

JULY 27, 2007

Counterpoint

Hechsher Tzedek will divide Conservative and Orthodox Jews

By RABBI ASHER ZEILINGOLD

I appreciate this opportunity to elaborate my thoughts on the Conservative movement's new Hechsher Tzedek (AJW 7-20-07).

I am deeply concerned that the Hechsher Tzedek (justice certification) will water down the sacred definition of *kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws). Unfortunately, only a minority of our people keep *kashrut* with all the requirements of *halacha* (rabbinic law).

To preach that *kashrut* is a matter of how workers are treated, etc., will give our people logical reason to concern themselves solely with the social aspects of food production in the name of keeping kosher. Torah mandates that workers must be treated fairly and also accepts

the authority of the government to administer these matters. The Hechsher Tzedek will serve only to drive a deeper wedge between Conservative and Orthodox Jews, further dividing Jew from Jew.

It is disturbing that the Conservative team has unjustly made the Agriprocessors kosher slaughterhouse the centerpiece of its campaign. In every news item and interview, they have referred to alleged conditions at Agriprocessors in order to justify their Hechsher Tzedek. I strongly dispute their allegations.

In May 2006, the Forward newspaper published a lengthy article defaming Agriprocessors. I visited the plant in Postville, Iowa, accompanied by Spanish-speaking Dr. Carbonera, on a fact-finding mission. After lengthy

and detailed interviews with numerous employees, conducted in their native language, we determined that the Forward article was "malicious falsehood."

The Conservative movement asked to visit the plant independently. They claimed they wanted only to evaluate the validity of the Forward article. Instead, they capitalized upon the unsubstantiated charges of that article to demonstrate the need for a Hechsher Tzedek.

The Conservative rabbis who supposedly made a thorough investigation of the plant and came up with negative findings have never stated their qualifications and credentials to evaluate safety and labor issues at a meat-packing plant. In contrast, I retained, as a private consultant, a high-level OSHA employee to

evaluate the safety at Agriprocessors. This consultant found that the plant compared favorably with other plants in the industry, and identified serious errors of fact and misleading statements made in the report published by the Conservative movement on its official Web site.

One must logically conclude that the Conservative team visited Agriprocessors with a predetermined agenda and predetermined findings. The Hechsher Tzedek is nothing more than an effort to show sympathy for and support of the labor movement (as does the Forward) and has nothing whatsoever to do with *kashrut*.

The Conservative movement has decided that the U.S. minimum wage is not an acceptable standard of fairness, but has not stated what

minuted in defeat by the Babylonians in 597 BCE, followed by destruction 11 years later.

What happened to the glory of the First Temple? It lasted 40 years. The Second Temple never achieved glory until its rebuilding by Herod, and that lasted 10 years.

Will a Third Temple fare any better? So far, the records of history indicate otherwise.

Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg is a Fellow of the Albright Institute

Opening at the Jewish World

The American Jewish World has an opening for a dynamic Account Executive to join our advertising sales team. This is a rare career opportunity for the right candidate.

We are seeking a talented, personable individual who can service existing accounts and take the initiative in identifying new clients that would benefit from reaching our unique group of subscribers.

Fax cover letter and resumé to Mordecai Specktor at 952-920-6205; or e-mail: editor@ajwnews.com.

Glory of Solomon's Temple lasted for just 40 years

• TEMPLE / from page 4

completed until 60 C.E., well after the death of Herod, and it only stood another six years before it's service was embroiled in the revolt against the Romans.

So what did Herod's great work really achieve? Did it achieve unity among the Jewish people? Did it achieve harmony between our different factions? Did it achieve reconciliation with the Romans, who

Opening at the Jewish World

The American Jewish World has an opening for a dynamic Account Executive to join our advertising sales team. This is a rare career opportunity for the right candidate.

We are seeking a talented, personable individual who can service existing accounts and take the initiative in identifying new clients that would benefit from reaching our unique group of subscribers.

Fax cover letter and resumé to Mordecai Specktor at 952-920-6205; or e-mail: editor@ajwnews.com.