

## AN ALUMNI'S THOUGHTS ON A LIFE AFFIRMING EXPERIENCE

There are moments in one's life that stand out forever.

Standing under the Chuppah, welcoming your child into the world, completing Daf Yomi, receiving a Bracha from a Gadol etc...

Last week, I experienced a moment that will never be forgotten. With the help of an incredible organization, Renewal, I donated my kidney to someone who needed it more than I did.

The entire process, from the moment I got the call to save a life until I closed my eyes for the operation was pleasant and even exciting. Don't get me wrong, there were nerves running through me, but the support from my wife, family, and friends helped me.

Donating a kidney is the last thing I ever thought I would do, but it is extremely doable and, of course, life changing.

The Torah tells us that when the Shvatim came down to Mitzrayim, it was Yosef and Binyamin who cried on each other. Rashi explains that each cried for the future destruction of the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash. My father once explained that perhaps the reason it was only Yosef and Binyamin who were crying on each other over the destruction of the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash was because they could each relate to the pain of the other. The other brothers definitely were sad but couldn't relate to the pain since it wasn't built in their cheilek of the land.

There is no question that for this reason previous donors were able to help me through the entire journey in a way that no one else could.

Another thing that comes to mind is the home in which I was zocheh to grow up in. My parents always taught us to respect and care for people. It didn't matter who they were, how they dressed, or how they practiced Yiddishkiet. It was our job to love all and not judge others. This too plays over and over in my mind as I think about the process. My wife also grew up in a home that was built on chesed. Her home in Silver Spring has always been about doing for others. These messages continue to live in us.

Lastly, I was privileged to have spent many years as a talmid of the Yeshivah of Greater Washington. During these years, not only did I grow in the Beis Medrash, but spent many years at the Landesman home. Rabbi and Mrs. Landesman

opened their home to all of the bachurim. The mixture of Torah, Mesiras Nefesh, and Chesed was instrumental during those years.

We just celebrated the Yom Tov of Shavuot.

The Torah states, ויחן שם ישראל-ל נגד ההר

Rashi explains: כאיש אחד בלב אחד

Perhaps this can help us understand what we say in the Haggadah:

אילו קרובינו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה-דינו

Because just being united would have been enough!

There was a second time Bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah- this was on Purim. The Megillah states the word מקבל without a ו. According to the Gra, this was because here too we were מקבל the Torah with unity.

It seems that Chesed and togetherness are the prerequisite for Torah itself.

May we all continue to be there for each other, and may we always be there to help someone in need.



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