

The Missing Facts, Motives, and Hidden Malice in My Ex-Wife's Articles about Me

A Response
By Marc Gafni

Let me begin by saying that I never wanted to write this piece. In fact, I have tried to stay silent about it for nearly ten years.

I only write because, in the interest of truth and fairness, I feel compelled to speak up and refute the ongoing tapestry of lies, distortions and misstatements that my ex-wife Chaya has been spreading about me since 2006. Over the years, she has been posted increasingly histrionic and malicious diatribes.

In each piece Chaya writes, she dramatically declares that “I am breaking the silence.” She claims that she is taking great risks in telling her story—and that she is writing on behalf of other ‘victims’. But, the truth is that Chaya, as I will show, is no victim. And she is not breaking any silence. Chaya has not stopped talking for the last ten years—talking deceptively, with malicious intent and self-dramatizing crocodile tears.

I have been the one who has been silent.

So, finally, I have to respond directly to the outright falsehoods, distortions, and unsubstantiated speculations with which Chaya has attempted to destroy my reputation, interfere with my personal and professional relationships, and create disharmony in my life.

Chaya’s writing, in which she grandly claims to speak for all ‘victims’, is actually an offense to the true victims of abuse and sexual violence. Chaya has personally attacked me in online forums, sent slanderous letters sent to places where I have been invited to lecture, and most recently in five articles

published in the Israeli press and in online blogs. She has repeatedly mischaracterized my conduct in our relationship as abusive. Now, she has helped inspire a major public smear campaign that threatens to destroy my credibility and my ability to do my work.

It is extremely painful for me to have to discuss my ex-wife's character, or our relationship, in public. Airing personal grievances in public forums has always seemed to me like a violation of our intimate relationships. At this point, I really have no choice but to tell the story.

[Here](#), I and members of the board of Center for Integral Wisdom discuss other aspects of the smear campaign that has gone on in the press since December, 2015, and that goes back more than ten years. This article speaks only to the claims Chaya has made, to the motives that appear to be behind them, and especially to her character as a complainant.

Who am I?

Let me start by saying who I am. I am a writer, a thinker, and a lover of people and of community. My life has been committed to evolving the source code of culture and consciousness, and to evolving our understanding of love. For many years, I sought for this in Jewish wisdom and community. Though I still adore the Hebrew wisdom tradition, my current teaching draws more on contemporary evolutionary theory and biology, as well as cross-cultural spiritual understandings about reality. Because I believe deeply that love is both transpersonal and deeply personal, a lot of my work has been done in relationships—friendships, professional partnerships, practice communities, and romantic and sometimes sexual relationships. In this, as in everything else, I have made mistakes. Like most human beings, I am a work in progress.

Yet, I have placed my calling as a writer, teacher, and creator of community before almost any other value in my life.

This has at times been a cause of suffering to my family and to some of my intimate partners. I deeply regret this, in more ways than I can say. Yet I continue to believe that the most significant thing I can do with my life, the best contribution I can make to alleviate suffering on this planet of ours, is to evolve, articulate and inspire new frameworks of meaning that transform for the good the way we experience and respond to our reality. Among these is the transformation of the way we understand love and Eros.

In the last five years, through the Center for Integral Wisdom, I have been blessed to work with a community of brilliant colleagues, who have come together because they too have a call to this work. Our relationships are collegial, loving and deeply satisfying. These associations are based on a profound recognition of shared consciousness.

I cannot be true to either this work or to my partners in the work without speaking honestly to these attacks.

The Destructive Side of Social Media

There is more than enough material in some of the press reports and in many of the online personal attacks to warrant extensive litigation. These articles and statements contain dozens of assertions about my behavior that are demonstrably untrue.

Worst of all is the insidious defilement of language through a kind of childish name calling that violates both my dignity and their own. Chaya and her posse have not seen or spoken to me in more than ten years. Yet, they feel free to throw around words like ‘monster’ or ‘sociopath’ or ‘fiend’ or ‘predator’ that have nothing to do with who I am. Yet because she was married to me, and claims to speak from personal experience, many people believe her. Language is powerful. And despite evidence that much of what is written on the Internet is untrue, many people take it seriously.

We are living in a time when social media can be brilliantly deployed to call out wrongs that would never be addressed in our legal system. Powerless people, for the first time, are being given voice against the powerful—witness the

use of Internet and social media in the Black Lives Matter movement, or by feminist activists to call out sexism on Facebook.

One important result of this is that women who have been sexually or emotionally abused can, for almost the first time in history, speak up about their situation and receive a hearing. This is one of the most important developments of post-modern life.

Yet along with this, there's been a parallel, and very disturbing development: the growing practice of Internet witch-hunting. A demonizing story—sometimes true, but just as often false, or radically distorted and misinterpreted-- can be circulated around the world of online media, and brutally damage an individual's reputation. Words like 'predator' and 'sociopath' are today's equivalent of 'witch.' Attach them to the name of someone you don't like, and you automatically cause people to look at them differently. If no real evidence exists—hey, make it up! Twist someone's life to reframe it as a narrative of transgression. And if they are a public figure—well, pretty much anything goes.

This is what has happened—and continues to happen—in this case. These deceptive and false claims, from Chaya and one or two others, have now become the basis of an organized and widely disseminated smear campaign against me. As of this writing, the Jewish press is still featuring articles that repeat these smears. Reading these accounts, most of them essentially based on Chaya's 'testimony', has left me flabbergasted and, I admit, almost speechless, as though I had been caught in someone else's nightmare.

As a white male with enormous opportunity and privilege, I would feel ridiculous in claiming to be a victim. Yet, there is no question that I am now the target of intense negative press, much of it based on Chaya's 'testimony' over the last ten years. As a result, people who have been my friends are afraid to be seen defending me. Others who personally dislike me, feel competitive with me, or just enjoy the thrill of joining in the chorus of damning another person, concur triumphantly that

“Gafni doesn’t deserve to be teaching” Many well-intentioned people sign petitions against me, because they want to be in the club of the virtuous and believe what they read.

At the same time I was gratified that dozens of my colleagues and virtually all of our board members have stood in integrity with me. You can see some of their testimony [HERE](#).

The Secret Smear

Chaya’s Times of Israel Opinion piece (January 2016), written in the form of a diary, is so full of inaccuracies and histrionic mischaracterizations that it would take this entire document to answer them. However, that piece is mild compared to the ten-page screed that Chaya and a few of her friends have been circulating in secret since 2008. This 2008 letter has been systematically sent to every institution that wanted to invite me to teach or lecture. Anyone reading it would be horrified by the person it depicts—as am I. That person is certainly not me.

This extraordinary document calls me a predator and a child rapist—both absolutely untrue. It claims that I abused my kids—something they would be the first to deny. It says, that I ‘seduce people into my circle and take pleasure in destroying them’, that I exhibit a ‘Hitlerian level of charisma’. It describes what the writers call my ‘sexual predilections’ with the clear implication that my sexual behavior (which is actually quite ordinary) is somehow unusual or aberrant. It calls me a ‘monster of a man.’ And much else.

This 2008 letter has done much to create the widespread assumption that Marc Gafni is a very bad person. It is one of the core factors that gives power to the current smear campaign.

The 2008 letter was always circulated in secret. Chaya and her friends claimed that I would exact ‘reprisals’ should I learn of the letters—another completely false allegation. (Anyone who knows me knows that when it comes to conflict, I am a total wuss. Far from exacting ‘reprisals’, I am much more

likely to write an email asking my attackers to meet and heal the issues between us.)

So, until a colleague sent me a copy of the letter in January, 2016, I never knew what was being said. Therefore, I was not able to refute these distorted claims and outright fictions. Most of these claims are absolutely false—literally bald-faced lies. The very few that have some factual basis are deliberately distorted. The letter is written in highly emotive and dramatic language (drama is Chaya's specialty). One of its claims is that Marc Gafni is so 'demonically' persuasive that no one should risk speaking with him. The letter claims that it would be dangerous to listen to my side of the story, or even check facts.

As a result, many well-meaning people have simply assumed that I have a terrible history of abuse and predation that was somehow kept secret until Chaya and her friends 'spoke out.'

By demonizing me in this way, she and her posse have been able to avoid any investigation into the facts that would expose their false complaints.

Why Does She Write these Things?

In a later section of this article, I will discuss the events around my breakup with Chaya in 2002 and 2003. The end of the marriage was difficult, as I will explain later. I take much responsibility for that, and deeply regret that I did not handle it more elegantly. I have often apologized to Chaya, both in private and in the context of our couple's counseling. Chaya also apologized—both of us in tears—for her own behavior during the last phase of the marriage. We both understood at the time that neither of us was the victim or the villain. We had loved each other and hurt each other. We were both powerful. We were both powerless. We were both responsible.

Our divorce was initially friendly. I provided for Chaya financially, paid for her travel and schooling, and made myself available for lots of conversation. She called me often to chat.

“You need to die or disappear so I can get on with my life”

Then, in 2006, two years after our separation, Chaya called me with an unexpected request. She asked me to return to Jewish Orthodoxy and re-marry her. I gently, and in the most loving way I could, refused. Our marriage had been far too unhappy for me to want to get back into it.

She then confessed that she had become involved with a new guy—Hillel Lester, whom she later married—and wanted to get engaged to him. But, she told me, I loomed so large in her life (two years after our separation!) that I would have to ‘die or disappear’ in order for her to be able to be with someone else. It seemed from her words that my very existence in Israel and in the public sphere of the Jewish world made her compare me to her new boyfriend in a way that made him and other men seem less desirable.

It was just a couple of months after this conversation, in May 2006, that Chaya wrote her first public letter of attack. More ominously, (according to Chaya’s own testimony to my colleague Dr. Ruth Eldar) she personally instigated and helped organize false complaints of sexual harassment against me in Israel.

Chaya’s narrative about me cannot be understood without understanding something about her motives. I believe that the core motivation for all of her attacks on me was an attempt to punish me for not loving her in the way she felt she should have been loved. But even more deeply, her desire was to remove me from her field, so that my public life would not continually remind her that she was not part of it.

False Claims of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a felony in Israel. If I had been found guilty of such complaints, I would have gone to jail. As it happened, the police found these complaints so unbelievable and without merit that they refused to register the complaints

at all.

However, Chaya and her friends were not deterred by mere facts. They called a meeting of my community, Bayit Chadash. There, according to a legal affidavit from a person present at the meeting, it was dramatically 'revealed' that legal complaints had been registered by the Israeli police, the clear implication being that I was now wanted by the Israeli police. They had their lawyer call to warn me that I was in danger of imminent arrest. All of this was not true.

They convinced my partner Avram Leader and members of the board to denounce me saying that police complaints had been registered. Avram even wrote a letter saying that he had read the women's depositions and would stake his life on the fact that they were true. (Several years later, in an email to me, Avram denied that he had ever read any depositions, and said that what he knew was 'true' was that I had had relationships with the women 'named'.)

The fact that the complaints were not registered was only discovered in 2014 by Nitza Cohen, an Israeli lawyer who was able to look into the police files, and found no record of any complaint.

For eight years, Chaya and her posse *pretended to me, to everyone we knew in common, to the public and to the Israeli press that I was 'wanted' by the Israeli police for sexual harassment*. This allowed her small group to essentially take down Bayit Chadash, which I had founded in Israel and which was considered by many to be an important model for a modern version of post-orthodox Jewish mysticism. It began the narrative of Gafni as 'disgraced rabbi' that persists to this day.

It also forced me to leave Israel. I knew that I had hundreds of emails from the so-called complainants, going back two years and more, that expressed clearly that the relationships to have been consensual, loving and above all, acts of mutual friendship. But this is where it gets complicated.

To protect herself, one of the complainants, who worked closely with Chaya) had taken my computer to be cleaned. During this time, she had deleted these emails and instant messages from my computer. For me to recover my emails from the computer was necessary to show the falsity of the complaints, which I had been assured had actually been registered. To do this, I needed to retrieve that computer from New York, where I had left it before my flight to Israel. My lawyer told me that I should leave Israel until the emails were retrieved.

In the meantime, the false complaints (which, remember, were not only false, but had even been registered by the police!) were presented to the press and to my community as true. The 'reports' were delivered to the community in a tone of hysteria which cynically adopted the trope of victimization. The false complaints literally tore the Bayit Chadash movement, and my life apart.

The story of my 'disgrace' was covered in Israeli and Jewish papers and all over the web. I was forced to go silent for two years. For a long time I did not know if the computer experts my lawyer had hired would be able to recover the documentation to fully refute the complaints. Remember, that if I had not been able to recover this material, then had I returned to Israel, I might have been false convicted of sexual harassment and jailed.

All of this was more than fine with Chaya. She not only organized, by her own admission, the false complaints, she also hid the fact that there were actually no complaints registered.

These two actions of hers destroyed almost everything precious in my life. My calling, teaching, physical home, religious community, country, lineage, movement-building capacity, a thousand relationships of trust around the world, a television show, a professorship, all came crashing down. I landed in Israel on May 11 2006 and my life was beautiful. By May 12th my life had –at least for a time –been effectively

destroyed. All of this was organized, aided and abetted by Chaya.

Chaya's first letter of attack was circulated online at that time. In this 2006 letter, which she calls a 'deposition', she insists that her name not be used. She describes herself as my ex-wife, and along with many factually distorted claims about me, imputes to me many forms of pathology. She calls me a narcissist, a sociopath, a sex addict, and a person with an incurable character disorder. Chaya had no professional training or clinical experience in the field of psychology, though she had certainly read some pop psychology books. Her 'diagnoses' were strongly refuted by professional counselors with whom I consulted directly.

Character Attacks

In 2008, it became clear that I possessed documentary evidence to refute the false claims of sexual harassment. At that point, Chaya and her posse stopped claiming that I had sexually harassed members of the community. Instead, they stepped up their attacks on my character—using language that made me out to be a kind of demon in human guise. Though allegations of sexual harassment can be refuted, it is hard to refute character attacks.

In the opening paragraphs of this post I mentioned some of the milder falsehoods (and they weren't even that mild!) contained in that 2008 letter.

What motivated the escalation of the character attacks seems to have been this: she and her friends were deliberately covering up the fact that they had made false complaints. Rage and wounded pride undoubtedly helped motivate her to create her novelized version of my character. But there was also a need to blow enough smoke around me to take attention away from the fact that she and her friends lied to the community and the police about our relationships, and then continued to lie about the fact that the complaints had not been registered or accepted by the police.

In a 2015 meeting with Dr. Ruth Eldar, (see Dr Eldar's account at the end of this document) Chaya admits proudly that she organized the false complaints of sexual harassment, and that she and her lawyer knew that the police had refused to register the complaints. Nonetheless, Chaya and her posse continued to claim for 8 years that I was 'wanted' by the Israeli police on allegations of sexual harassment. Chaya and her friends continued to circulate these claims about police complaints and to allow me and others (including the Israeli press) to believe that I had been accused of sexual harassment. They stopped only when it became clear that I had documentation to prove the 'complaints' false. It seems clear that the 'reprisals' they claim to fear is simply the possibility that I would publish the documentation that shows they lied.

I suspect, also, that demonizing me helps her avoid any internal remorse she might feel at what she has done to a former intimate partner. After all, if she can convince people that Marc is a 'fiend' with 'demonic power', then what does it matter if the 'facts' she cites are untrue and never happened? Sort of like the cop who plants evidence and justifies himself by saying that he 'knows' the person is guilty despite the absence of real evidence. DNA evidence now shows that many people who 'confessed' or were 'proven' guilty by false police evidence or false witness, were in fact innocent.

Chaya is not the only person involved in this, as is made clear in Clint Fuhs' essay called [Anatomy of a Smear](#). However, since she identifies herself as my ex-wife, her private and public statements hold a lot of credibility for readers. After all, she was married to me, she is speaking in the first person, and claiming to have had a first-person experience of me. Moreover, her language—again and again she calls herself my 'victim', and talks about how she is 'breaking the silence' and 'speaking out' despite the terrible risk (what risk?) is a cynical attempt to associate herself with the truly victimized—the millions of women who have been victims of genuine, and truly terrible, abuse from spouses, family members, and strangers.

Let me say here that I am sickened by the way women have been abused and silenced almost since the beginning of history. I stand in the strongest possible way against all forms of abuse. I also deeply regret any way that I may have caused emotional hurt to Chaya or anyone else. Yet none of this has anything to do with Chaya's radical distortions of my life and motives, or of her false claims regarding my actions in our marriage. She makes her life into high drama, with herself cast as innocent dupe and me as the monstrous abusing husband. She continually mischaracterizes my lovers as victims. In this way, she infantilizes and disempowers women whom I genuinely loved and respected, and who were full consensual participants—not victims-- in relationships that we perceived at the time as mutual and loving.

I was a Prop

The most honest statement in this series of posts was in Chaya's last piece. In a comment on one of Chaya's blog-posts about me, another woman asked why Chaya hasn't taken responsibility for her own part in the relationship. In response, Chaya wrote this: "I used Gafni. He was a "fast ticket to power". I used him for" – again quoting Chaya, "my own selfish, small-hearted, deeply-scheming need to be seen and drive for power. I wed him out of a whole retinue of ulterior motives."

One of these motives was her desire to use my insights and relationships for her own career. Chaya is ambitious, but, at least when I knew her, has little taste for hard work. Her forte is poetry and emotion, not rigor. As anyone who knows me can attest, I work incredibly hard on my books, teachings, and on my relationships with colleagues and students. Chaya seems to have believed that she could co-opt my hard-won insights to enhance her own image as a poet and 'priestess'. (One of the few pieces she contributed to my first book was the dedication, which she wrote herself. It read, "To Cary, poet and priestess.")

As I said earlier, I am far from being a perfect husband or partner. There is much in my relationship with Chaya that I deeply regret. That said, during the seven years I lived with Chaya, I experienced myself as essentially a prop for her life-long performance. I still am. Much of Chaya's professional life is directly organized around me. She made me (or rather, her distorted version of me) the subject of her Master's thesis at California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). According to people who know her, the 'teachings' she shares in her little programs are based on teachings she heard from me, during our marriage and before. Now, she is creating a public profile as my victimized ex-wife. In other words, Chaya continues to define herself through her relationship to me. She has continued to use my energy and person as the source of her advancement. If you read her posts carefully, you begin to recognize that the over-riding energy is self-dramatization. She makes herself the heroine in a self-invented narrative in which I am given the role of victimizing husband.

"Look at me!" she cries out. "Do you see how shiny I am"? Hijacking and exploiting the narrative trope of victimhood has proved more profitable to her than the bad poetry which is her usual form of public speech. It draws more accolades, more approval and makes her appear far more righteous. It turns her, basically, into a feminist heroine. I am the foil in her drama. She makes herself the center, and I, the ex-husband, have become a prop in her play.

This has been a core dynamic between us from the start. I almost never felt Chaya loving me as a person. She was always intent on getting the most out of being on the 'Gafni ride'—which in those days was an exciting one. My experience throughout those years was that she using my energy and my status as a 'rock-star rabbi', but never seeing me, or holding me, or partnering with me in the ways that my soul yearned for.

I rarely felt her true participation in our marriage.

Despite the fact that we had very little money, she was never willing to contribute to our income. “Why should I have to work?” she often said. Instead, she insisted that I pay for her graduate study—which I did, not only while we were married, but even later, after our divorce. When the situation required her to help with administrative tasks for Bayit Chadash, she resented it deeply, though she was happy to play the role of Rebbe’s wife in public, reading poetry during Sabbath services, and presiding over the Friday night meals that our community put on.

Don’t get me wrong: I was happy to support Chaya’s study, and to open professional doors for her. I like to help people, especially those I love. But I never felt loved or seen by her. Ultimately, that is why, after four years of a difficult marriage, I sought love and intimacy elsewhere. It is why I eventually felt compelled to leave her. I will say more about this later in the article.

Why Did She Write these Things?

After four years of faithful marriage, during which I was consistently unable to take rest in Chaya, I had fallen deeply in love with E, a woman with whom I was co-teaching. Chaya, understandably, felt rejected and hurt. But more than that, as I will show later, she was angry.

I had chosen another woman over her, and to add insult to injury, the woman I had chosen was professionally successful in a way that Chaya could not match. I was teaching with this other woman, something I had never been willing to do with her. Chaya wanted to be featured in my public programs, but she didn’t know how to hold the energy in a room of people. Instead of flowing with an audience, she would get lost in her own dramatic verbiage, often losing touch with the people around her. Chaya’s pride seems to have been wounded as much by the fact that I ‘chose’ E over her as a teaching partner, as by the fact that I had fallen in love with her. And by the fact that I had called Chaya out on what

appeared to me and others to be the self-indulgent grandstanding in her writing and teaching. My intention in this was to give her helpful feedback. She didn't see it like this.

Normal Hurt and Malicious Hurt

A great Hasidic master once wrote, "Don't cry more than it hurts". (Yes, I did just say that!) In the scenario I will describe below, we all – myself included—experienced emotional hurt. We hurt each other and were hurt ourselves. Chaya also did some very hurtful things to me, for which she apologized and for which I long ago forgave her.

All of this was in the normal arc of human relationship, which includes, joy, pain, loss, betrayal and ecstasy. The truth is that neither Chaya nor I were victims. We were two adults in the dance of relationship. We each had a right to feel hurt. We each had a right at times to feel angry. Yet, there is a vast difference between the emotional hurt that occurs in the course of any bad marriage, and the hurt inflicted by jealousy and malice gone wild. There is a big difference between acknowledging and speaking up about emotional hurt, and denouncing a partner under the guise of 'victim protection' when your words are actually based on the wish to exact vengeance for one's own wounded pride, or to take down someone perceived as a rival.

As I said earlier, I readily acknowledge that Chaya felt hurt in the course of our mismatched marriage. I have apologized to Chaya for any hurt that she experienced, not once but many times in 2004, 2005 and 2006. She also apologized to me, in tears, for the hurt that she inflicted on me. Moreover, I had called her out on what appeared to me as a kind of self-indulgent grandstanding in her teaching, writing and being. Her pride was wounded. Her ego was hurt. And she was furious.

That said, Chaya did some incredibly hurtful things throughout our marriage, which are crucial to understanding why things happened as they did. However, I've long ago forgiven her for all this.

As you will see if you read '[Anatomy of a Smear](#)', no one in Chaya's group of 'friends' is actually a victim. (Most of them weren't her friends, either.) Each of them is and was a fully powerful adult. All participated in fully consensual, adult and, by their own testimony at the time, loving relationships with me. In other words, they had sex with me because they liked me, desired me, felt attracted to me. We were friends—often deep friends. There are real victims in the world, genuine victims of sexual violence and misogyny, who desperately need our love and support. Chaya and the group of women she calls her “g-d fearing, decent, innocent young friends” do not belong on that victim list. They were all in equal partnerships with me. (In fact, one of Chaya's reasons for refusing to accept any form of feedback from me was the fact that, as she often said, she was my equal!)

Chaya's hijacking of the victim narrative is an example of a phenomenon taking place in many arenas of culture. There are several current books that discuss this kind of hijacking, including Alan Dershowitz's *The Abuse Excuse*, Laura Kipnis's *A Female Thing*, Christina Hoff Sommers' *The Death of Feminism and a Therapeutic Culture*, David Sykes' *A Nation of Victims* and many more.

The Mean Gafni Meme

To point out the full level of distortion and falsehood in Chaya's first *Times of Israel* piece (2016), I would need to quote and comment on every single line. That is beyond the scope of this even such a lengthy article as this one! Chaya uses a diary form (not her actual diary) to paint a picture of a marriage where she is berated, yelled at for forgetting an email, and in which she feels miserable. She calls on God to witness her pain. She looks very hard for evidence of physical abuse. She can find none, other than the fact that during an argument, I pulled a chair out from under me. This is true—the argument in question was one in which she was berating me horribly and falsely. This was something she often did. Both of us were screamers—but she was much better at it

than I was.

She repeats again the truly preposterous claim made in her 2006 letter that she participated in some significant way in writing of my book *Soul Prints*. She also claimed—absurdly-- to my colleague Dr. Ruth Eldar that she also wrote my doctorate and in an earlier letter claims as well to have written significant portions of *Mystery of Love*. This is all so self evidently absurd and so easy to document as untrue that I do not know weather to laugh or to cry when I read it. (To date it is perhaps worth mentioning that I have more than ten books I have published. Chaya has yet to publish one.

Chaya then goes on to talk about the two relationships I had during our marriage-- with my teaching partner Erica and with a woman in Oxford.

Throughout the piece she dons the mantle of the powerless, innocent and helpless victim who has been horribly abused by a husband whom she -- who she alternatively calls a fiend, sociopath, marauder, monstrosity of a man, predator etc.

She describes herself as “furious for the bruised dozens of victims.... Furious for “my nightmares that still won’t end”. She prays with great pathos, “Please God protect us from the smiling sociopaths whose hands drip with candy”. She returns again to the theme of the powerful vs. the powerless ,with me placed in the role of the powerful who is silencing the victims. She herself is the powerless one who is just now having the courage to claim her voice. (This, after ten years of publically attacking me in print and online.) Again and again she uses the victim mantle to cover her own shadow and especially to cover up the fact that she organized false complaints against me, and tried (unsuccessfully) to have them registered with the police, and then put the false story in the world that they had been registered which had devastating impact on myself, my children, and on thousands of other people in so many ways.

She talks about the risk she runs in writing. She claims to be acting bravely for the sake of the victims. “Putting this two-decade chronicle into print is a risk for me.^[SEP]Everyone who cares about me is begging me to just “Keep quiet”.^[SEP]And

yet I can't. So, in honor of them, I leave out my name.^[L]_[SEP]But in honor of the victims I share my story. Yes, there is a risk to writing this "aloud." But there is also a risk to staying silent, staying safe. Twenty years and untold numbers of victims later, I have learned that staying safe can also be risky business".

Chaya manages not only to be the victim, but also the heroine, the risk-taking brave protector who is –through her courage, saving future victims. And to do it under a cloak of anonymity

Who is acting sociopathically here? This is a woman who has been lying about me for ten years. Is she really claiming that she is the victim?

Filling in the Back Story

When Chaya and I decided to end our relationship, we did a profound and potent process of counseling with a highly respected (and very expensive) couples' therapist.

These were the most honest talks we ever had. I still have our written notes from the many hours in that deep truth space. I will refer to them below. Each of us owned both the beauty and the shadow of our encounter. We each thanked each other the very beautiful and large gifts we had given each other. We each owned our part in what went wrong. Together with the therapist. Every time Chaya tried to slip into the victim narrative, the counselor challenged her. The counselor also challenged me when I seemed to veer off-course and get lost in my anger at Chaya. We both took full responsibility. We cried and laughed together. It was – paradoxically-- one of the best times in our marriage.

Her full-scale abuse victim narrative began, as I've said, after I refused to re-marry her. Shortly after that, the claims of sexual harassment were made. Because I needed to restore deleted emails from my computer in order to produce evidence to refute the complaints. I went silent while waiting for the restoration.

This proved to be an enormous mistake. In my silence, the complaint narrative took on a life of its own. I have already

detailed in a [separate piece](#) the dynamic they unleashed and the damage they caused to the community and to my life. [Mariana Caplan has also written about this](#). The intense demonization Chaya engaged in ignored our process with the counselor. It took hurts that were part of the normal arc of human relationships, and renarrated them as monstrous transgressions, creating a tale that was light years away from what had actually occurred. The stories and claims grew more exaggerated and shocking by the week.

When Chaya's first victim-letter came out in 2006, many people were convinced by it. I was urged by many people to respond, but held back. First, at the time I believed, as did my whole team, the lie put forth by Chaya that the police had registered their (false) complaints of sexual harassment. I and my team were in the process of collecting the material that would establish my innocence, and that process took priority. Without that evidence, –as Chaya knew well—I felt proscribed from speaking in public.

The second reason I did not respond was that I literally did not know how to do so without sharing what I knew about her, and to share those truths went against my basic ethics about privacy in relationship. Despite everything, I did not want to join her in violating our private space. I loathed the notion of responding to her public attack with a counter attack.

I did write, some two years later, in 2008, a private statement, which I shared with several close friends.

Below is part of that letter, part of which I am sharing –reluctantly –for the first time in public. It is almost entirely as I wrote it a decade ago, though I have taken out sections that repeat what I have written above.

I wrote this letter to myself. It was not written in public prose. I am leaving it as I wrote it then, because it conveys some of my experience then. Any substantive additions are in brackets. Like almost all of my writing the sections are numbered. I share it because it is the most direct response to her core statements from her very first post in 2006. Her statements seem credible because they are stated as first-

person experience. As we all know, however, first person testimony should be subject to cross-examination in order for something like the truth to emerge. This response letter that I wrote privately a decade ago, effectively provides at least some dimension of the missing cross examination of Chaya's "testimony". It fills in the necessary context to evaluate her recent round of writing as well.

Some of what I originally wrote in that letter repeats what I have said earlier. I have removed most of the repetitions, except for what is important for flow.

1) My former wife Chaya wrote a public letter about me {in 2006}. Much of what was said in the letter was distorted or inaccurate. I had decided at the time to ignore it, but as I move forward with my life several people have asked for a public clarification. I offer this clarification reluctantly, since it necessitates public discussion of private issues, which I believe are better discussed in private mediated contexts.

2) I have no desire to hurt Chaya in any way. God forbid. Indeed, I am only writing this letter, even in private, because Chaya began a public discourse through her letter. Sadly and awfully, she established the "public letter" as the means of correspondence between us.

3) It is not difficult to make any failed relationship sound fairly horrible. I will not respond to most of the points in Chaya's letter for reasons of grace and dignity. But some of the key ones demand response. In what follows I will also speak of my own contributions to the end of the marriage, as honestly as possible.

4) Chaya and Physical Violence

Chaya clearly wanted to make a claim in her letter that I was somehow violent during our marriage. The best that she

could come up was her claim that I pulled out a chair from under her during a particularly heated argument. She is right about this. I apologized then and I would apologize now. This happened during the argument in which I felt most pushed to my edge with Chaya. My frustration expressed itself in that manner. It was the only time that something like that ever happened. I never laid a hand on Chaya in any shape or form, not even during our most heated –and they were heated – exchanges.

Anyone who knows me at all knows that I am not a physically violent person. I suffered great physical violence when I was a child. The result was that I was unable to physically discipline my own children, even when some parents might have thought it appropriate. The rumor of my being physically violent began with my first marriage; it was begun by my first wife's parents after our divorce. My first wife wrote a letter (which I retain on file) in which she apologizes for this rumor and affirms that was in no sense correct.

What Chaya somehow neglects to mention is that she herself was physically violent throughout our marriage. She is physically very strong, and would often strike me or scratch me when she was angry. The incident described below was the most dramatic, but far from the only incident of Chaya's intense physical violence. Her extensive domestic violence, has been left out of the story. In fact, at some point in our marriage, my fear of her outbreaks became part of the terrain of our marriage, causing me to walk on eggshells around her.

5) Open Marriage: Oxford, and the Beginning of the End

While I was doing my doctorate at Oxford, Chaya and I discussed the possibility of having a more open marriage. During the therapeutic process that Chaya and I did before our divorce {in 2003-2004} from which I retain the written records, she acknowledged both that these conversations took place, and that I had reason to believe that she had given her

implicit consent to the possibility of a more open marriage. She even described the kind of person she had suggested it would be okay for me to have an extra-marital liaison with. The person I chose matched that description perfectly.

We had discussed open marriage specifically in light of what Reb Zalman Shacter had told us about his own practice of open marriage at a certain stage of his life. (Zalman had shared this information publicly as well as with both of us). During much of his life, well into his 60s, Zalman had ongoing liaisons with dozens of people, including affairs with staff, liaisons with his students and open relationships of more and of less transparent nature. This has been confirmed over the years by many different people who knew him well at different times.

In light of my conversation with Chaya about open marriage, and because I was finding it very hard to connect with Chaya during our time at Oxford, I began an involvement with a fellow student at Oxford. I was not quite certain of what the rules were about our new agreement. So, the first time Chaya asked about this woman, I denied having the relationship.

The second time Chaya asked about this relationship, she prefaced her request by saying that if it was true, she was fine about it. After all, she said, we had had the conversation about this very possibility. At that point, I shared the involvement with her.

In response, Chaya went into a several-days-long fury. She screamed, again and again and again, with intense rage, saying:

“I will destroy you! I will destroy you!”

“I am a princess - how dare you do this to me?”

Nothing I could say or do abated her rage.

Finally, Chaya made a demand, almost literally for a pound of flesh, as the price for “not destroying you and Bayit Chadash. (She knew that the Bayit Chadash community was what I truly loved and cared about most in the world).

She asked me to put my hands down and to let her hit me for as many times as she wanted, for as long as she

wanted, as hard as she could. I pleaded in tears for her to not do this. My mother--as Chaya knew very well-- had often done the same thing during my early youth. She would ask for me to lower my hands and not defend myself while she hit me. It was the most traumatic memory of my younger life.

Despite my rather desperate pleas, Chaya would not be dissuaded. She wanted what she seemed strangely to think of as her due. She had forgotten her implicit agreement to open marriage, and all of our discussions around it. She wanted what I supposed she saw as her vengeance, her pound of flesh, her punishment to inflict on me. Her pride was wounded. How could I choose anyone except her?

She struck with all of her considerable force and fury, screaming on the top of her lungs, "I am a princess! I am a princess! How dare you! How dare you!"

Chaya kept talking, saying that she was accessing her Kali. I said, "You are using Kali as a mask for abuse. Don't do it, love." She would not be dissuaded.

On that day, something broke inside of me.

When we talked about this incident in our Boulder therapeutic process, she apologized profusely for it and took some real measure of responsibility for what she had done. This is written up in our notes from that process. Later however—after the false complaints two years ago—her story seems to have regressed to her pre-therapy stance about it.

6) Chaya's Tendency to Performative Histrionics:

I have already spoken about Chaya's love for dramatically reading her own poetry in public. When she did this, she invariably failed to notice the people around her. Often she would go on and on, despite the clear discomfort of the people around her. More disturbingly, she also displayed this tendency in her personal life. Here is one incident among many:

Chaya's grandfather was dying. We were at his death-bed, during what were literally his last moments. Her grandfather and I liked each other. We recognized each other in a quiet way, as did Chaya's dad and I. I was honored to be there at

this moment, and had stepped into the background as the family gathered around his bed. In the midst of this hushed scene, Chaya suddenly stepped into center stage. She started reciting some sort of verse and chanting loudly. What she was doing was completely incongruent with the atmosphere in the room. It was radically out of sync with the mood, and with what was needed by her grandfather and her relatives, who were simply trying to honor their relative in his dying.

Chaya's action at that moment was all about Chaya and her drama. She seemed to have no sense of what the people in the room needed, or even what was appropriate. I tried gently to encourage her to step back, but she got furious with me. Finally, one of her female relatives—her aunt, I believe-- said something to the effect of "Shut up, Chaya" and drew her out of the room.

As Chaya was being escorted from the room, her eyes met mine. It was a bad moment. She could feel me seeing her, and I could feel her shame that she had exposed her narcissism and that I had seen it. I did not know how to pretend I had not seen it. Later, I tried to raise this with Chaya. She exploded in rage. If I were playing the game of amateur psychologizing, as she did in her letter, I would be tempted to point out that when Chaya's letter 'diagnosed' me as a narcissist, she might have been projecting her own narcissism onto me.

7) Chaya and Being Nice to Waiters

It was clearly wrong for E and I to enter into relationship before Chaya and I had divorced, and before E had disengaged from her own fiancé. I apologized for this to Chaya many times over. What I could not explain to Chaya why our marriage had begun to feel so wrong to me. I had felt this wrongness on an almost cellular level almost since the beginning of our marriage—and tried for years to ignore it.

The quality that disturbed me in Chaya was epitomized by the fact that she was not kind to waiters—or to anyone else in a service position. It may sound like a small thing, but for me it personified the core of the disconnect between us. When

I knew her, Chaya loved to pray. She often cries while she prays, in great drama and ecstasy. Especially if there was an audience—an actual audience, but also the audience she provides for herself—she enjoys displaying her tears, which she believes validate her profound spirituality.

In the same vein, Chaya loves to get up and recite one of her poems. She revels in being the center of attention, when all eyes affirm her shiny beauty. Anyone reading with half an ear for discernment can feel this same bid for attention in the histrionic language of her three recent posts.

Indeed, even in her letter attacking me she could not resist the impulse to scream “Look at me and see how profound and beautiful I am!” So in her original letter in 2006, she appended a poem she had written about freeing herself from my alleged tyranny. Pseudo-Pathos was the animating energy of Chaya’s inner life, at least during the time when we were together.

However, I never saw her demonstrate real caring towards other people. The ability to be loving and kind to another person for that person’s own sake--not as a role you’re playing --was not part of the Chaya I knew and wanted desperately to love. There are many examples which I could point out to illuminate this point.

Every time Chaya would be rude or cruel to a waiter---I use “waiter” here as an archetype for anyone in a service position--I would flinch. I would then challenge her practice of “tearful prayer,” saying “Chayale, true prayer is being good to waiters.” Her repeated casual rudeness to seemingly unimportant people is what began the very deep alienation that set in between us.

As much as Chaya’s letter shocked me, I had always sensed that she was capable of such cruel behavior if she was not honored as the shiny centerpiece of her world. In a real sense, it was that sense of disjunction between her professed self and her actual self that drove me away from her. I simply could not truly respect her.

8) I was entirely faithful to Chaya in every way for four years. I did everything I knew how to make life good for her, to open

doors for her professionally, to love her, to financially support her, and to include her in the services I conducted. I made the decision to do graduate work at Oxford partly to help her find a way to do a PhD. She had originally entered the doctoral program at Hebrew University, but the rigor of the Israeli academy and their insistence on precision and grounded insight (as opposed to flashes of shine), did not work for Chaya. She simply could not meet their bar.

I came up with the Oxford possibility much more for her than for myself. At the time, I did not want to leave Israel at all. It was actually exhausting for me to travel between Israel and Oxford, but I was happy to do it for the sake of our love and commitment. And it was I who persuaded the college to take her on as a graduate student.

Sadly, she could not complete the work. And our marriage did not make it either.

We did not make for three reasons.

First, because I felt increasingly alienated. I simply could not find Chaya's goodness. I could not feel that she loved me or saw me other than as a "rock-star rabbi" whose position added to her luster. Nor would she receive any form of real feedback. She was constantly affirming that because she was my equal (and, as she said on more than one occasion, a 'princess'), she did not need any feedback.

The second reason, as I have said, was that in 2002, I fell in love with another woman, E. In 2003, E asked me to leave Chaya and marry her. I remember where we were that day, what our room looked like at the Boulderado Hotel, and the moment I made a decision to leave Chaya for E.

The third reason that our marriage had to end was that I was slowly coming to terms with my naturally polyamorous sexuality.

This had been one of the core contradictions of my journey, and has caused countless difficulties in my life as a rabbi, simply because it took me a long time to own it and find a way to live it without secrecy or hiding. As an orthodox Jew, I had been brought up to regard anything other than strict

monogamy as “sinful” and in violation of the ethical and legal norms of Orthodox law. Yet I knew that my nature was polyamorous. Being polyamorous and orthodox Jewish is like being gay in Mississippi or South Carolina in the 1950’s. It simply does not work. Gay people in that situation hid their sexual behavior. And that is almost never a good idea—not only because it feels terrible, but because you are always in danger of blackmail, social opprobrium and professional disaster.

I fully own my responsibility in not facing up to my own sexuality in a more perfect way. But for years I was deeply confused about the right path. I apologized to Chaya many, many times for any and for all the hurt this caused her. I had several other relationships, both romantic and sexual, during my final years with Chaya. But, after Chaya and I had separated, and E and I had stepped apart somewhat, I determined to be transparent about my relationships. There were no relationships or liaisons in my life that I did not share with E.

I also want to affirm here, as the emails attest, that none of my sexual or romantic relationships were not in any way coercive, nor were they with students. At no time did I use my status as a rabbi or a spiritual counselor to seduce a woman, though obviously, in any relationship, the man’s status plays an unacknowledged role in attracting partners. All of these encounters—some short-term and others continuing over time-- were experienced as positive, equal, and loving by me, and to the best of my knowledge, by the women I was with. This is confirmed not by one or two emails but by literally dozens and dozens of email exchanges with each of the women I was involved with, as well as with E.

With that background, let me now fill in some relevant facts.

9) Vengeful Letters

Chaya wrote to me again and again about her anger at me and desire to exact vengeance. This correspondence covers the better part of the three years between 2003 and 2006.

Chaya wrote to both me and to E, expressing her “rage” at our involvement. Her attack on me in May 2006 (the false complaints she, by her own admission helped organize were from her perspective I believe justified as punishment from her.

Chaya was one of, perhaps THE major force behind this whole drama of the false complaints that brought down my organization in Israel; certainly her 2006 letter was a significant factor that led many people to believe the narrative that pathologized me.

One of Chaya’s many contributions to this event of May 2006 was the public letter that she circulated to many of my students, friends, and board members, in which she used clinical language borrowed from the DSM -in which she has no expertise or training- to pathologize me. Her core motive, as she has indicated, was revenge and the desire to take me out of her world. By borrowing feminist language of “defending and protecting the women” her letter hides her real motives behind the alleged intention to ‘defend and protect the women’—women who certainly needed neither defense from her nor protection from me.

10) Chaya places a Curse on E:

My involvement with E intensified after E asked me to leave Chaya and marry her. We were talking often, working together on books, and co-teaching courses and workshops. There was a magical quality in our conversation and in our teaching. There were also real problems, as there often are in such situations, which is why we didn’t end up together. E and I must have exchanged a thousand emails. She said to me as I boarded a plane to Israel the day of the false complaints, “You are the best friend I have ever had.” At the time, this was true for me as well.

Chaya, at some point in the year following our breakup, went to a woman in the orthodox quarter of Jerusalem and placed a curse on E’s life.

I don’t know how effective curses are, not being a believer in this kind of thing. I cite it simply because it shows Chaya’s malice. However, it is true that after the curse was laid, E

became very sick with a chronic illness that came close to threatening her life. I know this because Chaya told me that she had done this.

Chaya very much believed in the efficacy of these mystical curses. Her willingness to do this showed me the depth of her malice. It went beyond anything I thought Chaya capable of...

11) Chaya's Affair: "Sleeping with the Rebbe's Wife"

Chaya forgot to say a few things in her "tell all" letter. One thing she forgot to mention was the affair she had while we were still married, and still trying to work things out between us.

E and I had made a decision to step back so that I could really work with Chaya to try and rebuild our marriage, and so that E could try and make her relationship with her fiancé work out. During that time, we were actively working on the marriage, Chaya was having a major affair with a man named Kendall Ross.

Chaya did not tell me about her affair. I asked her several times if she was involved with someone. Each time she said 'No'. Finally, I told her that I knew her well, that I could tell she was sleeping with someone, and that it was totally fine with me. Sexual jealousy is not a part of my make-up. I told her, sincerely, with full open heart, "Enjoy, and let it be a blessing for you. Just let me know where you're at, and let's delay our marriage counseling until you know you want to step in." She expressed her appreciation to me, admitted to the affair, and that was that.

According to Chaya, Kendall was professionally employed as a "sexual partner".

Chaya would inform me-- at regular intervals and in a triumphant and spiteful tone-- just how sexually talented Kendall was. She told me that he satisfied her sexually in ways I was never able to do, due to what she pointed out as my lack of skill in this area. That was fine by itself--what surprised me was the sustained and intentional cruelty of her words, which seemed intended to diminish and hurt me. This was not pain

inflicted as byproduct of a great love, rather it was intentionally inflicted pain for no apparent purpose than malice--I suppose for the sake of some sort of petty vengeance.

At a critical point, the Kendall affair stood in the way of working on re-building the marriage. Without it, it's possible that we might have gotten back together.

Kendall has written an as-yet unpublished book about his affair with Chaya called "Sleeping with the Rebbe's Wife". Chaya called to tell me about this book--she was in great fear about it, because she did not want anyone to know she had had an affair, especially with someone who was basically a sex worker. I said to her then that being a sex worker, or what is now termed a sacred intimate is potentially noble and beautiful. She agreed but was desperately afraid that it would not play well in public. She was particularly angry that he seemed to regard his affair with her as a way of relating to me. I told her that he was just trying to come up with a clever title.

Chaya also shared with me that while she was in a committed exclusive relationship before our marriage - - actually living with a female lover, Sheva Chaya, in the old city of Jerusalem, that she had had a number of mini-affairs. She never told Sheva Chaya about her other sexual engagements.

I have no judgement about any of this. I get all of it. Moreover, I fully support the expression of sexual desire in women and men. I stand for the possibility that all people can feel free to experiment with their sexuality, hopefully with love and caring. I stand for a world in which it is entirely safe for women to express their sexuality with any gender or in any way. My point is simply that it is disingenuous to leave your own sexual story out of the narrative when you are casting stones at your former husband. When we live in glass houses we should have at least some humility about which stones we cast.

12) Chaya, "Fuck Zalman," and Blackmail

Chaya left Israel in Feb. 2003; We stopped living together at that time. From February until August there were various attempts at reconciliation. Chaya, as in the rest of our

marriage, did not earn her own living during this time. I supported all of her travels and study. She made no financial contribution to our support.

We divorced that summer, in August. The Jewish divorce was done by Rabbi Zalman Schacter. Zalman asked us to fill out a financial agreement that stipulated that from this point on, we would be divorced, and that all monies earned would be considered as separate monies.

We signed this agreement. Chaya went her way and I went mine.

Chaya, however, continued to draw on our account, in which all of the funds were earned by me, to pay all her bills, including her tuition at CIIS. When I initially challenged this she said that I would be reimbursed in the civil divorce settlement. Trusting her, I agreed. She then said to me, apparently innocently, "Is it ok if we file for our official divorce in Memphis?" She claimed that since this was where her parents lived, it would be easier for her. Again, I trusted her and consented.

She kept delaying the actual divorce, for reasons I did not understand. The actual filing for divorce happened almost a year later. As it turned out, in Tennessee law, all property and earnings are considered joint property until the actual civil divorce papers are filed with the state. So, not only did Chaya not pay back any of the money (earned solely by me) that she had used to pay for her tuition and expenses; she then demanded that I give her more than half of my income for the year after our divorce. She asked for a payout of about \$150,000.

I said three things in answer to this demand.

First, that this money was intended to buy my children apartments in Israel, which is the custom in Israel, where jobs are scarce and apartments are expensive. I told Chaya that I would be happy to honor her with a substantial sum of money, but that the amount she was asking would make it impossible to buy the children their apartments. She knew that this was what this money was set aside for. She was single, had no kids, and was fully capable of working or being supported by her

wealthy parents during her continuing education. On the other hand, my children, whom she claimed to love, had no other source of support other than myself. Her demands therefore would have a very adverse effect on their lives.

Her response—these are her exact words-- was “Fuck you and fuck your kids.”

I talked to her a second time. I said “Chaya- you have plenty of money - this money is for Eytan and Yair, whom you claimed to love, to buy apartments. Let’s put part of the money in an account for them—you can even control it--and split the rest.

Chaya’s basic response was again, “Fuck the kids.” In her inimitable style, as she took the money they needed for their future, she called them, wanting to get together with them in Israel for deep conversation. She even made them each beautiful little picture albums with lovely poetic words from her, about her time with them. This was classic Chaya: beautiful poetic words that are belied by her actions.

The second thing I pointed out to her was that we had signed an agreement with Zalman. He had agreed to do our Jewish divorce based on this agreement. In other words, we had agreed NOT to do exactly what Chaya was doing. We gave our word to each other, we signed a document before God and gave our word to Zalman.

When I reminded Chaya of this, she screamed at me in a rage. “Fuck Zalman and fuck the agreement!” she shouted, before slamming down the phone”.

Finally, after my attempts to argue with Chaya’s financial demands, she wrote an email to my lawyer, which was functionally a kind of blackmail note. She wrote that if I argued and the case went to court she could make it a “fault” divorce, claiming that the reason for divorce was my affair with E. She then told me in conversation that this would be in the public record and would “destroy me”. She said that if I wanted to teach and to save Bayit Chadash and everything I believed in, I had to accede to her request. I felt at the time that I had no choice but to accede to her financial blackmail.

13) Chaya's Pathologizing of Me

Chaya, who clearly feels rejected and dishonored, did not see anything problematic in offering a public, pathologizing diagnosis of my supposed 'pathology'. She quoted diagnostic material from the DSM, which she applied in what I can only call an imaginative way. The fact that she had no clinical experience or knowledge of this subject, other than some popular literature, did not deter her. It did not seem to occur to many of the readers of this article that an angry former wife who lacks self-reflection is not the best person to diagnose her former partner. Nor does it seem to have occurred to many people that when we make amateur diagnoses of others, we are very often projecting our own pathology onto them.

14) Let me be clear: *Her amateur diagnosis was fully refuted by all of the serious professionals I worked with over the years.* I did a committed process of inner work with professional counselors as I sought to regain my inner center after significant parts of my world fell apart in May 2006. Because of the web attacks, I also engaged in extensive professional evaluation in order to have third-party objective evaluation to counter the trial-by-Internet actively initiated and led in part by Chaya. {See in this regard [Peter Dunlap's evaluation](#) here and see the other evaluations [here](#) and [here](#).}

15) Chaya's Claims about my Sexuality and Pornography

Chaya also suggests in her letter that I somehow admitted to sexual addiction. This is completely untrue. First, because I am not a sex addict. If I was, I would simply say so and get treatment. Several therapists I have worked with will attest to this. I lived with Chaya monogamously for four years, and have lived many other monogamous stretches in my life. While my preferred form of relationship is a hybrid of monogamy and polyamory, that is not because of any form of sex addiction. On this topic I will elaborate in depth in a forthcoming set of books which engage the future of

relationships.

I have an ambivalent relationship to pornography and erotica. I began with a classical negative view of erotica. Over the years, my view shifted and I began to believe that it had a place. When I would watch erotica I would thank the men and women acting in the film for their gifts, and recognize them as full subjects and bow in appreciation and reverence. I never watched porn extensively, in the sense of having any kind of porn addiction. My viewing was sporadic and occasional. Naturally, over time that adds up. I did, as Chaya notes, clean my computer twice. Too much visual material slows the computer down.

In the end I have come down with a strong position against classic pornography for two reasons. First, a colleague sent me an article that in some amount of pornography, the actors and actresses are actually victims of the sexual slave trade. Thus discerning what porn is being watched, its source and the full freedom of the players is an essential ethical obligation. Second, I worked with a wonderful young man who had what he self described as a porn addiction. He sent me extensive literature on the addictive nature of pornography. Third, the deadening nature of most porn destroys Eros. Fourth, extensive porn usage seems to undermine sexuality in relationship. Fifth, in many cases extensive viewing of pornography becomes a replacement for relationship itself. All of this therefore requires a level of discernment in engaging this arena of life and sexuality. That discernment requires that a distinction between porn and erotica be drawn and elaborated. There is a sacred and even crucial place for erotica which needs to be liberated from the more banal and deadening rhythms of pornography.

I am not sure, however, why this is so interesting, given the wide-spread interest in pornography shared by many people today. I could easily write here about the kind of hardcore pornography that Chaya preferred. But why would I share—and why would Chaya share-- that kind of private information? Chaya also suggests that I asked her on occasion to play the “whore” role during sex. This is absolutely true.

Moreover, as my partners will attest, I also enjoy playing that role myself. The play of domination and submission is one of the recognized 'tastes' of sexuality. I hope to write about this in the future in depth. But is there a reason why Chaya is using this information to attack me, by attempting to pathologize my sexuality?

16) Chaya's plan to seduce her Professor at CIIS.

Chaya has an extensive discussion with me about her sexual crush on one of her professors—a famous writer and the author of several important books. She told me in quite a serious way that she was going to try and seduce him. I pointed out to her that this might not be fair to him--she did not know his marital status. Besides, I told her, it might endanger his work--as I have learned the hard way. She angrily dismissed my objections. I do not know whether this plan was scrapped or put into motion.

17) Chaya's False Claims of Authorship

Chaya claims in her letter to have written a "significant" part of *Soul Prints* and *Mystery of Love*. As Chaya knows well, that is simply a lie, in fact, a demonstrably libelous claim. I wrote around eight hundred pages in the original manuscript of *Soul Prints* and eight hundred pages in the original manuscript of *Mystery of Love*. I had to remove almost five hundred pages of material in each book—all of which I hope to publish at the right time under a separate title.

Chaya wrote three very short pieces in *Soul Prints*; two sections consisting of one page, one that was perhaps closer to two pages. (She also, as I've said earlier, wrote the dedication to herself!) This scant material did not contain any new ideas at all. Ironically these are the only sections of the book that I do not like; they felt at the time like pseudo –pathos and added nothing to the book. I kept them in to please Chaya, and for no other reason. They will be removed from the next edition of the books.

In *Mystery of Love* Chaya made only one substantive

contribution, a section on the allegory of the wine; again, a contribution which I did not want to include; and indeed had to exclude valuable material to make room for. The allegory is to my mind not helpful and certainly adds no new substantive idea. Again, I kept it, along with a few other minor notes in the book, as a gesture to Chaya.

Chaya did write the introductory poem to *Soul Prints* and indeed her name will be appropriately credited in the next edition, or more likely the poem removed.

The idea that she helped write these books in any substantive sense is simply absurd. Chaya also told Dr. Eldar, a colleague of mine in Israel, that she wrote or helped write my doctorate. That is, again, sheer fantasy. Chaya is incapable of reading the Hebrew texts upon which the doctorate is based, let alone the very obscure Aramaic texts.

I have written several volumes of serious work at this point in my life. Ten of them have been published, two by Atria Books, an imprint of the mainstream publisher, Simon and Shuster.

More than that, my ideas are regularly borrowed, stolen, or used without attribution by colleagues and people who, because of the Internet smears, feel justified in not citing me as their source. All of that is fine with me, since to some extent ideas are not ours at all. However, I try to be very rigorous about citing work from which I draw. I do this as generously and fairly as possible. The core ideas, the actual writing, and the structure of my work is original, but like any work, it is influenced by many sources, which I always cite. This idea that any form of plagiarism is at the core of my work is just simply- utter nonsense.

The work I am really excited about is yet to come. Here is [a link that lists of my work so far](#).

18) Chaya and Plagiarism, Part Two: Sacred Writing and Writual.

A few other points need to be made here. Chaya gave a

course several times on *Judaism and Sacred Writing*. She called it *Writual*. This creative name is Chaya's origination. However, virtually every significant core idea that made up the content of the course (and indeed inspired the name 'writual') was either taken from *Soul Prints* or developed by me and shared with Chaya while we were in Oxford.

The core idea of the course, which I shared with Chaya, is that there are different "mitzvoth" –sacred commands-- on writing embedded in Hebrew tradition, which need to be excavated and reclaimed as part of the tradition. The key Mitzvot that I identified as such were writing a Sefer Torah, writing one's own letter in the Torah, writing a Mezuzah which is connected to liminal spaces and transition moments, writing a Get, a bill of divorce which is connected to the writing we do around separations and ending, writing an ethical will, writing Tefillin, writing each one of the Megillot etc.

I shared with Chaya how each of these might be read differently --and renewed as a contemporary Mitzvah.

I connected these ideas for Chaya with the Baal Shem Tov's transmission on the Hebrew word Anochi, which he identifies as "Ana Nafshai Kativt Yahivt' based on the letters of the word Anochi; "I my soul I write, I give". (All of this together I intend to write as a separate book and share as best as I can). However, before the attacks happened, Chaya told me that she wanted to write a book on this topic. After some discussion, I said that it was my honor to offer her these ideas as my gifts; I merely asked for some acknowledgement in the introduction. She acknowledged that I had originally shared these ideas with her but it was clearly difficult for her to do so. In the end, she did, and thanked me. This conversation took place only six or seven weeks before the Bayit Chadash issue exploded on May 11, 2006.

19) Old Stories: Chaya's False Reports of What I Said

Based on Chaya's 2006 letter, a number of Jewish leaders have made wrong assumptions about events of long ago. These need to be corrected.

i) Chaya writes that when we got married I told her that I had had affairs during my previous marriage. That is true. I addressed that above. It was a failing; I could not reconcile my own sexual nature with the conventional boundaries of classical orthodoxy or classical marriage. However, I did not ever say—as she suggested—that I had affair with congregants. I never did.

One lover occasionally came to my synagogue to see me teach. She was not, however, a congregant and had no interest in the Synagogue or Judaism.

ii) Chaya implies that I told her (and so it has been reported) that the reports published about the two relationships with Judy and Sarah from 30 and 36 years ago, are all true. That is categorically false. I never told her that, because those reports were not true as reported. I did tell her that I had a one-time limited (15 minute) physical encounter with Judy, which I had not acknowledged because Judy had distorted and lied about the nature of what happened and because there was no one with whom a healing conversation could be had. Judy was, in my opinion, used as pawn. To this day I greatly regret that this was not fully engaged and healed at the time. I have said this publically time and again for the last ten years. It has been written about in articles posted on my website for over a decade. (See [this essay](#) for an in depth sharing and understanding of this story from my perspective.)

So, once again, let me be clear; the story of Judy and Sarah as told on the Internet is fundamentally false. I never told Chaya differently. Period, End of story.

The stories never happened in the way that they are told on the internet, and currently reported in the blogs and articles that currently refer to me as a ‘predator’ and ‘child molester’ and even ‘child rapist’. When I read the first Internet stories in 2004, I was aghast. I actually threw up in disgust at

the gross and malicious distortions.

The story that Judy tells in the original posts and today is so distorted that it bears very little relation to what actually happened. That is true ten times over in the story of Sarah. Both stories have been filtered through the linguistic prism around what is today considered as sexual abuse. Both women were counseled by therapists specializing in the abuse narrative, including Vicki Polin, Joseph and Rivka Blau, and others with clear agendas.

My contention is that to fabricate a sexual abuse story about someone who has not abused you is in itself a form of sexual abuse. I imagine that Vicki Polin and others had something to do with the evolution of the false sexual abuse narrative that Judy and Sarah (who are now closely aligned constantly tell. Vicki herself, in the 1980s, spoke on Oprah about how her parents were part of large Jewish satanic cult that cannibalized babies. She also said that she was forced to have sex repeatedly on the Torah scrolls in the synagogue and the like. After reports like this were refuted by FBI investigations, Oprah removed Vicki's episode from her archive. Luke Ford, who interviewed Judy and Sarah and reported their stories on his site, was at the time a gossip columnist for the pornography industry. Rabbi Blau has been my avowed enemy since I was 24 years old. At that time, during an argument in the halls of Yeshiva University, I told him, with the arrogance of youth, that instead of attacking me, he should look to the wholeness and health of his own marriage. Rabbi Blau swung a punch at me and swore he would bring me down; an oath that I must say he has been punctilious in trying to fulfill.

But what is important is that what is reported on the Internet in the interviews with the two women from these old stories is simply not true. Sexual abuse in any form is a terrible thing. It ruins countless lives, and creates untold trauma. Sexual abuse and the 'rape culture' deeply scar the lives of women and men who endure it. It deserves to be called out. Yet as with all genuine abuses, the meme of sexual abuse can also be used to mischaracterize what are actually well-intentioned sexual encounters. My stories, re-narrated in the

language of what is sometimes called the professional psychologists' "sexual-abuse industry" and "culture of victimization" have been framed in a way that is simply untrue either in substance or quality. I took (and passed) polygraphs with the former director of polygraph research at the Department of Defense to validate my version of these events.

These two old issues need a mediated therapeutic context for healing. These false stories, distorted and inflated, have been used in increasingly dramatic fashion as the basis for a meme that continues to damage my reputation and my life-work, and which cannot be healing for either of the women involved.

What I did tell Chaya in that private conversation in Memphis, Tennessee so long ago, was that in my encounter with Judy, there was more truth than I was able to own at the time.

I told her that there had been a very brief and incomplete physical engagement, after a two-week flirtation initiated by Judy. We did not have intercourse or anything approaching it, although Judy asked me at the time to have actual sexual relations with her. None of this of course appears in distorted version of all this posted on the web. My version is confirmed by an independent polygraph test.

This encounter was an enormous mistake on my part. I regretted it the moment it happened. I was clearly and completely in the wrong. But though it was a mistake, it was not a pathological act, nor was it ever repeated. I was 24 the time, and Judy was 16; Judy was a full and willing participant and was experienced by me as an initiator. (This, of course, in no way diminishes my responsibility, since I was an adult and she was a teenager.)

At the time, I had no idea that this was in any sense illegal according to the laws of the United States. I know now that a 16-year old, while not legally a minor in many respects, actually cannot be thought to be giving full consent. The responsibility for holding boundaries rested with me, as I was her youth advisor and an adult. By not holding those boundaries I did Judy a great disservice.

However, to take that mistake and use it to characterize me as pathological, as has been done, is simply unjust.

Judy, at the time, was not at all unhappy about our encounter; she was pleased and expressed that clearly to me. She also told her counselor about it in a positive way, expressing the wish that I would leave my wife to be with her. It was only after talking to her advisor, Rabbi Blau, and others that she was informed that this was a sexual sin and that Gafni needed to be destroyed as a sexual abuser.

Judy has gone on, with Blau and company to attack me on the Internet and in the press, constantly expanding and distorting the story and casting me as a sexual predator. Yes, it was a mistake and a capitulation to sexual temptation, which we refer to in Hebrew as *Yetzer Hara*. It was a violation of my responsibility as Judy's advisor. But it was not evidence of a pattern of predation.

The second encounter, when I was 19, took place exactly as I have recounted it all these years. I took a polygraph test with the same person on this as well.

We have in our society correctly created boundaries of who is a minor and who is an adult. The fact is, however is romances between 14-year olds and 19 years old can exist legitimately. A sixteen-year old can have a one time, twenty-minute sexual engagement with a twenty-four year old. In retrospect, I hold both as mistakes and misjudgments on my part which I wholeheartedly regret and recognize, and for which I have tried in every way to atone. But I honestly attest that my intentions at the time were loving, if misguided. And, there is a great difference between two highly limited youthful mistakes, both of which I self -corrected, and the way my behavior has been painted as evidence of an ongoing pattern of predation.

At the time, I did not own the encounter with Judy. First, because the story she very quickly began telling was absolutely not true. I was being attacked by people who wanted to destroy my ability to teach. I did not have the maturity, courage, or skill to own the part that was true while

denying the greater part that was not true. There was also no 'vessel' for it, no one who could hear nuance. Indeed, when I sought counsel from two close friends, they confirmed this. "Blau and his wife Rivkah want to destroy you," one woman told me. "This sexual story is just an excuse; you have little choice but to deny all of it". That was what I did. and I was wrong to do so. I regret that fully.

20) Chaya Falsely Accuses Another Rabbi

This section of the letter was added in 2014. It is taken from the *Anatomy of a Smear* document which explains the hidden dynamics that catalyzed the smear campaign of 2015-16.

"In 2014, information came to us that Chaya was also the hidden false complainant who caused the dismissal of another Rabbi, who was at the time running a dynamic Jewish center in California. In this event, which happened shortly after Chaya helped galvanize the false complaints against Marc in Israel, Chaya complained that the Rabbi had been sexually inappropriate with her. He adamantly denies this, as so do both his ex-wife and his current wife. This Rabbi found out accidentally that Chaya was the complainant, when the notebook of the person who had mediated his negotiation with his synagogue accidentally found its way into a box of his returned books. In the notebook, the mediator noted that the person who spoke against this rabbi and toppled the Jewish community he had brought together was none other than Chaya. Marc knows the Rabbi in question, as well as the Rabbi's ex-wife, and has no doubt that Chaya's complaint was false."

21) Interview with Chaya

In December, 2015, Dr. Ruth Eldar, an Israeli psychologist who was trying to persuade me to come back to teach in Jerusalem, visited Chaya to discuss these issues. What follows is a letter sent to me by Dr Eldar, explaining what had occurred at this meeting.

From: Ruth Engel-Eldar <xxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xx>
Subject: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED
Date: December 3, 2015 1:09:19 AM PST
To: marc gafni <xxxxxxxx@xxxxxx.xx>

Dear Marc,

This is an on the record sharing of my conversation with Chaya and with the [Nitza Cohen, the lawyer that established for you last year that there were never any police complaints.](#)

I went to visit Chaya with my husband Tzvi in Jerusalem. I was very surprised that ten years later she was still obsessed by this but it became more clear why as I spoke to her.

I went trying to find out what the actual claims were. She said in very clear way that all of the relationships {you engaged in} were fully mutual. Her attacks on you were mostly psychological character attacks.

As a clinical psychologist who has practiced and lectures for thirty years I tried to explain to her that throwing out clinical terms which she has no clinical experience in and does not fully understand is very irresponsible and malicious.

But she was not listening. She did everything she could to persuade me not to work with you. She also said "if he succeeds he will fall". Her implication was that they she would make sure that you fall. It was - i think the right word in English was ominous because she comes across in a very lovely manner. If you are clinically trained as I am however you recognize the obsession, the distortion and the maliciousness behind it. I think she is so lost in her story that she can only justify her own actions by making you as bad as possible. **She confirmed to me what the lawyer we hired had already written in a**

statement, that no complaints were ever filed because the police did not register them. It was clear that she knew that no complaints were registered even though she has said many times on line that there were police complaints. I was shocked to hear this because they had told you and the rest of the world that there were complaints. I remember well when I called you last year to tell you and you were in full shock and did not believe me. You burst out crying if your remember, because everything you had done for eight years was under the assumption that there were complaints.

What really revealed Chaya's state of mind is that she did not seem aware that there was anything wrong with telling you and the entire world that there were police complaints when there were not. As I shared with you when we talked, she must still be in love with you in a distorted way because her existence internally revolves around what she called, you "falling again". It is also important to share that she told me that she was the one who organized the women and pushed this all forward. When you put that together with what you shared with me, that several months before this happened in 2006, she talked to you about you and her remarrying, the obsession becomes clear if not less frightening. It is very hard for people who do not know malice to recognize it. I also want to say that she claimed that she wrote your thesis in Oxford. I could not quite believe that she said that, but she did. She also said that you had demonic magical powers that can influence on people from afar. I was shocked. I was there and my husband was there when she said it. **I also want to say that Chaya told us clearly that she was a prime organizer of the complaints.** She said it proudly with a kind of delight that surprised us.

After a very long in person talk with Chaya I told her that she had not yet told me anything substantive which

would prevent me from working with you. She was very surprised, like she was used to everyone believing her story. I will send you the formal letter from the attorney saying there were never any legal complaints if you cannot find it in your old emails..... I also want to remind you of cognitive dissonance. Once a reporter comes to a story from one side of things, it takes the unusual person not realize that he has made a mistake and to go in a different direction. Most people do not have that level of integrity. I hope this reporter does.

sincerely

Ruth
Dr Ruth Engel Eldar

To Conclude:

Many people have the experience of an ex-partner losing their composure and lashing out on them from the place of hurt, insecurity or fear. That person might be your ex-wife or husband, your ex student, ex business partner or former friend. We are all sadly familiar with the trope.

However, this can become particularly destructive when, as in my case, a small group of ex's—people who are no longer in your life-- get together to attack you. In most cases, you broke with them for good reasons. In my case, they have not seen me for ten years. These people do not represent most of your past relationships. They are a small group of embittered ex's. But these days, such people can easily link up through email, texts, social media, Skype, and texting. Because of our contemporary communications technology, a tiny group of people can successfully re-narrate your story, demonize you, tell egregious lies about you, and hijack your personal and professional life.

That is what has happened here. And much of it was the work of my former wife, who is currently writing gleeful blog

posts, congratulating herself for having successfully ‘brought me down.’

But as we know, the nature of the Internet culture is that a group of angry ex’s can hijack your life narrative. It can be painted with brushstrokes which you and all those who know and love you now find unrecognizable. That’s all old news---a common meme we recognize in our personal lives in today’s culture. My experience is particularly extreme, since this group of ex’s, led in large part by my former wife Chaya, have for the third time in ten years used newspapers, social media and the like to attack me personally and professionally, claiming to be speaking for an imaginary group of ‘victims’ and doing their best—so far, quite successfully—to destroy my personal and professional life, and even put me outside the pale of what is socially and professionally acceptable.

I am compelled to speak to these issues not only for myself, but in the defense of everyone who has suffered similar Internet demonization. There are very real, terrible violations of love and humanity going on in this world. Rape, inappropriate seduction, sexual and child abuse going on all over the world. It is imperative that we recognize and stand against these and all abuses of human rights and autonomy. And yet we as a culture also need to get very clear about the difference between real abuse, and the use of the language of abuse and victimization that is used as a form of ‘witch-hunting’ and sexual McCarthyism.

If you want to get a real sense of the kind of people who are currently in my life, of the quality of our relationships, and of their experience of who I really am, please [see the public response to the 2016 Internet smear campaign from the Center for Integral Wisdom, and the sixty or so blog posts that follow it.](#)

These posts represent a small part of the Center’s leadership. They speak of some of the important larger cultural issues at play behind the smear, but also about their

very positive experience of me, our relationships, and the kinds of relationships that define the Center's culture. I promise that you will be moved by the depth, wisdom and goodness of these people, and of their writing.