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Reflections on the Prosecution of Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin and the Government Raid of the Agriprocessors Kosher Meat Packing Plant in Postville, Iowa

Apr
11

Responding to Failed Messiah Feedback on the Sholom Rubashkin Defense Article

Activism, Gregory Johnson – Journal, Lifeways, Politics

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Summary. I want to thank everyone who has read and responded to [my article in defense of Sholom Rubashkin](#); even those with negative comments.

I value constructive feedback, as it helps challenge and shape my own views as well as offers insights into how I can clarify what I've written.

Below is a response to the publishers and readers of the Failed Messiah website where [an early draft of my article was posted](#).

I'll continue to update this page in response to reader comments on that page.

* * *

11 April 2010 | Sunday

Hello Friends,

I discovered that my article has been picked up and posted to a variety of websites, including [Failed Messiah](#) and [Shturem.org](#). This page offers responses to comments posted [on the Failed Messiah website](#).

For those interested, my original article is here:



<http://www.resourcesforlife.com/docs/item2734>

Based on all the feedback I've received from many people about the article, I've tried to make clarifications as needed, so the current article includes some minor corrections, but mostly remains the same as the original.

Some good points are raised in the comments at [Failed Messiah](#), and I'm interested to read more thoughts on this topic. To help the discussion stay grounded in the facts and not get off track with speculation or conspiracy theories, let me just correct and clarify a few things. Please don't read these as defensive responses, they are just meant to be clarifications.

First, I should clarify for everyone, that I don't work at [Shturem.net](#) ([Shturem.org](#)), and my sister isn't Gloria Johnson-Smith, nor does she work at B&H Photo. I'm not a paid plant/fake/shill for the OU/Heshy/Hershy or anyone else. I appreciate the positive comments from those who accepted what I shared as genuine. I've not been paid off by anyone to write the article. Were I paid or compensated in any way, I would have disclosed that. You can read my disclosure statement here:

<http://www.resourcesforlife.com/docs/item2581>

Now, some responses to the comments so far, in order of appearance above.

1. Shmarya Rosenberg commented, "Even a cursory reading of the vast amount of evidence against Rubashkin refutes much of what Johnson claims."

- **Clarification.** I'm not attempting to whitewash the Rubashkin plant or any other. I'm simply sharing my own personal eye witness account. My experiences and observations only when combined with others can convey a broader picture. I'm just adding my observations to the mix. If you read my full article on the plant visit, you'll know that I don't believe there's any entirely "kind" way to kill an animal: <http://www.resourcesforlife.com/docs/item46>

2. Shmarya Rosenberg commented, "Johnson's evaluation is based on a controlled tour given long after public and governmental pressure forced Agriprocessors to improve."

- **Clarification.** I agree with you here. Planned tours or inspections are undoubtedly a bit more tame than business as usual. However, I was not with a group of inspectors who might be considered a potential threat, and what I was primarily observing were machines, procedure, and aspects of the plant that can't be easily changed in a day for a small tour group.

3. Shmarya Rosenberg commented, "...he projects backward, alleging that PETA lied about Agriprocessors."

- **Clarification.** Not to get into a debate about PETA, but I was simply surprised that nothing really seemed to have changed two years later, and that what seemed to be the same procedure, produced different results in reality than what the video depicted. Also, the group I was with were not seen as ‘outsiders’ so, it seemed to me, that less was done to impress us. We weren’t inspectors nor were we considered a threat in any way. So, I would think they would be less likely to be on their guard. My observations and comments about the plant were primarily about the machines, mechanisms, and procedures being used. These are things that can’t easily be changed for a tour group. I was looking at the entire process and sort of ignoring things that a person can clean-up in a day prior to an inspection.

4. Shmarya Rosenberg commented, “Johnson even claims the ‘procedure’ he saw in 2006 was exactly the same throat-ripping shown on PETA’s 2004 videos.”

- **Clarification.** What I saw was the same room, the same equipment, and a quick cut to the throat that seemed to produce instantaneous death. There were no cattle hobbling around while bleeding to death, nor were throats being ripped out. Maybe I need to revise the article to make this clearer.

5. Shmarya Rosenberg commented, “Rubashkin supporters do not have the facts or the truth on their side, so they often resort to lies. Those lies may help energize their base and help raise money, but they will not impress a sitting federal judge or law enforcement.”

- **Clarification.** I’m not in touch with any *Rubashkin supporters*, so I can’t speak to this, you may be right there. I can only say that my story is genuine and truthful.

6. Harold and Dave comment about my article being posted on Failed Messiah.

- **Clarification/Comment.** From their comments, I’m guessing my article presents a position contrary to what is normally found on the site. I applaud that. I try to do the same on my own website, and value that elsewhere on the Internet.

7. *State of Disgust* commented, “...just how many slaughterhouses has Mr. Johnson been in? How would he know what he is looking at, or what to look for? IS he a trained expert in slaughterhouse cleanliness? Is he familiar with the chemicals used in a meat packing plant?”

- **Clarification.** In case it wasn’t clear from my article (although I think it would be), I’m not a slaughterhouse inspector. As a vegetarian and animal welfare advocate, most of my exposure to various kinds of factory farming and animal cruelty over the past 30 years has been from animal welfare groups. Perhaps that’s why the Rubashkin plant didn’t seem so bad in reflecting on what I’ve seen. I’ve also developed an opinion about

factory farms and meat packing plants from watching videos like John Robbins *Diet for a New America*:

<http://www.amazon.com/Diet-New-America-John-Robbins/dp/0915811812>

8. *Justice Seeker* states, “I can smell a plant....it might as well be by ‘John Smith.’ Its just more propaganda, and mis-information. Everyone knows there are no vegans in Iowa! Iowa is a state where PETA stands for ‘People Eating Tasty Animals.’”

- **Clarification.** As I mentioned above, I’m not a *plant*. Please refer to my statement on disclosure link provided above. There are actually quite a few vegetarians, vegans, and people involved in animal welfare here in Iowa. We have many vegetarian restaurants in our town as well as a very popular restaurant that serves only vegan organic locally-grown foods; see TheRedAvocado.com

9. *Yidandahalf* commented, “This guy Johnson is a plant, a fake, a shill for the OU/Heshy/Hershey and the lot of them. How much did he get paid? By the writing style of just the first few paragraphs, he gives himself away. Also dude, you’re like four years too late. As the old saying goes, ‘Don’t quit your day job.’”

- **Clarification.** As I mentioned above, I’m not a paid shill of the Orthodox Union and Hershey. What’s amazing to me, is that now it’s been four years, yet so many people just won’t stop persecuting this Sholom Rubashkin. For me, the story isn’t about what’s current news, but simply a matter of principle and justice.

10. *AGRI-vated Angel* responds to my claim that ‘the PETA video was gathered covertly over many weeks and meticulously spliced together.’

- **Clarification.** This information was actually from PETA, not from me. They described that they had infiltrated the plant and captured a lot of video footage over a period of many weeks. So, it’s factual information provided from PETA, not me. I’ve already responded to the point about the tour being scheduled.

11. *Concerned for the Postville Area* asked also about my claims that the video was collected over many weeks.

- **Clarification.** I’ve answered this above in #9.

12. *AGRI-vated Angel* commented, “I find it rather strange that Mr. Johnson was given a tour of the facility . . . However, while a group of nuns (during a visit to Postville) requested a tour of the plant, they were turned away. I wonder what ‘they’ didn’t want the nuns to see?”

- **Clarification.** I went on the tour with some people who were essentially seen as ‘friends’ of the plant rather than inspectors. So, perhaps that’s why our group was

allowed in. I'm not surprised that there might have been some resistance to various outsiders coming in, possibly for the sole purpose of finding something negative to write about.

13. *State of Disgust* comments, "The real question is why do the Rubashkins and/or Hershey feel it necessary to salvage the reputation of a failed firm at this time? Why try to lay a false trail now? Just speculation but perhaps because they plan to reintroduce the brand again."

- **Clarification.** Please don't read into my article and conclude they are going to reintroduce the brand again. It's just an article about my experience visiting the place. There's no grand conspiracy here, at least not one that I'm aware of.

14. *Neo-Conservaguy* comments, "The writer is clearly ignorant about different approaches to kosher slaughter. The upside down contraption used in Postville is a disaster not only because it's a terror for the animals, but even more so because it sets up bad slaughter. Concern about damaging the knife on the sides of the pen may explain much of what was seen in the PETA videos - ineffective cuts that clearly didn't sever all of the veins, perhaps because they were not deep enough. Standing pens are the only reasonable approach for mature animals as large as the cattle involved."

- **Clarification.** As I stated above, I can't imagine any entirely "kind" way to kill an animal. From the research I did, those who justify the hanging the animals upside down method say that the blood rushing to the brain causes the animal to be in a state where the pain of death and length of suffering is decreased. Maybe those sources are wrong. Not having spent my life studying how to kill animals, I can't really speak too much on the issue.

As needed, I'll follow-up with another posting below in response to additional comments on the [Failed Messiah website](#).

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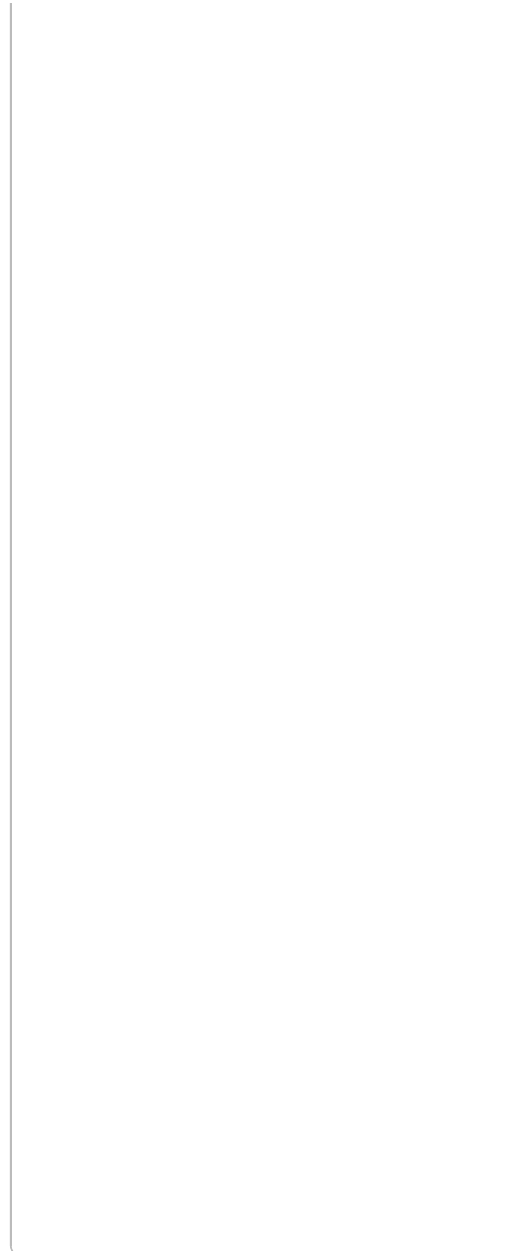
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