysis schedule three times a week, unable to lead a normal life. Gavi had two healthy kidneys and was completely prepared to give one to Lior. He kept thinking about how this "small" act could let Lior live like anyone else, and he knew it was absolutely the right thing to do.

His family was very supportive. When Gavi explained everything to his kids, they thought it simply made sense. Gavi's 13-year-old daughter's reaction was most poignant: "Until today, I thought only women could bring life to the world."

When one relative argued that perhaps Gavi was taking unnecessary risks, he asked if she had not done the same to bring children into the world. "I'm also bringing life into the world," he explained, "by saving someone and giving him a chance to really live."

"How can we ever repay you?" Lior and his wife kept asking Gavi. But Gavi felt he had gotten the best reward a Jew could ask for: knowing that he had been the *shaliach* to save someone's life.

"What makes a person feel good?" Gavi asks. "A higher salary? A bigger house? Vacation?" To him, the answer was clear - and he never looked back.

Before the surgery at Haifa's Rambam Hospital was even complete, Gavi's kidney was already working in Lior's body. It was an emotional period - and one for which Gavi is probably just as thankful as Lior.

Gavi was recently honored to serve as sandak at Lior's new baby's *bris*, and they speak frequently. Gavi's only regret is that he doesn't have another spare kidney to give - although he has continued giving, albeit in a different way. Gavi's example inspired his

brother Dovi to donate a kidney, too.

When **Dovi Rebibo**, 32, of Petach Tikva, came to visit his brother in the hospital after the transplant, he witnessed Gavi and Lior's first meeting post-surgery. The atmosphere of love and brotherhood was awe-inspiring. "I knew I was going to do it, too," Dovi says. "There are so few times in life when you can go through something so big. It takes your breath away. **There's your wedding, having a child ... and donating a kidney.**"

"My only regret is that I can't do it again." It's a sentiment often echoed by the amazing people who do this tremendous act of loving-kindness. What chessed can only be done once in a person's lifetime?

He called Matnat Chaim and a match was quickly found. Dovi thought a transplant wouldn't take place until the summer, but time was running out for the recipient. Dovi's match was a 34-year-old father who had been born with only one kidney and was in very bad shape.

Having had a brother already go through the process definitely paved the way for Dovi. His family was encouraging and he truly felt there was no reason not to do it.

The surgery took place in Petach Tikva's Beilinson Hospital right before Pesach, and Dovi's transplanted kidney began to function immediately. While Dovi was only in the hospital for a short stay, his kidney partner was supposed to be hospitalized much longer. However, everything went so smoothly and quickly that the recipient was released before Seder night.

Dovi's only regret? "It went too fast," he says, explaining that there are times in life when you want to take everything in and absorb what's happening. Things went so quickly he wasn't able to savor the moments enough. Dovi is so thankful for the experience – and for his new friend.



Gavi as sandak at the bris of his kidney recipient's son.

Two brothers, two kidneys, two lives saved – and four families sharing something absolutely incredible.

Giving a kidney
Meet two incredible individuals whose hearts - and kidneys - extend far beyond themselves.



In Memoriam Yair and Pinchas



We are the parents of five children, three daughters and two sons. Our son Yair Nissim, a soldier in the Nahal unit, was killed in 2004 in a battle with terrorists in Mevo Dotan. Three and a half years later his brother Pinchas Yosef died of cardiac arrest on his way to dialysis. They both died at the age of twenty-two and a half.

Both of them excelled in helping other people without receiving anything in return, not even a thank-you, and always with a smile. They were gifted in identifying people in trouble and offering assistance, whether in our community or in the army. They were able to withstand suffering, especially Pinchas, who never complained about his unbearable medical condition, starting from age three. They made it a point to participate in the joyous occasions of their friends even if it was very difficult. After starting dialysis, Pinchas volunteered to work with special-needs youth in Beer Sheva in spite of his poor health. Since neither of them was privileged to build a family, we have partnered with our friends at the Efrat anti-abortion organization to raise funds to bring new life into the world. We have succeeded, so far, in bringing about nine births.

And it was also the hand of Providence that brought together Pinchas and Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber, who lay next to one another during dialysis. After Pinchas' death, Rabbi Heber took the initiative to found the Matnat Chaim organization in his memory. Matnat Chaim's goal is to give life to patients with renal failure; and so it happened that even in their deaths, both our sons are a source of life.

With enormous appreciation and gratitude to Rabbi Heber whose undertaking is a blessing for all of Israel,

Yaakov and Michal Turgeman, Kiryat Arba, Hebron





Chavrusa for Life

Uri Goldstein and Benayahu Kalimi learn Torah *bechavrusa* and also save lives • Each of them donated a kidney and now they have a joint mission: to encourage others to perform this *mitzvah* • “It’s like giving one shekel and the recipient gets a hundred shekels!” • **Toras Chaim**

Akiva Yemini (translated from the Hebrew)
photos: Yaakov Nachumi

For many years **Benayahu Kalimi** has devoted many hours to studying the *halachos* relating to organ donation. Why? He himself can’t explain it, but the subject interested him and frequently led him to delve into the various problems and issues regarding donation. “Many people are not even aware

of the possibility of kidney donation and don’t appreciate its significance, but I always knew about the subject and kept it somewhere in the back of my mind until about four years ago,” he says. “The wife of the head of the *kollel* where I was studying needed an urgent kidney transplant. I saw the

desperation in the eyes of my Rav when his wife’s condition began to deteriorate. He was clinging to the hope of finding a suitable donor. Every time the telephone rang he jumped. There were so many times when it appeared that the *yeshua* was at hand and then fell through at the last minute. Then one day we received the happy news that a donor had been found. We all shared in the tension of the surgery, which *baruch Hashem* went well. Today she is a healthy woman, on her feet and managing a home blessed with many children. After that experience I felt that I simply could not stand idly by when there is an opportunity to perform such a great act of kindness. I decided to find out if I could donate a kidney.”

No differences of opinion

Kalimi’s first stop was, of course, with Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber. “I sat with him for hours,” he recalls. “Rabbi Heber showed amazing expertise in the medical literature. He was able to answer all my questions almost before I could ask them. He supplied me with a mountain of medical materials and with the names of distinguished medical experts whom I could consult concerning the effects of kidney donation on my life. I left there and read everything from A to Z. I felt that after I fully understood the subject I would be able to make the right decision.

“The more I read, the calmer I felt. The opinions on the subject were unanimous. All the doctors agreed that the second kidney is merely a reserve, like a spare tire. To complete the picture I consulted with great *halachic* authorities. I conferred personally with Harav Ya’akov Edelstein *shlita*, chief rabbi of Ramat HaSharon, who told me it was a great *mitzvah* and strongly encouraged me. I spoke with Harav Aharon Leib Steinman *shlita* who supported me and said that even though I was not obligated to donate, it would be a very great *mitzvah*. I got the same answer from Harav Ovadiah Yosef *zt”l* who gave me his heartfelt blessing. By the end I was filled with such a strong feeling of motivation that even my wife, despite her doubts, gave her full consent. And so my journey began!”

“The doctors assured me that I could back out even at the last minute. They said they would make up some medical excuse for cancelling the operation and not reveal that I got cold feet. They really did everything to make certain that I sincerely wanted to donate.”

Kalimi says that the moment that most stands out in his mind was when he arrived for his interview with the committee of the Health Ministry. The recipient and his father arrived

at the same time. The recipient of Kalimi’s kidney was a 16-year-old *yeshiva bochur* who had been born with renal failure. He had suffered his whole life and this was to be his second transplant. The father explained that he was taking his son to the hospital several times a week to be hooked up to dialysis for a number of hours. The previous month the doctors had warned that the boy would not survive the treatments for much longer. That led to a frantic search for a kidney donor. At that point Kalimi realized that this was a matter of life or death and that his actions would directly save the boy’s life. Soon afterwards the operation was performed at Beilinson Hospital.

“I arrived at the hospital the night before the operation in a euphoric mood.

“I underwent some basic tests and then I dropped off into a sweet sleep until morning. I woke up early and *davened* at the earliest *minyan* in the hospital synagogue. As I *davened* I felt I was standing right there before *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* Himself. At eight o’clock they wheeled me to the operating room and I emerged about four hours later. I woke up in the recovery room with a foggy feeling, as if I were drunk, but happy. I was truly excited. I felt that I had done such a great thing to renew someone’s life. There aren’t words to describe that feeling.”

“The multitude of blessings I have received are outweighed by the great joy of knowing that there is a person today alive because of me.”

Recovery and return to routine

“My recovery went very easily. I had some pain from the incision, but that was all. I returned to my regular routine within two weeks.”

His regular routine? Kalimi says that he feels like a new person. Ever since the operation his life has changed for the better. “It’s as if Hashem has come close to me and opened up the gates,” he gushes. “After a five-year gap, my wife gave birth again. We had children, but we wanted more. We were able to expand our house, our income increased, and I was appointed head of the *kollel* which was for me a great spiritual achievement.

“The multitude of blessings I have received are outweighed by the great joy of knowing that there is a person today alive because of me. For four years I’ve walked around with this amazing feeling that after years of treatments, my recipient is functioning normally without having to visit the hospital. And I believe that in a spiritual sense, I get some credit for each page of *gemara* he learns and every *mitzvah* he performs.

“I had the chance to meet up with my recipient after the operation when I happened to be in Jerusalem and went to his house. I sat with his family and I could see how much better he was. He was eating well and putting on weight, he grew a beard, and he smiles all the time. I realized then how much he had suffered before. We’ve met a few more times since then and each time we embrace like brothers – blood brothers.”

Chavrusa for life

Benayahu Kalimi’s story did not end there. Two years later he started studying in the Morasha ve-Daas *kollel* headed by Harav Meir Greenblatt and there he met his *chavrusa* Uri Goldstein, also from Bnei Brak.

“We got along very well together and talked about all kinds of things. After getting to know him, I thought that Uri would be a good candidate to be a kidney donor, so I suggested it to him.”

Goldstein smiles as he says that Kalimi’s suggestion did not sound strange at all. “I had been thinking about donating for a few years,” he says. “I also have a personal connection to the subject because my father underwent a liver transplant a number of years ago and we all went through so much tension and uncertainty. Knowing first-hand the feelings of the recipient makes one realize the supreme importance of organ donation. I knew that I was interested in becoming a donor, but still I put it off until I met Benayahu. He is a person with tremendous joie de vivre. He told me that since his donation he has felt a special elation.”

“Every time I want to improve my mood I remember my kidney donation and I get fresh *kochos*” he told me.

“At that time, I happened to hear of two acquaintances who went through testing to become donors and were rejected because the tests disclosed traces of disease in their bodies. The early discovery enabled them to be treated and to recover completely. That made me see another aspect of the story - that even potential donors enjoy a special *siyatta Dishmaya*. There is no way that their donation could harm them.

“Despite all that, I still took my time making the decision. I’m not the kind of person who decides in one day, and I consult with *rabbonim* before doing anything. The more I read in the medical and in the *halachic* literature, the more I understood that there is no significant risk involved. I consulted with Maran Harav Chaim Kanievsky *shlita* who

assured me that everything would go smoothly and that I shouldn’t worry. I sent a detailed letter to Harav Yaakov Edelstein *shlita* with my questions, and his answers also encouraged me to go through with the donation.

“I informed Rabbi Heber that I was ready, I took all the tests, and went to the committee at the Health Ministry where I was surprised to meet the young man who was to be my recipient. We stopped and talked. He told me about himself and we even learned a page of *gemara* together. It turned out that his family is in difficult financial circumstances and has no one in the world to help them. His father was also a kidney patient and his own condition was deteriorating every day. I took great pity on him, embraced him, and felt privileged to be able to help.”

Goldstein’s operation was performed a few weeks later. His *chavrusa*, Kalimi, accompanied him every step of the way. Kalimi explained what to expect and to do at every stage and even came to learn with Uri in the hospital during the days of recovery. They were both in a state of euphoria. Goldstein’s recuperation was even faster than Kalimi’s and **as soon as he left the hospital he felt no more pain, in fulfillment of the brocho of Harav Kanievsky.** When he was released from the hospital he was informed that his kidney was working well in the body of his recipient. “That gave me such a special feeling,” he says, “and my first reaction was a longing to be able to donate another kidney!”

Goldstein stresses that since his donation, he and Kalimi feel a sense of mission to encourage other *avrechim* to take this step which bestows the gift of life on someone who so desperately needs it.



Gedolei Torah Are Unanimous: It’s a Great Mitzvah to Donate a Kidney

Not only is it permissible to donate a kidney, since the health risk is minimal, but it is a great *mitzvah*.



Harav **Ovadia Yosef** zt”l

“It is permitted and even a *mitzvah* to donate one’s kidney in order to save the life of a Jew who suffers from renal disease. Expert doctors who are *yirei Shamayim* have informed me that the level of risk in removal of a kidney is very low.”



Harav **Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv** zt”l

“Not only is it permissible for a living person to volunteer to donate one of his kidneys, to do so is a great *mitzvah*”.



Harav **Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** zt”l

“It is certainly permitted to extract a kidney from a healthy donor in order to transplant it into a sick person. It is also a great *mitzvah* of *pikuach nefesh*.”

Translation of letter opposite:

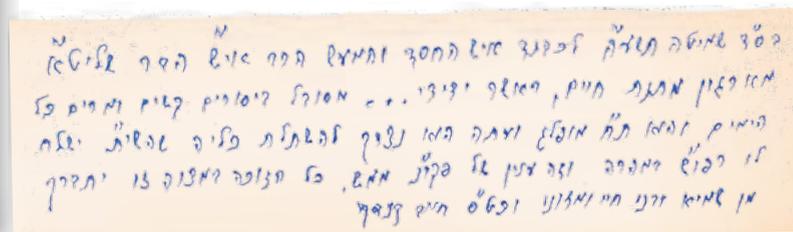
בס”ד Shmittah 5775

To the man of *chessed* and action, Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Heber *shlita* of the Matnat Chaim organization,

My friend _____ has been afflicted with great and bitter suffering all of his days. He is an exceptional Torah scholar, who is now in need of a kidney transplant; may Hashem speedily grant him a complete recovery. This is truly a matter of *pikuach nefesh*. May anyone who has the privilege of performing this *mitzvah* be blessed from Heaven with children, life, *parnassa*, and all things good, *selah*. Chaim Kanievsky



Harav **Chaim Kanievsky** *shlita*





Dialysis is Pure Suffering

Kidney patients are hooked up three times a week for long, painful treatments, waiting for the donor who will give them a chance at normal life. One out of five dies waiting.

The life of a kidney patient revolves around dialysis. There are the days he's having the treatment and the days he's recovering from it. And that's it.

"It's a very difficult treatment – exhausting and painful," says Gera Schechter, an educational psychologist and dialysis patient. "You have to hook up to a machine that mimics kidney function and purifies the blood. To this end, the blood vessels have to be dilated and special catheters inserted. It's a painful procedure that you undergo 3 times a week for several hours each time."

In Israel, more than 5,800 people receive this treatment, which involves being hooked up to a machine that slowly draws the blood out of their body and then pumps it back in after it has been purified. Sometimes people wait for a life-saving transplant for as long as seven years; every year, one of five patients dies, still waiting.

Special catheters are attached to the patient's arm at the beginning of treatment in order to allow the blood circulation to pass from the artery into the dialysis machine.

"To enable the insertion of a catheter, a special operation is performed on the arm, on the prominent artery into which a connector is inserted that allows blood to flow from the artery into the hemodialysis machine," Schechter explains. "The doctor has to examine the patient to decide in which arm to place the connection. If you're right-handed and this fistula is inserted into your right arm (as in my case), you have to learn to use your left hand for everything you've always done with your right hand."

"When the nurse or doctor comes to attach the patient to the machine, he has to search for the fistula in the artery and when he thinks that he's found it, he inserts a catheter. This really hurts. Sometimes he doesn't find the exact spot and sticks the catheter in somewhere else."

"When the two tubes are joined and the blood starts to flow, treatment begins. The patient is asked to keep his arm straight, without moving it, (the slightest movement might detach the connection) for 3-4 hours."

Time Is running out

"Time passes so slowly when you're waiting for the treatment to end," Schechter continues. "You can hear some of the patients groaning in pain. You look around you and see faces filled with disappointment and frustration, men and women of different ages, even little children, with no glimmer of hope."

Penina, a kindergarten teacher and mother of a large family from the center of the country, became acquainted with the dialysis routine unexpectedly. "I suddenly found myself in a new world of suffering, pain and grief," she recalls, "And what really bothered me was the question 'How do you live with it? How do you continue to function and run a home with small children?'"

"I began having treatments three times a week, four hours each session. During treatment your blood is drained from your body 70 times. Sometimes I would faint in the middle of treatment. I'd get home totally exhausted and weak, unable to function or take care of the kids."

"There's another difficulty, apart from the treatment itself: strict restrictions in what you eat and drink. In the heat of the summer, when the body is crying out for water, I had to make do with sucking a few ice-cubes."

Recently, Matnat Chaim found a donor for Penina, a young *charedi* man she had never met.

"I now have the transplant behind me and every day I thank *Hashem* that I'm at home, free of dialysis," she says. "Sometimes I wake up with a start, thinking '*Today's Tuesday, I'd better hurry to get to dialysis!*' And then I suddenly remember and I'm overwhelmed with joy. The main thing is that I'm a healthy mother once again, able to raise my children happily."

Chava Gutheit, who recently received a kidney from a Matnat Chaim donor, relates her story: "On my 40th birthday, after 11 years of strict dieting, my kidneys collapsed," she recalls. "I hoped that within a year they would find me a kidney, but the time stretched on and on and I began to lose hope."

"The dialysis was pure suffering. I would go to dialysis three times a week. I would come on Sunday, return on Tuesday and ask what happened to the man on my left?"

'Dead'. A week passed. Where is the man who sat here? 'Hospitalized in critical condition'. And where is the woman who sat here? 'She was taken to have her leg amputated'. And I would ask myself, 'When will it be my turn?'"

"I was afraid to go to sleep because I didn't know if I would wake up. I was terrified of the loss my children would suffer if I died."

The lives of the entire Gutheit family were turned upside down. "My waking hours were a nightmare - terrible pain, worry, and a feeling of helplessness. I used to be an active, involved woman and the next minute I was sick. This sickness destroys not just your body but also your spirit. You collapse and lose consciousness and everything gets all mixed up."

"The idea that I would not be at the weddings of my children was the worst for me. I couldn't imagine in my sweetest dreams that I would be privileged to accompany them to the chupah. I saw the worst in my thoughts. I saw my end with my own eyes. Suddenly I would hear my 16-year-old crying at night. I would go to him and understand that he was crying because I might die."

"I would hear my 16-year-old crying at night. I would go to him and understand that he was crying because I might die."

Children suffering

It's particularly heartbreaking to see children in the dialysis unit, children whose lives depend on being hooked up to a machine that pumps out their blood.

While their classmates go off to school every day, growing and developing, children on dialysis need to be attached to a machine that drains their strength and hinders their physical and academic development.

Instead of running and playing in the school yard, they spend their time in hospital, surrounded by suffering. Even when they are at school or kindergarten, they are subject to dietary restrictions and it's almost as if an invisible screen separates them from their friends.

Dozens of children in Israel suffer from kidney failure and are on dialysis. "We've been fortunate to have arranged a number of successful transplants for children," says Matnat Chaim founder Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber. "It's an indescribably uplifting feeling to see a child going back to school, *baruch Hashem*, fit and healthy, laughing and giggling in the playground, happy once again."



I've Returned from Gehinnom;

Now it's my Duty to Rescue my Fellow-Sufferers

Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber never sought the limelight. He was living a quiet life, content to be a teacher in a yeshivah and educational director of a large *cheder*. And then, one fine day, his kidneys failed and he was introduced to the harsh, painful routine of dialysis. "I had to put my entire life on hold and abandon my dear students," he recalls. "I'd sit for hours undergoing dialysis. And when a fellow patient suddenly stopped coming, I knew I wouldn't see him again."

There, in the depressing dialysis unit, Rabbi Heber made the acquaintance of Pinchas Turgeman, a 19-year-old *yeshiva bochur* from Kiryat Arba, who had been on dialysis for a long time. The two of them would sit and learn Torah together while undergoing treatment. "We became good friends, very attached to each other," Rabbi Heber remembers.

Pinchas had defective kidneys from birth. As a child he had received a kidney transplant which had worked splendidly and made him into a healthy person. When Pinchas was 16, a terrible tragedy occurred in his family. It was the time of the 2nd Lebanon War, and his older brother Yair was killed in a battle with terrorists. The suffering in his family was immense and Pinchas was particularly broken at the loss of his only brother. During the *shiva* he forgot to take the drugs which were preventing rejection of his transplanted

kidney. The result was tragic: his body rejected his transplanted kidney. After ten years in which the transplanted kidney had worked beautifully, it ceased to function. Pinchas now had only his own defective kidneys. The doctors informed him that there was no option but to return to dialysis. Pinchas, who had just lost his brother, had to return to life in the shadow of dialysis.

Rabbi Heber was eventually rescued from dialysis, thanks to a kidney donation from a friend. As he walked through the doors of the unit for the last time, he resolved to find a donor for Pinchas. "I left no stone unturned until I found a donor for him," he says.

Pinchas and the donor began a series of tests, but Pinchas' body couldn't hold out. Seven years ago, Pinchas passed away suddenly, leaving his parents bereft of sons. Pinchas' older brother, Yair, an IDF soldier, had been killed by terrorists, and now Pinchas, their pride and joy, had lost his life in the "dialysis battle."

"The day he died was the day that Matnat Chaim was born," Rabbi Heber reflects. "Pinchas' father called me in the morning and told me the tragic news. All that morning, I

was tormented by the thought that a person can die, when his life could be saved so easily. For Pinchas' sake, I decided to try to solve the problem."

Why has Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber, formerly a charedi educator, dedicated his life to finding kidney donors? He has 220 answers - people who've been taken off dialysis - and counting.

When Rabbi Heber's wife came home that afternoon, she found him in his armchair, the way she'd left him that morning. "Inform the *cheder* that I'm resigning," he told her. "I'm making a change in my life."

"I've been to *gehinnom* and back; now it's my duty to rescue my fellow-sufferers".

That first year, to his great joy, he managed to find four kidney donors. The next year, he was responsible for 15 transplants and in 2014, made more than 60 "matches."

More importantly, Rabbi Heber has triggered a fundamental change in the way Israelis view altruistic donations. "Israel ranks among the leading countries in the world with regard to altruistic donations," he says, playing down his role in this astonishing achievement. "There are no statistics, but it may well be *the* leading country."

Rabbi Heber dedicated the organization to the memory of his young friend Pinchas. In each person whose life is saved, Pinchas' parents see a spark of their son who didn't make it.

Rabbi Heber knows the personal stories of all those involved, having spent hours with them – explaining the procedures, making arrangements and, most important, offering reassurance. "*Baruch Hashem*, with a seven-year track record, I can say that the situation in Israel is improving all the time, but we still have a way to go. If only the process here in Israel were like in the United States, with a month of bureaucracy rather than several months, we'd have much more success. My dream is that within four or five years, the list of people waiting for a transplant will be reduced to a minimum, and anyone in need of a transplant will receive one within a few months. This is our obligation as a society and a nation."

In recent months, Rabbi Heber's work has been given extra impetus. To increase life in this world is also the legacy of his four friends who were murdered last November in a terrorist attack in his local *Shul*.

"I live on Agasi Street in Har Nof. I knew the victims of that terrible massacre personally. I saw evil incarnate and it is just the opposite of what I do."

Like everything in Rabbi Heber's life, sadness and joy are intertwined. A week or so after the murderous attack, he celebrated the *bris* of his first grandchild in that same *Shul*, and during the week in which Israel was reeling in shock from the ghastly pictures, a record number of transplants was performed. Four transplants, four people with a new lease on life.

"In the face of such an atrocity, we are working to increase life," he declares, with a tremor in his voice.

When Rabbi Heber founded Matnat Chaim, he decided that all his activities would be carried out voluntarily. All of the kidney donors perform the incredible act of saving lives with no thought of remuneration, and many of them continue to volunteer afterwards in the organization.

Like the kidney donors, he never ceases to be moved and excited by those who volunteer to undergo surgery, and give up a kidney, for someone they don't even know. As Rabbi Heber says: "I'm in a really enviable position, spending my time with these wonderful people who are willing to give of themselves. The nobility that I see in their eyes, the smiles of the recipients' children, who've regained their parents – I wouldn't swap these for the world."



The former President of the State of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, presents the Presidential Volunteer Medal for 2014 to Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber. The Prize Committee, headed by the former head of the Supreme Court Mrs. Dorit Beinisch, explained that the non-profit organization which he founded, Matnat Chaim, has broken new ground in the field of living kidney donation in Israel.



Photo: Baruch Yaari



TO SAVE A LIFE

Rav Yehuda Rosenberg, a young *avrech* from Kiryat Sefer, made an extraordinary decision - to donate a kidney to a total stranger.

Here's his story.

Akiva Yemini (translated from the Hebrew)

photos: Yaakov Nachumi

It was a very special night; a night pregnant with emotion. On a creaky bed in a dark hospital room in Beilinson Hospital, the young *avrech*, **Rav Yehuda Rosenberg**, lay, fully awake, while his mind was racing. In a few hours, he was to be wheeled into the operating theater where one of his kidneys was to be removed and transplanted into the body of a total stranger.

At such a time, most people would be full of trepidation. All he felt was excitement. He could barely restrain the tears of emotion that choked him, aware that he was about to save a life, and, in the words of *chazal*, of an 'entire world'. In a moment of spiritual inspiration, he sat up, took pen to paper and began to write.

This is the *tefilla* he wrote:

I give thanks to You, my G-d and the G-d of my fathers, that from nothing, you created me with a body, *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshomo*; you developed me in my mother's womb; molded a form within a form; and you brought me into the world, the child of a G-d-fearing, truth-loving father and mother, who raised me on the right path....

I know that there are unfortunate people whose kidneys no longer function and who could barely exist even for one hour, if You had not, in Your great mercy, granted the physicians the wisdom to invent a machine that mimics the action of the kidneys. However, the benefit of this machine is extremely limited, its effectiveness is short-lived, and it entails much suffering. And so, in Your great mercy, you also inspired the physicians to learn how to remove a healthy kidney from a healthy person and transplant it into the body of a sick person, thereby considerably lengthening his life.

Therefore, at this time, when I am healthy in mind and body and have two kidneys which, in Your great mercy, You bestowed on me even though I only need one; whereas Your other dear son needs a kidney to save his life; and since I truly believe that I have nothing of my own and that all I have is Yours, may You be blessed, and take pleasure when a person rises above his own wishes to perform Your will, please give me strength and courage at this time, so that no fear, sorrow or worry should mar my thoughts, and please consider my desire to take this action to be equivalent to a sacrificial offering on the altar. I ask and beg of You that my remaining kidney be a source of good counsel and may I always choose the right path, with not a thought of sin, *chas veshalom*.

This heartfelt *tefilla* added to the emotions that flooded him and filled him with a feeling of reinforced *bitachon*.

"In the morning I was wheeled into the operating theater," Rav Rosenberg relates, "and as I received the anesthetic, I murmured this *tefilla*, while I totally focused on the benefit that would result from the act of *chessed* I was about to perform. Those were, without a doubt, the happiest moments of my life."

Just less than six months earlier, Rav Rosenberg, a young *avrech* from Kiryat Sefer, had decided to become a kidney donor. He decided to embark on this journey together with his wife after he read some articles describing the dreadful suffering of people who are on the endless waiting list for a kidney donor.

A *brocho* from his Rav

Yehuda Rosenberg set off on the long but satisfying journey. It began with a visit to his family doctor, who assured him that a kidney donation entailed little risk. "I looked into the medical procedures that awaited me. However, before making my final decision, I wanted to consult with the rabbis who have always been at my side."

In Rosenberg's case, these rabbis are close family members. He is the grandson of Maran HaGaon Rav Nissim Karelitz *shlita* and the son of the prominent *dayan*, Rav Sariel Rosenberg *shlita*. "I always used to seek my grandfather's advice, but in the past year my grandfather has found it more difficult to answer questions, so I consulted

with my father.” He was fearful that his father, as a father, would be concerned about the risk involved in donating a kidney. However, upon hearing Yehuda’s question, his father replied that, although he would not direct him as to whether to do it or not, it was important to realize what a tremendous *mitzvah* it would be. “At that point, I knew that I’d been given the go-ahead.”

Rosenberg then contacted Matnat Chaim, headed by Rabbi Yeshayahu Heber. “He explained the whole process to me and helped me make appointments for all of the medical tests. “The way Matnat Chaim walked me through the entire procedure was amazing. Their support gave me strength and helped me through any slight hitches that occurred along the way.”

Prior to the surgery, Rosenberg had to meet with a social worker and a psychologist, who were to ascertain whether he was fully cognizant of the step he was taking. “I saw how surprised they looked when I told them that I want to do it because it’s a *mitzvah*,” he recalls. “For people who are not Torah-observant it may be difficult to understand. For me, it was obvious. I explained that I truly believe that my purpose in this world is not my personal enjoyment, but to do Hashem’s will, and if I believe this is what He wishes, then I will, happily, do it. In fact, I only benefit from performing such a rare *mitzvah* as saving a human life.”

His first encounter with the intended recipient was moving, yet embarrassing. “I realized that he felt uncomfortable because he didn’t know how to express his thanks to me...so I reassured him that I was doing it for my own benefit and not for him – in order to perform an important *mitzvah*. This made him feel better and made it easier for us to feel comfortable together.

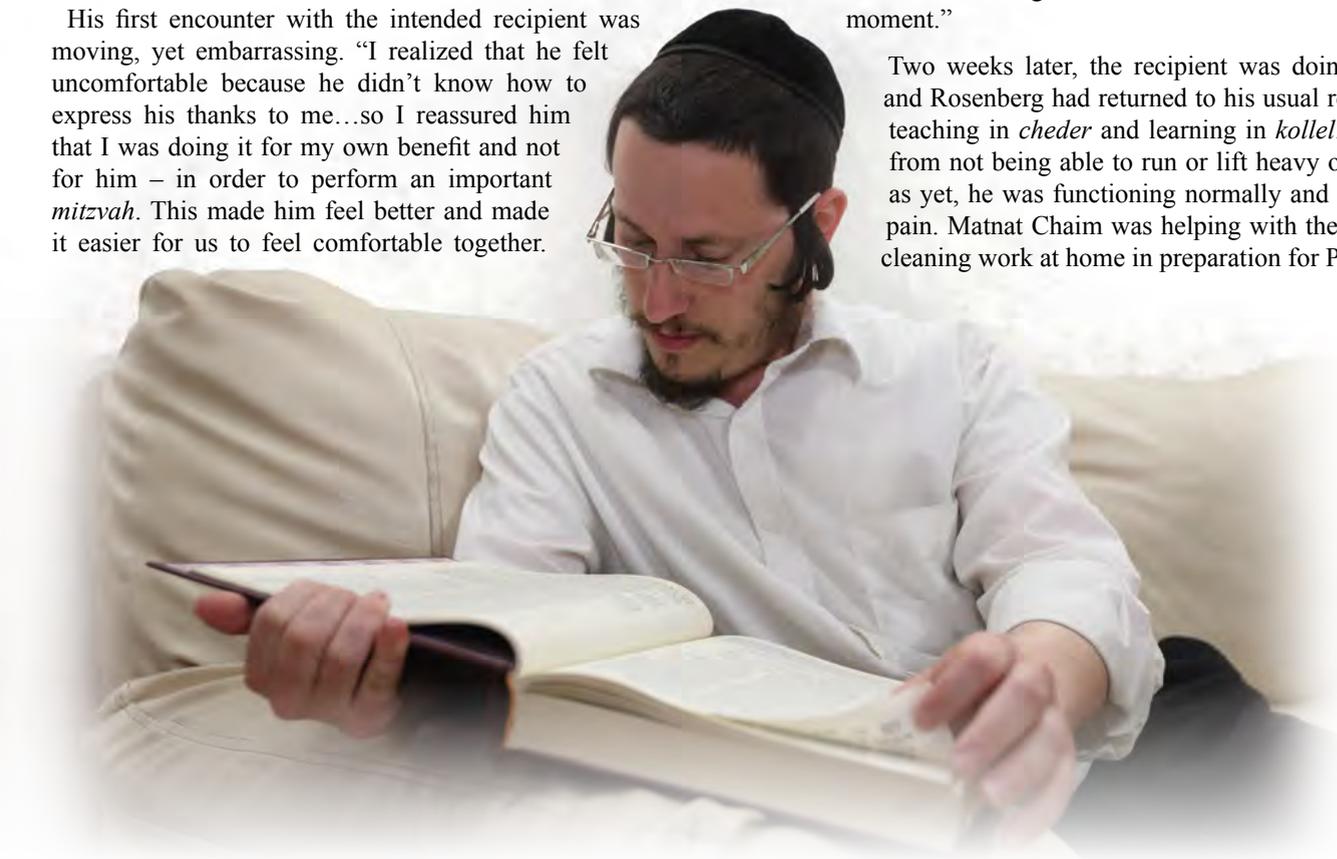
He told me about his difficult medical condition and I understood that the donation was urgently needed in order to prevent further deterioration.”

Before the operation, he and the intended recipient found time to visit several gedolim, *shlita*, Maran Rosh Hayeshiva Harav Steinman, Maran Hagaon Harav Kanievsky and the Admor of Vishnitz. “The Rebbe took a great interest in the medical procedures we had already undergone and was clearly moved. Afterwards, we received a call to inquire if all had gone well.”

The actual operation lasted several hours. “When I woke up, my first thought was about the recipient. The staff assured me that the transplant, which was still in progress, was going well, *baruch Hashem*.” Immediately after the operation he felt no pain, and only some time later did he experience some discomfort. “The whole procedure is so simple. All it takes is some time, will, and a lot of faith.”

Towards evening, Rosenberg was informed that the transplanted kidney had begun functioning. “I was so excited and thanked Hashem fervently.” Later that evening, Rosenberg made his way to the recipient’s room. “It was so moving,” Rosenberg recalls, “we embraced long and hard; we felt so close – the bond of blood between us was a wonderful feeling. I don’t think I’ve ever felt such a tremendous feeling of satisfaction as I felt at that moment.”

Two weeks later, the recipient was doing well and Rosenberg had returned to his usual routine; teaching in *cheder* and learning in *kollel*. Apart from not being able to run or lift heavy objects, as yet, he was functioning normally and free of pain. Matnat Chaim was helping with the heavy cleaning work at home in preparation for Pesach.



Matnat Chaim UK

Matnat Chaim is expanding to the UK

Several Jews in the UK have turned to Matnat Chaim in Israel for help and advice in finding a kidney donor and we have already helped four kidney patients *baruch Hashem* e.g. by encouraging family members to donate a kidney. In order to help more kidney patients we have decided to set up a branch of Matnat Chaim in London.

One kidney patient for whom Matnat Chaim already found a donor is Rachael Steele from Edgware for whom a successful transplant took place in Beilinson Hospital two years ago.

The first Matnat Chaim event in London was held at AISH UK in Hendon - a most successful gathering organised by Howard and Michelle Steele, the parents of the kidney recipient, in honour of the donor of her kidney, **Yehuda Mayteles**. Yehuda tells his story:



From L to R, Mr Howard Steele, the donor Yehuda Mayteles, and Rabbi Heber.

I’m 28 and made aliya from the U.S. at the end of 2011.

One day I saw a small notice on the on-line forum of Nefesh-be-Nefesh about a young woman from London who was looking for a kidney from someone with blood type O. Since I have this blood type, and also because I am curious by nature, I answered the notice and asked about the donation procedure. When I was told that it involved taking blood tests and certain other tests, I thought that it didn’t seem like such a big deal. I was tested and found to be a match. And so the process continued stage after stage. Meanwhile I read up on the subject of renal disease and dialysis treatments. I understood how terrible it is, but more than that, I realized that the number of potential donors is much larger than the number of kidney patients! Since the low-risk operation should have no harmful effects on the life of the donor while giving him the feeling of doing something concrete to save a life, I thought there was no reason for anyone to still be waiting for a kidney.



Throughout the long process I received the full support of my family and I always had the feeling that I was doing the right thing. Of course, the fact that Matnat Chaim was by my side at every step of the way made everything easier. The most important help for me was when they flew my mother in from America so she could be with me during the donation and recovery. This was critical for me because I have no family in Israel.

The transplant was successful and the recipient, Rachael Steele, continues to function wonderfully. She can enjoy life in a way that was previously impossible. I am happy to have been privileged to participate in this medical miracle.

The UK phone number of Matnat Chaim is: 0800-0488276
Email address : matnatc@gmail.com Website in English: www.kilya.org.il/en

Two women, kidney donors, tell their story

What causes two women from Jerusalem to wake up one morning and decide to donate a vital organ, flesh of their flesh, in order to save another's life?

Sara Shapira, a Neve Yaacov resident, donated a kidney to a young woman who was in critical condition. Tami Ne'eman, a resident of Ramat Shlomo donated to a 4 year old boy. Both women tell their story: the process, the experience and the immense and lasting satisfaction.

Sara Shapira talks about the unforgettable moment when she received a late night call from Rabbi Heber. His words were: "We must find a kidney donor for Tali. It's an emergency." It had been a long day filled with a full-time job, child care, weddings and social obligations.

"My heart was beating in a way I had never experienced... The word 'emergency' echoed in my ears. I heard myself shouting, waking my husband. He found me pale and trembling as I was making final arrangements for tests. In the morning I would go to Beilinson Hospital and in two days' time I would appear before the Ministry of Health Committee, the body that determines my eligibility to donate a kidney to Tali."

Pure kindness

Sara knew nothing of Tali save her name, 'Tali', and that her condition was 'critical'. She also knew that she would do everything within her power to help her. That is the meaning of an altruistic kidney donation.

And what really causes a woman, in the middle of her life, to decide that she wants to donate an organ from her own body?

"From my perspective, it all started 14 years ago when a good friend was suffering from kidney failure. Her condition was really bad." Sara continues to relate how her friend openly told her about her illness and that she was waiting for a kidney donor to come forward. "Only now do I understand that she was hinting, her way of asking for my help. At the time I didn't know anything about the subject. I didn't realize that this had anything to do with me and that I could help save a Jewish soul. Approximately three years ago, I came across an article about Rav Heber's organization, Matnat Chaim. A young woman from Jerusalem needed a kidney. One of my daughters said that she knew the girl. Suddenly, everything became closer and more personal. In the end, I donated my kidney to another young woman from Jerusalem."

"During the whole process leading up to the surgery I read a lot of material and testimonies of kidney donors. I really identified with them, knowing that it would suit me as well. A full-time American career woman said that she felt guilty because she didn't have time to host guests for *Shabbos* and *chagim*, or to bake cakes for *simchas* or to do hospital volunteer work. By donating her kidney she felt that she had done her *chessed* in a concentrated form.

"The American donor wrote that she felt far less stress before her surgery than she felt when she entertained 15 dinner guests. I felt the same way. I had always lived with these same pangs of guilt and now I wanted to do true *chessed*. It seems that 'we', the donors, are made from the same stuff."

After ascertaining that Sara was in good health, with no family risk factors, and certain about becoming an altruistic kidney donor, she was added to the Matnat Chaim donor register.

An 'amulet' in the hands of Hashem

Sara is not the only one whose heart and mind came to such a critical and significant decision. Matnat Chaim data shows that the organization has been involved with over 220 altruistic kidney donors since its inception, about half being women.

"This is a very interesting statistic", says Tami Ne'eman, a young mother residing in Ramat Shlomo. Tami donated a kidney about two and a half years ago. "Many people asked me whether I was concerned that my health would be affected. After all, I am a young woman who wants to continue to give birth and to raise a family."

And you really were not concerned?

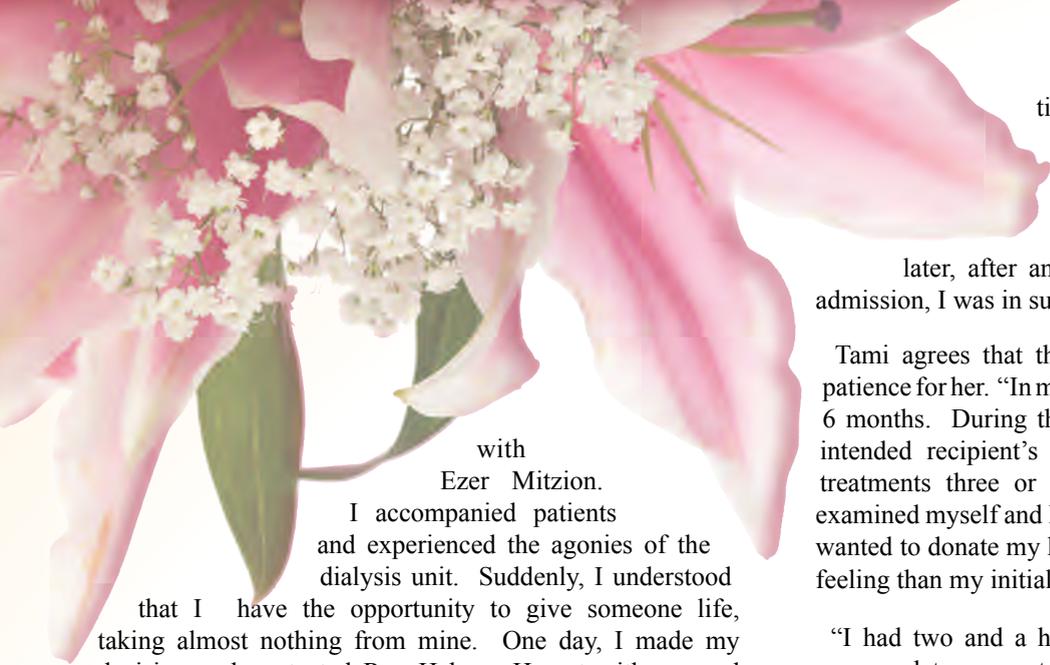
"Well, this was, in fact, my main concern because I understood that my close family takes precedence over everything else. At the time, I had 6 children and, with Hashem's help, I planned to have more. There was no way I would take this step

if it would put my ability to give birth or my children at risk." After a thorough, worldwide, research of the professional literature, Tami discovered that, statistically, a person living with one kidney does not have a higher risk for any disease as compared with those who have two kidneys. The only reported minor risk is a slight increase (approximately 1.3%) in pregnancy complications. "This did not frighten me. I told myself that bringing a child into the world involves many dangers and we put our trust in Hashem. Indeed, a little over a year following my surgery, I was privileged to embrace my seventh child. The entire pregnancy passed uneventfully, not even requiring extra monitoring."

Sara is also blessed with a large family. She was concerned that living with one kidney would affect her functioning at home and increase her risk for other illnesses. "I kept on wondering what would happen if a family member would require my donated kidney. I was afraid that I might be behaving irresponsibly but I also had very strong faith in He who rules the world and if He decrees that something should happen to me that would be my fate. Nobody has any guarantee for a body organ and anything can happen. Beyond this, I felt that it was significant that Hashem has blessed me and my children with good physical and mental health. This goes beyond preparing lunch for my family and helping my children with their homework. I decided to go for it. When all of the test results came back 100% perfect it became clear to me that, with Hashem's help, I would act as an emissary to bring life to the world."

Tami also emphasizes that she felt that it was a privilege to donate an organ from her own body. "I work as a medical secretary at the Meuchedet Health Fund in Ramat Shlomo. Through my work I have been able to get a close-up view of the patient's experience. I have been able to get to know their feelings and their indescribable suffering. From where I sit, as a medical secretary, the bureaucratic burden, alone, seems awful. During the same period of time, I volunteered





with
Ezer Mitzion.

I accompanied patients and experienced the agonies of the dialysis unit. Suddenly, I understood that I have the opportunity to give someone life, taking almost nothing from mine. One day, I made my decision and contacted Rav Heber. He sat with me and described the process (he explained, rather than trying to persuade). Subsequently, I discussed the issue with doctors and *rabbonim*, hearing from everyone that, for the donor, there is almost no risk. The surgery is simple and, conversely, the quality of life for the recipient is indescribably improved. The more I thought of it, the more I became convinced that this was an opportunity not to be missed. I constantly think about how worthwhile this ‘deal’ was for me. We all want to be blessed and there are so many things that I would like to receive from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*; health, *parnassa*, success in raising my children and so much more. And here, I have an ‘amulet’ in the hands of Hashem.

Waiting for surgery

When you ask Sara or Tami about the most difficult part of the donation process they both, amazingly, answer that the anticipation prior to surgery was the most trying time.

In Sara’s case there was a long time lapse between her initial tests and the surgery itself. “In the first stage I was assigned to a patient whose transplant was delayed because of her poor health status and the doctors were continuously deliberating regarding surgery. I was waiting for approximately 3 months. To me this felt like an eternity. I very much wanted to be over with the surgery and to know that it was a done thing. In the end, I just couldn’t wait any longer so I called Rabbi Heber and told him that I was sure that the delay was from Above and that there were, undoubtedly, other people who needed an immediate kidney transplant. Within a few days, he contacted me to tell me about Tali who was in critical condition. After that everything proceeded at a rapid pace. A few days later, I appeared before the Ministry of Health Committee. There I met Tali and her mother for the first

time. This was a most significant meeting. Suddenly, I understood that there was a person behind the name. Her condition was serious. Everything became real. One month

later, after another few tests and a short hospital admission, I was in surgery.

Tami agrees that the waiting period was a real test of patience for her. “In my case, the process took approximately 6 months. During this entire period I identified with my intended recipient’s suffering. He was having dialysis treatments three or four times weekly. I continuously examined myself and learned that each time I felt surer that I wanted to donate my kidney. This desire was a far stronger feeling than my initial enthusiasm.

“I had two and a half weeks to get organized once the surgery date was set. I went about my tasks much as a woman does before giving birth. I prepared food, organized help at home and took a week’s leave from work. A week following surgery, I was back at work.”

What did you tell the children?

“I used simple words to explain where I was going but it turned out that they already knew from all the telephone conversations they had overheard and were already prepared. They even encouraged me and were happy that I was doing this. I tried not to make too much of it and explained that “*Imma* is going to a mother’s camp”. Overall, I think that, in practice, they only gained from the experience. We are always trying to educate our children to perform good deeds and to love others. I am happy that, through my example, I have succeeded in teaching them this important concept.”

Did you know the identity of your intended recipient?

Tami found this question most interesting. “When I first approached Rabbi Heber and told him that I wished to donate a kidney, he asked me if I had a specific recipient in mind. I replied that the exact identity of the recipient was not important to me but that I wanted him to be a Jew who was badly in need of a transplant. Rabbi Heber asked me to check to see if there was anyone I knew who needed a transplant and that he would be given priority. As a sick fund medical secretary, I get to know most of the patients. I went through the lists and came up with a few names. One patient was incompatible and a second one already had a prospective donor. The third name was that of a four-year-old neighbor from a *charedi* family that was coping with 4 children with kidney disease. I knew the boy by his slow walk and grayish facial coloring. All of a sudden I realized to what extent I could change his life and I approached my surgery more certain than ever.”

Closeness to the Creator

As the date for surgery approached, both Sara and Tami felt a mixture of excitement and anxiety. It was a three hour medical procedure requiring full anesthesia. “It’s not that I was particularly stressed”, Tami emphasizes, “but I felt that I needed support. About a week prior to surgery I got on a 402 bus and went to see Rabbanit Leah Kolodetsky, daughter of Maran Hagaon Harav Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*. She gave me exactly what I needed. She hugged me, encouraged me and told me that her father had also asked her to encourage me and to tell me that I need not worry and that this was a big *mitzvah*. Only blessings could come from this *mitzvah*. She added that she, personally, knows of a number of people who have donated kidneys and enjoy an excellent quality of life with many blessings and salvation. Her words were heartfelt and left me feeling totally calm.

“However, on the fateful morning when I was summoned to the operating room, I felt weak in the knees with butterflies in my stomach. I remembered reading a very emotional article by a woman who describes her feelings prior to donating a kidney, likening it to giving birth (of interest is that doctors call this surgery ‘birth’ because of the similarity between this incision and that of a C-section). As with every ‘delivery’, there is happiness and excitement but also fear and concern. The writer felt that since she was donating her kidney to someone of marriageable age that she was bringing her kidney to the *chuppah*. I identified with her words. I felt that this was a real opportunity to experience the true light and become closer to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. I read a chapter of *Tehillim*, took a tranquilizer tablet and went into surgery feeling gratitude and happiness”.

When Sara speaks about the big day she was transported onto the operating table, she breathes deeply. “I also wasn’t stressed. However, when I left the ward, on the way to surgery, I passed Tali’s family. They waved to me and fell into one another’s arms, sobbing. I got a glimpse of their incredible raw emotion mixed with expectation and caution. Every time I recall this scene tears come to my eyes. It was a moment that demonstrated, to me, the enormity of this act of giving. It is the greatest thing that a human being can give to someone. It is giving life with all of its implications”.

Sara feels that she needs to be truthful about the surgery itself. As with all surgical procedures, there is post-operative pain. “The night following surgery I was very nauseous and had pain from the abdominal incisions. By morning I was already feeling better, nagging the nurses to remove the various machines and tubes and allow me to get out of

bed. I was allowed to get up and my nausea got better as the day progressed. I was discharged after two days rather than the estimated three. This was far easier than giving birth. I resumed my normal daily routine after two days at home. *Baruch Hashem* I have remained strong and healthy.”

The dance of life

The living donor kidney transplant success rate in Israel is currently 95%. Despite this, Tami was very tense after surgery. “I was in hospital and not able to think about my personal recovery. I was constantly pre-occupied with thoughts of the four year old boy who entered the operating room as I came out. Did his body accept the kidney? Will he merit a full and healthy life? The next morning his mother came to my room and, with much emotion, told me that her son was already producing urine, a clear sign that the new kidney was functioning. His creatinine had come down to near normal levels. This was further proof of success. However, the doctors could not be certain that the transplant had taken hold. During the long weeks that followed, the boy had to be hospitalized for further tests. However, the direction was always positive and today, almost three years after the transplant, we know that it is a success, *baruch Hashem*.”

Have you seen the boy after he was released from hospital?

“Of course I have. The first time we met following surgery was actually in the street. It was around a month following the surgery and I saw him running and playing with friends. He was no longer gray and weak but happy and pink. I froze for a moment and then burst into tears of gratitude. I saw the wonders of creation before my eyes. This is the most amazing thing that a person can experience.”

Sara also notes that Tali’s creatinine level had gone down to normal range right after surgery. From day to day her levels have improved. “Until now, we have remained in touch, corresponding on a regular basis. She is always telling me of the new things that she has begun, the new foods she has tasted as well as other new things she never even dreamed of. Recently, I attended a performance in which she danced on stage. This was a peak moment for me. Before the transplant she was hardly able to walk. When I married off my first-born daughter, Tali surprised me by preparing a special dance in honor of the bride. This was the most emotional dance I had ever seen in my whole life. **It was the dance of life.**”

Kidney Donations Save Lives. So Do Monetary Donations.

Matnat Chaim has recruited more than 200 volunteers who donated their kidneys and saved over 200 lives. But even if you can't donate a kidney, you can partner with Matnat Chaim to save the lives of kidney patients. Your donation will support programs aimed at eliminating the waiting list for kidney transplants, including:

- Programs to empower family members of kidney patients and encourage them to volunteer as donors.
- Targeted publicity campaigns to recruit additional altruistic kidney donors.
- Mentoring of kidney patients and kidney donors throughout the donation process.
- Close cooperation with hospitals and transplant centers to ensure timely surgical procedures and personal attention.
- Educational programs to heighten awareness of the need for living donation.



You can't donate a kidney? Help us get to someone who can

Every donation, in any amount, works to bring us closer to the next successful kidney transplant.

For secure online donations by credit card:

<https://secured.israelgives.org/donate/matnat/>

By phone:

From Israel: 0543213911

From UK: 0800-0488276

By mail:

Send checks to Matnat Chaim, Kanfei Nesharim 15, Post Box 90, Jerusalem 9546427, Israel

Bank Transfer:

Bank Mercantile, Kanfei Nesharim branch, Account 17/661/62951787

”כל המציל נפש אחת מישראל כאילו
קיים עולם מלא”

All shekel, dollar and pound sterling donations are tax-deductible

MATNAT CHAIM

VOLUNTEERS FOR KIDNEY TRANSPLANTATION
Israel: 02-5000755 Ext 9 | UK: 0800-0488276 | matnat@gmail.com



My One-Year Anniversary

Written by "K", who wishes to remain anonymous



July 6, 2015

בס"ד

To: Matnat Chaim

One year ago today, on July 6th, 2014, I donated a kidney. A year before that I spotted an ad in the paper from Matnat Chaim and something inside of me clicked. My 50th birthday was approaching and instead of thinking, "What can I get for the "big 5-0?" I thought, "What could I GIVE BACK to Hashem, for all of the kindness that He showers upon me?"

My husband and I met with Rabbi Heber and his wife, two people who are completely dedicated to this amazing cause of finding a kidney for anyone who is in need. They patiently answered all of our questions and explained the procedure. After being matched, I started with the physical exams which lasted quite a while, but gave me plenty of time to think about what I was doing. Truth be told, there were times that I wanted to chicken out but I kept thinking of all of the people who need just one kidney, and here I am walking around with two!

The physical and mental evaluations were over and the day was approaching. I didn't tell too many people- maybe five in total. I needed all of my strength to go through with this and couldn't have people putting doubts in my head. I also wanted to keep it quiet for two other reasons: my mother must never find out and I also wanted to do it beseter - to do a mitzvah without proclaiming it to all - keeping it between me and the Boreh.

Baruch Hashem, all went well with no surprises and my recovery was smooth. The family of my recipient was grateful beyond words. He is doing well, we are in touch, we've met a few times this past year and today, on our "anniversary" we went to Beilinson Hospital together to visit other altruistic donors, recipients and their families, to wish them well and for them to see the progress after a year.

My life has changed for the better in so many ways. I thank Hashem for the opportunity to help someone and I thank Matnat Chaim for making it happen. May Hashem bless Rabbi and Mrs. Heber with continued health and success in all they aspire to do.

"K"

Jerusalem, Israel

MATNAT CHAIM

VOLUNTEERS FOR KIDNEY TRANSPLANTATION
Israel: 02-5000755 Ext 9 | UK: 0800-0488276 | matnat@gmail.com



How Do I Donate a Kidney?



There are several steps in the process. This is the process in Israel. The process in the UK is slightly different (see page 31) but involves the same basic medical tests.

referred to the transplant center where the potential recipient of your kidney is to undergo the transplant. If you don't have a specific recipient in mind, we have a list of potential recipients who are waiting anxiously for the right volunteer to save their lives. We can match you with the person most suitable for your kidney donation.

Step 1

The first step is to contact Matnat Chaim (Israel: 02-5000755 Ext. 9; UK 0800-0488276; or matnatc@gmail.com). You will be given preliminary advice and answers to any questions you may have.

A donor must be a healthy individual, who doesn't suffer from high blood pressure or diabetes, isn't excessively overweight and has no record of kidney problems.

After speaking to a Matnat Chaim representative, you will be given a list of several preliminary tests (blood, urine etc.) to determine whether you are suited to be a donor:

You will need to go to your family doctor and ask for a referral (*hafnaya*) to do the tests, as you are considering donating a kidney. Matnat Chaim will supply a form for the doctor explaining the requirements.

Step 2

Once you have all the results, please send them to Matnat Chaim and keep copies for your files.

You will be asked to fill out a form registering you as a kidney donation candidate, and from there you will be

Step 4

The donor and potential recipient are given appointments for an interview with a social worker and with a psychiatrist, who examine their ability to undergo the transplant with respect to their emotional and social resources.

It will also be necessary to ensure that you are not a carrier of the type B hepatitis virus, and you may be required to do other medical tests. For this purpose the donor is often hospitalized for a couple of days, during which he (or she) undergoes a thorough series of tests to ensure that the donation will not be detrimental to his (or her) health. In addition, the donor (if not donating to a family member) will have a psychological evaluation.

Finally, for non-related donors, the donor and potential recipient have to appear before the final committee, the National Board of the Ministry of Health in Tel Aviv, whose members interview the donor and potential kidney recipient and pass on their recommendations for the final approval to the director-general of the Ministry of Health.

Step 5

Once Ministry of Health approval has been given, the transplant usually takes place within a short time.

This lengthy procedure - usually 3-6 months - is designed to make sure that the donor is healthy and a good match for the recipient. At the end of the process, you will be privileged to **save a life!**

Step 3

Matnat Chaim will register the potential recipient and donor at a hospital transplant center where they will be given an appointment for transplant match testing. Israel has several centers which perform kidney transplants. Every transplant center has a transplant coordinator who processes the preparations for the transplant. The center will send you to do the required tests, will make your appointments for the various committees and provide you with all necessary assistance.

At your first visit to the transplant center a simple test is carried out in a tissue typing lab, where blood samples from both parties are taken and cross-matched, in order to determine if they are a match. Tissue typing tests are also done. If no antibodies are found, the match will be approved. At this stage there are also meetings with the transplant coordinator and a nephrologist.

If you meet the requirements, you will begin a procedure of tests, committees and authorizations, leading up to the transplant itself.



Can I Donate a Kidney?

Yes, you too can donate a kidney!

The donor himself, of his own free will, must make the final decision, having received all the information needed to reach an informed decision. He must not be subject to any external or family pressure.

In the past, it was necessary to carefully match donor tissue with recipient tissue in order to prevent rejection of the graft by the organ recipient. Recently, however, new drugs have been developed to suppress the immune system and prevent it from rejecting the transplanted organ; these new developments have significantly increased the success rate of kidney transplants. Genetic similarity between the donor and recipient has therefore become less critical for a successful transplant.

Before undergoing surgery, the donor will receive information, guidance and advice from the staff at the transplant center, as well as answers to any concerns he and his family may have. The volunteers of Matnat Chaim are willing to answer questions on any issue or to handle any request, 24 hours a day.

We have at our disposal professionals from a wide range of fields - experts in medicine, surgery, law, ethics,

Halacha, and psychology, all of whom consider it a privilege to offer advice and assistance to those admirable individuals who are willing to donate a part of their body to save the life of another human being.

What is a Kidney and What is its Importance to the Human Body?

The kidney is a vital organ whose function is to remove poisons and excess fluids from the body. "People who need transplants are those who suffer from renal failure", says Dr. Ruth Rachamimov, senior nephrologist and director of kidney transplantation services at Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikva. "It is a disease which gets worse and worse until kidney function is so poor that there is an accumulation of poisons and excess water in the body, demanding dialysis or transplantation. The main causes are diabetes and hypertension, followed by certain infectious and genetic diseases which cause renal failure. When dialysis is required, the patient must go to a dialysis clinic three times a week, each time for four hours. Dialysis is not a substitute for a healthy kidney since the patient is attached to dialysis only twelve hours a week and the body keeps working all the time. Dialysis patients must keep to a very strict diet. They may not drink more than four cups of water a day and must avoid fruits, vegetables, legumes, etc. The difference is not just in the quality of life but in its length. Research has shown that the life expectancy of a kidney recipient is about ten years longer than someone on dialysis."

Dr. Rachamimov says that kidney donation is a safe procedure. "A person can live until 120 with one kidney. The first donation in the world from a live donor took place in 1954 when the donor was 24. He died at the age of 81. I don't know what he died of, but it's clear that after so many years it wasn't connected to his kidney." Rachamimov relies on studies involving thousands of donors over several decades.

You're Donating What?!

by Judy Singer

(This article was written on October 20, 2013.)

In another ten days, barring last-minute delays, I will be admitted to the vascular surgery ward at Rambam Hospital. The next morning a surgeon is scheduled to remove my right kidney and transfer it to the body of Rina, a woman from Haifa near my own age, who has suffered from a severe kidney disease for the past ten years. If all goes well, my kidney will allow Rina to regain her health and return to a normal, productive life.

A long journey

This surgery will be the culmination of quite a long journey which has come to be something of a vocation, a trek that has taken me far from my comfort zone. I have been permitted a small glimpse into the lives of people for whom taking care of their health is a full-time job, and who yearn for something that most of us feel entitled to automatically – the right to take good health for granted.

My connection to kidney transplants began about a year and a half ago, when I “by chance” saw an article written by an acquaintance in the USA, who had come to Israel on sabbatical and decided during her stay to donate a kidney to a stranger. I was deeply and inexplicably moved by this article, which explained her reasons and motivations for donating – primarily a “pay it forward” approach to life and good works. Even before I reached the end of the article, I knew that I was interested in donating a kidney someday, if it turned out to be at all possible. I started doing some research on the subject, but realized that the timing was all wrong due to a new job. I put the project on a back burner, but a few months later it resurfaced in my head and I started to check it out more seriously.

What I found out was this: in Israel there are about 800 people on the waiting list to receive a donor kidney. There is a severe shortage of kidneys, and many people spend years being kept alive by dialysis, which severely impairs their quality of life. Every year people on the transplant

list die while waiting their turn. Some patients find a living donor among their relatives or friends, but this is quite rare in Israel, and many people have no one who offers or is able to donate to them. Over the past four years, largely due to the efforts of the non-profit organization Matnat Chaim (Hebrew for “the gift of life”) which was established to encourage non-directed living kidney donations, the number of live donations has increased, and over 100 successful surgeries have taken place since 2009. (Ed: These are 2013 figures.)

“Gold standard” kidney

An organ from a living donor is the “gold standard” in kidney transplants, and has a higher success rate than kidneys from deceased donors; these kidneys also last longer, on average, in the recipient. A living donor has to be absolutely healthy, and is required to submit to a significant battery of tests to prove his or her physical and mental health. The donor also has to convince quite a lot of people that he understands the implications of the decision to donate; that no one is pressuring him to do anything against his will; and that he is not engaging in any activity that could possibly be interpreted as organ trafficking. In Israel, where the rules are especially strict, along with the physical tests, I had to convince a social worker, a psychologist, a psychiatrist and a panel from the Ministry of Health of my good intentions.

Kidney donation is considered very low-risk surgery for the donor, with few long-term complications, and has a very high rate of success for the recipient. In most cases, the recipient’s life is immeasurably improved, and he returns to the world as a relatively healthy person with a more or less normal lifestyle.

As I gathered more and more information and got deeper into the process, I found the donation was becoming more and more important to me, and my self-identification as a donor more intense. I met some awe-inspiring people, for instance, Rabbi Heber, himself a kidney recipient, who has dedicated his life for the past few years to founding and running the Matnat Chaim organization, on a voluntary basis. I have made contact with many kidney donors, in Israel and elsewhere, some of whom volunteer to be advisors for people undergoing the donation process. I have met doctors

and other medical staff who spend years selflessly caring for kidney patients, and patients who bear their suffering in quiet dignity. Gradually I realized that I had the ability to do an unusual *mitzvah* with a good possibility of – literally – saving someone’s life.

Good health can be shared

Our lives are enriched by a surfeit of material blessings and most of us understand and respect the need to help the less fortunate by giving of our money and our time. A person who is blessed with good health may feel thankful, but may not realize that even good health is something that can be shared with others. I can testify that the lengthy donation process – even before the actual event – has immeasurably enriched my life and has given me a feeling of satisfaction so immense that I sometimes feel I am donating my kidney purely for selfish reasons.

A person who is blessed with good health may feel thankful, but may not realize that even good health is something that can be shared with others.

During the process I have been asked over and over to explain why I am doing this. In my answer I generally mention my community in northern Israel, Merav, a place where so many people are involved in doing good, both on a communal and a personal level. This has inspired me to find my own way of giving back. It’s certainly not for everyone – the donation process is long and arduous, has roller-coaster highs and lows, and you need to be really determined to see it through. As one of my “advisors” keeps reminding me – it’s not a sprint, it’s a marathon!

Although I initially thought to keep my donation private, as many donors do, I changed my mind when I remembered

that my original inspiration to donate came from reading someone else’s story. Perhaps someone – even just one person – will read or hear about my donation and be inspired to find out whether donation might be right for him or her?! Every living donation saves a life and shortens the waiting list for everyone else just a little more.

There are many kinds of *mitzvos*, and countless ways to help others in need. I believe that we shouldn’t rank good deeds, but rather should be thankful that different people have different interests and goals, and prefer one project rather than another. I picked kidney donation, and it doesn’t seem to me to be particularly difficult or heroic. I hope that each of us will be able to identify his or her own path to making a difference in the lives of others.



Conference of Kidney Donors held at the Rabin Medical Center (Beilinson Hospital)

Hundreds of kidney donors participated in a moving event which took place recently in Beilinson's conference hall

The CEO of the hospital, Dr. Eyran Halpern, greeted the assembly. He praised the high quality of the donors, the devoted medical staff, and singled out especially Rabbi and Rabbanit Heber who have brought about a breakthrough in the field of kidney transplantation in Israel in recent years. They have proved that: Yes! It is possible!

Prof. Eytan Mor, director of the organ transplant department at Beilinson, began his remarks by joking that if Rabbi Heber continued with his success, future conferences would have to be held in Nokia Arena or Bloomfield Stadium. Prof. Mor told of meeting Rabbi Heber in his sick-bed after his kidney transplant; Rabbi Heber told him then that he intended to find kidney donors for all the dialysis patients. "When you search for 'kidney transplant' in Hebrew on Google", said Prof. Mor, "the first hit is Matnat Chaim, before Beilinson and even before Wikipedia, proving what the organization has accomplished."

The next speakers were Prof. Boaz Tadmor, Associate CEO of Beilinson, Dr. Tamar Ashkenazi, director of the National Transplant Center, and Dr. Ruth Rachmimov, medical director of the transplant clinic.

Rabbi Heber spoke next. There was not a dry eye in the hall as he introduced a number of people in the audience, including **Avraham Rachamim**, who came in his pajamas attached to an IV after having donated a kidney the day before, and **Zur**

European Commission Report:

Matnat Chaim is spearheading kidney donation in Israel

The European Commission in the HOTT report November 2014 wrote:

Since 2011 there has been a marked increase in live kidney donations [in Israel]. 22% of these are unspecified donors, most of whom (17%) are matched to recipients on the wait list by the charity organization, 'Matnat Chaim'.

The report added:

According to the National Transplant Center, 30 of the 134 living kidney donors in 2013 were altruistic unrelated donors. This phenomenon is spearheaded by the Israeli charity, 'Matnat Chaim' (www.kilya.org.il/en/) which matches altruistic donors with kidney patients on a voluntary, not-for-profit basis.

Update: in 2014 there were 47 altruistic unrelated donors.



Ophir, who was waiting to go the operating room a few hours later to donate his kidney to a man he had met only that evening.

The conference was entertained by a singer who was a liver transplant recipient and by cantorial selections sung by renowned cantor Naftali Herstik, himself a kidney recipient, all of which added to the festive atmosphere in the hall.

The evening concluded with emotional words from kidney donor **Lior Frishman** and kidney recipient Dalia Wisman.

Experiences of a UK Kidney Donor

My attempt to donate a kidney goes back a number of years to when I was first tested in the Hammersmith Hospital for compatibility with a young lady from NW London. Unfortunately I was unable to help as we were not a match, and although I was disappointed, at the same time I was also relieved! Meanwhile, I stayed in contact with the family of this young lady, and some years later was delighted to learn that she had 'found her match' through an Israeli organisation called Matnat Chaim.

I found however that the idea of donating a kidney never left me. To cut a long story short, I met Rabbi Heber of Matnat Chaim at a reception in Hendon hosted by the family of this same young lady, and ended up being tested in Israel for suitability as a donor both in Beilinson and Ichilov hospitals.

However, before my testing was complete, I heard about a gentleman in London who was on dialysis – and whom I already knew quite well. I contacted him, and subsequently contacted the renal department of the Royal Free, where he was being treated.

Appointments were made to visit the Royal Free, and I was given over to the care of Bethan – my transplant coordinator. She was very thorough, and went through my medical history with me and indeed, the entire process of becoming a donor. No stones were left unturned, and she made sure that I was fully aware of every aspect of the procedure. I did have the advantage of the two excellent Israeli hospitals behind me, and we were able to get through this stage quite rapidly.

She then arranged a series of appointments to test my heart, lungs, kidneys and liver with x-rays, scans, MRI, blood tests, kidney function tests etc etc. This took some months to complete, and if nothing else, I acquired a complete medical MOT (*Ministry of Transport annual car test*) – all care of the National Health Service!

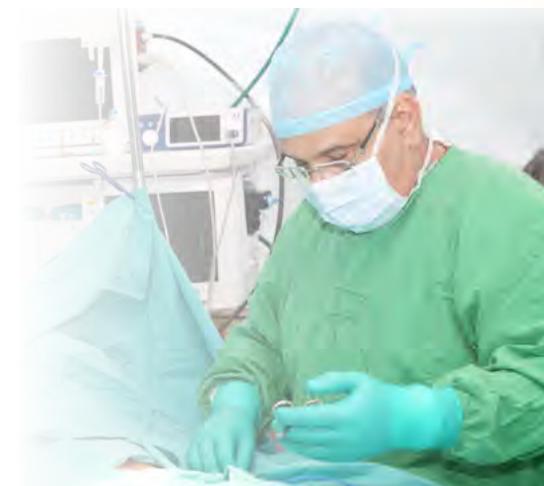
Following the results (*baruch Hashem all good*), I met with various physicians and surgeons, who explained the surgical procedure, before, during and after. From my experience at all three hospitals I learnt that there are different methods of carrying out the actual

keyhole surgery in order to remove the kidney from the donor, and that each doctor and each hospital believes that their method is the best.

My transplant surgery has not yet taken place - but it is eagerly anticipated!

I would encourage any would-be kidney donor to contact Matnat Chaim and discuss - without any commitment - the whole process.

The author wishes to remain anonymous until the transplant has taken place.



Medical Panel of Matnat Chaim

Professor Geoffrey Boner:

Senior consultant in the nephrology and dialysis unit at Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center, Bnei Brak; formerly Head of the Department of Hypertension and Kidney Diseases at the Rabin Medical Center, Beilinson Campus, Petah Tikva; Nephrology Consultant in the Bildirici Center for Diabetes Care and Research, Sanz Medical Center, Laniado Hospital, Netanya.



Professor David Ezra:

Director of the Internal Medicine Department at the Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer; Professor of Medicine at the Tel Aviv University Sackler School of Medicine.



Professor Eitan Yefenof:

The Bertha & Max Densen Chair in Cancer Immunology and Professor and Chairman, The Lautenberg Research Center, both at the Hebrew University - Hadassah Medical School, Jerusalem.



Professor Nathan Levin:

Professor of Clinical Medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York; Founder and previous Medical and Research Director of the Renal Research Institute, New York; past President of the Renal Physicians Association in the USA.



Professor Devora Rubinger:

Formerly Director of the Dialysis Unit, The Hadassah University Hospital, Ein Kerem, Jerusalem.



Professor Stuart Greenstein:

Transplant surgeon, Professor of Surgery, Director of Outreach and Program Development at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center, New York.



You have read this supplement
Simcha shel Mitzvah -
Kidney Donors Know the Joy of Giving Life
and now you have 3
opportunities:

1.

Contact Matnat Chaim to enquire
about donating a kidney (no obligation!)

By phone: From Israel: 02 5000755

Ext.9; from UK: 0800-0488276

By email: matnatc@gmail.com

2.

Donate money to help us
find the next kidney donor
- for details see page 24

3.

Pass this supplement on to your
friends to spread the word about
kidney donation

Im yirtzeh Hashem any of these opportunities will give you

Simcha shel Mitzvah.