

## Going Public

Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by HaRav Chaim Weg

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<https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/P09-VaYaishev-5784-Chanukah-Mocher-Kisuso-For-Ner-Chanukah.mp3>

The Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 671:1) write that one must be careful to fulfill the mitzvah of *ner* Chanukah, to the extent that if he doesn't have money to buy candles, he must borrow it or even sell his clothing. But the Rambam (Chanukah 4:12) says in a lengthy introduction to this halacha that *ner* Chanukah is a precious mitzvah and a person must be careful to fulfill it "in order to publicize the miracle (*pirsumei nisa*) and to add in praise to Hashem for it." The Rambam's introduction indicates that he is not speaking solely of the pauper's obligation to sell his clothes; rather, he is deriving from that obligation how important the mitzvah is for everyone. The Magid Mishneh explains that this halacha is derived from the Mishnah in Psachim 99b, which says that even the poorest Jew must drink four cups of wine at the Seder (on account of the importance of *pirsumei nisa*). If one must sell his clothes to fulfill *arba kosos*, then *kal vachomer* (a fortiori) he must do so for *ner* Chanukah. The Lechem Mishneh asks why this is a *kal vachomer*—aren't both mitzvos equal *pirsumei nisa* vehicles? The Shvus Yaakov answers that there is less *pirsumei nisa* in *arba kosos*, which is witnessed only by one's household, than in *ner* Chanukah, which might be seen by many people.

The Eirech Hashulchan notes that in discussing many mitzvos, the Shulchan Aruch prohibits eating before doing the mitzvah so that one doesn't forget to perform it, but he doesn't mention this prohibition in regard to *ner* Chanukah. The Eirech Hashulchan explains that no one would forget to light Chanukah candles due to the great *pirsumei nisa* involved. Although the halacha follows the Magein Avraham, who does prohibit eating a meal before lighting,[1] we see from the Eirech Hashulchan how important is the element of *pirsumei nisa* in *ner* Chanukah.

[1] The Magein Avraham explains that the Shulchan Aruch did not record this halacha because he already mentioned it numerous times earlier in the context of other mitzvos.