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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פורים

אמר רבא רבא מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפורי' עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. (גמ' מגילה ז:)
Rava said: One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim, until one does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai. (Gemara Megillah 7b)

On Purim, many authorities hold, based on the above Gemara, that there is an obligation to become drunk. The Gemara implies that one should drink to the point of losing the mental capacity to distinguish between Mordechai haTzadik and the wicked Haman. Let us examine the meaning and significance of this *mitzvah*, which is often misunderstood.

Tosfos (ibid.) references the Yerushalmi, which provides the text of the *tefillah* one must recite: ארוך ארוך, זרש, ברוכה אסתר, ארוך כל הרשעים, ברוך כל היהודים. *Cursed is Zeresh, blessed is Esther, cursed are all the wicked, blessed are all the Yidden*. Indeed, as stated in Shulchan Aruch (690:16), the *minhag* is to say this *tefillah* based on the Yerushalmi.

The Rosh Yeshivah *shlita* presents a question from his father, R' Leib *zatzal*. The Bavli indicates that a person should be so inebriated to the extent that he cannot distinguish between the cursed Haman and the blessed Mordechai. In contrast, the Yerushalmi includes a *tefillah* where one must declare Mordechai and Esther as blessed, and Haman and the wicked as cursed. This seemingly creates a contradiction: the Bavli demands one should lose the ability to think clearly, while the Yerushalmi does not require such an extreme level of drunkenness.

R' Leib explained that there is no contradiction here. The Bavli describes the mental state one should reach while intoxicated - being unable to appreciate the difference between Mordechai and Haman. On the other hand, the Yerushalmi outlines what a person should actually say. A person should indeed strive for a level of drunkenness that impairs their cognitive function, but they should still be able to declare, "Blessed is Mordechai, cursed is Haman."

This highlights a crucial point: a person's understanding of good and evil must be so deeply ingrained that even when they are impaired, they subconsciously recognise the truth. One must internalise this clarity of right and wrong before drinking, becoming so convinced of it that, even inebriated and mentally confused, they will still declare the truth.

This concept serves as the foundation for an interpretation of a *possuk* in Shir HaShirim (1:4): נזכרה נזכרה דדיך מין, lit. *We will recall Your love better than wine; unrestrainedly do they love You*. The Kaminetzer Maggid offers a novel explanation of this *possuk*: נזכרה דדיך מין – if Klal Yisroel expresses their love for Hashem even under the influence of wine, this clearly demonstrates that Klal Yisroel has sincere love for Hashem. As Chazal (*Eiruv* 65a) teach, נכנס יין יצא טו, *when wine enters, secrets emerge*. Therefore, when Klal Yisroel shows clarity of faith and love for Hashem even while influenced by wine and facing impaired mental faculties, it reveals their true essence and feelings for Him.

The Chasam Sofer explains that with the *mitzvah* of עַד דָּלָא יָדַע לְבַסּוּמִי בְּפוּרִיָּא there is an element of rectifying the sin of Klal Yisroel during the days of Achashverosh. The Gemara (*Megillah* 12a) states that the reason Klal Yisroel deserved punishment was due to their participation in and benefit from the feast of Achashverosh. Even though the people sinned while drunk, they were still held accountable. A Yid is expected to behave according to the ideals of the Torah under all circumstances, and even when intoxicated and intellectually compromised, an inherent repulsion to sin should guide appropriate conduct. For this reason, we are commanded to become inebriated on Purim, and even in that state, to express our ability to discern between good and bad, alongside our deep-rooted faith in Hashem.

There is a noteworthy insight from Rav Yechezkel Abramsky *zatzal* which echoes this message. In *Sefer Melachim* (I 3:5-15), we learn about the choices that Hashem offered to Shlomo HaMelech upon his ascension to kingship. Shlomo was given the opportunity to ask for incredible wealth, a long life, or power over his enemies, but he chose to ask only for wisdom and the ability to render justice. Because of the purity of his request, Hashem showed His approval by generously granting Shlomo not only wisdom but also all the other important blessings that he had declined.

Rav Abramsky posed the following question: What remarkable greatness did Shlomo demonstrate in making such a request? Wouldn't any *ben Torah* make the same choice? He answered that Shlomo's request was made in a prophetic dream (as noted in *possuk* 5), which underscores Shlomo's greatness. To have the clarity of mind and purity of heart to seek wisdom, even while sleeping and dreaming, reveals one's innermost desires and sincere aspirations!

This Purim, let us internalise this profound lesson which emphasises the true essence of the *mitzvah* of drinking on Purim. The purpose of becoming inebriated is to express one's innermost feelings, despite the impairment that alcohol can induce. Even when one reaches the state of עַד דָּלָא יָדַע, he must still say אָרוּר הֵמֶן and בְּרוּךְ מְרַדְּכֵי. By fulfilling this obligation properly, we can remedy the sin of those who, during the feast of Achashverosh, lost their moral compass and behaved incorrectly when inebriated. May our clarity in Hashem and our commitment to our beliefs be deeply embedded within us, shining through to declare the truth, even when we cannot rely on our intellect!

א פִּרְיֵילֶכֶן פּוּרִים!

[According to the above, the *mitzvah* applies only to someone who, even while under the influence of alcohol, can declare the goodness of Hashem and act with *simchah*. If someone whilst drunk, unfortunately, loses their ability to behave correctly and therefore acts disrespectfully, they cannot and should not get intoxicated, as clearly stated in *halachah* - see *Kol Bo* and *Beis Yosef*.]

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.