

OLAMI MENTORSHIP



**PURIM
SPECIAL**

PURIM IN A NUTSHELL

Purim is the happiest day of the year. It is the day we pause to remember that even in the darkest night, The Almighty is quietly weaving the narrative of redemption.

More than two thousand years ago, in the year 356 BCE, every Jew in the world lived under the vast empire of the Persian king, King Ahasuerus, whose kingdom stretched from India to Ethiopia. At his side stood his prime minister, Haman, a man consumed by hatred.

Together they signed a terrible decree. On the thirteenth day of Adar, every Jew, young and old, men, women, and children, was to be destroyed in a single day.

Fear spread like wildfire. Hope seemed to flicker out.

But one Jew refused to surrender to despair. The leader of the generation, Mordechai, did not raise an army. He raised hearts. He called his people to return to their Father in Heaven, to fast, to pray, to believe.

And in the hidden chambers of the palace stood his cousin, Queen Esther, a quiet young woman who had become queen without revealing who she truly was. With courage that seemed impossible, she risked her life, inviting the king and Haman to a banquet, and then another. There, with a trembling voice and unshakable faith, she revealed her identity and exposed the plot.



The king was enraged.

Haman was executed. A new decree was issued, allowing the Jews to defend themselves.

On the very day meant for their destruction, the Jewish people rose with faith in their hearts and prevailed over their enemies. And the next day, the fourteenth of Adar, became a day of joy, of feasting, of gratitude.

A day we still celebrate. Because Purim teaches us something eternal. Even when The Almighty's seems hidden, His love is not. Even when darkness seems to win, salvation is already on its way. And so every year we dance. We give. We rejoice. And we celebrate the miracle of Jewish survival!

To commemorate the salvation of the Jewish people and the transformation from darkness to light, Mordechai and Queen Esther established four mitzvot to mark the miracle of Purim:

1. Reading the Megillah

Listening to the Purim story from the Book of Esther, read from a handwritten scroll, both on the evening of Purim and again the following day.

2. Mishloach Manot

Sending a food gift to another Jew containing at least two ready to eat items, in order to increase friendship and unity.

3. Matanot La'Evyonim

Giving charity to at least two poor people on Purim day, so that everyone can participate in the celebration.

4. Seudat Purim

Sharing a festive daytime meal with family and friends, celebrating the miracle of Jewish survival and continuity with joy and gratitude.

These mitzvot ensure that Purim is remembered not only as a historical event, but as a lived experience of community, generosity, and faith.

CUSTOMS

In addition to the four core mitzvot established in the Book of Esther, several well known Purim customs developed over time. Many people wear costumes and masks to reflect the hidden nature of the miracle and the way events were disguised in the Purim story. It is customary to drink wine at the Purim meal in a spirit of joy and gratitude. Special foods such as hamantashen are eaten as a reminder of the downfall of Haman. During the public Megillah reading, children and adults alike make noise with graggers or by stamping their feet whenever Haman's name is mentioned, expressing our rejection of evil and our celebration of Jewish survival.





POINTS TO PONDER

Question:

Why is Megillat Esther the only book in the Tanakh in which God's name never appears?

Answer:

Because that silence is the very message of Purim. Earlier redemptions were filled with open miracles and clear revelation, but the story of Esther unfolds in exile, in concealment, through ordinary events that look like coincidence. No prophecy. No splitting seas. Only sleepless nights, chance meetings, and perfectly timed turns of fate.

By hiding His name, the megillah teaches us how to find Him when He is hidden. It trains us to recognize Divine providence beneath the surface, to see that even when God's face is concealed, His hand is guiding every step. Purim is the revelation of the hidden, the discovery that even in silence, God is present.

Question:

Why Do We Wear Costumes on Purim?

Answer:

1. Purim Is a Holiday of Hiddenness

The story of Megillat Esther unfolds through what appear to be coincidences: Esther chosen as queen, Mordechai overhearing a plot, a king who cannot sleep at the perfect moment. God's name never appears in the megillah, yet His hand guides every detail. Purim teaches that beneath the mask of nature lies Divine providence. We wear costumes to mirror that hiddenness, reminding ourselves that the world is not merely what it seems. Behind the façade stands God.



2. Purim Is a Holiday of Reversal

Purim is defined by dramatic transformation. The Jewish people went from vulnerable and threatened to empowered and victorious. Costumes reflect that reversal. Just as clothing can instantly transform a person's appearance, so too on Purim fate itself was turned upside down.

3. National Unity

A central force behind the Purim salvation was unity. Haman described the Jews as “a scattered and dispersed people,” fragmented and vulnerable. In response, Esther called on the nation to “gather all the Jews” — to stand together as one.

We wear costumes to blur our individuality. When faces are hidden, distinctions fade. In masking ourselves, we symbolically set aside separateness and remember that our strength lies in unity.

**Question:**

Why will all the Jewish holidays fade in the messianic era, yet Purim will remain forever?

Answer:

In his book *Pachad Yitzchak*, Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner explains with a powerful parable. Two people search for a friend in the dark. One carries a flashlight and quickly succeeds. The other has no light. He is forced to listen closely, to feel his way forward, to sharpen senses he never knew he had. When morning comes, the first person throws away his flashlight. It is no longer needed. But the second person keeps the inner sensitivity he developed in the darkness. His relationship is deeper because of it. So too with Purim. Through Queen Esther, the Jewish people learned how to find God without open miracles. No splitting seas. No pillars of fire. Only hiddenness. Esther taught us to trust, to unite, to act with courage even when God seems concealed.

In the era of great light, other holidays may no longer be necessary. But the inner vision we gained in the darkness of Purim will illuminate us forever.

Question:

What is the source of eating hamantashen/ozniot Haman (3 cornered dough pastries filled with assorted fillings)?

Answers:**1. "Haman's pockets"**

In Yiddish, *tasch* means pocket. Hamentaschen may allude to the fortune Haman offered King Ahasuerus to destroy the Jews, symbolically "consuming" his scheme.

2. Seeds of faith

Traditionally filled with poppy seeds, recalling how Queen Esther ate seeds to remain kosher in the palace, honoring quiet faith in exile.

3. Hidden miracles

The filling hidden inside the dough mirrors the message of Megillat Esther. God's name is absent, yet His providence guides every event.

4. The three-way struggle

The three corners may also represent the dramatic triangle of Purim: Haman plotting destruction, Ahasuerus holding power, and Esther bringing salvation, or the merit of the three Patriarchs that protected Israel.



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