



Federation for Jewish Philanthropy
OF UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY



I have found myself speaking often recently about the opportunities that we have on a daily basis as Jews to save lives. Most frequently in those cases, I am talking about the lives we save through the impact of our Federation annual campaign. That impact is real, tremendously meaningful, and vitally important.

And there are times that what makes the difference in saving a life is more than any one of us, or all of us together, could write a check for.

A few years ago, a staff member of mine informed me that he was going to need several weeks off. He had the "paid time off" available, and he wanted to speak with me about the scheduling. He was a key employee, a reliable right hand, a good friend, and someone I admired as both a team member and a teacher.

While he was a frequent traveler, often on interesting and exotic vacations, this request wasn't to travel the world. Instead, he had decided, as a healthy single man, an observant Jew in his 40s who did not have plans to have children, that he wanted to donate one of his kidneys to save someone's life. He didn't know someone specifically in need, but he knew that he had something that someone else needed, and he wanted to give it.

He found an organization that helped him find a match. He volunteered for major surgery to give one of his healthy kidneys to someone whose life depended on receiving one. He spent weeks in recovery. And he became a hero for an entire family... and a hero of mine.

Of all the donations I've witnessed in my life, that was of a particular generosity and selflessness that I have not had the honor of

FJP ANNUAL MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 25
7:30 PM

FJP Offices
at the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus
4200 Park Avenue, Suite 300
Bridgeport

featuring keynote speaker

RIVA SILVERMAN
VP, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
HIAS

"How HIAS Helps Refugees around the World"

Open to the community

[click for more info](#)

taste of



TORAH

featuring keynote speaker
Dr. Joel M. Hoffman
and thought-provoking electives
by Jewish clergy and educators
from throughout
Upper Fairfield County

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22
3:30 - 5:30 PM

Congregation B'nai Israel
2710 Park Avenue, Bridgeport

Free & open to the community

[info & registration](#)

otherwise knowing so closely.

Indeed, there come opportunities to give in a way that transcends our typical concept of philanthropy.

This week, I received a message from Rabbi Marcelo Kormis of Congregation Beth El in Fairfield about a similar need for extraordinary kindness in our own community; and receiving that note, I reached out to Fred Leder, the loving husband of Barbara Leder, both members of Beth El.

Barbara is suffering from end-stage renal disease, and her life expectancy and quality of life would be significantly improved with a kidney transplant. While she is on a waiting list, the wait can often exceed six years.

Fred is not asking for a healthy person to donate a kidney for Barbara, as my staff member so selflessly did. But I write this with the belief that extraordinary situations can sometimes find miraculous solutions through extraordinary awareness. Indeed, I have been told that a community member who was making the tragic choice regarding life support for a family member could choose to specify that a healthy kidney be directed to Barbara, and given renewed life to her in the process (and that new kidney donation processes allow one to do so without requiring a tissue match).

Should you have any questions about this situation (and in particular, a potential donor), please do not hesitate to contact me at dweisberg@jewishphilanthropyct.org and I will facilitate the connection.

Thank you for being a community of such incredible kindness. While sometimes the lives we can save are across the world, indeed sometimes they are next door.

Best Always,
David



Friday, Feb. 10
6 PM
Congregation B'nai Israel
2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport

[click for details](#)



2017 GALA

Honoring community leaders
Amy & Neil Katz
Mindy & Jeff Siegel

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017
Westport Country Playhouse

6:45 cocktails & light supper

7:30

tribute to our honorees
and

Jewish Broadway Musicals

Past, Present & Future

with

[\(click for music\)](#)

Jewish Music Superstar

Neshama Carlebach

Acclaimed Singer-Songwriter

Jill Sobule

Two-time Tony-Award Nominee

Mary Testa

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ad opportunities](#)



thank
you

to our fabulous Israeli Young Emissaries, **Noa Feldman, Meshy Gabay, Rotem Rotner, and Guy Shamai**, for bringing a taste of Israeli culture and society to groups across our community, helping to build meaningful bridges between Connecticut and Israel.



Meshy Gabay and preschoolers make a Chanukah menorah.



Rotem Rotner and Noa Feldman at New Fairfield High School

[click for more photos](#)



Guest Columnist

Rabbi Yirmiyah Moldovan

Congregation Ahavath Achim, Fairfield

FJP
community
voices

As we reach the end of the book of Genesis, it is fitting to reflect on one of the most fundamental issues in our faith. Abraham is lauded as the first Jew. He is the individual who investigated creation and came to the conclusion that Judaism is the correct path. But what defines Abraham as the first Jew? What was his innovation?

I have heard many a pundit suggest that in a world steeped in idol worship, Abraham was the first monotheist, the first to believe that there is only one G-d. However, upon investigation we must contend with other great characters that preceded Abraham. Adam, Noah, Enoch to name just a few, surely believed in one G-d with whom they communicated. Midrashic sources even describe a Yeshiva that was founded and operated by Shem and Ever, two sons of Noah. Monotheists existed before Abraham. So what Abraham's innovation?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, the great Lithuanian Rosh Yeshiva who escaped Europe before the holocaust and contributed to developing Torah strongholds in Toronto and New York, explains that unlike many other religions, Judaism does not reject and disdain the body, but rather gives primary importance to the body. We are a religion that mandates eating significant quantities of food about 100 days a year! We are a religion in which we drink alcohol to consecrate births, weddings, holidays, and practically every significant religious event! We are a religion where every member, even the most holy and pious, are mandated to have children.

Those great people who preceded Abraham surely served one G-d. But their manner of service was to separate from the physical due to the inherent risks of getting carried away with their natural desires and themselves. The Yeshiva of Shem and Ever was a place to escape to an isolated

mountaintop and meditate - to avoid the physical as much as possible. Abraham proposed that the way to come close to G-d is not by separating from the physical but by harnessing the physical in G-d's service.

Unfortunately, Judaism is often painted with the same brush as other major religions and conceived as a movement that shuns the physical. The truth is the contrary. Judaism is a religion with a focus on the physical. We embrace and value the body and attempt to elevate it to the highest levels possible. This is what it means to be a Jew.



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