

# Kudos to kidney kindness

► Mordechai Ullmann

EVERYONE can take part in a life-saving venture. That was the message of an especially moving evening last Sunday in Hendon celebrating the gift of life a young lady from London received thanks to a relatively new organisation in Israel. The event, held at Aish UK also served as a fundraiser.

The life in question is that of young Rachel Steele from Edgware, who was diagnosed with renal failure eleven years ago and began a difficult dialysis procedure, to the dismay of her parents and family. Faced with feelings of helplessness, the family understood that she was urgently in need of a donor to replace her failed kidneys, as dialysis is by no means a cure. Her father was found to be a match, but shortly after the transplant she developed pneumonia and was forced to find another donor, which turned out to be her uncle. Sadly, her body rejected the kidney again, and they were forced to look outside of the family. It was at that point that the family were introduced to the organisation that would save the girl's life. And in February of this year, Rachel underwent her third transplant. Boruch Hashem, she

is doing very well now.

The organisation, called Matnas Chaim, began some seven years ago after Rabbi Yeshaya Heber, the principal of a large boy's school,

developed kidney disease. Whilst undergoing dialysis and awaiting a suitable match for a kidney transplant, he came across a young man called Pinchas, who had lost his older

to a girl he does not even know.

During her speech, Mrs Heber related the feelings of satisfaction donors experience knowing they have given a person back his health, a husband back to his wife, a father back to his children. She related the story of a young child, who having received a kidney donation, requested another one in order to donate it. She also told of the tremendous hashgacha they were shown, when the recipient of a kidney turned out to be a descendant the person who was instrumental in helping the donor himself after the Holocaust.

The organisation's volunteer, Mrs Abrahams from Rehovot, having donated a kidney when nearing retirement age, has been instructed by her Rav to publicise her acts in order to encourage more people in the frum world to do the same. Describing the "after-effects" of surgery, she said in her address that, besides a few aches following surgery, the exhilaration felt having saved someone's life, was similar to having given birth, "with the bonus of not having to get up in the night to feed a baby!" she joked. She said that a few



From l-r Mr Steele, the donor and Rabbi Heber at Sunday night's event

PHOTO SHULI SMUS

brother during the second Lebanon war. Pinchas was also in need of a donor, and begged Rabbi Heber to find him one. At that time there was no organisation in Israel dedicated solely to finding donors, so Rabbi Heber penned a poignant article in a newspaper there to find one. But alas, even having found the donor, Pinchas lost his life to a disease he developed whilst undergoing dialysis. "It was at that point that my husband asked, what could we do to ensure this would not re-occur?" said Mrs Heber at the event. And so, four years ago, Matnas Chaim was born. With Hashem's help and with the encouragement of gedolim, including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztl and Rav Elyashiv ztl they have merited growing from an organisation that saved the lives of four people in the first year, to a total thus far of 115 people, through their tireless efforts, and all for no remuneration.

In addition to being a Seudas Hoda'ah, last Sunday's event served to promote awareness within the kehilla of the capability of anyone in reasonable health and of a suitable age, to offer to donate their kidney to save another person's life. "When we first started, people thought it was virtual suicide to donate an organ," Mrs Heber explained, but through their publicity campaigns, the costs of which, Rabbi Heber informed me afterwards, runs into hundreds of thousands of shekels (close to £50,000), it is slowly being considered viable by many. Each campaign, he said, can encourage six or so donors to agree to act as the life-saver of a fellow Jew. This obviously also engenders a great Kiddush Hashem, when millions of Israelis reading the country's most widely read newspaper last Sunday, see that a frum Jew donated his kidney

years on, she's doing fine and felt that in addition to donating a kidney, she'd donated part of her heart. People who offer to donate and find themselves unsuitable are genuinely disappointed.

A foremost authority in kidney transplantation, Dr Hakim, who made a special effort to attend, said he believes human beings were granted two kidneys with "one to keep and the other to donate!" The procedure, he added, takes no longer than one hour.

Commenting on the event, Rabbi Dovid Lister, Rav of Edgware United synagogue, remarked how inspired he was and that this is a form of Techias Hameisim!

A sentiment echoed by Mrs Steele, who noted that watching a family member undergo dialysis often takes away part of their soul, and some of the special additional merit of the donor is in coming to the rescue of the family.

A leaflet was distributed at the event, detailing the nature of the organisation, interviews with kidney-donors, as well as evidence of respectable health journals showing how almost no risk is involved in saving a life in this form.

Those attending the evening left inspired as well as informed and it is hoped that the awareness promoted at the event will continue to spread. Indeed as Mr Steele commented, it is so easy to find the weaknesses of others, but his family were privileged to witness the kindness of so many, firsthand.

If you want to learn more about this tremendous opportunity email [kidneydonation101@gmail.com](mailto:kidneydonation101@gmail.com). Or to donate to the running costs of the organisation please contact them directly- 00972 2-500 0755



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## מודעה

על פי בקשת הציבור החלפנו השעות של "בית הוראה טאטענהאם" כדלהלן:

Due to public demand the hours **TOTTENHAM BEIS HOROAH** have been changed as follows:

החלפנו השעות של "בית הוראה טאטענהאם" כדלהלן:

8:00pm-9:00pm	
יום א'	הרה"ג ר' לוי יצחק ראסקין שליט"א דומ"ץ לויבאוויטש
יום ב'	הגאון רבי יוסף פדווא שליט"א דומ"ץ דהתאקה"ח
יום ג'	הרה"ג ר' אליעזר מרדכי שטאלצבערג שליט"א דומ"ץ קיט"ל ד'סאטמאר (42)
יום ד'	הרה"ג ר' גרשון שפיצער שליט"א דומ"ץ חסידי וויזניץ (126)
יום ה'	הרה"ג ר' מאיר מארקאוויטש שליט"א דומ"ץ קיט"ל ד'סאטמאר (67)

**הבית הוראה בבית המדרש קהל חברה ש"ס**  
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