

# Did you forward that message from your WhatsApp?

An open letter to Klal Yisroel.

It's been over a year since my name got plastered on many social media forums and from websites, claiming they know for a fact that I scammed millions of dollars from innocent victims that were scheduled to be at my Pesach event.

At that time, many people came out harshly against me. Many felt the need to warn the public of "the scammer" for doing an unimaginable scam which caused so many to be without Pesach plans. They easily convinced themselves that they're doing a Mitzvah, and it's the will of Hashem, to name and shame me and my family.

To be honest, I wasn't sure what to make of it. I remember thinking that I don't know of any other person in Klal Yisroel ever being plastered and shamed in this fashion regardless of the crime they may or may not have committed.

Everyone knows (or heard of) a family that lost all their savings by investing in a Ponzi scheme. Yet, none of these scammers or their families were ever exposed online as a scammer. No mention was ever made online to stay away from this Ponzi schemer as he may ask you to invest with him, yet the rules changed when I shared my story with the public. So, I asked myself, why was the green light given to so many websites, social groups, commenters, WhatsApp groups etc. to post and forward all kinds of Loshen Hora and Motzei Shem Ra on me?

My only reasoning at that time, was that these people may have lost money in shady investments, they needed a place to vent about their losses, and the fact that I came out in public with a video showing how a phishing scam was done to me and how we missed it (which was only done for awareness, so others don't become the next victim of a phishing scam) was the perfect opportunity to finally get the closure they needed.

A very smart man (known to have a following of over 500,000 on LinkedIn) said to me, "Once you go public with a story, you're no longer the owner of it. Anyone can have an opinion about it and take the part they feel they disliked and judge on it".

This was very painful to hear, and I'll explain why.

When I found out that my company got scammed with a phishing email, I received many phone calls from very successful business people sharing with me that they too got scammed. I was told to stay strong, and that Hashem will help me recover...basically giving me the Chizuk that they felt they could offer me since they too were affected by it.

I asked each and every one that called me why didn't you come out in public? You could have shared it in newspapers and tell people to be on the lookout for these email scams so others shouldn't fall for it. "Yea yea it needs to be done" is all that they said.

I took the opportunity and published a video about what happened so others don't get hurt.

If you're a smart person you don't need to read any further as the story that unfolded should have been very predictable, but I did not see it coming.

Yes, I did get many to thank me as my story stopped them from sending a wire to a phishing scam but to the rest of the world this was as someone said to me "good entertainment".

The phone calls started coming in asking me to go on a radio show so more people could learn of the danger of phishing scams.

I didn't think it was necessary as I felt I did my share of awareness but that's when the pressure started by good meaning people saying to me that I have to do it since some people don't believe me and this will give me an opportunity to show them black on white what happened. I was assured that this was just to help me clear my name so it's really doing me a favor.

Well, the rest I think is history as everyone that watched the video will tell you that it was clearly not done to help me and everything to make me look like a real gangster. The social groups and sites worked very hard trying to make me look like the scammer himself that's trying to cover up this massive scheme. Anything I said or proved otherwise was used against me which in result gave me the title of a scammer. Unfortunately, they succeeded way beyond their expectations.

I remember discussing this with my LinkedIn buddy and asking him why they were doing this to me? So of course, he lectured me about not going on these shows but also explained to me something that will shake up the Kosher Frum Media. He said to me "these people will sell their mother for views". I was not sure what he was saying to me, going on kosher sites to me meant reading news with ads popping up all over.

While having a conversation with Reb Elya Brudny Shlita, he shed some clarity to me. He said something very similar but added to it. "As long as we give ads to these sites, we are feeding the terrorist". I asked him to explain which he went on to say that it's the fault of the advertisers. Since the site owner needs to post material that will get them the views needed to be considered a busy site, it's the advertisers that are enabling the spread Loshen Hora & Rechilos.

While this is not the place for me to share my view on "open forum websites and social post/comments" I do however have to question if this is not considered **חוטא ומחטיא את הרבים**. Everyone can comment on a post what his heart desires and no one will hold him accountable for it. None of these sites (or groups) have the traditional Hashgocha that magazines have, and no one tells them what to do. This means that anyone with a keyboard and a phone can freely say anything.

We all know the story of Kamtza Bar Kamtza but what we don't talk about is that this was a direct result of the Rabonim staying silent.

**אמר הואיל והווי יתבי רבנן ולא מחו ביה שמע מינה קא ניחא להו...אקמץא ובר קמץא חרוב ירושלים: גיטין נ"ה**

*Since the Sages were sitting there and did not protest the actions of the host, although they saw how he humiliated me, learn from it that they were content with what he did".*

I'm reaching out to each one of you to do your part, so this doesn't happen again. While it's a huge Mitzvah to buy a beautiful Esrog and to learn all day, the Bias Hamikdash was not destroyed for a lack in Mitzvos and Torah. It was only Sinas Chinum and it's up to us to fix it.

Many have tried to stay away from the internet and have been successful at it, for the rest of us, we must be realistic and realize that the internet is going to continue to very much be part of our lives. Do realize that many Bnei Torah with filters got caught up with this story.

**לא תעמוד על דם רעך** The Torah states: "You shall not stand idly by the blood of another.

While many have made wonderful arguments to why this is believable Loshen Hora and they know from this one and that one floods of facts about me and my past which gives them the full right to do what they have done (and continue to do so), my best and honest response is very simple. You didn't hear the other side of the story.

If a person only hears one side of a story and chooses to believe it, there is another very important Gemara to know.

**שבת נ"ו: אמר רב יהודה אמר רב אילמלי לא קיבל דוד לשון הרע לא נחלקה מלכות בית דוד ולא עבדו ישראל עבודה זרה ולא גלינו מארצנו**

*Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Had Dovid Hamelech not accepted Ziba's slanderous report about Mephibosheth, the kingdom of the house of Dovid would not have been divided, Bnei Yisroel would not have worshipped idols because of Jeroboam, and we would not have been exiled from our land.*

Let's do our part to demand a Hashgochah from the sites we visit regularly. Let's do our part of not sharing posts (or being part of groups) that share Loshen Hora. And finally, let's teach our children the difference between reading news and reading news from a Loshen Hora free site only.