



Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

STATEMENT FROM RABBI CHAIM DOVID ZWIEBEL

14 Tammuz 5779
July 17, 2019

Leaders of Agudath Israel of America were recently contacted by a number of Roshei Yeshiva, Mechanchim and Rabbonim from across America who expressed concerns about the "Siyum App" introduced by the Agudah in conjunction with the upcoming 13th Global Siyum HaShas of Daf Yomi.

The original intent behind the Siyum App was להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה: to encourage and facilitate Torah learning among the broad *hamon am* by making Daf Yomi shiurim and other forms of *limud haTorah* easily accessible to the masses. The Siyum App was never intended to encourage those who do not have "smartphones" to start using them; it was meant for those who already do use smartphones, and who now would have an opportunity to use the App to start or increase their own *kvias itim la'Torah*. In this respect, the Siyum App was designed with similar goals as were the several other special learning initiatives developed in advance of the upcoming Siyum HaShas - for example, Chavrei HaSiyum and Masmidei HaSiyum, which have already resulted in a major increase in *limud haTorah* among young and old alike, and which will *be'H* continue to do so in the months leading up to the Siyum and beyond.

Despite these good intentions, as news of Agudas Yisroel's sponsorship of the Siyum App spread, we received communications from a number of respected Roshei Yeshiva, Mechanchim and Rabbonim that the Siyum App was undermining the message they were trying to convey to their talmidim and baalebatim discouraging smartphone usage whenever possible. They pointed out that Agudas Yisroel's sponsorship of an app, even one designed to promote *limud haTorah*, conveys the misimpression that the Agudah and the Gedolei Torah who stand at its helm view smartphone usage as a "*l'chatchila*" for all segments of the Torah community. This, they argued, was inconsistent with - and harmful to - their efforts to discourage such usage within their kehilos and yeshivos.

We brought these concerns to the attention of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America. The *chavrei ha'Moetzes* agreed that the concerns were well taken. They acknowledged that many people may need to use smartphones for business or other necessary purposes, presumably with appropriate filters, and that there already exist several apps that promote *limud haTorah*. Nonetheless, they felt, an organization like Agudas Yisroel - whose hallmark has always been uncompromising fealty to *da'as Torah* and the highest Torah standards - must avoid taking any steps that could be misinterpreted as encouraging those who do not need smartphones to start using them.

Accordingly, at the direction of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, Agudas Yisroel has withdrawn the Siyum App. We apologize for any inconvenience or misunderstanding.

Looking forward to joining with you this coming ד' טבת, January 1, dancing together at the Siyum Hashas
לכבוד התורה ולומדיה ולקדש שם שמים!

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