

Why I'm canceling my organ donation card

When it is a matter of saving human life, I am Haredi. But then into this mix comes the The National Transplant Center women-free ad in Jerusalem.

By Tirtza Flohr

I wish to hereby declare that I am relinquishing my Adi card. I signed up for it a long time ago, and never for a moment regretted the decision, until a few days ago. And if I may, with all due seriousness: it's a shame. Because I'm a pretty good client. I'm closing in on 40, have never had hepatitis or shingles, haven't been to any exotic countries or collected any parasites, and my latest checkup showed that I have a praiseworthy liver, a heart that is just the right size, and corneas that are in superb shape. In addition, I also ride a motorcycle, which in my humble opinion makes me a preferred client. But no, please remove me from your lists. And do not pull a fast one and declare me a "dormant client." The client is neither dormant not in any sort of deep sleep and if, heaven forbid, she were, you would not be allowed to get near her with a scalpel.

I was dismayed to learn that you don't just transplant at the National Transplant Center; you also extract. With the wave of a single outdoor ad in Jerusalem, you excised women from the list of donors and recipients as soon as you caved in to pressure from the Haredim to run the Adi advertisements without photographs of us. And what is the woman-free ad really trying to tell us? "Be a man, give a kidney"? Or "Be a man, receive a lobe"? Or is it "You can trust us, fella - you won't be donating to a woman"? The advertisement is directly aimed at an audience that is unwilling to accept an advertising photograph in which a woman's face may be seen. But an audience that is willing to accept other things.

The hypocrisy in this case is nothing short of mesmerizing. If - heaven forbid - a Haredi man is in need of an organ donation, and the rabbi confirms that prayers will not be adequate and that modern medicine can be allowed to intervene, this yeshiva student will accept - in a heartbeat - the organ from a female donor. A stranger, a secular woman, even a blatantly non-Jewish woman. All of the forbidden-to-touch and forbidden-to-travel rules and restrictions can go to hell. Saving human life comes first and, with God's help, the piece of some woman is going into this fellow's gut and will stay there. All you need is a healthy donor with the same blood type, and sometimes you can even get by without that. And if the body rejects the transplant, God forbid, it won't be because it originated in a female.

I believe with an all-too-complete faith that the National Transplant Center has only good intentions. I gladly signed up and I walked around with the Adi card in my wallet, with a certain air of superiority. Look at me, I've tackled the steeplechase of fear, including the hurdle of "to whom are they going to give me away?" - a familiar hurdle to those who, in their deaths, do not wish to save the lives of, for instance, murderers.

Life is life is life, and if you agree that human life is more important than anything else, you will donate to any human being, whoever he is. When it is a matter of saving human life, I am Haredi. But then into this mix comes the ad in Jerusalem. The National Transplant Center has clearly trampled through the shame barrier, and cast me out from the register of human beings. That, my good sirs and ladies, is the violation of a contract.

If they would say, "We've become the semi-National Transplant Center, we harvest only from men and transplant only in men, and we will set up for women a center of their own," that's okay. And if there was scientific justification for doing so, then fine. But no such justification exists. What we have here is nothing but one huge disgrace.

I do not expect the patients now standing in line for organ transplants to get up and protest. They are in dire straits already. But the members of the medical teams, in the dialysis units and the thoracic surgery departments, and the transplant specialists, should be screaming: "Have you gone mad!?" You know the extent to which these tormented people must wait for a transplant, and you dare to reduce by half their chance for a better life? Or for any life? These days, doctors have too many struggles on their minds, but at the very least they could add this trifling matter to the end of their list.

קראו כתבה זו בעברית: למה ויתרתי על כרטיס אדי

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