

Parsha Plug: Purim, Simcha, and Not Knowing

<p>Esther 8:15-17, 9:19–22</p>	<p>אסתר ח:טו-יז, ט:יט-כב</p>
<p>15 And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad. 16 The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor. 17 And in every province, and in every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day. And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them...9:19 Therefore do the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions to one another. 20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, near and far, 21 to enjoin them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, 22 the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned for them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor.</p>	<p>טו וּמֵרָדֵכַי יֵצֵא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תִּכְלֹת וְחוּר, וְעֵטֶרֶת זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה, וְתַכְרִיךְ בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשַׁן, צָהֳלָה וְשִׂמְחָה. טז לַיהוּדִים, הִתְהַ אֹרְחָה וְשִׂמְחָה, וְשׁוֹשַׁן, וַיִּקְרַי יז וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר וְעִיר, מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וּדְתוּ מֵאִיעַ, שִׂמְחָה וְשׁוֹשַׁן לַיהוּדִים, מִשְׁתָּהּ וַיּוֹם טוֹב; וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵי הָאָרֶץ, מִתְיַהֲדִים--כִּי-נִפְל פְּחַד-הַיהוּדִים, עָלֵיהֶם... יט עַל-כֵּן הַיהוּדִים הַפְּרוּזִים (הַפְּרוּזִים), הִישָׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרוּזוֹת--עֲשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר, שִׂמְחָה וּמִשְׁתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב; וּמְשַׁלַּח מְנוֹת, אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ. כ וַיִּכְתֹּב מֵרָדֵכַי, אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה; וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיהוּדִים, אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ--הַקְּרוּבִים, וְהַרְחֹקִים. כא לְקַיָּם, עָלֵיהֶם--לִהְיוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר, וְאֵת יוֹם-חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ: בְּכָל-שָׁנָה, וְשָׁנָה. כב כִּימִים, אֲשֶׁר-נָחַו בָּהֶם הַיהוּדִים מֵאִיבִיָּהֶם, וְהַחֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה, וַיֵּאבְּל לַיּוֹם טוֹב; לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם, יְמֵי מִשְׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה, וּמְשַׁלַּח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ, וּמִתְּנוֹת לְאֶבְיָנִים.</p>

<p>Masechet Megillah 7b</p>	<p>מסכת מגילה ז:</p>
<p>Rava said: One is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordecai’. Rabbah and Rebbe Zeira joined together in a Purim feast. They became inebriated, and Rabbah arose and cut Rebbe Zeira’s throat. The next day he prayed on his behalf and revived him. Next year he said, ‘Will the master come and we will have the Purim feast together?’. He replied, ‘A miracle does not take place on every occasion’.</p>	<p>אמר רבא מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפורי'א עד זלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי רבה ורבי זירא עבדו סעודת פורים בהדי הדדי איבסום קם רבה שחטיה לרבי זירא למחר בעי רחמי ואחיייה לשנה אמר ליה נתי מר ונעביד סעודת פורים בהדי הדדי אמר ליה לא בכל שעתא ושעתא מתרחיש ניסא.</p>

<p>Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 695:2</p>	<p>שולחן ערוך אורח חיים תרצה:ב</p>
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<p>A person is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordecai'. Rama: There are those who say that it is not necessary to become so drunk. Rather he should just drink more than usual and go to sleep, for in sleep he cannot tell the difference between 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordecai'.</p>	<p>חייב אינש לבסומי בפוריא <u>עד דלא ידע</u> בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. הגה: ויש אומרים דאין צריך להשתכר כל כך, אלא שישתה יותר מלימודו (כל בו) וישן, ומתוך שישן אינו יודע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי (מהרי"ל).</p>
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<p>Likutei Halakhot Hilkhoh Nefilat Apayim 4:7</p>	<p>ליקוטי הלכות הלכות נפילת אפים ד:ז</p>
<p>The primary attainment of knowledge is precisely the aspect of the goal of knowing that we are not to know. For the aspect of not knowing is the primary goal of knowledge...Therefore, on Purim we must get drunk to the point that we reach such joy until we merit the aspect of the aforementioned goal of knowledge, where pursuit and hindrance are combined, they being knowledge and lack of knowledge.</p>	<p>שעיקר השגת הידיעה הוא על ידי זה דייקא בבחינת תכלית הידיעה אשר לא נדע. שבחינת לא נדע הוא עיקר תכלית הידיעה ... ועל כן בפורים אז צריכין להשתכר עד שיבואו ליד שמחה כזאת עד שיזכה לבחינת תכלית הידיעה הנ"ל ששם נכלל הרדיפה והמעכב יחד, שהם הידיעה והעדר הידיעה...</p>

<p>Rav Ezra Bick <i>Purim: A Holiday in Disguise</i></p>
<p>Purim is not a dignified holiday. It is not blessed with ritual. It is a day when you find the power to rejoice in God's goodness, in His charge to you, even though He is not demanding it. It is also a day of Jewish solidarity and equality. Because it celebrates the Jew rather than God - the Jew discovering God rather than God calling to the Jew - it demands unity and solidarity. Charity is of course a mitzva every day. The mitzva to give alms on Purim is not a fulfillment merely of charity, but of the nature of Purim. Shall I rejoice alone on this day? You must search out the needy - and also share with your friends, although they are not needy. Exchanging gifts, of food, with each other, so that the celebration will be truly ours, from within. And, have a good time. Not telling us how to have a good time is a big risk for the halakha. There are, after all, so many ways to misuse human rejoicing. There is a word in Biblical Hebrew - tzchok - which means basically "fun," and which is used in the Bible to variously describe murder, sexual impropriety and idolatry. In Megillat Esther, the "good time" of the Jews is described as "light, joy, happiness and honor." Actually, it does not say that the Jews rejoiced. The verse is phrased in the passive voice - "And there was light, joy, happiness, and honor for the Jews." Indeed, the happiness is something that is meant to happen on this day, to spring up from within, without guidance from above. It is a day to be swept away by the currents that have been hidden, as Esther was hidden, as God is hidden. On the other hand, the Sages have a pithy saying about instinct - "In three ways is a man known - kiso, kaaso, koso (his pocket, his anger, his cup)." If it is natural joy welling up from within, without the guiding hand of eternal reason, it is a mighty indicator of the true nature of the man within.</p>