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## Holiday Visit



Peres at Rabbi Amar's sukkah Photo: Yosef Avi Yair Engel

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## Peres lauds Rabbinat for recognizing brain death

**During traditional visit to Sephardic chief rabbi's sukkah, president praises his host on decision to encourage organ donation. 'I saw the suffering of people waiting for transplants and realized we could do something,' explains Rabbi Amar**

Kobi Nahshoni

[President Shimon Peres](#) on Sunday welcomed the Chief Rabbinat's decision to recognize brain-respiratory death and its initiative to encourage organ donations in accordance with Jewish religious laws.

During the president's traditional visit to Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar's sukkah in Jerusalem, Peres praised his host for his part in the initiative, as reported by Ynet.

"I would like to thank you for approving organ donations among the religious public in Israel," the president said. He embraced Rabbi Amar and added, "You have done a great mitzvah. I respect you and wish you a happy [Sukkot](#) holiday."

The chief rabbi received compliments from Peres, despite the fact that in the Rabbinat's meeting he had supported postponing the discussion and that the proposal was eventually promoted by Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger and Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu.

During the president's visit, however, Amar said that he had supported the initiative wholeheartedly as "it is a mitzvah, a real soul saving."

He said that one of the things which had encouraged him to act on the matter had been a personal meeting with patients waiting for transplants. "I saw the suffering and realized that we could do something."

The rabbi also gave the president a short halachic briefing on the issue.

## Memories from grandpa's sukkah

Peres went on to visit Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Metzger, who addressed the [sign of life](#) received from [kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit](#). The rabbi stressed that Israel must not enter a state of complacency in light of the captive's relatively good condition or "relay on a miracle."

According to Metzger, "As we have seen, God is protecting him, but we must also act, try to work hard for him to return home peacefully, safe and sound."

During Peres' visit to Metzger's house, the two discussed the holiday's customs and the president told the attendees about his memories from the house of his grandfather, Rabbi Meltzer, who served as a synagogue cantor in the Jewish town of Vishnevo (today's Belarus) in Poland.

Earlier, the president [visited](#) the sukkah of Shas' spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, in Jerusalem's Har Nof neighborhood. During the visit, Peres expressed his satisfaction with his friendship with the rabbi, saying "we should see such good relations between all layers of this nation – religious, secular, Ashkenazim and Sephardim."

Asked why he was visiting the ultra-Orthodox rabbi in the midst of a period characterized by haredi violence in Jerusalem, Peres replied, "Eda Haredit is a radical minority. Most haredim are against violence, and this includes the haredi bloc, which Rabbi Ovadia Yosef belongs to."

Rabbi Ovadia blessed the people of

Israel with "many good and pleasant years," and then fondly patted the president on his cheek. "You are so dear to us, we love you so much," he told him. "We are proud that the people of Israel have a president like you, an honest man, beloved and pleasant. May you succeed in everything you do."

Peres said that the rabbi's blessing is very dear to him, as it is to the majority of the nation.

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