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# News

## Israeli Factory Mixes Schnitzels with Scientology Religious and Secular Jews Band Together to Aid Workers Fighting Against Cult

*by Moshe Schapiro*

The telephone call came through to Lev L'Achim's anti- missionary/anti-cult division in early June. The caller was employed at a kosher food processing plant in the northern Israeli town of Shlomi. His request could be summed up in one word: Help!

According to the factory worker, the manager of the plant, Chanon Zoglobek, was pressuring the workers to become adherents of Scientology, a cult "religion" that has been discredited in dozens of countries. The manager was also trying to force the worker to join in the cult's activities. Could Lev L'Achim help?

Moshe Shtigleitz, head of Lev L'Achim's anti-missionary/anti- cult division, didn't waste any time. He confirmed the caller's tale by speaking to four other factory workers. Within weeks the Rabbinate, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Histadrut, and the secular media were all involved, and they all shared the same belief. What was going on at the factory, some of whose products have a Badatz *hechsher*, was strictly *treif* -- in every sense of the word.

### FEARING FOR THEIR JOBS--AND THEIR SOULS

In the small town of Shlomi, a job at the Zoglobek food processing plant, which produces kosher hot dogs, schnitzels and the like under the brand name of Kol Tuv Teva, is considered a good source of income.

Shoshana, one of the workers, wasn't at all unhappy when one day management announced that employees would be expected to start attending special seminars during work hours.

But after one of these seminars Shoshana began to worry -- and with good reason.

Scientology is a cult that ensnares unsuspecting people through a kind of mind control that has been called psychological terrorism. Although the cult promises that its adherents will vastly improve their ability to enjoy life, and improve their careers and personal relationships through better communication, the truth is that the person is brainwashed and loses the ability to think for himself. Once members are under the cult's control, they are persuaded to donate large sums of money to the organization, and/or billed very large sums

of money for the cult's courses and books. Some of the cult's victims, who found themselves unable to escape its greedy clutches, have ended their lives.

Scientology was founded in the United States during the 1950s, and in the decades that followed it quickly spread throughout the western world. It reached Eretz Yisroel in the 1970s, and Chanon Zoglobek was one of the first attendees of the cult's seminars.

But Zoglobek was not content to practice his new "religion" in private. According to several people employed at his Shlomi factory, Zoglobek forced his workers to attend Scientology lectures. For those who dared to refuse, Zoglobek had a simple solution: he fired them.

### **INVITATIONS AND INTIMIDATIONS**

Yehoshua Ohrmland was employed at the Zoglobek factory for 11 years. He started out as a member of the security team, but he worked his way up to manager of the department. Despite the long hours he had to work at the factory, and the additional hours he had to put in -- without pay -- at Zoglobek's home on Shabbos and Yom Tov, Ohrmland didn't mind. His dedication was rewarded in 1994 when his salary doubled and he was given use of a company car.

But all that changed when Ohrmland decided that he had enough of the Scientology meetings and lectures he was forced to attend. Within one year of that fateful decision, he was fired.

According to Ohrmland, a person's willingness to participate in the cult lectures was the determining factor in guaranteeing his employment at the factory.

It all began, he said, during the hiring process. Job applicants were given a special test during their interviews that revealed their emotional state. Zoglobek was looking for people who were emotionally vulnerable and easy to manipulate.

Then, the factory worker's first encounter with Scientology would come during a private meeting in Zoglobek's office. Next he would be required to take a "communications" course, where he would sit for hours with a cult professional who asked the worker a series of personal questions. A report was written up about the worker and then passed on to Zoglobek.

If the worker got a good evaluation from the Scientology professional, the worker was moved up to the next level, which involved having to attend lectures twice a week in the factory's lecture hall. The next step was an invitation to the boss' home, where the worker would attend even more lectures.

But if the worker was "uncooperative," a very different scenario ensued.

"It happened more than once," said Ohrmland, "that workers left Chanon's office in tears and quit their jobs because of his brutal and aggressive treatment of them and others."

Zoglobek apparently used intimidation often to influence his workers. According to Shoshana, who asked that her last name not be used, he always tried to make the workers feel guilty about their actions.

Zoglobek would also try to get his workers' spouses involved with Scientology, and it was over this issue that Shoshana had her run-in. Shoshana's husband was sick, and he was in no shape to attend the lectures.

"When I protested about my husband participating in the seminars," Shoshana said, "Zoglobek reacted angrily."

Shoshana also tried to convince her fellow workers that Scientology was nonsense, which

didn't help put her in her boss' good graces. She, too, was eventually fired.

Neither Shoshana nor Ohrmland have been able to find new jobs, and they are struggling to make ends meet. But according to Lev L'Achim, help is on the way.

### **THROWING THE BOOK AT THE CULT**

Under Israeli law it is absolutely forbidden to use the workplace to attempt to change a person's religious beliefs. And needless to say, halacha also forbids such practices.

Once Lev L'Achim had confirmed the first caller's story, its anti-missionary/anti-cult division sprang into action. It began by coming to the aid of the helpless employees. The organization prepared and distributed materials to the workers that explained the dangers of Scientology, and it offered its services to those who had questions or wanted assistance.

Meanwhile, the secular Israeli newspaper *Yediot Achronot* was tipped off about the story, and it ran a large article that was highly sympathetic to the plight of the workers in its June 8 edition. The story was then picked up by several other Israeli newspapers.

The Histadrut, Israel's national labor union, was also informed of the situation, as was the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which requested an immediate investigation.

Lev L'Achim then worked with the Badatz to draft a letter stating the conditions that the owners of the factory would have to meet to maintain the *hechsher*.

The letter began by demanding that Chanon Zoglobek have no further contact with present and past employees, and that a new manager be selected to run the factory -- someone who had no connection with the Scientology activities held there.

Next, management had to announce to all employees that all Scientology activities have been stopped and that promotions and benefits will no longer be affected by attendance at such courses

An inquiry committee will also be established, with the participation of the Rabbinate, to see what methods were used to influence workers to join this or other cults. Management must agree that workers will be guaranteed immunity if they testify, and Chanon Zoglobek will be required to submit a list of all present and past workers who participated in the seminars.

Another special committee will be formed, headed by representatives from the factory workers' committee and the Histadrut, to conduct an inquiry into the reasons for the dismissal of workers during the past two years. If the dismissals were due to the workers' refusal to participate in seminars promoting Scientology or any other cult, management will have to agree to reinstate the workers in their previous jobs.

Representatives from the Rabbinate and Lev L'Achim will be allowed to continue their inquiries into the company's activities to ensure that no further cult activities are being conducted, and management must agree to abide by all the conditions of this agreement for the next two years.

Once it does so, Lev L'Achim will notify the public and the Israeli press, and the company will be allowed to keep its *hechsher*.

### **A FAMILY BUSINESS**

The Zoglobek food processing plant is a privately owned, family business that earns \$100 million a year. It was founded in 1937 by Raymond Zoglobek and his wife, Yonah, who were refugees from Nazi Germany. The first factory was established in Nahariya, and later a newer factory was built in Shlomi.

The ownership of the family business was evenly divided between Chanon Zoglobek, his brother Amram, their brother-in-law Reuven Maschit, and their sister Yael.

The other family members have been less than pleased by the discovery of cult activities being held at their factory and by the negative publicity that is threatening to jeopardize the financial health of the business.

In effort to keep the business afloat, Chanon Zoglobek did respond to the allegations by sending a letter to Rabbi Yeshaya Mittler, Chief Rabbi of Nahariya, on June 15. He said, "There were not, are not, and will not be Scientology activities or those of any other cult [at the factory]."

He went on to insist that the lectures held at his factory were designed to improve his workers' skills and had no missionary content whatsoever. He also agreed to have a *mashgiach* check the factory.

In an interview with *Yated Ne'eman*, Chanon Zoglobek did admit that "personally Scientology helped me healthwise." However, he insisted, "in the factory it did not exist." All there was in the factory was a "seminar about communication and nothing more. . . I state again that there was never any Scientology activity in the factory."

However, the experts of Lev L'Achim said that these statements confirm the suspicions. This is exactly the way that Scientology operates. "They invite you for a harmless-looking course in communication, and then they spin their nets, and whoever finds himself entangled has a hard time getting out."

According to a company spokesman, Chanon Zoglobek has left his position as manager of the Shlomi factory, and he and his brother Amram are now pursuing business opportunities in the field of electronic communications.

Lev L'Achim confirms that the company is beginning to comply with the conditions that were outlined in the letter.

But even when all the conditions are met, it will still take a long time for all the damage to be repaired.

"Many of the Zoglobek employees are traditional Jews," says Lev L'Achim's Shtigleitz, "and what was going on at that factory has shaken them to the very core."

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