

## Fun Facts

▶ G-d's name does not appear in the book of Esther. This is a deliberate choice that reflects the Jewish belief in the hidden and revealed aspects of divine intervention. The name of G-d is not mentioned to emphasize the idea that His presence is not always visible or known, but rather that He is always working behind the scenes to provide guidance and support to His people. This theme is central to the Purim celebration, where the story of Esther and the miraculous saving of the Jewish people from Haman's decree serves as a reminder of G-d's hidden and revealed presence in the world.

▶ *Shabbat Zachor*, the "Shabbat of Remembrance," immediately precedes Purim. It takes its name from the additional Torah portion (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) which is read that Shabbat and which begins with the word *Zachor* (remember). This passage recalls the wicked nation of *Amaleik* that attacked the fledgling Israelite nation without cause for provocation and from whom Haman is described as having descended.

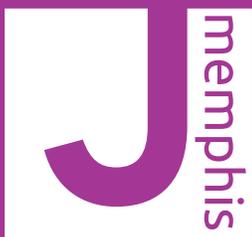
“ ...to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year— the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor (*Esther 9:21-22*) ”



# All about Purim

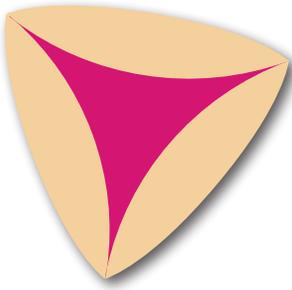
A Holiday of  
Post Rivalry Revelry

Night of      Day of  
**March 2–March 3 / Adar 14**



They Tried to Kill Us.  
We Survived. Let's Eat!

# The Backstory



The Persian Empire of the 4th century BCE sprawled over 127 diverse lands including every place Jews called home. The events begin when at the end of a six-month party Persia's King

Achashveirosh, at his adviser's suggestion, had his Queen, Vashti, executed for failing to follow his orders. In need of a new queen, a Jewish woman, Esther, was chosen from all the bachelorettes in the Kingdom, but her Jewish identity was kept secret at her relative, Mordechai's, request.

Following a failed coup, during which Mordechai's intervention was instrumental to saving the king, a new antagonist, Haman, was elevated to the king's lead advisor, making him more powerful than all but the king himself. Haman, enraged after Mordechai refuses to bow for him, manipulates the king into issuing a decree allowing the extermination of all Jews on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar, a randomly chosen date by Haman. (The holiday of Purim gets its name from this lottery drawing - 'Purim' means 'lots').

## How We Celebrate

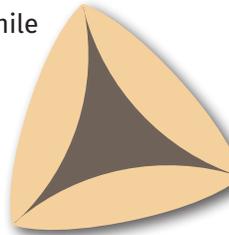
**Megillah:** *Megillat Esther* – the biblical book of Esther – is read twice on Purim (ideally communally), once at night, and once in the morning. It contains the firsthand account of the events surrounding the fear, faith and triumph of the Purim saga as recorded by heroes, Mordechai and Esther.

**Matanot La'Evyonim:** Gifts to the poor. Purim's immense joy cannot be complete until all are included in it. A critical component of the day is the traditional gifts made to those less fortunate whose financial resources preclude them from participating in the festivities of the day. The Mitzvah specifies that on the day of Purim itself, one should give charity to at least two people in need.

**Mishloach Manot:** Distribution of food portions. When Haman approached King Achashveirosh to request royal sanction to exterminate the Jewish people he stated the Jews were a "scattered and separate" people. (Esther 3:8) The *Mishloach Manot* sent to our families, friends and acquaintances yearly are a bold statement of our communal unity in defiance of Haman's characterization. The Mitzvah specifies one should send at least two diverse food items to at least one other Jewish person on Purim as a show of *Chevrashaft* – our genuine compassion

Mordechai and Esther want to save their people, but Esther is afraid of placing herself at risk. Confronted with an opportunity to be an Upstander, Esther, with Mordechai's encouragement, faces her fear. After requesting that all Jews repent, fast, and pray to G-d for three days, Esther asked the king and Haman to join her for a feast. It is only at a follow up feast that Esther revealed her Jewish identity to the king while decrying Haman's plan to exterminate her alongside her people.

Haman was hung from the very tree intended for Mordechai, while Mordechai was ultimately appointed prime minister in his place. As a king's decree is irrevocable, a new decree was issued granting the Jewish people the right to self-defense against any that would attack them. On the 13th of Adar, the Jewish people were successful in fending off those would be attackers, and on the 14th of Adar, they rested and celebrated. In the walled capital city of Shushan this process of self-defense took an additional day. As such, to this day Jews celebrate Purim on the 14th day of Adar in most cities, while celebrating Shushan Purim on the 15th of Adar in any city which was walled in the time of Joshua's conquest (like in Jerusalem).



and generosity toward fellow members of our Jewish community.

**Seudah:** A joyous feast. The traditional markers on holidays include wine and feasting, and on Purim we commemorate the salvation through a festive meal infused with singing, stories and words of Torah. *Shtick*, the Yiddish word for gimmicky funny performances, routines and activities, enhance the fun of this meal.

**Al HaNisim:** An expression of gratitude for the holiday miracles is inserted into the daily prayers and grace after meals.

**Other Customs:** Beyond the formal Mitzvot above, certain things have become customary as part of Purim's festivities. These include: Dressing in costume; making noise with a *Grogger* (noisemaker) at every mention of Haman's name in the Megillah, eating *Hamantaschen* – the triangular filled cookies said to resemble Haman's hat or ears, and performing in or watching a Purim *Shpiel* – a creative performance of the Purim story.

