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A mitzvah



Life saving procedure (Illus.)
Photo: Visual Photos

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A kidney from the heart

Ayelet Katz from Be'er Tuvia and Joseph Cheeger from Pennsylvania are total strangers. Yet, now one of them might save the life of the other

Sarit Rosenblum

At age 20, Ayelet Katz's kidneys failed. When Joseph Chiger (35), a Jewish American heard about it, he decided to come to Israel in the hope he would be able to save Ayelet's life. "It is a chance to save another person," said Chiger. "I realized that without me Ayelet's chances of survival are slim."

Ayelet was a healthy baby until at age two she suffered a severe bacterial infection that damaged her kidneys permanently. The doctors informed her parents that Ayelet would have to undergo a transplant at some point in her life.

At 18, Ayelet volunteered to serve in the army and was stationed in the Air Force. Yet, in January 2007 her condition deteriorated and for four months, she has been undergoing daily dialysis treatments. In April, the dialysis ceased to help her and the only option for saving Ayelet's life was a kidney transplant.

Since none of Ayelet's relatives was a match, the family started looking for a donor around the world.

Joseph Chiger read about Ayelet on the internet site of HOD: Halachic Organ Donation Society. "I was touched by what I read. Saving a human being's life is the biggest gift one person can give another."

After tests showed that Chiger was a good match, he arrived in Israel with his family to undergo some additional examinations. On Friday, a committee will review the case and decide whether to approve the generous gift as according to Ministry of Health's regulations, organ donations by living donors are only permitted among family members.

The "shiduch" between Chiger and Katz was made with the help of the [HOD Society](#) that promotes Halachic organ donations. HOD was founded six years ago by Robby Berman in order to educate the Jewish community about the halachic and medical issues surrounding organ donation.

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Opinion

A mitzvah called organ donation / Efrat Shapira-Rosenberg

Did you know that Israeli Jews have the lowest rates of organ donation of any ethnic group in the country? In a state that arose from the ashes of the millions who perished, the saving of life at any price could be expected to be the highest item on the national agenda. So why do we recoil from organ donation "for religious reasons"?

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