



Dr. Karen Friedman, founding director of Gefen and The Rimon Center Hadassah Mount Scopus, and Kaden Harari, program director at the Gefen Center, German Colony, Jerusalem.



COURTESY

The golden triangle – mind, body and spirit

THE COMMANDMENT in Genesis to “Be fruitful and multiply” is one that seems to be “observed” in Israel by both the religious and the secular.

Israel has the highest per capita rate of population growth in the developed world, with an average of 3.1 children per family. Foremost is the lingering post-Holocaust imperative of Jewish survival. In Israel the whole basis of society is familial.

For those left out – the numerous fertility challenged women in Israel – the Keren Gefen Center addresses a need and fills a void. Keren Gefen is a non-profit organization established in 2014 that provides emotional and wellness support in challenging situations. In 2013, Karen Friedman founded the Rimon Mind/Body Fertility Center at Hadassah’s Mount Scopus hospital, which is still operative.

Dr. Hananel Holzer, director of IVF Centers, and Dr. Anat Hershko Klement, IVF unit director, both embrace the same vision: that the road to motherhood should include emotional mind-body support.

I only recently met Karen Friedman, married to Prof. Yedidia Stern and mother of eight. She sees the center as her ‘payback’ for the myriad blessings she has personally experienced. Karen is a Harvard graduate in psychology who made aliyah from Los An-

geles at age 30. To date, hundreds of women from secular to hassidic backgrounds have been helped at a minimal charge. All therapists as well as Karen and her co-director, Kady Harari, work as volunteers.

Funded by donations from Israel and abroad, Keren Gefen is the only organization of its kind in Israel that provides emotional and wellness support to fertility challenged women in Israel. Their program includes: cognitive behavioral therapy workshops, fertility yoga, mind/body workshops, individual therapy, acupuncture, aromatherapy, even meal deliveries for women going through fertility treatments.

Research shows that women who integrate mind/body therapies with fertility treatments greatly enhance their chances to conceive. The purpose of the workshops is to share and build a supportive community and learn relaxation techniques. Yoga, for instance, helps calm the mind and balances the nervous system.

One crucial program is the Fertility Preservation workshops, which empower women in their 30s who have not yet found their partners and are at prime fertility age to make informed decisions.

I heard numerous testimonials on how the Gefen Center helped transform women’s lives. One single woman wrote how



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Dr. Rhonda Adessky, clinical director, leading a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Mind/Body Fertility Workshop at the Gefen Center, German Colony, Jerusalem

she would never have realized her dream of becoming a mother without the critical help and ongoing support of the Gefen Center. Another was comforted through group therapy after the loss of her baby.

A childless middle-aged philanthropist confided in Karen how she wished the Gefen Center had been around when she tried ever so hard to become a mother. Carrying a life in one’s womb and the journey of motherhood is a fulfilling experience that no woman who longs to be a mother should be deprived of. ■

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