

**5** The Nuclear Weaponization  
of Loshon Hora

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# THE DOMINO EFFECT

HOW TO STOP THE DAMAGE

פרשת תזריע מצורע

APRIL 21, 2018 • 6 IYAR 5778

**NATIONWIDE**  
**SHABBOS** OF **SHMIRAS**  
**HALOSHON**

**CHOFETZ CHAIM HERITAGE FOUNDATION**  
THE ZICHRON YAAKOV TZVI CENTER FOR THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHOFETZ CHAIM



Whether we are speaking person-to-person or online, when we erase Hashem's instructions for proper speech from our lives,

we are at the same time **erasing from our lives** so much of the brachah for which we hope and daven.

# WHY NOW?

When our words or posts humiliate one of Hashem's children, we create division among ourselves and **shatter the vessel** into which all Hashem's goodness flows.

We compromise the merit to appeal to Hashem's compassion. We may think of loshon hora as a debt that only comes due in the Next World,

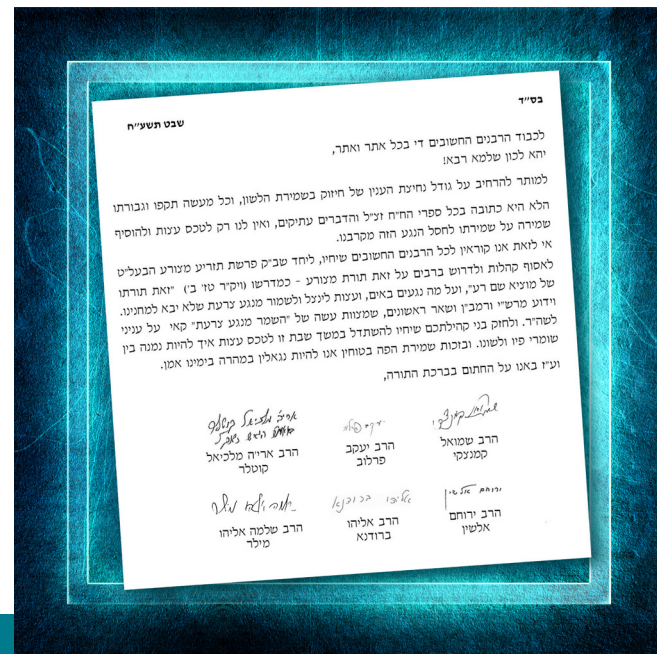
but in reality **our words create the world** we live in here and now.

And so, this **Parshas Tazriyah-Metzorah**, hundreds of Rabbonim are uniting to bring their Kehillos the awareness of the damage of Loshon Hora in speech and in all of its new technological forms.

Now is the time **to repair the breaches** that are opening moment by moment in our wall of Divine protection.

**This Shabbos is a window of opportunity** in which we can raise our awareness of what our mouths – and for many of us, our digital devices – are doing to our world.

Winning the battle against loshon hora means **empowering our Torah and Tefillah**, bringing us sholom and brochah and **DIVINE PROTECTION**. Standing together, **it's a battle we can win.**



**The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's Mission** is to inspire Jews around the world to grasp the life-enhancing gift of Shmiras Haloshon and to provide easy access to a wide array of options designed to spark personal growth.

[powerofspeech.org](http://powerofspeech.org)

**Imagine** a product design studio commissioned to design a tool that would increase loshon hora into the world in an unprecedented way.

**What would the design specs look like?**

- 1** The product would need to be accessible to every person
- 2** Reach people with lightning speed
- 3** Facilitate the spread of loshon hora to masses of people
- 4** Send pictures and videos
- 5** Convince people the information is true just by the sheer number of transmissions
- 6** Remove any guilt or personal responsibility

WhatsApp groups, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook may not have been designed to be the greatest loshon hora delivery systems in the history of mankind, but they fit the specs perfectly. With these tools, anyone can effortlessly reach out to groups of people to share embarrassing videos and posts that destroy reputations at lightning speed.

The anonymity of social media makes matters worse. In Virtually You: The Dangerous Powers of the E-Personality, author Dr. Elias Aboujaoude cites a study revealing that on-line users convince themselves that their on-line behavior is "not me," and therefore, they do not feel responsible for the consequences of their posts. Thus, a person who would feel constrained to say loshon hora out loud feels far less inhibited about posting and sharing it.

The author points out, the more often a post appears, the greater its veneer of truthfulness and accuracy.

"I've seen it everywhere," for most people means "it must be true." The combination of all these elements of social media makes it history's most destructive disseminator of loshon hora. It is a nuclear warhead that destroys everything within a tremendous radius.

For Klal Yisrael, the stakes are impossible to fathom. Hashem's brachah and our success as Jews depend on our Torah, tefillah and sholom, but loshon hora disables them. In a time filled with chaos and confusion, this is our lifeline: Hashem says "I can save you from all harm, provided you conceal yourself from a loshon hora." (Iyov, Ch. 5:21)

But everyday we are smashing the wall of protection Hashem offers us with tens of thousands of thoughtless posts that dart loshon hora from person to person and group to group.

By waking up to the impact of social media and putting strategies in place, we can access Hashem's incredible promises of protection and open up our world to receive Hashem's goodness.

# THE NUCLEAR WEAPONIZATION OF LOSHON HORA



# STRATEGIES

"WITH STRATEGIES, YOU SHOULD WAGE WAR"

-MISHLEI, CH 24:6

## ONLINE STRATEGIES

1. Before you post, click, forward or share: **Think,**

**HOW WOULD I FEEL IF THIS POST WAS ABOUT ME?**  
power of speech.org

To get your free "how would I feel" sticker visit [powerofspeech.org/computersticker](http://powerofspeech.org/computersticker).

2. **Post your Protest** If you're on a group and Loshon Hora or bullying is being shared:

1. Verbalize your displeasure by replying #Think before you post.
2. If you need to be more diplomatic, send an emoji of the monkey covering his ears.
3. If nothing else works, leave the group.



3. Attention Admins of WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms:

**Make your group Loshon Hora free!** Visit [powerofspeech.org/admin](http://powerofspeech.org/admin) to receive a protocol system.

4. **Subscribe** your group to a new 20 second a day inspirational post at [powerofspeech.org/post](http://powerofspeech.org/post).

## PERSONAL STRATEGIES

1. Sign up for the **Shabbos Table Machsom L'fi\***

Create a Shabbos of sweetness and harmony. The Shabbos Table Machsom L'fi takes the concept of a Machsom L'fi and uses it to enhance and uplift every Shabbos meal.

Sign up at [powerof speech.org/shabbos](http://powerofspeech.org/shabbos)

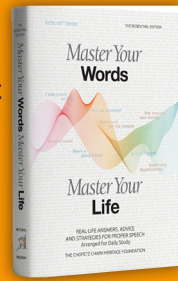


4,391 families have already signed up!

2. **Daily Learning: Learning the Laws of Shmiras Haloshon** in small portions, was the method that the Chofetz Chaim recommended for every Jew to observe and succeed at this crucial mitzvah.

Choose from a range of free emails. Sign up at [powerofspeech.org/dailylearning](http://powerofspeech.org/dailylearning) or by learning from one of our daily learning seforim.

Seforim available at bookstores or at [powerof speech.org/shop](http://powerof speech.org/shop).



3. **Machsom L'fi\***

Organize a Machsom L'fi as a powerful merit for a friend or relative in need of Divine Assistance. Our free organizers kit makes it simple.

Call 845-352-3505 ext. 116 or visit [powerofspeech.org/machsomlfi](http://powerofspeech.org/machsomlfi)

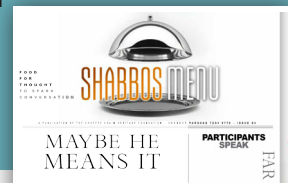
4. **Powerofspeech App**

Download our free app at the Apple store or Google play with a daily audio or text learning of Shmiras Haloshon and engaging videos.

## SHUL STRATEGIES

1. Distribute the free **Shabbos menu newsletter**

with weekly inspiration to your shul.



2. **Set up** a shiur to learn the halochos of Shmiras Haloshon every day before or after davening.

Visit [powerofspeech.org/shop](http://powerofspeech.org/shop) or at any Jewish bookstore for Seforim.

3. **Post** a 20 second Shmiras Haloshon message on your shul email list. Sign up at [powerofspeech.org/post](http://powerofspeech.org/post).

For newsletter sign up at [powerofspeech.org/shabbosmenu](http://powerofspeech.org/shabbosmenu).

## \*WHAT IS A MACHSOM L'FI

A Machsom L'fi is a program in which people commit themselves to focusing for a set period of time each day on the proper use of their power of speech as defined in the Torah. During that time, they concentrate on avoiding speaking and hearing loshon hora, gossip, slander, ona'as devarim (hurtful and angry words). The goal of Machsom L'fi is to grow in Shmiras Haloshon step-by-step. Often, a Machsom L'fi is undertaken as a zechus for someone who is in need of a refuah, a shidduch, children, parnassah or a personal yeshuah.

1. It is still loshon hara even if it already went viral. Just because it's making the rounds and everyone knows about it, does not prevent a negative report from being loshon hara.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע ב, יא

2. You can't share loshon hara about someone you decide is "bad" unless that someone is: a) halachically considered a "rasha"; and b) you are publicizing it so that people should stay away. It is not so easy to become a "rasha". Unless someone casts off Judaism (porek ol) he is not a "rasha". Non-frum people are generally classified as acting innocently (tinokos shenish-be'u) because they don't know better, so you cannot speak negatively about them.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע ד, ה

3. Loshon hara is about conveying negative or harmful information; it is not specifically about speaking or writing. Merely posting a video or picture of someone acting improperly is loshon horah even if you don't add any "cute" negative comment.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע א, ח

4. You cannot post a video of frum Jews making a chillul Hashem because its "news" or "interesting." Let's face it. What is a greater chillul Hashem than publicizing a chillul Hashem!

פשוט

"THEIR TONGUE IS A DEADLY ARROW." -YIRMIYAHU 7:9

# 10 RULES OF WHATS APP



5. Taking a picture of food at a restaurant and making fun of the quality with a cute "emoji" or just one "star" is bona-fide loshon hora, as it may cause harm to the store owner.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע ה, ז

6. You cannot publicize a person's private matter. Even if someone called you and you recorded the phone call, you cannot post it without his permission.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות רכילות ח, ה

7. It's loshon hara if it's embarrassing, ..even if it's hysterical...and even if you were also involved. Just because you don't care about the incident, does not allow you to shame someone who does.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע א, ט

8. There is no heter to speak about a group of people. Writing "Chassidim... Yekkes... Lakewooders, etc. are so..." is a severe example of loshon hara.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע י, יב

9. Even if you are writing fact, and even if it is not technically loshon hara, there is a prohibition against generating discord and friction amongst people.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות רכילות ט, ד

10. One may not judge a person unfavorably...and generally when you post a pic or video of someone doing something questionable, you clearly mean "wink wink. Can you believe he is doing this..." which is clearly prohibited.

ספר חפץ חיים הלכות לשון הרע ז, ז

“ The loshon hora post and subsequent viral storm hit at our son’s Bar Mitzvah.

## The negative comments came pouring in.

What was supposed to be one of life’s happiest moments was a nightmare. Now whenever I meet people, it’s “Aren’t you the one who...”

My life has been reduced to one unfortunate moment in time. Hundreds of people forwarded the post.

## What were they thinking? ”

- ANONYMOUS



“I would advise those seeking to improve their economic situation to take exceedingly great care in regard to loshon hora, and especially not to harm others actively through, cheating and the like...if one respects another person’s feelings and possessions, his own possessions shall certainly be blessed more than if he had performed any segulah. ”