

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher z"l

The Sin of Lashon Hara - A Chilul Hashem

The Torah states in Parshat Emor "You shall not desecrate My Holy Name" (Vayikra 22:32).

This verse is the source for the sin of Chilul Hashem, which is one of the most serious sins that a Jew can commit, and for which it is extremely difficult to do t'shuva (Yoma 86a).

A little known aspect of Chilul Hashem is when a person habitually speaks or listens to LASHON HARA. The Chafetz Chayim includes Chilul Hashem in the list of sins one violates when speaking LASHON HARA.

In explaining the reason for this, he says that generally a person sins for various motivations, either because he has a desire for something, which he cannot control, or because the sins will provide him with some physical pleasure.

However, the sin of LASHON HARA cannot be considered the fulfillment of a physical drive or pleasure, for which the person could not control his YEITZER HARA. It is simply habit a person gets into when speaking negatively about others, or listening to others speaking LASHON HARA. If he realizes that the Torah forbids it, how can he just ignore and continue to violate this serious sin?

Rav Pam would point out that speaking LASHON HARA is also a Chilul Hashem because that person has so little regard for Hashem's will that he brazenly violates it. By shamelessly throwing off the yoke of Heaven, he has cheapened and denigrated the Word of Hashem by speaking ill of others.

The Chafetz Chayim adds that the sin of LASHON HARA is compounded if the one doing this is a distinguished person whom people look up to and respect. When people see how he casually disregards the Will of Hashem, they too will take liberties in the performance of Mitzvot. This is especially true when they see a Talmid Chacham speaking LASHON HARA (see Rambam Sefer HaMitzvot, prohibition 63).

This is another important reason to avoid LASHON HARA in ALL its forms. **ESP**