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ON JEWISH LIFE

Israel's New Organ Donor Policies

Getting the inside track on insides

By [Marc Tracy](#) | Jan 28, 2010 3:00 PM | [Print](#) | [Email](#) |

Israel is [infamous](#) for having one of the lowest organ-donation rates in the developed world: a paltry 8% of Israelis are listed as organ donors, compared to roughly 35% in most Western countries. The problem is mainly that many observant Jews believe (incorrectly) that a body must be buried with all its organs intact.

Yesterday, a Slate article [explored](#) how the Israeli government has gone about trying to encourage donation. More prominently, the country gives “slight priority” to people who agree to be donors if and when they themselves are seeking an organ. (Which makes a bit of intuitive sense, no?)

More quietly, but no less importantly, Israel recently became the first country to compensate organ donors’ families. The ostensible purpose of the rewards—which run to several thousands of dollars—is to “memorialize” the deceased, but who’s kidding whom?

The [Halachic Organ Donor Society](#) exists to educate Jews and to encourage Jewish organ donation to Jews and non-Jews. Maybe it’s time to “compensate” them a bit?

[Kidney Mitzvah](#) [Slate]

Earlier: [Organ Donation’s Legality, Jewish and Otherwise](#)