

HODS Advertisement

■ I am writing to thank you for making a mitzvah possible. Please allow me to explain.

Some years ago, I saw an advertisement for the Halachic Organ Donor Society in *Jewish Action*. The ad, featuring over one hundred rabbis with organ donor cards, prompted me to go to the HODS web site to read the articles posted there and learn about the issues. After considerable thought, and after discussing it with my rabbi, I registered for a HODS organ donor card.

On September 6, my father suffered a massive stroke that caused his death. He had expressed his willingness to become an organ donor. In this moment of crisis and despair, however, my family found it difficult to agree to the donation. We had a long talk about the enormity of the mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh*, and our thoughts turned to the families who, at that moment, were praying that a desperately needed organ would become available. We understood that Hashem's help and love could come to them through us.

The result was an act of *mesirut nefesh* in which personal feelings of distress were put aside so that the mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh* could take place. The next day, my father's liver was transplanted into a sixty-two-year-old man from New York City who would have died without it.

I can easily imagine the tears of relief when the doctors told the recipient and his family, "We have a liver for you." And I take comfort in knowing that my father's *neshamah* went to the Other World with the tremendous merit of having saved a life.

Thank you, Orthodox Union, for bringing this issue to my attention so I could study it in a timely fashion and prepare myself for the day when I would have to face it directly.

Janet Podell

Amherst, Massachusetts

The OU has not taken a position on the halachic permissibility of organ donation. The question of organ donation is currently being reviewed by the Rabbinical Council of America's Halachic Commission. See Jewish Action articles on the subject: "The Brain Death Controversy in Jewish Law" (spring 1992) and "What Does Halachah Say About Organ Donation?" (fall 2003), both by Rabbi Yitzchok A. Breitowitz, and letters to the editor on the subject in subsequent issues. Ed.

A Jewish Soldier

■ As a former NCSYer, a US Army vet (1965-1967) and currently a vocational rehabilitation specialist with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (Virginia), it was with more than usual interest that I read "The Making of a Jewish Sergeant: Keeping the Faith in Iraq," by Bayla Sheva Brenner (fall 2006). I just want to say *today rabbah* to Sergeant Campbell for his service and wish him well on his road to rehabilitation.

Henry G. Rieser

New York, New York

On Yizkor

■ I read your excellent article "Yizkor" (by Steve Lipman, summer 2006) and would like to make a couple of points. Yizkor is primarily observed by Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern European ancestry. It most likely dates back to the late seventeenth century (having roots that go back to Matnas Yad). It was added to the services of the Frankfurt community only after many of its members settled in New York following the Second World War. Rabbi Joseph Breuer felt that it should be added, as Jews from Eastern Europe would be troubled by its absence.

Aryeh Moshen

Brooklyn, New York

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