

Profaning with Speech

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Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by Dayan Yehoshua Grunwald

<https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Parshas-Emor.m4a>

You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Bnei Yisrael; I am Hashem Who sanctifies you.

Vayikra 22:32

The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos, *Lavin* 63) writes that the prohibition of chillul Hashem can be violated in three ways, one of which is committing an *aveirah* solely to rebel against Hashem, without receiving any benefit. The Rambam infers this from the *pasuk* that says taking a *shvuas sheker* violates chillul Hashem (Vayikra 19:12), which he says is because no physical benefit is derived from this *aveirah*.

Sefer Chafetz Chaim (in the *Psichah*) derives from this that speaking *lashon hara* also violates chillul Hashem. He explains that the Gemara in Ta'anis says that at the end of days, the animals will ask the snake why it ate other animals, given that whatever the snake eats tastes to it like dirt, and it will reply that one who speaks *lashon hara* also derives no benefit. The Chafetz Chaim says that *lashon hara* is therefore likewise a chillul Hashem according to the Rambam. He explains further in the Be'er Mayim Chaim that one of the cases of *shvuas sheker* is swearing falsely in *bais din* to defend against a financial claim, even though in this case he derives financial benefit from the *aveirah*, so the Rambam must mean that chillul Hashem is violated if no *physical* benefit is obtained.

R' Yitzchak Hutner maintains that *lashon hara* does not violate chillul Hashem. He says *shvuas sheker* constitutes chillul Hashem despite the lack of physical benefit due to the severity of swearing falsely in Hashem's Name. Because *lashon hara* is less severe, it is not chillul Hashem, though the benefit incurred by the speaker may be comparable.