

MY REBBE THE ROSH HA'YESHIVA

Background

The Gemara tells us that the worst sin possible is that of *chilul* HASHEM – desecrating HASHEM’s name. Rashi explains that this is because not only does the person himself sin, he teaches others to sin as well. The Gemara then proceeds to give a number of examples *chilul* HASHEM:

Rav says, “A *chilul* HASHEM is if I go to the butcher to purchase meat and don’t pay immediately.” Rashi explains that by doing this, the butcher would assume that Rav wasn’t going to pay, and the butcher would learn from Rav. If so great a person as Rav is a thief, then it must not be that bad, and this butcher would learn to steal as well.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף פו/א

היכי דמי חילול השם אמר רב כגון אנא אי שקילנא בישרא מטבחא ולא יהיבנא דמי לאלתר

רש"י יומא דף פו/א

חילול השם - חוטא ומחטיא אחרים:

ולא יהיבנא דמי לאלתר - וכשאני מאחר לפרוע הוא אומר שאני גדלך, ולמד ממני להיות מזלזל בגזל

Gemara

What constitutes chilul HASHEM? Rav says “For instance, if I were to buy meat from the butcher and not pay right away.”

Rashi

Chilul HASHEM – Sin and teach others to sin

And not pay right away – *When I delay paying, the butcher says “Rav is a thief,” and he learns from me to steal.*

Questions

Question #1 – The Butcher Erred:

Rav is clearly an honest man with an impeccable reputation. If the butcher judges him incorrectly, it is the butcher’s problem – not Rav’s.

Question #2 – Rav Will Pay Back

Even if Rav weren’t to pay right away, when eventually he does pay, the butcher would see that he was wrong. If so, how will the butcher learn from Rav to steal?

Question #3 – Why Is It Worse than Rav Himself Stealing?

The Gemara states that the worst sin possible is *chilul* HASHEM. It is far worse than any other sin.

Even if it were true that the butcher would learn to steal, then the butcher would violate a negative commandment. This should be no worse than if Rav himself stole. Granted that stealing is a serious crime, but it isn’t the most severe crime in the Torah. Why should someone’s learning to steal because of Rav be any worse than Rav himself stealing?