YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY**

**By Rav Moshe Taragin**

**The Relationship Between *Pirsumei Nissa* and the Act of Lighting**

Several *gemarot* establish that the *mitzva* to light the Chanuka candles entails not only the mechanical act of lighting, but also the element of *pirsumei nissa*, publicizing the miracle. The *gemara* that most directly articulates this aspect is found in *Shabbat* (23b), which prioritizes lighting Chanuka candles over *Kiddush* on Friday night. If a person lacks enough money to pay for both, he should use the funds he has to buy Chanuka candles, since they generate *pirsumei nissa*, which always demands augmented financial outlay. In this *shiur*, we will explore the relationship between the mechanical act of lighting and the element of *pirsumei nissa*.

An interesting *gemara* in *Shabbat* (23a) establishes a unique *berakha* opportunity. The lighting of the Chanuka candles is usually accompanied by two *berakhot*, “*Le-hadlik ner shel Chanuka*” followed by “*She-assa nissim la-avoteinu*.” Presumably, the presence of a second *berakha* in addition to the *birkat ha-mitzva* indicates the existence of this second layer of the *mitzva,* the *pirsumei nissa* component. This logic is asserted both by Tosafot (*Sukka* 46) and the Ramban (*Pesachim* 7a).

After establishing this extra *berakha*, the *gemara* obligates one who sees Chanuka *neirot* to similarly recite the *berakha* of *She-Assa Nissim.* Following the above stated logic, it appears that the *gemara* encourages a *berakha* upon experiencing *pirsumei nissa* even when that *pirsumei nissa* experience is severed from the actual lighting. This simple reading of the *gemara* is adopted by Rashi (*Sukka* 46a, and to a lesser degree in *Shabbat* 23a).

Based in part upon Rashi’s explanation, the Meiri quotes an even more radical opinion, one which completely severs the *pirsumei* *nissa* aspect of the *mitzva* from the formal act of *hadlaka*. In Rashi’s scenario, *pirsumei* *nissa* entails witnessing a halakhically lit Chanuka candle of another person. Although the witness’s *pirsumei nissa* experience is not associated with his own lighting, at least the *pirsumei nissa* here surrounds a halakhically prepared Chanuka candle. But the Meiri cites a position (in the name of “*gedolei* *ha-doros*”) regarding someone who finds himself on Chanuka without a home and who is not in the presence of Jews who are lighting in their homes, and he is therefore unable to recite *She-Assa* *Nissim* on his personal lighting or on the lighting of others. The Meiri suggests that such a person should light a candle and recite the *berakha* of *She-Assa* *Nissim* – even though this candle does not constitute a halakhically lit Chanuka candle! Indeed, since the person lighting does not own a home where the candle is being lit, he cannot recite the *berakha* of *Le-Hadlik*. Nevertheless, the Meiri maintains that this candle can catalyze *pirsumei* *nissa*, and therefore mandates a *berakha* of *She-Assa* *Nissim*. Evidently, *pirsumei nissa* is completely detached from the formal *mitzva* of *hadlaka* and can be experienced (and accompanied by a *berakha*) even in the absence of a halakhic lighting.

However, the *gemara* that establishes a *berakha* upon witnessing someone else’s lit *menora* does not necessarily assert a split between the act of lighting and the *pirsumei nissa*. Indeed, many *Rishonim* disagree with Rashi. Rashi himself (in Shabbat) cites his teachers as claiming that only someone who has not lit nor has plans to light that evening should recite *She-Assa* *Nissim* upon seeing someone else’s candles. The Rashba popularized this position, and it forms the basis of the *psak* of the *Shulchan* *Arukh*; when traveling home on Chanuka evening, one does not recite *She-Assa* *Nissim* upon seeing the first *menora* he encounters.

Evidently, Rashi’s teachers and the Rashba did not sever *pirsumei nissa* from the act of lighting. It is preferable to delay the *berakha* of *She-Assa* *Nissim* until *pirsumei nissa* is experienced alongside one’s person lighting, rather than to recite it upon the first experience of *pirsumei nissa*.

An interesting comment of the Ramban in *Pesachim* also appears to connect the *pirsumei nissa* to the act of *hadlaka*. Questioning the syntax of various *birchot ha-mitzva*, the Ramban questions why some begin with the prefix of "*lamed*," while other are introduced by the preposition "*al.*" His basic strategy is to distinguish between *mitzvot* that can be executed by a secondary agent (*shaliach*), which begin with “*al*,” and those that require personal involvement, which begin with "*lamed*." The first challenge to this theory surrounds “*Le-hadlik ner shel Chanuka*,” which seems to contradict this policy. Chanuka candles can be lit be a representative, yet the *berakha* begins with the more personalized "*lamed*"! The Ramban’s second answer to this question asserts that since *pirsumei nissa* can only be performed personally, the *berakha* of *Le-Hadlik* carries the “personal” prefix. If *pirsumei nissa* and the act of *hadlaka* were completely distinct, with each possessing their respective *berakha*, there would be no reason that the personalized nature of *pirsumei nissa* should alter the syntax of the *berakha* assigned to the act of *hadlaka*. Evidently, in the Ramban’s view, the two layers are integrated. *Chazal* instituted a *mitzva* to light, and through that lighting, to create *pirsumei nissa*. Since *pirsumei nissa* is an element of lighting, its character defines the character of the lighting as well. Since *pirsumei* *nissa* is personalized, an element of the lighting process is also personalized, and the entire lighting process therefore carries the more personalized conclusion prefixed with a "*lamed.*"

Further indications that *pirsumei nissa* is not an autonomous layer of the *mitzva*, but is rather integrated into some aspect of lighting, can be gathered from exploring an interesting position that the *gemara* raises but ultimately rejects. Understanding the logic of this rejected position may help us understand the logic of the other opinion, which is ultimately ratified.

The *gemara* in *Shabbat* (22b-23a) questions whether “*hadlaka oseh mitzva*,” the primary *mitzva* consists of an act of lighting, or “*hanacha oseh mitzva*,” the primary *mitzva* entails placement. Clearly, the possibility that focuses on placement evokes the element of *pirsumei nissa*. Placing a candle in a public setting will publicize the miracle, and it hence entails the primary *mitzva*. However, the *gemara*’s defense of this position may indicate that even this opinion, which is centered around *pirsumei nissa*, still requires elements of *hadlaka.* In effect, *pirsumei nissa* cannot exist independent of an act of lighting.

The first scenario posed surrounds someone who lit candles inside his home and only afterward placed them in the proper position. A *beraita* invalidates this process, and the *gemara* questions how to explain this invalidation according to the opinion that maintains the centrality of *hanacha*. Why should placement of a candle that was lit inside be invalid? The *gemara* responds that onlookers will assume that the candle was lit for personal use, rather than for Chanuka use. Thus, the candle lit inside must be extinguished and relit, even according to the opinion that *hanacha* is the pivot of the *mitzva*.

Some assume that this requirement is merely to debunk suspicion. People who see someone light inside and then move the candles will assume that the person did not fulfill the *mitzva* of *ner Chanuka*. To quell this suspicion, he must relight in an obvious Chanuka manner. Indeed, there is ample precedent for the obligation to quell suspicion in general, and suspicion surrounding Chanukah lighting in particular. For example, the *gemara* (*Shabbat* 23a) cites the obligation to light a *menora* at each entranceway leading to a large estate in order to avoid the suspicion of those who may not notice a *menora* placed at another entrance (which presumably is out of their range of visibility). Perhaps the *gemara* requiring the person who lit inside to relight intends a similar obligation. Fundamentally, he has fulfilled the *mitzva*, as *pirsumei* *nissa* can be accomplished even without a proper *hadlaka* as long as the candles are place in the proper location. However, since people will suspect him of lighting for personal use, he must re-light the candle in a manner that demonstrates his intent for Chanuka.

Several *Rishonim* disagree, however, and claim that even the position that maintains that *hanacha* is the primary pivot of the *mitzva* still requires a properly lit candle. (R. Akiva Eiger, 2:125, clearly articulates this position.) If the candle is lit out of its proper position, positioning it will not accomplish *pirsumei* *nissa*. *Chazal* dictated *pirsumei nissa* with a halakhically lit candle, and perhaps also as a continuation of a halakhic act of lighting. Although positioning achieves *pirsumei* *nissa*, it is not sufficient if it is not performed on a properly lit candle and in the wake of an act of *hadlaka*. This provides further proof that at least according to the opinion that *hanacha oseh mitzva*, *pirsumei* *nissa* is not an autonomous element, but is rather integrated with *hadlaka*.

Similar evidence emerges from a *gemara* in *Shabbat* (23a) that discusses a candle that has remained lit from the day before. In theory, the position of *hanacha oseh mitzva* should permit one to merely raise the candle and reposition it in order to fulfill the *mitzva* on the second night. Yet the *gemara* demands that the light be extinguished and relit before being repositioned on the second night. Once again, *hanacha* alone would be insufficient, even though it creates the desired *pirsumei nissa*. Since the candle was lit for an earlier night, the medium for *pirsumei* *nissa* doesn’t exist. Additionally, the repositioning does not occur as a continuation of an original halakhic act of lighting. *Pirsumei nissa* is not an independent *mitzva*.

This logic explains the opinion that *hanacha oseh mitzva*, but based on this logic we may speculate about the basis of the alternate opinion of *hadlaka oseh mitzva*. This is particularly important given the fact that we actually adopt this principle as the halakhic ruling. Perhaps this view maintains that *hadlaka* is not simply a prelude to *hanacha* and the resultant *pirsumei nissa*. Rather, in addition to serving this function, *Chazal* instituted a formal act of lighting, which operates even independent of any *pirsumei* *nissa*-inducing role.