



חזיון מרדכי...

Purim Wine

The mitzvah is מיחייב איניש לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי - a person is obligated to drink [Rashi: to get drunk with wine] until he no longer knows the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai." [Megilla 7b].

One explanation of "not knowing the difference" is that you can no longer figure the gematrias of "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai" which are equal [502]; another is that you should fall asleep from the wine.

A Jew prizes mental clarity virtually over all else. Drunkenness obliterates the intellect. Why should the Torah give us such a strange mitzvah?

We find that the *tikkun* [- rectification] of that which has been debased is to use it instead for sanctity. Thus, the Jews in Egypt who had worshipped the sheep were commanded to sacrifice the same animal to HaKadosh Baruch Hu:

רש"י שמות יב ו: והיה לכם למשמרת ... ושהיו שטופים באלילים אמר להם משכו וקחו לכם משכו ידיכם מאלילים וקחו לכם צאן של מצוה.

Shemot 12:6 The lamb shall be under your watch ...

Rashi: The Jews were steeped in idol worship. HaShem said to them (Shemot 12:21) "Draw and take for yourselves [sheep according to family and offer the pascal sacrifice;]" [that is to say] – withdraw your hands from idols and take for yourselves sheep for the sake of a mitzvah.]

In the time of Purim the people chose to attend the party of Ahashverosh. This sin brought on the decree of Haman. The food and wine was Kosher. Yet it was a celebration of the defeat of the Jewish nation. Ahasverosh miscalculated the prophesied 70 years of exile and boasted by displaying the holy utensils from the Beis haMikdash. He held a feast; attendance was mandatory yet the drinks were "on the house" - *ve haShetiya keDat, ain ones* – the wine was optional and non-coerced.¹ Mordechai told the people not to attend but they disobeyed. Now, measure for measure, Hazal instituted drunkenness, but this time it was for the sake of sanctity, at a *seudat mitzvah*.

¹ אסתר א ח: והשתיה כדת אין אנס כי כן יסד המלך על כל רב ביתו לעשות כרצון איש ואיש. רש"י: כדת - לפי שיש סעודות שכופין את המסובין לשתות כלי גדול ויש שאינו יכול לשתותו כי אם בקושי אבל כאן אין אונס. יסד - לשון יסוד כלומר כן תקן וצוה. על כל רב ביתו - על כל שרי הסעודה שר האופים ושר הטבחים ושר המשקים. לעשות כרצון איש ואיש - לכל אחד רצונו.