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Receive but not Give?



Halachic ban on organ donation?
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Heart recipient's father: We'll never donate organs

Haredi man whose daughter's life was saved thanks to heart, lungs donation from Arab child killed in car crash says Halacha prohibits him, his family from donating organs

Dr. Itay Gal

The father of an eight year-old girl whose life was saved thanks to an organ donation from an eight year-old boy killed in a car accident said Wednesday that as an ultra-Orthodox Jew, he or his family would never donate organs themselves.

"It's easy for us to receive organs, but we would never donate," said the man, whose daughter received the heart and lungs of Anwar Abu Arar from the village of Qalansawe.

Anwar's family decided to donate his organs last week after he died in a car accident. His heart, lungs, liver and kidneys saved the lives of four children.

How did you feel when you found out that the donor was Arab?

"I was actually relieved to hear that it came from an Arab family. We cannot donate organs because the Halacha prohibits it from doing so, but for them it's not a problem, so there was no dilemma here. We can receive organs, but not give.

"But I must admit that many in our family asked questions – what would happen when Arab blood flows through my daughter's veins. But the blood is replenished so this isn't a problem.

"I saw the Arab family next to the operating room, and I was very pained to see them. I sent them a thank-you letter and I personally have no problem with the fact they're Arab," he added.

Will you be willing to sign an organ donor card now?

"Organ donation is very noble. It's a beautiful thing to save lives... But I said all along that the transplant wouldn't change our minds and that there is still no Halachic approval for donating organs."

Surgeon: Clearly immoral behavior

The father's words angered Prof. Yaacov Lavee, director of the Heart Transplantation Unit at the Sheba Medical Center. "This is outrageous," he said. "I've heard such statements from many of my candidates (for a transplant), who weren't ashamed to admit they wouldn't donate organs.

"Such statements led me to initiate the bill that prioritizes transplants for people who have signed an organ donor card. This is clearly immoral behavior," he added.

The new transplant law, which will go into effect in May, states that any person in need of a transplant and who has had an organ donor card for at least three years will be given priority on the organ transplant waiting list.

"I know for a fact that the refusal to sign such a card originates in

Debate

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extreme haredi circles. I've encountered many haredim who signed the card. Those who don't accept brain death (as an indication for death) represent a very small stream of Judaism... many rabbis view organ donation as a great mitzvah," Lavee concluded.

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