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## Borough Park, NY - Brooklyn Kidney Transplant Donor and Bnei Brak Recipient Meet

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Last week Tuesday evening, Leah and Aliza met for the very first time at Orchidea, an upscale dairy restaurant located on 12th Avenue and 49th Street in Boro Park. Smiling broadly, they embraced warmly. Neither one of them said very much at that special moment. They didn't have to. Their emotions spoke volumes.

Borough Park, NY - Leah is a young and vibrant wife and mother living in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Aliza is a middle aged grandmother of 26 grand-kids living in Bnei Brak. The two might never have met except for the fact that Aliza was ill and desperately in need of a kidney transplant in order to survive. Leah was determined to be a donor and to save someone else's life. And that's how these two brave women formed an indelible bond.

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The transplant was facilitated by an organization called [Renewal](#), under the direction of Rabbi Menachem Friedman. Renewal assists patients in a variety of ways but their ultimate goal is to help obtain a kidney for those in need of a transplant procedure.



Assemblyman Dov Hikind attended the event saying that he felt fortunate to be there.

About a year ago, Leah contacted Renewal. Her own mother, Rochel bas Moshe, O'H, had passed away several years ago from kidney disease. Leah had wanted to donate to her back then, but unfortunately by the time the screening process was completed her mother was not considered a good candidate for surgery. Ever since then, Leah had dreamed of donating a kidney to another Jewish woman l'iluy nishmas her own wonderful mother. "I just felt," says Leah, "that if I couldn't do it for her, I would at least do it for someone else's

mother or grandmother."

Meanwhile, Aliza and her family were anxious about her own medical prognosis. A victim of kidney failure, Aliza knew that her days were numbered if she would not receive a transplant sometime soon. Boruch Hashem, a call came in from Renewal several months ago. A match had been found. Aliza and her husband were on their way to New York's Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center for surgery.

About three weeks ago, the surgery was successfully performed. Both the donor and the recipient recovered nicely. Within two weeks Leah was back at work and Aliza had a new lease on life. In honor of the occasion, a seudas hoda'ah was held at Orchidea.

Mazal Werberger and Ofer Kohen are proprietors of the elegant and sophisticated Orchidea. They have hosted many special occasions before, but none so heartwarming and inspiring as this one. Mazal is the sister in law of Aliza, so this celebration is also a personal expression of appreciation. "It is our greatest pleasure," says Mazal, "to host a special celebration such as this one."

Friends, family, and well wishers gathered together at Orchidea to show their support and to wish both women well. Leah's friends were thrilled to see her glowing with happiness and beaming with pride. "She's just an amazing person," says Mindy. "We're all really proud." Aliza's husband called Leah a "malach min shomayim" and says that his entire family feels tremendous "hakoras hatov".

Renewal's President Sedy Ornstein welcomed the guests, noting that Renewal has already been instrumental in twenty six kidney transplant procedures since its inception just three years ago. "Boruch Hashem," he says, "many others are coming forth to donate. There are no words to describe this tremendous mitzvah." He also thanked Leah's husband and family for supporting her throughout.

To continue the momentum, Rabbi Ornstein revealed that Aliza's son Ariel is scheduled to donate his own kidney to another recipient (the surgery is IY"H scheduled for Tuesday, January 5th). Having witnessed the miracle in his own family, he is determined to do the same for someone else.

Assemblyman Dov Hikind attended the event saying that he felt fortunate to be there. "To be in Orchidea with Ofer and Mazal is always a pleasure," he said, "but tonight more so than ever."

Assemblyman Hikind said that "the most important thing to me is the chesed. In spite of all our problems, we in the Jewish community, the average people, perform acts of chesed that are unsurpassed." He called Leah "a leader of klal yisroel" who "sets an example for the rest of us."

Mazal's husband also offered his good wishes, saying that he knows firsthand about "the angst and the stress" that Aliza's family were going through as their mother's kidney continued to deteriorate. All that changed when they heard about Leah's offer to donate a kidney. "This mitzvah is strictly l'shem shomayim," he said.

Aliza's husband, R' Shmuel, a respected Torah scholar in Bnei Brak, spoke passionately about Leah's incredible mitzvah. He and his family presented her with a beautiful gift, a stunning silver candelabra, as a token of appreciation. He also expressed his deep gratitude to Renewal for helping them every step of the way.



Sedy Ornstein and Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz of Renewal with Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser at the seudas hodaah.

Also, in attendance was the Dinover Rebbe from Williamsburg, as well as Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, who came to honor Leah. Rabbi Goldwasser offered strong words of chizuk to Leah and everyone in attendance. He also joined in the saying of "Nishmas" oft said at a seudas hodaah.

As for Leah, she says she is "on a high" from this entire experience. The sense of achievement and triumph that comes from saving the life of a fellow Jew is something that cannot be put into words. She was the gracious Guest of Honor all night long, perhaps even a little bit embarrassed by all the fuss and attention, even heard saying "I'm just a regular woman from Flatbush". The elegant Orchidea, she feels, was the perfect venue for spreading the word about kidney donation to the community at large. "If it will help even one person decide to do this mitzvah and save someone's life," she says, "that

would be wonderful." What a beautiful way to pay tribute to the memory of her beloved mother.

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