

Press Release

March 14, 2024

Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by Rav Micha Cohn

https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/SH74_11_Pikudei_Freedom_of_the_Press_and_Libel_Through_the_Prism_of_Halacha-1.mp3

They made bells of pure gold, and they put the bells among the pomegranates on the hem of the me'il, all around among the pomegranates.

Shmos 39:25

Chazal say the *me'il* atoned for the sin of *lashon hara*: "Let something that emits sound come and atone for acts of emitting sound" (Arachin 16a).

Contemporary *poskim* discuss whether criticizing or sharing negative information about public figures in the press is prohibited as *lashon hara*.

Printing false information would certainly violate *motzi sheim ra*, but publicizing accurate information about elected officials may be permitted in certain circumstances in order to enable the public to make informed decisions about such officials and hold them accountable. A person elected to public office usually consents to such publication for this reason. This can perhaps be compared to a ruling of the Shvus Yaakov, who writes that since awareness of what is going on in the world, e.g., wars, is sometimes necessary, such information may be read on Shabbos.

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky and R' Eliezer Waldenberg permit writing negative book reviews, because a writer's publication of a book implies that he consents to public scrutiny of his writings.