

Introduction

The Gemara discusses whether we are permitted to light a Chanukah candle by using the flame of an existing Chanukah candle:

איתמר רב אמר אין מדליקין מנר לנר ושמואל אמר מדליקין.

It was stated, Rav said one may not light from one candle to another and Shmuel said that one may light.

Shabbos 22a

The Gemara, after a lengthy discussion, concludes that if we hold *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*, that the mitzvah is dependent on the actual lighting of the candles rather than the placement of the candles, then it is certainly permissible to light from one candle to another. This is because we actually fulfill a mitzvah at the time of lighting the second candle, and therefore, it is not a denigration to the first candle to use it for a mitzvah.

Since we follow the opinion that *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*, we would expect to also be permitted to use one of the candles to light the others, and that we should not require a *shamash* (extra candle) for this purpose. However, the Rama adds an additional factor:

ונהגו להחמיר בנרות חנוכה שלא להדליק אפילו מנר לנר דעיקר מצותו אינו אלא נר אחד והשאר אינו למצוה כל כך לכן אין להדליקין זה מזה.

Our practice is to be stringent regarding the Chanukah lights not to light from one candle to another, because the primary mitzvah is only one light and the rest are not really such a mitzvah. Therefore one should not light from one to another.

Rama, Orach Chaim 674:1

There are two difficulties with the Rama's ruling. First, the *Sha'arei Teshuva* notes that the Gemara



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implies that when Shmuel permits lighting from one candle to another, he permits it even from the primary candle to the extra *mehadrin* candles. Second, the Rama implies that we may not even light the third candle from the second candle. If the concern is lighting from a mitzvah candle to a *mehadrin* candle, why can't we light from one *mehadrin* candle to another?

Perhaps, homiletically, we can explain as follows: Since *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* and the goal is to produce light, the manner in which each candle is lit is of less significance. Our focus is on producing the collective light of each night's menorah. However, the Rama is introducing another dimension. We light a different number of candles each night to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. By doing so, each day's lighting has its own unique character and represents something unique. Therefore, we don't only focus on producing the light, we make sure that each candle is infused with its own creative energy. It is not acceptable to draw from the existing light, *mi-ner li-ner*, but we instead must create the light anew.

We often encounter people who live their spiritual and religious lives *mi-ner li-ner*. They simply draw from the collective light that already exists in our world. There is a passivity to their religious identity — although they may be fulfilling halachic expectations, they are relying significantly on the insights and inspiration of others.

The alternative is a world where we approach each one of the candles of our religious personality and ignite its flame individually. We recognize that using someone else's flame might be sufficient, but we wish to contribute a new flame that might look the same as the old one, but has our own personal touch. We seek to contribute a new and vibrant flame to each one of the candles that comprise our religious experience, and infuse it with warmth, energy, and vitality.

This edition of *Torah To Go* features an exploration of what our new president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, termed the "Five Torot." These are five dimensions that define our communal and individual religious identities. We share with you Rabbi Berman's investiture address and a series of articles from authors who reflect upon and interpret each of these dimensions. The "Five Torot" concept is not meant to create a new approach to religious identity. Rather, it is to identify the distinct candles that we seek to light, in all aspects of our lives, and to ensure that each one is embraced with dedication and passion as a core aspect of our religious lives. We strive to live not *mi-ner li-ner*, not by simply drawing on the collective positivity of our religious world. We strive to contribute to each dimension, with intentionality and purpose, as we grow in our *avodas Hashem*.