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The chief rabbi's immoral stance on donor cards

Orthodox Jews should be free to make their own decisions about what constitutes death



Joel Braunold

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Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, believes organs should not be donated in the event of brain-stem death.

Photograph: Liverpool Daily Echo/PA

The debate on Jewish organ donation was reignited [this week](#) with a statement on what constitutes death according to religious law (halacha). In what is a very important debate, a lot of misunderstandings of what the rabbinical authorities are arguing about are being confused, so I am writing this to clarify what is going on and explain why I am upset at the decision of Lord Sacks, the chief rabbi.

The issue of organ donations within the Jewish community was pushed back into the front pages after the footballer Avi Cohen had an accident and his family went against his wishes and [decided not to donate his organs](#). He had been a proud organ donor-card holder in Israel, where there is a major issue of getting people to donate their organs due to the religious complexities around the issues.

The commandments of saving a life (*pikuach nefesh*) trumps almost all others and what to do when a family member is dying is a particularly tense time where religious guidance is sought. The high stakes involved, as well as the sanctity of the body in Jewish law, means that this issue is of vital importance.

The chief rabbi was not saying to Jews not to donate their organs. On the contrary: he was encouraging them to do so. You can read his clarification [here](#). In the case where someone needs a kidney or any other non-life-threatening donation (for the donor) there is no issue, you should be encouraged to donate your organ. The debate flows around what counts as death in Jewish law. Is it at the point of irreversible cessation of the heartbeat occurs (when the heart stops) or irreversible cessation of autonomous breathing (brain-stem death)? The chief rabbi's position is that it is when your heart stops. The difference means that if you are brain dead and on a respirator you would not be allowed to donate vital organs. If your heart stops you would be allowed to donate everything.

What the chief rabbi is asking for is that the current donor cards make this difference so that people can donate when their heart stops but not if they are only brain dead. He is asking that before the organs are removed, a rabbinical authority is consulted.

Why I and others are very upset is because the chief rabbi has said that [halachic organ donor cards are also unacceptable](#): "At this point, however, since the National Registry system is not set up to accommodate halachic requirements, donor cards (even those purporting to be halachic) are [unacceptable](#)."

This has upset a lot of other Orthodox rabbinical authorities. While the chief rabbi and his [bet din](#) might decide that brain-stem death does not constitute halachic death, there are Orthodox authorities who argue that it does. These include the chief rabbinate of Israel and Rav Moshe Tendler. Tendler is a [rosh yeshiva](#) at Yeshiva University and a professor of biology not to mention the son-in-law of the late Rav Moshe Feinstein z'hl, one of the most important rabbinical authorities of the past century and allowed his son in law to take a lead on these issues.

The halachic organ donor cards allows the donor to choose under which conditions (either brain death or heart failure or both) they would wish to donate.

The [argument](#) between the Hods (Halachic Organ Donor Society) and the office of the chief rabbi has become quite heated and is [featured](#) in this week's Jewish Chronicle.

They are upset as there is a major dispute among different rabbis over what constitutes death. Rather than acknowledging the dispute and giving people the option within the UK to choose which they would rather follow, the office of the chief rabbi has said that he only accepts heart failure and will not accept brain death. While this is one opinion, it is not the only opinion and to ignore those of rabbinical authorities who are also medical experts really upsets me.

Medical ethics on this level is very complex and is definitely something that not every communal rabbi will have an expertise on. What the chief rabbi has done by not allowing these halachic organ donor cards is to take the decision over whether brain-stem death will allow you to donate your organs away from Orthodox Jews in his jurisdiction – even though Orthodox Jews in America and Israel can have a choice.

The chief rabbi may be a moral philosopher but he is not a medical expert, while he is entitled to support the view that only heart failure counts as death, to make this the only view that the Orthodox community in the country can subscribe to is unfair and in my view immoral.

I still cannot see what would be the issue with the halachic organ donor cards and to impose a singular view is removing the choice for Orthodox families at a very tough time.

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Comments in chronological order (Total 29 comments)

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SoundMoney

18 January 2011 7:15PM

They are upset as there is a major dispute among different rabbis over what constitutes death.

Why don't they listen to scientists then? If UK society and hospital doctors can all agree on this, why argue?

Transplant technology may well require that a heart be kept beating artificially to maximise the outcome for the recipient.

Lord Sacks, in arguing against this, increases the prospects of poorer outcomes, and he raises enough doubts amongst his own community to reduce the number of available organs, which can only lead to avoidable deaths.

As you say, his stance is immoral.

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**bigmafuta**

18 January 2011 7:39PM

Maybe the Rabbi is not so immoral

The UK 'brain stem death' standard for the diagnosis of death on neurological grounds ignores evidence of persisting life and function in other parts of the brain [6][8][9][10][11] and has never been accepted in the USA – where the irreversible cessation of function of the entire brain, specifically including the brain stem ('whole brain death'), is required[12]. The US President's Council on Bioethics has recently described the UK standard as "conceptually suspect" and "clinically dangerous"[13].

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brain_stem_death#cite_ref-ref7_6-0

Interesting

There was no sound scientific or philosophical basis for the equation of 'brain stem death' with death in 1979[22][23][24]. It clearly confused a prognosis of death with death itself. It assumed the acceptance of brain death as human death – still a highly controversial issue[10][11][13] – and implicitly claimed that its simple bedside tests could, unaided by the more sensitive diagnostic techniques available even then, reliably establish the permanent cessation of all brain functions. The speciousness of that claim was admitted[25] by one of the protagonists of the 'brain stem death' criterion in 1985 and Conference finally abandoned it[7] in 1995

Recommend? (6)

Report abuse| Link**leftwingorthodoxjew**

18 January 2011 8:18PM

wow, Joel! thanks for that and for the links - like the bit about Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch (who gave rabbinic ordination to the CR) having a HODS card do you see this as part of a broader shift in the community (here and world wide)? and would you agree with my suspicion that the majority of "centrist orthodoxy" would prefer a HODS-based approach to the current rather conservative approach? incidentally there used be a book by Moshe Tendler called Practical Medical Halacha which afaik one can't get hold of anymore at least in the original version!

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 [NOrthWestofCetreRight](#)

18 January 2011 9:30PM

Joel Braunold's piece is interesting and thought provoking but fundamentally flawed.

Like so many others Braunold has failed to grasp that Orthodox Judaism is a rules based religion which has relied on the deliberation of its Rabbis for 1,941 years.

Fundamental to Orthodox Judaism is the relationship between a Rabbi and his community and the Rabbi's position as interpreter of Jewish Law.

The Chief Rabbi has not restricted his community's choice by offering his interpretation. Rather he enables them to make a more informed decision by offering his opinion to be considered amongst the hundreds of rulings which have already been put forward, only some of which is sited above.

Braunold's piece is well researched but intellectually dishonest as he has chosen to ignore the many respected Rabbis who oppose the HODS and Rav Moshe Tendler.

Braunold is also misguided to invoke the name of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein who could not have been stronger in his warnings regarding the dangers of human organ transplants.

The Chief Rabbi and the London Beth Din have a duty to analyse every issue, regardless of how emotive it may be, according to their interpretation of Jewish Law. The Chief Rabbi's willingness to put forward a controversial ruling on such an emotive issue furthers his credentials as an eminent religious and moral leader.

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[WelcomeBackKotter](#)

18 January 2011 9:49PM

I suppose this all comes down to the question of the function of a Chief Rabbi.

The Chief Rabbi is specifically the "Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth". That's a lot of Jews, but it is important to remember that it isn't all Jews.

Precisely what his constitutional position is within that grouping, and how he forms his views, and what his authority is over rabbis who constitute this Congregation, I don't know. I'd be interested to hear.

However, politically speaking, the correct thing for a man who bears the title of Chief Rabbi of an orthodox Ashkenazi confederation with diverse views on this controversial issue, is to promote an approach which:

- (a) facilitates the ability of as many religious Jews as possible, who want to donate organs, to do so; and
- (b) enables those religious Jews who require religious guidance on the issue to hear the various arguments, and find a religious authority which enables them to decide whether and how to donate.

Now, I hope that this is, in fact, what is happening. The Chief Rabbi seems to be making

the right sort of noises - but what matters is action. At the end of the day, will he put the effort into making it possible for Jews who care about such things to donate, or not.

I share your concern about what appears to be a stumbling block for these HODS people. The real test is: will he help to surmount that obstacle?

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[braunold](#)

18 January 2011 10:21PM

I would like to comment on two comments stated above.

Firstly to bigmafuta - the tests to determine brain stem death in america are a) the BAER test (brain-stem auditory evoked response) and b) the cerebral blood flow test, as well as the usual apnoea test and other diagnostic criteria. Whilst these tests are not usually done in the UK it is more than possible to order them if demanded and if the rabbinical council wanted them in order to increase the number of organs being donated then I know (as a doctor in ICU and A+E) that they would be done.

Also I hardly think that a quote from wikipedia referencing the Catholic Medical Quarterly is the most up to date medical opinion on brain stem death.

And secondly NrthWestofCetreRight - although there are many rabbis who disagree with HCOS, the majority are misinformed and ill-educated on this topic. Rav Moshe Tendler states that his father-in-law Feinstein did speak to him towards the end of his life agreeing to the concept of brain stem death and organ donation which therefore negates his previous writings where he condemned it.

Might i add that although there is a beautiful idea of pleurisy within orthodox Judaism there should be one uniting opinion on a topic such as this, due to its importance in saving life. And if there is substantial rabbinical viewpoint to agree with organ donation (which was set over 20 years ago) then the only thing the Bet Din is doing by changing this ruling is condemning patients to an inevitable yet preventible death.

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[JoelBraunold](#)

18 January 2011 10:32PM

Just to make clear that the Braunold above is Dr. Daniel Braunold and not the author who is me.

NrthWestofCentreRight - Why did the Chief Rabbi not follow the example of the RCA

(rabbinical council of America) who demonstrated that there was no uniform view on the issue and due to the seriousness of it we respect both views and do not say that either is forbidden.

It makes no sense that as an orthodox Jew following the orthodox opinion in the USA or Israel I could donate if I was Brian Stem dead but no in the UK.

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[Chessplayer](#)

18 January 2011 10:49PM

Braunold.

I applaud your opinion that there should be one uniting opinion on a topic such as this within orthodox Judaism. Without trivialising this subject, that applies to many other issues, e.g. smoking which is self-harming but there is no rabbinic consensus.

NrthWestofCentreRight - rules can be changed. E.G. Shulchan Aruch bans wearing jewellery on Shabbat, but this has been de facto overturned over the years. Medical advances may one day lead to (almost) 100% consensus.

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[WelcomeBackKotter](#)

18 January 2011 10:52PM

This is an interesting dispute

Here you have an interplay of scientific and religious/moral considerations being brought to bear on a medical ethics issue: how to save the lives of those awaiting donations, without treating donors at the end of their lives in a manner which also respects the sanctity of their lives.

First of all, it is a good thing that there are a plurality of views here, and that people are actively engaging with it. The complaint is, essentially, that the Chief Rabbi's office has misconceived the issue, consulted the wrong people, reached a mistaken conclusion, and has acted in a manner which - immediately at least - will result in fewer religious Jews donating than could be the case. Which is a pity. So, I wish you luck.

However, secondly - it is **hugely** refreshing to see orthodox religious people openly debating these issues and challenging religious hierarchies. I also get the impression that both sides are trying to reach an answer which both saves and respects life.

Should there be one answer rather than a "pleurisy" (I think you mean plurality - I wouldn't want lungs with pleurisy to be transplanted! ;)) to this question? To be honest,

I'm not sure there should be. I don't believe in God, but I would hope that I could make my own decisions in advance as to when I wanted my life support turned off and my organs donated. Although I tend to agree that brain stem death is the correct point to determine death, I might decide that I wanted to wait until some other point "so as to be absolutely sure". That might not be supported by the best medical evidence we have now, but it would be my choice. Alternatively, I might have concerns about what effect my decision to donate would have on the decision to give up on me sooner rather than later. Or I might have some sort of non-religious, but moral, conception of what "life" meant, that impacted on my decision.

If a decision is that personal for me, as a non-religious person, I'm not sure I'd really support handing it over wholesale to some Chief Rabbi figure :)

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[WelcomeBackKotter](#)

18 January 2011 10:53PM

(I mean, I don't think I'd want religious people to feel that they were obliged to follow a single ruling from the Chief Rabbi's Beth Din!)

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[garetko](#)

19 January 2011 3:34AM

I am a healthy being with two kidneys, one heart, two lungs, a liver, pancreas intestine and thymus. My death could aid 9 people. It's a no brainer. Let's hope really rich but unscrupulous people exploit the situation, again.

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[Keo2008](#)

19 January 2011 8:40AM

A typical arcane squabble between branches of an ancient "religion" .

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[samlebens](#)

19 January 2011 8:44AM

I'm generally a big supporter of the Chief Rabbi, but I'm certainly not fully on-board with him on this one. Having said that, medically, halakhically and philosophically, I feel a little bit out of my depth to make a clear call (the phd in philosophy, and my current rabbinic training notwithstanding).

The Rabbis with whom I'm most closely associated have all argued forcefully in favour of brain-stem death as the single halakhic criterion of death. I'm basically convinced, but given certain anti-Cartesian metaphysical assumptions, I can still see the other side of this debate.

A brain-stem dead person still has many of the biological signs of life, though they're not human anymore, in any broad sense of the word. A lot of this seems to hang upon the question: does our metaphysical conception of human identity come apart from brute biological criteria for life in general? If we say yes, then its clear that this biological organism in a vegetative state is no longer human. If we say no, then things become murkier.

Nevertheless, Joel, you say that the Chief Rabbi is trying to remove people's choice within the Orthodox community. But he is quoted, in the Jewish Chronicle, as saying: "We feel the best way forward is that we should inform the community there are voices this way [like Rabbi Tendler's], there are voices that way [like ours]. If they want the view of the London Beth Din, it is this, but ultimately there's a matter of individual conscience."

That somewhat undermines your argument, Joel, doesn't it?

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[JoelBraunold](#)

19 January 2011 10:32AM

cheers for the comment sam,

It doesn't undermine my comment as he is still saying no to the halachic organ donor cards

We defer to halachic authorities on all things in orthodoxy especially in life and death. If the bet din is saying in their opinion HODS cards are halahically wrong you need to ask why. On a card you get to choose which form of death you agree with. By saying the cards are wrong he is de facto taking away the choice as that is what the cards are all about, informed halachic choice. Look at the cards them selves it is two tick boxes and a

line saying that you must consult a rabbi before removing the organs. One box says heart death the other brain stem (well stop of autonomous breathing). What is he against with the HODS cards therefore, it is not with the box about heart death and it is not about the line about consenting rabbi's therefore it must be the fact that the donor gets to choose an option he disagrees with.

If it is because he thinks the NHS registry will not use the HODS cards surely he should lobby them to accept them rather than ban them.

If the chief rabbi really wants an open informed debate - why would you urge people not to sign up to the very cards that give you the ability to make that informed halachic decision?

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[samlebens](#)

19 January 2011 11:14AM

Thanks Joel, but I still think your criticism is undermined by the Chief Rabbi's own words.

You quote him as saying:

"At this point, however, since the National Registry system is not set up to accommodate halachic requirements, donor cards (even those purporting to be halachic) are unacceptable."

This sentences clearly early expresses the following propositions:

- 1) Donor Cards purporting to be halakhic are insufficiently accommodated by the National Registry - there is no guarantee, as yet, that our choices, as stated on such cards, will be respected or dealt with properly.
- 2) This in turn undermines the halakhic credibility of the cards themselves until the National Registry reforms.
- 3) The National Registry SHOULD reform because it would be GOOD for people to have the sort of choice that the halakhic cards are designed to give us.

This further entails, that despite the Chief Rabbi's own position on the issue, he is in favour of people having the right to chose for themselves. He is also in favour of the halakhic cards, but cannot advise people to hold them until he can be sure that the registry can deal with them.

If however, you chose to side with Rabbi Tendler, and the Chief Rabbi made it clear in his comment to the Jewish Chronicle, that he wants people to have the freedom to make such a choice, then it won't matter to you the registry cannot make fine grained distinctions in the way that it treats its donors, because you have adopted an halakhic approach that doesn't require such fine grained treatment from the registry.

In short: I (hesitantly) support your side of the halakhic dispute with the Chief Rabbi; but, I cannot accept that he has in anyway become and enemy of or an obstacle to

choice.

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[JoelBraunold](#)

19 January 2011 11:22AM

The unclear point that was also picked up by Rav Tendler and the head of HODS is if he is against his community having a choice and this is also what I took from it.

I can read it your way as well but seeing as the statement came within a statement clarifying the Bet Din position on this (which is fine for them to take) I find it a very unfortunate.

It's good to have an open debate on the issues and am warmed by the fact that the Chief wants to encourage the community to make up their own minds

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[leftwingorthodoxjew](#)

19 January 2011 12:49PM

@Keo2008

A typical arcane squabble between branches of an ancient "religion" .
actually this is an interesting example of the tensions between religion and science - a case where the two world views meet and clash.

The debate exposes a wide range of philosophical and religious issues, imho much more interesting that for example [the post which suggested that beetles "disprove" Noah's Ark](#), not least because this has a real practical outcome

However because it is within what is perceived as a "narrow" cultural and religious context and one which is not well understood as Judaism isn't part of the western intellectual tradition it passes people by in incomprehension, which is a shame.

@JoelBraunold

few questions:

have you seen [this article](#) which sets out the issues - seemed a fair discussion to me but I don't claim to understand these issues in depth - as you say medical halakha is a specialised subject?

on the basis of which morality is this decision "immoral"?

and final question (last and least, should you choose to answer any of them!) is 1

presume you are same Braunold who was at uni with my daughter?

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[JoelBraunold](#)

19 January 2011 1:34PM

Not allowing halachic organ donor cards as I understood the CR position due to the fact that the holder is allowed to choose which view he agrees with, was in my view immoral.

If you read Sam's comments above he claims that the CR is only saying no to HODS as he thinks the NHS is not set up to deal with the cards rather than being against them.

His statement can be read either way - he needs to clear that up.

I went to Bristol Uni

As for the article shaare zedek hospital website has a great resource of articles on this and other medical ethical topics.

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[leftwingorthodoxjew](#)

19 January 2011 2:32PM

@JoelBraunold

guess some of that was addressed to me? hope you aren't yet another person who refuses to refer to this moniker

anyway, do you have a link for the website you mention

and to repeat my previous question, on the basis of whose morality are you saying that this is "Immoral"

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[JoelBraunold](#)

19 January 2011 2:53PM

<http://www.chernydatabase.org/>

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[AswanDam](#)

19 January 2011 5:45PM

The Israelis could just carry on as they used to do in the 80s and 90s, which was simply to take organs from Palestinians. It only stopped completely in about 2005.

There is a taped interview of the chief pathologist being quite open about it in 2000 a year after it became public knowledge.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 2:31AM

Another argument for Dawkins assertion that Religion is the enemy of reason.

Any reasonable person would say that when the brain is dead, the person or spirit is gone with no hope of bringing the 'person' back. Conversely, the heart, once replaced, can restore the being to full capacity.

Physical, scientific 'reason' vs. religious 'reason.'

It also makes it practically impossible to obtain a human heart from anyone in the Jewish religion for transplant since the term is 'irreversible' indicating it cannot be caused to beat again.

Which also brings into question the ethical nature of the sources of human hearts used to transplant into people of the Jewish faith. One would assume that if this were the case, the acceptance of a heart from even a 'non' Jew would be the equivalent of ripping a vital organ from a living being and while I know that the Jewish religion classifies them as chosen people, does it classify 'non' Jews as nonhuman in the eyes of their god? If so, we have an altogether different view in which somebody just took over in claiming to be 'the master race' in that WE are the sources of donor organs and perhaps viewed with the same contempt as Ishii or Mengele.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 3:03AM

By extension, if the heart is deemed to contain something Holy and the essence of what god accepts as death, shouldn't the Rabbis be teaching that when the Jewish recipient in a heart transplant gives up his heart to be replaced with one supplied by a Palestinian he should be thus forced to give up his citizenship in Israel because he has lost his claim to Judaism and must be immediately condemned to live the rest of his days amongst the refugees on the Gaza strip? After all, HIS heart died indicating that HE IS DEAD.

Ah, theology! I love throwing religious logic back in the faces of those who argue absurdity.

Given the argument the faithful put forward, I would only respect a person of that teaching who was to refuse a life saving heart or deny it to their children based on the same moral grounds.

And no deathbed conversions either. Screams of "I was wrong, I was wrong" while one's own life is under threat do not forgive the death and suffering inflicted on others at their insistence.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 3:19AM

<blockquote>samlebens

19 January 2011 11:14AM>Doesn't it also undermine the whole concept of freedom of religion in that if a person of the Jewish faith decides to give up his body which he may not believe is his relationship with god is superseded by people of a differing belief (Family) who believe otherwise?

Remember, freedom of religion is an individual right and not a collective right. The right of the individual to decide on the status of his remains should not be decided by others who THINK they hold the same faith.

Isn't this why in all communities we see the 'ultra' religious and the 'nonpracticing' and all the shades of gray in between?

What right should my mother have in the invalidation of my altruistic wishes because it validates HER faith?

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[leftwingorthodoxjew](#)

20 January 2011 11:56AM

@Aswandam

do you remember the [Alder Hey organs scandal](#) and you could at least have bothered to provide a link although afaik the only version of the interview is mostly in Ivrit

(Hebrew)

@TheSmokingMan

you make some reasonable points e.g. re clash of science and religion, however I do wonder what you have been smoking when you start talking about the "master race" this is ridiculously OTT. Chauvinism no doubt exists however this is hardly unique to Jewish people - just read the red tops. In terms of a humanist critique of Judaism, this can be made fwiw [I wrote about this on CiF](#) and much more could be said. Note I am not saying the critique is without any force,

Your comments seem way off beam in any case when you appreciate that the argument here is not about whether one can donate organs to non-Jews or vice-versa, it is about the definition of death from religious and scientific viewpoints.

As for your theological comments, they are rather silly and ill-informed. I would suggest that rabbinic Judaism doesn't accept Cartesian mind-body dualism (others may disagree) so one may wish to reflect as to the impact of these advances. But this is quite a general issue - people write plays and stories about their experiences of organ transplants. What will happen when we can do brain transplants one wonders... then l'enfer c'est les autres will also no longer be true.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 3:24PM

you make some reasonable points e.g. re clash of science and religion, however I do wonder what you have been smoking when you start talking about the "master race" this is ridiculously OTT.

Oh here is the comment you refer to on another thread.

You pretend that your 'invisible man in the sky' tells you son=me thing and criticize me for what I am smoking?

You talk about OTT and yet you do not realize that your belief kills people?

Who's messed up, you who would let belief kill people or me who would let an organ donor card kill a person?

Something tells me that most sane people might question the belief the at kills people over the belief in a man on a frock behind a cloud that would have you deny life to a fellow human.... but that is just me.

Go on ... flip through the Torah or join me in the celebration of life, I dare you.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 4:16PM

TheSmokingMan

20 January 2011 3:24PM

Sorry ... drunk and in need of an edit button.

Figure it out. You know what I meant.

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[TheSmokingMan](#)

20 January 2011 5:12PM

Your comments seem way off beam in any case when you appreciate that the argument here is not about whether one can donate organs to non-Jews or vice-versa, it is about the definition of death from religious and scientific viewpoints.

As for your theological comments, they are rather silly and ill-informed. I would suggest that rabbinic Judaism doesn't accept Cartesian mind-body dualism (others may disagree) so one may wish to reflect as to the impact of these advances. But this is quite a general issue - people write plays and stories about their experiences of organ transplants. What will happen when we can do brain transplants one wonders... then l'enfer c'est les autres will also no longer be true.

To put it succinctly, do your beliefs save lives or kill people?

You're on about a god in the sky with tenuous proof. I am talking about two parents who will lose their child because your 'god' has spoken ... or has he?

Argue angels on the heads of pins elsewhere. I am talking about lives lost and lives saved. Religion doesn't enter into it when it is your loved one.

Silly? Ill informed?

To me, that thing written on parchment and rolled up in the cupboard seems silly and ill informed no matter how many idiots have prayed over it through the centuries.

If you kill people through 'faith and belief' what god is your religion?

The Nazis did it through faith and belief in a man. What's your excuse?

Oh yeah ... a book.

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C



[leftwingorthodoxjew](#)

20 January 2011 5:42PM

@To put it succinctly, do your beliefs save lives or kill people?

the article makes clear saving lives is a paramount value. Have a black coffee and then we can have a sensible (even civil perhaps) discussion!