

Blessed and Cursed **Rabbi Zev-Hayyim Feyer**

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Purim

On Purim, it is taught, one should become so intoxicated that one cannot tell the difference between “blessed is Mordecai” and “cursed is Haman.” Our tradition has explained this dictum in many ways.

Some take it literally. They drink so much on Purim that they become “dead drunk;” they pass out, become unconscious, and, even if not quite unconscious, in their stupor they cannot tell the difference between “blessed is Mordecai” and “cursed is Haman.” This is the level of the World of *Assiyah*, the World of Action, the level of *doing*, the body level.

Some examine it in the light of *gematria*, numerology. The Hebrew expression ברוך מרדכי (*Baruch Mordecai*, blessed is Mordecai) has a gematria (letter by letter) of $2 + 200 + 6 + 20 + 40 + 200 + 4 + 20 + 10 = 502$. The expression ארור המן (*Arur Haman*, cursed is Haman) has a gematria of $1 + 200 + 6 + 200 + 5 + 40 + 50 = 502$. The Kabbalistic tradition teaches us that two words or two expressions which have the same gematria are, on some level and in some way, equivalent. By *gematria*, then, there is no difference between “blessed is Mordecai” and “cursed is Haman.” This is higher than the level of *doing*; this is the World of *Yetzirah*, the World of Formation, the level of *knowing*, the mind level.

Then there are those – in the East, we would call this the discipline of *bhakti*, devotion – who are so wholly G*d-intoxicated that they are conscious of nothing but G*d. G*d is infinite, and this world – the spiritual as much as the physical – is finite, and so there is no difference, from a Cosmic perspective, between the best of us and the worst of us; compared to the Infinite, the small and the vast are equally tiny. To the G*d-intoxicated, there really is no difference between “blessed is Mordecai” and “cursed is Haman.” This is a still higher level; this is the World of *B'riyah*, the World of Creation, the level of *feeling*, the heart level.

The Baal Shem Tov, however, proposes a higher level still. Beyond getting so drunk that we cannot tell the difference, beyond the *gematrial* analysis that reveals their essential identity, beyond even the G*d-intoxication that transcends all differences and distinctions, the Baal Shem Tov tells us to learn, from Haman's diligence, his beautiful one-pointed concentration, his single-minded devotion, to perform enthusiastically the will of Mordecai. And this is the World of *Atzilut*, the World of Emanation, the level of *being*, the soul level, the highest level of all.

May we soon come to experience the joy of Purim on every level.

Hag Purim Same'ah.