

Drinking on Purim

"עַד דְּלֹא יֵדַע"

Megillah 7b

Drunkenness is condemned, forbidden, and admonished against – to varying degrees – in the Torah, Prophets, Writings, Talmud, and Jewish ethical literature. Intoxication can lead to loss of self-control, alcohol addiction, transgression, weakened morality, and crime.

With this in mind we are surprised to read an unusual story in the Talmud (Megillah 7b), where **Rava tells us: “A person is obligated to drink on Purim until he cannot distinguish between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordechai.’”** This cryptic line is followed by an even more eyebrow-raising anecdote about Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira, two sages who had experienced an unusual, and controversial, Purim feast.

In this session we will attempt – through the eyes of generations of Jewish thinkers and halachic authorities – to figure out what the Talmud is trying to teach us in this puzzling passage. Our quest will demand a thorough examination of the halachic sources that deal with drinking on Purim.

This session will address the following questions:

- What does Rava mean by “until he cannot distinguish between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordechai’”?
- What are the halachic guidelines for drinking on Purim?
- What is the underlying meaning behind drinking on Purim?
- Is there anything unique about wine in particular?

1 – PRIMARY SOURCE: GEMARA

Source 1. Megillah 7b – Rava describes the obligation to drink on Purim.

Rava said: A person is obligated to get drunk (Rashi – the Aramaic word *livsumei* means to get drunk on wine) on Purim until he cannot distinguish between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai."

Rabbah and **Rabbi Zeira** made a Purim feast together. They drank, whereupon Rabbah arose and killed [lit. slaughtered] Rabbi Zeira. The next day, Rabbah pleaded for Divine mercy, and thereby brought Rabbi Zeira back to life. The next year, Rabbah said to Rabbi Zeira, "Come, let's make a Purim feast together." Rabbi Zeira said, "Miracles do not happen all the time."

אָמַר רַבָּא: מֵיחֲזִיב אֵינִישׁ לְבָסוּמֵי (רש"י – להשתכר בגין) בְּפוּרִיָא עַד דְּלֹא יָדַע בֵּין אַרוּר הָמָן לְבְרוּךְ מֹרְדֵכַי.

רַבָּה וְרַבִּי זֵירָא עֲבָדוּ סְעוּדַת פּוּרִים בְּהַדְי הַדְדִי, אֵיבְסוּם, קָם רַבָּה שְׁחַטִּיה לְרַבִּי זֵירָא. לְמַחַר בְּעֵי רַחֲמֵי וְאַחֲזִייה. לְשָׁנָה אָמַר לִיה: גִּיתִי מַר וְנַעֲבִיד סְעוּדַת פּוּרִים בְּהַדְי הַדְדִי! - אָמַר לִיה: לֹא בְּכָל שְׁעָתָא וְשְׁעָתָא מְתַרְחֵשׁ נִיסָא.

(Taken at face value, this story is both shocking and miraculous. How did Rabbah allow himself to get so drunk that he slaughtered his friend?! Some commentators, such as the *Maharsha*, do not take this story literally. Rather, they explain that when it says that Rabbah 'slaughtered' R' Zeira, it means he forced him to drink until the point where R' Zeira felt he was ill. However, almost all other commentaries, both early and late, do not seem to agree with this innovative interpretation. Even according to the *Maharsha*, the story does not bode well for the potential consequences of drinking on Purim)

This Gemara is quite perplexing! Here is Rava, one of the greatest Sages in Talmudic history, not only condoning, but *obligating* intoxication?! What does that have to do with Purim!? And what's with the Purim-meal blood-bath?!!

Focus – 3 questions on this Gemara:

Question #1 – What is Rava saying exactly?

(i.e. Is Rava really telling us that one is obligated to get drunk? How drunk? Totally intoxicated??)

Question #2 – Why is Rava saying this?

(i.e. What would be the purpose of this drunkenness? How is one supposed to grow from this? What does drinking have to do with Purim?)

Question #3 – What is the point of the story?

(i.e. Stories are brought in the Gemara to teach us important lessons, not simply for interesting tidbits of entertainment! If so, why is this dramatic story juxtaposed to the Halacha of Rava??)

We'll begin by addressing the last question first:

2 – THE POINT OF THE STORY (Answer to Question #3)

1. The Opinion of Rabbeinu Efraim

One of the early medieval authorities has a shocking observation regarding the story:

Source 2. Baal Hamaor on the Rif, Megillah 3b (pages of the Rif)

Rabbah [Rabbah, not Rava, in the version of the Baal Hamaor] said: A person is obligated to get drunk on Purim... Rav Ephraim, of blessed memory, wrote that based on the episode that follows, where Rabbah got up and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira, and the following year Rabbah suggested that they make another Purim feast together (whose offer was then declined by Rabbi Zeira)... Rabbah's statement was rejected from the halachah. It is therefore improper to get drunk on Purim.	אָמַר רַבָּה חַיִּיב אֵינִי לְבָסוּמִי בְּפוּרִיָא כּו' כְּתַב הָרַב אֶפְרַיִם ז"ל לְמַהּ הוּא עוֹבְדָא דְקָם רַבָּה שְׁחַטִּיה לְרַבִּי זֵירָא לְשָׁנָה אָמַר לִיה תָּא נַעֲבִיד כּו' אֵי דְחֵי לִיה מִימְרָא דְרַבָּה וְלִית הַלְכָתָא כְּנֻתִיה וְלֹא שְׁפִיר דְמִי לְמַעַבְדַּד הָכִי.
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According to *Rabbeinu Ephraim*, the story of Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira is cited by the Gemara to teach us that "it is improper" to get drunk on Purim. In other words, the whole point of the story is to teach us not to listen to Rava!

Other authorities go even further, explaining that the Talmudic citation of the anecdote where Rabbah "slaughtered" Rabbi Zeira means to categorically prohibit drunkenness on Purim (because it can lead to transgressions such as murder!).

2. The Dissenting Majority-Opinion

As opposed to Rabbeinu Ephraim's approach, Rava's statement is quoted without qualification by many halachic authorities, including the Rif (Megillah 3b), the Rosh (Megillah 1:8), the Tur (Orach Chaim 695), and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 695). This certainly begs the question once again: what is the point of the story??

Source 3. Pri Chadash (Shulchan Aruch OC 695:2) – The Story is a *proof* to Rava!

It's said over, in the name of Rabbeinu Efraim, that from that incident wherein Rabba slaughtered R' Zeira, we derive that the opinion of Rava has been out-ruled, and one therefore should not follow this (Rava)

But this is incorrect. For if it were, why did R' Zeira decline to attend the following years Purim meal claiming that "not at all times will a miracle be performed"? Since he saw the destructive consequences of last year's meal (murder!) which came about as a result of excessive drunkenness, they both should have simply resolved to not drink so much this year!! Rather, the implication is that they would have indeed done it (gotten tremendously drunk) once again. This is, in fact, the entire reason why this incident was brought in the Gemara, to teach us that the saying of Rava should be understood literally: one is obligated become drunk to the point where he cannot distinguish between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai.

וככתו בפשם רבינו אפרים דמהך עובדא
דקם רבה ושקטיה לר' זירא אדחית מימרת
רבא ולא סד למעבד למעבד הכי

ואין זה נכון דא"כ אמאי אישתמיט ר' זירא
מלעבד סעודה אהדדי ואצטריך לומר ליה
לאו כל שעתא ושעתא מתרחיש ניסא כיון
שראו שיצא קלקול עון שפיכת דמים
מסיבת שיכרותם ראוי היה להם למנוע
עצמם לבסומי כולי האי ומלשתות אלא
יותר מעט מכדי הרגילם! אלא משמע
דעפ"ה היו משתכרים יותר מדי ולהכי
מייתי תלמודא ההוא עובדא לאשמועינן
דמימרת רבא כפשטא דמחויב אינש
לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך
מרדכי.

The Pri Chadash actually uses the story of Rava & R' Zeira as a *proof* to the halacha of Rava! The exact opposite of Rabbeinu Efraim!!

According to this generally accepted approach, the halacha emerges that one *is* indeed obligated to get drunk on Purim.

This brings us back to the 1st-question we posed: How can it be that there is obligation to get drunk on Purim!?

3 – DEFINING “DRUNK” (ANSWER TO Q#1)

1. Torah Perspectives on Drinking

In order to understand how Rava could possibly obligate one to become drunk, we should point out contrasting perspectives within the Torah regarding drinking.

On the one hand...

The Torah itself testifies to the destructive influence of wine. The first recorded instance of drunkenness in the Torah is the story of Noach after the flood. Even though Noach’s righteousness enabled him to save his family from the flood, he later planted a vineyard, became drunk, and was sodomized (or, possibly, castrated) by his son, Cham (Bereishis 9:20-24).

Source 4. Ramban (Nachmanides), Commentary on Bereishit 9:26

<p>The Noach wine episode was written in the Torah because it contains a warning more powerful than the passage of the Nazirite (Bamidbar/Numbers 6:1-21). Even Noach, the pure <i>tzaddik</i> (righteous man) who saved the whole world through his righteousness, was led astray through wine. It brought disgrace upon him and a curse to his offspring.</p>	<p>וְנִשְׁתַּבּוּ עֵינָיו הַיַּיִן בְּנֹחַ כִּי יֵשׁ בּוֹ אֲזֵקָה מִמֶּנּוּ יוֹתֵר מִפְּרִשְׁתַּי וְזִירוֹתַי, כִּי הִצְדִּיק תָּמִים אֲשֶׁר צָדְקוֹ הִצִּיל כָּל הָעוֹלָם, גַּם אוֹתוֹ הִסְטִיא הַיַּיִן וְהִבִּיא אוֹתוֹ לַיָּדַי בְּזִיוֹן וּמְקַלְלַת וְרָעוּ:</p>
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The Ramban explains that this episode is to teach us about the negative effects of intoxication.

On the other hand...

There are other sources, however, that indicate that becoming drunk is not a full prohibition. Take, for instance, the drinking of the sons of our Patriarch Jacob:

Source 5. Bereishis 43:33-34

<p>They sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. Portions were taken to them from Yosef’s table, and Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank, and became intoxicated with him.</p>	<p>וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לִפְנֵי הַבָּכֹר כְּבִכְרָתוֹ וְהַצְעִיר כְּצַעֲרָתוֹ וַיִּתְמָהוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ: וַיֵּשָׂא מִשָּׂאת מֵאֵת פָּנָיו אֶלְהֶם וַתִּרְבַּ מִשָּׂאת בְּנִימֵן מִמִּשָּׂאת כָּלֶם חֲמֵשׁ יְדוֹת וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׁכְּרוּ עִמּוֹ:</p>
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If the great sons of Yaakov, who established the nation of Israel, could become intoxicated in their family feast, then surely doing so doesn't imply so heinous a sin!

2. 'Drunk' vs 'Smashed'

The resolution to this lies, it seems, in a distinction between getting "drunk" and getting "smashed." In this sense, halachah differentiates between a regular level of drunkenness, and "the drunkenness of Lot."

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 99:1) writes that a person can recite blessings even while drunk. The Mishnah Berurah comments:

Source 6. Mishnah Berurah 99:11

This halachah applies until a person has reached the level of "the drunkenness of Lot." At this level, he is considered as though he has entirely lost his mind, and is exempt from all mitzvos. Therefore, if he recited [the Shema] or blessings in such a state of mind, he does not fulfill his obligation, because under such circumstances he is exempt. He must therefore recite [Shema] and the blessings again, later on.	וכ"ז כשלא הגיע לשכרותו של לוט דאל"ה כשוטה יחשב לגמרי לכו"ע ופטור אז מכל המצות ע"כ אפילו בדיעבד אם קרא אז ובירך לא מיפטר בכך שהרי פטור היה באותה שעה וחייב אח"כ לחזור ולקרוא ולברך.
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Based on this distinction, it can be suggested that there is no contradiction between the extreme levels of drunkenness of Noach cited above, and the anecdotes recording distinguished people who got drunk (mentioning no criticism of the practice):

Certainly, it is forbidden to get "smashed" to the point where a person loses his very consciousness. On the other hand, it is certainly permitted to get drunk to a certain degree.

3. Sleepy-Time

The Rambam who harshly criticizes drunkenness (see De'os 5:3), offers a creative and more moderate interpretation of Rava's obligation.

Source 7. Rambam (Maimonides), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Megillah ve'Chanukah 2:15

What is the obligation of this [Purim] feast? It is that a person should eat meat and prepare as nice a meal as he is able to. He should also drink wine until he becomes drunk and falls asleep out of drunkenness.	ביצד חובת סעודה זו ש'אכל בשר ויתקן סעודה נאה כפי אשר תמצא ידו ושותה יין עד ש'שתפר וירדם בשכרות.
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By drinking oneself to sleep, one fulfills the instruction of not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordechai!!

4. Fancy-Mathematics

Other authorities offer another novel interpretation of Rava's obligation:

Source 8. Darche Moshe Orach Chaim 695

But in the Chidushei Agudah (Megillah 6) and the Toldos Adam Vachava 10:1 (page 62c of Rabbeinu Yerucham) it is written that the numerical equivalent of [the Hebrew letters of] *arur Haman* (cursed be Haman) and *baruch Mordechai* (blessed be Mordechai) are identical (see chart below); one must drink enough to render himself unable to figure out the calculation ... The Minhagim wrote that there was a liturgical poem where the refrain would alternate between *arur Haman* and *baruch Mordechai*; one needs clarity to not occasionally make a mistake...

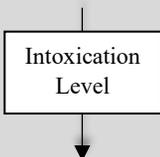
אָבֵל בְּחֵידוּשֵׁי אֲגוּדָה (מְגִילָה ס"ו)
 וּבְתוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם וְסוּהָ נִתְיַב י' חֶלֶק א' (סב)
 ע"ג) פֶּתַב דְּחֶשְׁבוֹן אָרוּר הָמָן וּבְרוּךְ
 מְרֻדְכַי שְׁוֶה וְצָרִיף לְהַשְׁתַּכַּר עַד שְׁלֹא
 יִדַע הַחֶשְׁבוֹן ... הַמְנַהֲגִים פֶּתְבוּ דְפִיּוּט
 אֶתְד הָיָה שְׁהָיוּ עוֹנִין עַל בֵּית אֶתְד אָרוּר
 הָמָן וְעַל בֵּית אֶתְד בְּרוּךְ מְרֻדְכַי וְצָרִיף
 צִילוּתָא שְׁלֹא יִטְעָה לְפַעֲמִים ...

total	ן	מ	ה	ר	ו	ר	א
502	50	40	5	200	6	200	1

total	י	כ	ד	ר	מ	ך	ו	ר	ב
502	10	20	4	200	40	20	6	200	2

The Darchei Moshe maintains one needs to become intoxicated only to the point where he loses his clarity of thought to do fancy gematria's and poems! This is certainly a low threshold!

Summarizing the Levels of Intoxication in Halacha



1. Smashed (like Lot)
2. Drink until you're drunk (The literal approach to Rava)
3. Drink until you fall asleep. (The non-literal approach)
4. Drink until you can't make mathematical calculations, or until you get confused in your singing. (Creative interpretation)

4 – WHAT’S THE POINT OF GETTING DRUNK?

(ANSWER TO Q#2)

1. Why Wine??

We’ve seen that one is indeed allowed, and even obligated to some degree, to drink more than usual on Purim. The question still remains: why?!? For what purpose? And what does drinking have to do with Purim in particular? Also, why specifically wine?

Source 9. Tzror Hachaim, Haderech Hashmini Midrash L’Purim pp. 120-121

The reason they mentioned drinking [on Purim] is because the entire miracle, from the beginning to the end, came about through wine-banquets. First, the episode of Vashti took place in the context of a wine-banquet, until Esther was made queen. The tale of Haman, from beginning to end, involved wine-banquets. This is similar to Chanukah, where the miracle took place through oil and we therefore light candles. Similarly, on Purim, where the miracle took place through wine, we are obligated to get drunk on wine (*livsumei*) and to make a joyous celebration for our going from darkness to light, as it says, “For the Jews there was light and joy and happiness and honor” (Esther 8:16).

והענין שנהזכירו בשתייה, מפני כי כל הנס
מתחלה ועד סוף היה במשתה הזין.
מתחלה ענין ושתי במשתה הזין עד
שהמליכו את אסתר. וענין הזין במשתה
הזין מתחלה ועד סוף. וכמו שמצינו
בחנכה שהנס נעשה על ידי השמן
ומדליקין נרות, גם כן בפורים שהיה הנס
על ידי הזין חייבין לבסומי ולעשות
שמחה שיצאו מאפלה לאורה. שנאמר:
ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר
(אסתר ח:טז)

By transforming the Purim celebratory feast into a wine-banquet, we commemorate and publicize the miracle that took place on Purim.

(This principle is also cited by the Chafetz Chaim (Biur Halachah, Orach Chaim 695). However, the Chafetz Chaim concludes: “Nonetheless, this [the obligation of drinking specifically wine] is only the preferred way to fulfill the mitzvah, but not a full obligation.” If wine is unavailable, or if a person does not enjoy drinking wine, other alcoholic beverages are also acceptable.)

2. Getting High from the Day of Purim Itself!

Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky (“*Nesivos Shalom*”) underscores the lofty nature of the day of Purim, understanding Rava’s instruction to “get drunk” on Purim as referring to becoming immersed in the wealth of spiritual riches available on this day.

Purim is compared to Yom Kippur – it is a day of receiving the Torah, and a time to eradicate the evil of Amalek. It holds the opportunity for each person to perfect the three essential relationships for which we are created – between man and God, man and other people, and man and himself.

Let’s read the next phenomenal source:

Source 11. Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, Nesivos Shalom, Purim. pp. 57-58

[Summarized]

Behold, this obligation is among the wondrous aspects of Purim. For the day of Purim is auspicious and very holy, containing many lofty components. It is a day "like" Yom Kippur, a day of receiving the Torah since the Jewish nation willingly re-accepted the Torah, which is a higher level even than Sinai. It is also a day of eradicating Amalek. Furthermore, we give *tzedakah* (charity) to anyone who requests (and likewise God responds to any of our requests). Clearly, then, understanding the essence of this day requires tremendous thought and peace of mind, which begs the question how is one able to do this while simultaneously fulfilling the mitzvah of getting drunk?

The Gemara doesn't say "*livsumei* with wine", rather "*livsumei' in Purim*" – meaning that one should get intoxicated **from Purim itself**, as in the connotation of (Yeshaya 51:21) "Drunk, but not from wine." One becomes drunk on the elevated revelations of Purim in the perspective of (Shemos 30:10) "Once a year."

Purim is divided into three aspects, corresponding to the three divisions of perfection in the service of God, as the Maharal writes: "Perfection in service of God includes our relationship with God, with other people, and within ourselves." All three of these areas include an aspect that is like "blessed be Mordechai" (positive) and another that is like "cursed be Haman" (negative). A person has to get so "drunk" from the holiness of the day that he cannot tell the difference between the two.

Reading the Megillah reflects completion with one's Creator. There are times when the Holy One, blessed be He, helps a Jew, when his mind and heart are open and he feels close to his God – These are "blessed be Mordechai" times. But there are also extremely dark times, when a person feels he has become dreadfully distant from God, where there is obscurity both in physical and spiritual matters, to the degree where he feels he has been totally cast out (God forbid) from God's Presence, and his whole existence is one of "cursed be Haman." This is a Jew's most difficult situation.

But on Purim a person must get drunk until he cannot tell between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai." He must draw from Purim's great reserves of joy until he feels that there is no difference between the times of closeness to God and the times he feels distanced and rejected.

Likewise concerning a person's relationship with others... On Purim a person must become so "drunk" that he cannot tell between "cursed be Haman" [foes and adversaries] and "blessed

חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע. הנה חייב זה הוא מן הדברים המפלאים בפורים, שהרי יום פורים הוא יום גדול וקדוש עד מאוד, והרבה ענינים נשגבים כלולים בו. שהוא כיום בפורים, ויום קבלת התורה דהדר קבלה בראשון, היינו במדרגה יותר גבוה ממעמד הר סיני. וגם עת מחנת עמלק. ובו כל הפושט יד נותנים לו. ולכאורה דרוש לכל זה הרבה הרבה ישוב הדעת, ואיך זה מתלשב עם החייב לבסומי בפוריא. ...

דלא אמרו לבסומי בגין אלא בפוריא, שישתפר מהפורים עצמו בחינת [ישעיהו נא כא] שקרת ולא מינו, כי אם מפל הגלויים הנשגבים של פורים שהם בבחי' אחת בשנה.

דהנה עניני הפורים מתחלקים לג' חלקים כנגד ג' חלקי השלימות בעבודת ה', כמו שכתב המהר"ל דלשלימות עבודת ה' פוללת שלם עם בוראו שלם עם חבריו ושלם עם עצמו. ובכולם יש בחינת ברוך מרדכי ובחינת ארור המן, אשר חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא מקדושת היום עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי.

קריאת המגילה היא מכלל השלימות עם בוראו. דהנה יש זמנים שהקדוש ברוך הוא עוזר ליהודי שמחו ולבו פתוחים ומרגיש קרוב לאלקיו, בבחינת ברוך מרדכי. וישנם זמנים חשוכים ביותר, שמרגיש כי נתרחק מאוד מהשם ותברך, שנמצא בהסתור בענינים גשמיים ובענינים רוחניים, ועד שנדמה לו שהשלה לגמרי חס ושלום ממחיצתו של הקב"ה, וכל מציאיותו בבחינת ארור המן. זהו המצב הקשה ביותר ליהודי.

אכן בפורים חייב איניש לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי, שישאב מהפורים שמחה עצומה עד שירגיש בלבו שאין כל הבדל בין העתים שבהם הוא מרגיש את עצמו קרוב להשם ותברך לבין העתים שבהם מרגיש מרחק ונדחה.

ובכן בחלק של שלם עם חבריו יש בחי' ארור המן ובחינת ברוך מרדכי. יש חברים שמרגיש

be Mordechai” [close friends]. This is the idea of giving gifts to one another (*mishloach manos*), to increase friendship and camaraderie...This is an exceedingly elevated level, to love all in whatever situation they are.

The idea applies even to perfection within one’s own self...On Purim a person must become so “drunk” that he cannot tell between “cursed be Haman” [base physical pursuits] and “blessed be Mordechai” [elevated spiritual pursuits].

For the power of Purim is such that it makes no difference whether he is involved in Torah or service of God, or he is involved in physical activities – since the entire world is God’s acquisition.

As the Maggid of Mezritch said, the world is full of methods of acquiring (*kinyanim*) a connection with God. Just as one can connect to God through Torah and direct service, so one can attain a connection with him through physical matters. We believe that everything was created for the glory of God. Through this approach a person reaches self-perfection.

פי הם קרובים ללבבו וכי הם הגונים וראויים
בבחינת ברוך מרדכי. ויש שרואה את חביריו
בבחי' ארוך המון, אם מחמת שהוא בעצמו
במצב ירוד ומשום כך נדמה לו על אחרים
שאיןם בסדר, או כאילו באמת אינם הגונים.
ובפורים חייב אדם לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין
ארוך המון לברוך מרדכי, שנה ענגן משלום
מנות איש לרעהו להרבות הרעות והנדירות.
וכפי העולה מדברי חז"ל ומה שכתב הרמב"ם
במצנות ואהבת לרעהו כמוה, חייב אדם לאהוב
כל אהד ואהד בישאל כגופו, שזו מדרגה
עליונה ביותר לאהוב כגופו כל אהד ואהד
באינה מצב שהוא.

וכן יש בפורים ענגן שלום עם עצמו. שתפקיד
היום מחיית עמלק בסור מרע והדר קבלוה
ברצון בעשה טוב. וגם בנה נאמר דחייב לבסומי
עד דלא ידע בין ארוך המון לברוך מרדכי.
דכאשר אדם אינו שלום עם עצמו בבחינת מאמר
הכתוב (תהלים לח) אין שלום בעצמי, אז
בעסקו בתורה ועבודה הוא בבחינת ברוך
מרדכי. ואילו בעת עסקו בענינים הגשמיים
ושקוע בתאוותיו הסמריות הריהו בבחי' ארוך
המון.

ובפורים חייב אינו לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין
ארוך המון לברוך מרדכי, שמפח הפורים לא
יהיה הפרש אצלו בין אם עוסק בעניני תורה
ועבודה או שעוסק בענינים הגשמיים, כי מלאה
הארץ קנינה, כמאמר הרב הקדוש המגיד
ממזריץ זכרונו יגן עלינו, שהעולם מלא
בקנינים שאפשר על ידם לקנותו יתברך. כמו
שאפשר לקנותו על ידי תורה ועבודה, כך
אפשר לקנותו בשעה שעוסקים בענינים
הגשמיים ומאמינים שהכל ברא לכבודו, שאז
מגיע האדם לשלימות עם עצמו.

5 – PRACTICAL HALACHAH

All major halachic authorities follow the ruling of Rava: It is obligatory to drink on Purim to a greater extent than regular days and regular festivals. They do not support the view that the Gemara cites the disastrous anecdote of Rabbah and Rav Zeira in order to defer the ruling.

In citing Rava, the Shulchan Aruch quotes the literal wording, whereas the Rema combines the concepts of drinking more than usual and of falling asleep through drink.

Source 12. Shulchan Aruch and Rema, Orach Chaim 695 – How do we rule?

<p>Shulchan Aruch - A person is obligated to drink on Purim until he cannot distinguish between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordechai.’</p> <p>Rema’s note – There are those that say that one does not have to get drunk. Rather, he should drink more than usual (Kol Bo), and fall asleep. By sleeping he will not know the difference between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordechai’ (Maharil).</p> <p>Both the one who [drinks] a lot and the one who [drinks] a little [is praiseworthy] as long as his intention is for the sake of Heaven. (paraphrasing the Mishnah on Menachot 110a)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">חַיִּיב אֵינִישׁ לְבַסּוּמֵי בְּפוּרִיָּא עַד דְּלֹא יָדַע בֵּין אָרוּר הָמָן לְבָרוּךְ מְרַדְּכֵי:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">רמ"א - הגה וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים דְּאִין צָרִיךְ לְהַשְׁתַּכֵּר כָּל כּוֹף אֶלָּא שְׂשִׁשְׁתָּהּ יוֹתֵר מִלְמוּדוֹ (כל בו) וַיֵּשֶׁן וּמִתּוֹךְ שְׂשִׁישְׁן אֵינּוּ יֹדְעֵ בֵּין אָרוּר הָמָן לְבָרוּךְ מְרַדְּכֵי (מהרי"ל).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">וְאֶחָד הַמְרַבֵּה וְאֶחָד הַמִּמְעִיט וּבִלְבָד שְׂשִׁיבּוּיִן לְבוֹ לְשָׂמִים.</p>
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The conclusion of the Rema is of special importance: "Both the one who [drinks] a lot and the one who [drinks] a little [is praiseworthy] **as long as his intention is for the sake of Heaven.**"

This idea can be well illustrated by a beautiful account of the drunkenness of one of the great Sages of recent generations, R' Yisroel Salanter:

"Rabbi Yisrael Salanter used to get extremely drunk on Purim. *Yet in this state he would spend the entire day speaking novel words of Torah, with razor-sharp clarity and creative genius, in all areas of the Talmud. He used to call this, 'giving the body a test,' to see whether even his physical body was an embodiment of Divine wisdom...* For us, who are small in Torah and in the service of God, it is enough to ‘drink more than usual, without getting so drunk’ (Rema, Orach Chaim 681:2). Let us guard the loftiness of the day and not let it turn into an empty waste of time." Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, (AleI Shur, Vol. II, p. 468)