

## In Response To Your Public Letter

1 message

Rabbi Yosef Kirszenberg

Fri, Mar 8, 2024

To:

BS"D

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayakhel 5784

Dear Rabbi Weissmandl Shlita,

We are writing to you privately regarding the letter you recently publicized where you questioned the motives of our Beis Din in discontinuing the supervision at AgriStar.

From the outset, the Rabbonim chose not to engage in a public dispute and sought to avoid conflict. Therefore, they did not detail the various issues in their letter. Normally, we would not respond to such a letter. However, due to והיינו נקיים we cannot overlook a situation where a letter is publicly circulated (this without prior discussion with the Rabbonim) stating that there is "no kernel of truth" in the letter of our esteemed Rabbonim shlita. We strongly urge you to retract your statement.

Your letter came as a great surprise to us, as we are sure you are aware (or should be aware) of the happenings at the plant. Respectfully, we will limit this email to a few examples of issues that you would have been aware of that contradict your assertions that the motivations are not related to Kashrus and that "the owners have never mixed in to the Kashrus."

החי when just a few days ago, Rabbi Weissmandl shlita called in our local kashrus representative in Postville and informed him that our demand for proper supervision at the salting station cannot be implemented?

You should also be aware that your representative, Rabbi Shlomo Fried, received an email just this past Monday from our local kashrus representative.

The email states, among other things, that

"last week a new shochet was brought down without prior confirmation from CHK," and

"on several occasions, I have given instructions, but they were not implemented," or

"please ensure that I receive daily copies or pictures of the melicha forms. It seems like they were not being filled out."

This email concludes:

"I understand that some of these concerns are not because of you. You have been very helpful. If there's any problem with your superiors in these matters, please inform me so we can resolve this in the best possible way."

Above all, you must know of the email dated December 29, sent from CHK to Agri, copied to you as well.

The email, although lengthy details a discussion between the Vaad Hakashrus and Beis Din with AgriStar management who were resisting the implementation of the instructions of CHK and includes the following quotes:

"the vein in the chuck under the first rib toward the neck, discussed in the meeting, must be removed and the dried blood in the channel of the back of the chuck must be properly cleaned. If fat in that area is bloody it must be removed";

"three properly spaced, horizontal cuts must be made across the vein in the back of the tail";

"staff must be instructed to open the back of the tongue and remove (not cut) the whole blood vein";

"This was the practice in Agristar until recently. The change back to another method was a serious breach of the trust we place in you";

"The 'pillars' that will carry our hechsher must be cleaned on both sides";

"The fat and membrane between the 12th and 13th rib must be completely removed";

"We are troubled by the pushback from the plant even on some of the (by your own numbers), less costly measures, which we requested";

"they had been rolled back without approval or even any notification to the hechsher";

"This type of behavior, is a serious breach of kashrus protocol..."

Are you not aware of the subsequent email from Rabbi Weissmandl shlita dated Jan. 1 to the CHK?

The email stated:

"I personally called up rabbi Greenberg that everything is on review but agri was not willing at the time to implement".

The final straw was the conversation Rabbi Weissmandl shlita had this week with one of our representatives, where he asserted that he is the ultimate kashrus authority. (Indeed, this is for us a serious issue. The CHK cannot in full conscience maintain our certification of a place when someone else decides what our kashrus standards should be, and we no longer have the ability to make kashrus decisions as we see fit. This is even more telling in your recent letter. While you are certainly entitled to keep your certification as you see fit, it baffles us that when a kashrus agency decided to remove certification from a plant due to kashrus issues, you come out with a public statement stating that what our Rabbonim said is not true. Only our Rabbonim have the authority to decide what they think is a kashrus issue for the CHK clientele).

Yet, in the same conversation Rabbi Weissmandel shlita indicated that if anything does not receive approval from management, it will not be approved. This contradictory stance raises concerns about the independence and integrity of the kashrus supervision.

These are but examples of the many issues. Our Rabbonim shlita are known for their insistence on proper kashrus standards and prioritize kashrus over anything. They do not seek to be extra machmir, but insist on following proper policies, even if, as in this case the discontinuance of supervision will result in the significant financial loss to the hechsher. All of us need to examine whether financial concerns ("Negiah") can taint our view of Kashrus issues.

As mentioned in the public letter of the Beis Din, "trust and the human factor are the keys to kashrus."

We understand the complexities involved in maintaining kashrus standards, but it is disheartening to witness the prioritization of financial interests over halachic integrity. (In contrast to others, the Crown Heights rabbonim have nothing to do with the financial side of things, and don't sign checks). Above all, it is troubling that certain decisions seem to be contingent upon management approval. This undermines the integrity of the kashrus process and raises questions about the independence of the supervision.

Rabbi Yosef Kirszenberg

CHK Kashrus Director, in the name of the Vaad HaKashrus