



National Donor Sabbath

Judaism and Organ Donation

Contrary to common myth, all Jewish denominations encourage organ and tissue donation. The mitzvah of saving a life, pikuach nefesh, is considered one of Judaism's highest values (Hadassah - Pikuah Nefesh).

In principle, Judaism supports and encourages organ donation in order to save lives. This can sometimes override the strong objections to any unnecessary interference with the body after death, and the requirement for immediate burial of the complete body.

It is understandable that there will be worries about organ donation. At a time of stress and grief, linked to sudden unexpected illness and death, reaching a decision about donation can be difficult for a family. It is at this time that halachic guidance is so important.

Judaism insists that no organ may be removed from a donor until death. Judaism insists that honor and respect are due to the dead (kavod hamet). After donation, the avoidance of unnecessary further interference with the body, and the need for immediate interment, are again of prime concern.

"One who saves a single life - it is as if he has saved an entire world."

Pirke D'Rav Eliezer, chapter 48

Scriptural References that may be useful in presenting the Charitable Gift of Organ Donation

Old Testament	
Genesis 2:20-30	The first transplant: A rib taken from Adam to give life to Eve
Leviticus 1:7	"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
Deuteronomy 30:15-20	"Choose life so that you and your descendants may live."
Psalms 41	Images of a healing Lord
Psalms 100	Psalm of praise and thanksgiving
Psalms 107	"consider the steadfast love of the Lord."
Psalms 111	"I give thanks to the Lord."
Psalms 113	Praises to the Lord
Psalms 116	"O Lord, I pray, save my life!"
Psalms 145	"The Lord is gracious and merciful."
Psalms 147	"Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving."
Ecclesiastes 3:1-17	"For everything there is a season..."
Isaiah 35:1-6	"Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees." "...the eyes of the blind shall be opened..."
Isaiah 40:31	"but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength...they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."
Ezekiel 37	The valley of dry bones: "These bones shall live."

