Agudath Israel Responds to Recent Statement Regarding Organ Donation and Brain Death

By Agudath Israel Statement
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Agudath Israel of America issued a statement today regarding a recent statement by several rabbis on the topic of organ donation and brain death. The statement, which can be read at Organ Donation Statement, was signed by over 100 rabbis from all over the world, and listed five position statements on the topic.

In response, Agudath Israel's release called the statement "decidedly unorthodox in its approach to the halachic process. In fact, it makes a mockery of that process, by asking other rabbis to accept one particular halachic view regarding a complex issue pertaining to matters of life and death on the grounds that the times, in the signatories' estimation, require a certain result."

The Agudath Israel statement continues:

For anyone, rabbi or layman, to decide that a perceived outcome should determine what halachic approach to take is something usually associated with Jewish movements outside of Orthodoxy.

Organ donation can and does save lives. Halachic authorities have ruled that, under certain circumstances and with proper safeguards, it is permissible and indeed laudable to be a live donor, and to bequeath organs after death. But defining death is a crucial halachic matter, not one to be "decided" on the basis of what some consider a societal need.

Compounding the statement's offensive embrace of a halachic position based on an extra-halachic rationale is its derision of those who take "a restrictive position regarding donating organs and a permissive position regarding receiving organs." That halachic position, held by a majority of major...
I am curious if the Agudath Israel statement also applies to the Charedi London Beth din and its Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks. It just issues a statement declaring that brain death is not death. "For anyone, rabbi or layman, to decide that a perceived outcome should determine what halachic approach to take is something usually associated with Jewish movements outside of Orthodoxy."
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