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[www.rabbinicalcollege.edu.au/Shiurim](http://www.rabbinicalcollege.edu.au/Shiurim) ✉ [Rabbi.Lesches@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au](mailto:Rabbi.Lesches@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au)

פסחים ב' ע"א

## "אור לארבעה עשר"

### 1. Why does the משנה refer to the night of י"ד as אור לארבעה עשר?

The גמרא (on ג' ע"א on) concludes that although the word אור literally means light, nevertheless, our משנה uses the word אור to refer to the night. The גמרא then asks the obvious question:

"ותנא דיין מאי טעמא לא קתני לילי"

Why didn't the תנא of our משנה just use the word לילי (night)?

The גמרא answers:

"לישנא מעליא הוא דנקט"

Our תנא avoided using לילי since it has a negative connotation – nighttime is associated with darkness<sup>1</sup>, which is a void<sup>2</sup>. Instead, the תנא chose a לישנא מעליא (refined expression) instead.

The ראשונים ask several questions on the גמרא:

1. **On the גמרא's conclusion:** How could the word אור possibly mean night? אור, light, is the exact opposite of the darkness of night!
2. **On the גמרא's question:** The גמרא brings several other משניות and ברייתות in which the תנא uses the word אור to denote night! Why does the גמרא question specifically "תנא דיין" – **our** משנה, and not those other משניות and ברייתות as well?
3. **On the גמרא's answer:** There are many משניות and ברייתות in which the תנא uses the word ליל or לילה! Most notably, the גמרא cites a ברייתא which teaches exactly the same דין as our משנה, in almost the same words, the only difference being that לילי is used instead of אור: "תני דבי שמואל לילי ארבעה עשר בודקין את החמץ לאור הנר". Why were those תנאים not as particular about using a לישנא מעליא?

### ⚡ The approach<sup>3</sup> of the מאירי and the ר"ן

1. In our משנה, the word אור is to be understood as a **euphemism**<sup>4</sup> for night.

<sup>1</sup> ראה ספר המכתם.

<sup>2</sup> פיה"מ.

<sup>3</sup> וכ"כ הבעל המאור, הובא גם בספר המכתם, וכ"כ רבנו דוד ותוספות הרא"ש, וכ"כ תלמיד הרמב"ן בריש דבריו.

<sup>4</sup> אבן עזרא in the words of "לשון כינוי" or, ברטנורא and רבנו חננאל in the words of "לשון סגי נהור".

This is also a possible way of interpreting the רמב"ם in פיה"מ, where he writes, "ונקרא הלילה אור כדרך שנקראין כמה דברים ההפכן", – "The night is called אור, just as a number of things are referred to by their opposite." Seemingly, the רמב"ם is saying that אור is a euphemism, referring to the opposite.

According to the חת"ס however, the רמב"ם means that "אור" belongs to a class of words which have two opposite meanings. [For example, the word שרש, which means "root", can also mean "uproot", as when it appears in the form "תשרש".] Therefore, the word "אור" simultaneously means two opposite things; light and absence of light.

These two ways of understanding the רמב"ם has its parallel in another מחלוקת, regarding the following פסוק (in שמות י"ב):

- Generally speaking, whether to use ליל or אור is entirely up to the discretion of the תנא, and not something to make an issue of. Sometimes, the תנא prefers the euphemistic term אור, and sometimes, the תנא prefers the literal term ליל. Although the גמרא emphatically discourages the use of a לשון מגונה (coarse expression), the word ליל is clearly not a coarse expression<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the גמרא does not challenge the תנא's choice of terminology in any other ברייתא or משנה!

The question of the גמרא specifically on **our** משנה is: In every other משנה and ברייתא, when the תנא states אור, it is abundantly clear from the **context** that the תנא refers to night<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the תנא's usage of the word אור does not confuse the reader, and one easily understands that אור is employed euphemistically. In our משנה however, it is not immediately apparent from its context whether חמץ חמץ is to take place during the day (morning), or at night! Thus, in choosing the word אור, the תנא actually obscured the intent of the משנה! Why did the תנא do this?

- The גמרא's answer is that our תנא preferred a לישנא מעליא. It is true that the תנא does not normally insist on this – especially when doing so would obscure his intent! Nevertheless, in our משנה, the תנא was **especially** concerned about **opening** the מסכתא with a negative connotation, for opening words must be especially refined, as תהילים states: "פִּתְחֵי דִבְרֵיךָ יֵאִיר" – "the opening of your words should shine." [This is especially so here, where the first word of the מסכתא literally refers to light.]

### ⌘ The approach of the ראב"ד

- The ראב"ד rejects the מאירי's approach; he rejects the notion that the תנא's usage of אור in other משניות and ברייתות is entirely arbitrary, and he also rejects the idea that אור is employed merely as a euphemism. Rather, the ראב"ד explains that לילה refers to the **entire** night, whereas אור refers to the very beginning of the night, when some traces of daylight still remain. That is how אור can refer to the night, for it refers to the part of night which has the most light.
- That is why the גמרא does not challenge the תנא's choice of terminology in any other משנה or ברייתא, for the תנא's particular choice of words is precise: When the תנא says אור, he refers to

וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הָעֶנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּאָר אֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה.

The common translation is: "And he came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, and there were the cloud and the darkness, and it **illuminated** the night, and one did not draw near the other all night long."

However, there is a fierce debate between the ראב"ד and his contemporaries. The ראב"ד lambasts מרינוס who explains the פסוק as saying: "And he came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, and there were the cloud and the darkness, and it **darkened** the night, and one did not draw near the other all night long." [Others who hold this way are ר' יהודה אבן קורייש מפס שבמרוקו בחיבור האגרת שלו (רסאלה בערבית), ר' יונה בן גינאה, מנחם בן סרוק במילוננו מחברת מנחם]. The ראב"ד asserts that it does not make sense that one word can mean opposite things, and וַיֵּאָר must therefore be a euphemism, whereas מרינוס holds that "אור" belongs to a class of words which have two opposite meanings, and therefore, it can simultaneously mean two opposite things; light and absence of light.

<sup>5</sup> The גמרא's answer in full reads:

"לישנא מעליא הוא דנקט וכדאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי לעולם אל יוציא אדם דבר מגונה מפיו"

"He uses refined language, as רבי יהושע בן לוי said that a person should never emit a coarse expression from his mouth."

At face value, the גמרא is equating the תנא's avoidance of the word לילה with the statement of רבי יהושע בן לוי, which would imply that לילה is a coarse term. However, רש"י there explains that רבי יהושע בן לוי was not focussing on the word לילה, for it is not a coarse expression, and completely permissible to use. Rather, רבי יהושע בן לוי was banning speech which is truly coarse. The גמרא is using רבי יהושע בן לוי's prohibition against coarse language as a basis to go an extra step and derive that it is preferable to choose refined words even when the alternative is not unrefined, but merely, not as refined. However, this extra degree of caution is not a requirement, and only some תנאים act accordingly.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the ברייתא of "מאימתי ארבעה עשר אסור בעשיית מלאכה" (דף ב' ע"ב on), see ר"ן and חת"ס.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, this idea is especially relevant in ensuring that our לימוד at the beginning of a year starts on a strong note!

the beginning of the night<sup>8</sup>, and when the תנא says ליל, he refers to the entire night.

The question of the גמרא specifically on **our** משנה is: In every other משנה and ברייתא, when the תנא states אור, it is abundantly clear from the **context** that the תנא refers to night. Thus, the תנא's usage of the word אור does not confuse the reader into thinking that he is referring to the day, and one easily understands that the word אור was used instead of לילה in order to refer to the beginning of the night. In our משנה however, it is not immediately apparent from its context whether בדיקת חמץ is to take place during the day, or at night! Thus, with the word אור, the reader does not know whether the תנא refers to day, or to the beginning of night! Why didn't the תנא avoid אור, which, in this instance, is obscure? He couldn't have used the word לילי either, for that would mean the entire night, but he could have stated "בתחילת לילי"!

3. The גמרא answers that the תנא nevertheless preferred אור, for not only does it accurately reflect the point of the תנא (when interpreted correctly) – that בדיקה must be performed at the **beginning** of the night – but it is also a מעליא לישנא. [Nevertheless, since the intent of the משנה remains somewhat obscure, therefore, the תנא דבי שמואל (רף ג' ע"ב on) retaught the דין of the משנה with the preface "לילי ארבעה עשר", in order to clarify that "אור לארבעה עשר" of the משנה refers to the night<sup>9</sup>.]

### ⌘ The differences between these two approaches

There are a number of important differences between the approach of the ר"ן and the ראב"ד. To enumerate some of them:

1. **Is אור לארבעה עשר literal?** According to the ר"ן, this expression does not literally refer to light, and is merely a euphemism. According to the ראב"ד, this expression does indeed refer to light, literally.
2. **Does אור לארבעה עשר refer to the whole night?** According to the ר"ן, it does. According to the ראב"ד, this expression refers to the beginning of the night, when it is most light.

This has important ramifications in הלכה. According to the ראב"ד, one must perform בדיקת חמץ at the very beginning of night, when there are still some traces of daylight! [According to the ב"ח and מגן אברהם, this period of time is בין השמשות. However, most אחרונים maintain that this period of time begins immediately after צאת הכוכבים, and the Alter Rebbe rules accordingly, in סי' תל"א סעיף ה' – see קונטרס אחרון at length.] In explaining the opinion of the ראב"ד, the ר"ן cites two reasons to perform בדיקה at the very beginning of night; in order that one should not be lax in his obligation to perform בדיקת חמץ, and to prevent him from forgetting to do בדיקת חמץ. However, according to the ר"ן's own opinion, the משנה is not conveying any urgency to do בדיקת חמץ immediately at the beginning of night.

3. **Can the terms אור and ליל be used interchangeably?** According to the ר"ן, they can be used interchangeably, because they refer to the same thing – the entire night. According to the ראב"ד, they cannot be used interchangeably, because they do not refer to the same thing – אור means the beginning of the night whereas ליל refers to the entire night.
4. **When the גמרא suggested that the תנא should replace אור with something else, what exactly would that something else be?** According to the ר"ן, the תנא could have said לילי, because it means exactly the same thing as אור. According to the ראב"ד, the תנא

<sup>8</sup> For each משנה or ברייתא that states אור, the ראב"ד explains why the תנא focusses specifically on the beginning of the night – see the ראב"ד for details.

<sup>9</sup> As the ראב"ד adds, it is the function of the ברייתא to crystalize any obscurities of the משנה. [The חתם סופר asks why the תנא did not crystalize his intent even further, by stating "בתחילת הלילה", or something similar.]

could not have said לילי, because it does not mean exactly the same thing as אור. Rather, the גמרא was suggesting that the תנא could have said תחילת לילי.

5. **When the גמרא answers "לישנא מעליא נקט", is that the full extent of the answer?** According to the ר"ן, this is not the full extent of the answer, but one must add that the תנא was concerned about this type of מעליא only at the beginning of the מסכתא. Curiously, the גמרא did not impart this detail, even though it is a crucial part of the answer. However, according to the רבא"ד, this is the full extent of the answer.

### ⌘ According to חסידות

In עבודה, the words of our משנה are explained in light of חסידות: In עבודה, the process of חמץ בדיקת refers to locating all traces of "חמץ" in our הבהמית,<sup>10</sup> whether noticeable enough to be "seen" (בל יראה), or so microscopic that they can only be "detected" (בל ימצא). This process of חמץ בדיקת can only be achieved through the level of "אור לי"ד". The number fourteen refers to the seven מדות (emotional attributes) of the נפש האלקית when they are encloded within – and in control of – the seven מדות of the נפש הבהמית.<sup>11</sup> However, bridging the מדות of the נפש האלקית with the מדות of the נפש הבהמית calls for a higher "אור" that has the power to unite these opposites. The "אור" that must be present in order for this התלבשות to occur allows one to locate and subdue all traces of "חמץ" in his הבהמית.

### 2. What is רש"י's intent in the very first דיבור?

רש"י points out that the proper גירסא of the משנה is "אור לארבעה עשר". What is רש"י's point? Many ראשונים explain that רש"י negates an alternate גירסא which states "לאור ארבעה עשר", i.e. the prefix "ל" appears before the word "אור". Therefore, רש"י clarifies that the correct גירסא is "אור לארבעה עשר", i.e. the prefix "ל" appears after the word "אור".

At face value, this distinction seems minor. However, it is not the manner of רש"י to correct inconsequential variations in the גירסא of the גמרא. If רש"י is correcting the גירסא, it must be for an important reason. Here are three ways of explaining this variation:

### ⌘ The night before or the night after:

זבחים (see הגדה של פסח אור לשלישי גרס) distinguishes between "אור ל..." and "לאור...", with the former referring to the night before, and the latter referring to the night after<sup>12</sup>. This seems supported by the משנה in ראש השנה (דף ב' ע"ב) which refers to the night **after** the thirtieth day of the month as "לאור עיבורו", with the prefix "ל" appearing after the word "אור". Accordingly, when רש"י states that the proper גירסא of the משנה is "אור לארבעה עשר", and he negates

<sup>10</sup> See also the Rebbe's הגדה של פסח, where the following incident is recounted:

The Alter Rebbe went to Mezeritch to study under his master, the Maggid, for the first time in the year 5524 (1764), and remained until shortly before Pesach 5525. When he returned home, he prepared to apply all the spiritual lessons he had learned concerning the search for chametz. On the thirteenth of Nissan that year he did not eat. He did not fast, because it is forbidden to fast during Nissan, but neither did he eat, preoccupied as he was with preparing for the search. His search for chametz lasted the entire night, although he had only one room.

After completing his search, the Alter Rebbe offered a mystic interpretation of the words of the mishnah: "On the eve of the fourteenth, we search for chametz by the light of a candle," explaining as follows: "Thirteen" is numerically equivalent to the word echad – "one." Oneness is identified with the knowledge of Hashem. On this level, there is no need to search. "Fourteen" refers to our emotional attributes (the seven attributes of the animal soul and the seven attributes of the G-dly soul). Here a search is required. The search must be "by the light of a candle," a reference to the soul, of which it is said: "The candle of Hashem is the soul of man." And this search must encompass one's entire being, just as the actual search for chametz must probe into even the "holes and cracks" of one's home.

<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere, חסידות explains that the עיקר הביורר in our times is with regards to the seven ספירות (the מדות), and not the three intellectual ספירות (the מוחין). Perhaps this explains why, here too, the focus is only on the seven מדות.

<sup>12</sup> Although תוספות present **proofs** for this, they do not explain **why** the placement of the ל' should make a difference. See the חתם סופר for an explanation, based on his comprehension of the פיה"מ in רמב"ם (see above footnote 4.)

the גירסא of "לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר", this might be because he agrees with תוספות in זבחים, maintaining that the former phrase means the night before the fourteenth, whereas the latter phrase means the night after the fourteenth. Many ראשונים interpret רש"י this way<sup>13</sup>.

The ר"ן disagrees with תוספות. He maintains that the placement of the letter ל' in a phrase does not affect whether it refers to the evening before or the evening after. He proves this from the outset of גמרא, which quotes a number of משניות and ברייתות, including two that do not seem consistent with תוספות's rule. Thus, it wouldn't make any difference if the משנה were to state "אור לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר" or "לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר" – for that matter, there would even be no difference if the ל' was omitted entirely, and the משנה would merely state "אור ארבעה עשר"<sup>14</sup>!

The two sources these ראשונים cite<sup>15</sup> can be found on ג' עמוד א':

- ❖ A משנה which begins "המפלת לאור שמונים ואחד" ("A woman who miscarried on the evening of the 81<sup>st</sup>"). This משנה is referring to the night before the 81<sup>st</sup>, and not the night after – yet the prefix "ל" appears before the word "אור", refuting the rule of תוספות.
- ❖ A ברייתא which begins "יכול יהא נאכל לאור שלישי" ("Perhaps the קרבן may be eaten on the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup>?"). This ברייתא is referring to the night before the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and not the night after – yet the prefix "ל" appears before the word "אור", refuting the rule of תוספות.

It is important to note that, in both of these quotes, our גמרא has a different גירסא, in which the prefix "ל" does not appear before the word "אור", but afterwards.<sup>16</sup> This is perfectly consistent with the rule of תוספות.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it emerges that we have three citations in total – our משנה, as well as the משנה and ברייתא on ג' עמוד א' – in which the ראשונים debate the correct גירסא.

The מהר"ם חלאווה notes a practical מנהג with regards to the date in a שטר. According to תוספות, "אור ל" means the night before, and "לֵאֹר ..." means the night after. According to the ר"ן however, either phrase is ambiguous, referring either to the evening before or the evening after.

### ⚡ The first word of a phrase:

The מאירי explains that the prefix "ל" is grammatically inappropriate at the very beginning of a phrase or sentence. Accordingly, when רש"י states that the proper גירסא is "אור לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר", he may be negating the גירסא of "לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר" simply because it is grammatically incorrect. [According to this approach, the placement of the prefix "ל" in the other two sources cited earlier is irrelevant to our משנה, because in those cases, the word אור is not the beginning of a phrase.]

### ⚡ Before the night or during the night:

The פרי מגדים distinguishes between "אור ל" and "לֵאֹר ...", asserting that the former refers to the actual night, whereas the latter refers to the leadup to the night. Accordingly, the two גירסאות are debating whether בדיקת חמץ must take place **during** the night, or in the **leadup** to the night.

Elsewhere (on באורתא, ד' ע"א ד"ה), רש"י clearly states that בדיקת חמץ must take place **during** the night. Accordingly, when רש"י states that the proper גירסא of the משנה is "אור לארבעה עשר", and he negates the גירסא of "לֵאֹר אַרְבַּעַה עֶשֶׂר", this might be to emphasise that בדיקת חמץ takes place **during** the night, and not in the **leadup** to the night (e.g. בין השמשות).

<sup>13</sup> The following ראשונים interpret רש"י this way and agree with him: תלמיד הרשב"א, תלמיד הרמב"ן, גמון יוסף, פירוש ר"י מלונלי, תוספות חכמי אנגליה, תוספות רבנו פרץ. The following ראשונים interpret רש"י this way but disagree with him, maintaining instead as per the opinion of the ר"ן that follows: תוספות הרשב"א, מהר"ם חלאווה, רבנו דוד.

<sup>14</sup> A number of ראשונים (see מהר"ם חלאווה) state that רש"י never intended to negate the גירסא which omits the ל' entirely. However, the מאירי seems to have understood רש"י as negating even that גירסא.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by the ר"ן and the מהר"ם חלאווה. They also cite additional sources in פרק איזהו מקומן (זבחים נ"ו ע"ב).

<sup>16</sup> The ראשונים who disagree with רש"י assert that our גירסא originated from רש"י.

<sup>17</sup> However, with regards to the additional citations from פרק איזהו מקומן (זבחים נ"ו ע"ב) (see footnote 15), our גירסא there does not conform with the principle set down by תוספות.