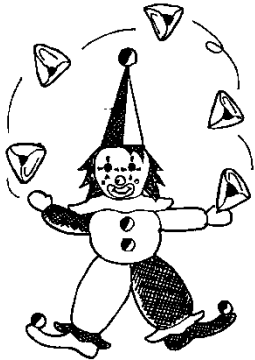


HAPPY PURIM!

Chabad Purim Celebration Sunday * Megillah 4:15 pm * Meal 5:00 pm

(Purim 5774: Saturday Night & Sunday, March 15/16)



PURIM BASICS

- ◆ Fast of Esther: Thursday, March 13, 2014
- ◆ Thurs. evening: Give 3 Half-Dollars to a Shul-Charity in place of the Half-Shekel
- ◆ Megillah-Reading: *Saturday* evening, and again on *Sunday*
- ◆ Seudat-Purim: On *Sunday* afternoon- Enjoy a festive Purim meal
- ◆ Mishloach-Manot: On *Sunday*- send a gift of food-treats to a friend
- ◆ Matanot-L'Evyonim: On *Sunday*- give gifts to poor Jews, or to an institution that supports them.

The Secret of Jewish Survival

Only twice in human history, did a tyrant attempt to totally annihilate the Jewish people, old and young, child and elderly. Nazi Germany tried in our days. In the events leading up to Purim, *Haman* of Persia had tried it first.

Persia granted Jews equal rights; economically, socially, and politically. Jews were welcomed as equals to King *Ahasueros's* royal banquet, and they clearly relished the invitation. How wonderful to be accepted as fellow Persians; not to be treated as aliens! Even before the Purim episode, a Jew, *Mordecai* filled a high government post, and a Jewish queen, *Esther*, ruled the empire.

In a period of such tranquillity, no one in his or her wildest dreams could imagine that Jewish life could be threatened. Yet, the inevitable did happen.

Mordecai and *Esther* were convinced that Jewish survival defies all logic. The attempt of many Jews to conceal their identity and assimilate earned no respect. It brought only disaster. Instead, *Mordecai* and *Esther* gathered Jews together to fast and pray. Jews reconnected with G-d and His Torah, and were proud to be different. Only afterwards, feeling confident in her link with G-d's divine assistance, did *Esther* appeal to the king for mercy.

Esther was brilliantly successful. The very same king, who enacted genocide for Jews, completely reversed himself and gave Jews security and power.

Conclusion: *We survive as Jews, only because we are different; because of our unique bond to G-d that defies all odds!*

“The Missing Link”

Rabbi Meir of Premislan would often immerse himself in a Mikvah, beneath a steep hill. The hill was treacherously slippery in the wintertime. All besides R. Meir, walked on a lengthy detour *around* the hill. R. Meir, though, continued daily to take the downhill shortcut. His townspeople considered R. Meir's downhill walk, a miracle.

One day a skeptic visited. To prove his point that miracles do not exist, he too tried to walk the downhill slope. When this skeptic fell and broke his leg, R. Meir visited him, to fulfill the Mitzvah of comforting the sick.

“Tell me your secret” the skeptic insisted. “You must know of a secret path down that hill!” The rabbi replied: *“When one is linked to the Above, he does not fall below!”*

Shallach-Manot: Why?



No other holiday requires the Jew to send gifts. Only Purim! Here's a rationale:

Haman describes his hatred for Jews with these words: “There is one nation, dispersed and apart-from-each-other, among all the nations, whose religion is different from that of any nation.” We give Shallach-Manot to demonstrate that although we may be “dispersed”, we are still “one” nation and we are definitely not “apart-from-each-other”.

The Purim Story—a synopsis



King Ahasueros of Persia ruled over 127 provinces, encompassing the entire civilized world. His queen, Esther, kept her Jewish identity secret. Persia was tolerant of its minorities; Jews enjoyed equal political status, economic opportunities, and social benefits. They were welcomed as bona fide Persian citizens at the King's royal banquet and many ate and drank the non-kosher food. Jews did not want to stand out as being different and assimilation was rampant.

The king's viceroy, Haman, was a bitter anti-Semite. Haman decreed that every single Jew, both old and young, would be exterminated on

one single day throughout the vast Persian Empire. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, rallied Jewry to a spiritual return back to Jewish living, in the hope that they would merit a miraculous deliverance. Esther risked her own life, revealing to the king her Jewish identity, and she begged him to spare the lives of her People.

Ahasueros deposed of Haman, and installed Mordecai in his place. Yet, the king refused to repeal Haman's decree. He merely gave authority to Esther and Mordecai to legislate other laws in protection of Jews. Mordecai had the Jews armed, and they gathered on the fateful day to defend their lives. All enemies of Jews were destroyed, and the following day became a day of rejoicing and festivities. It's the holiday of Purim, when we celebrate Jewish survival.

Know your Purim facts.

What are these?

- **Megillah:** It is the story of Purim, written in the original on parchment. Every Jew listens to the reading of the Megillah twice; once on the evening of Purim (–this year Saturday night March 15th), and again on Purim daytime (–this year Sunday).
- **Seudat Purim:** A full course Yom-Tov meal (–with drinks) that we eat on Purim afternoon.
- **Shallach-Manot:** Sending a gift of delicacies to a Jewish friend, so that we share the joy of Purim. Jews suffered together, and we survive because we are in this together. Shallach-Manot does not mean charity! It is intended to be a gift of food to a Jewish friend, who will eat it in celebration of Purim. The point of Shallach-Manot is not charity, but to demonstrate that all Jews are an extended family.
- **Matanot L'Evyonim:** Gifts to destitute Jewish families, so that they too will be enabled to share the joy of Purim.

Why do we eat Hamantashen? No, Haman did *not* have triangular ears, or a triangular shaped hat! Indeed, the original name was not “*Hamantashen*,” but “*Muntashen*”. “*Mun*” is the Yiddish word for poppy seeds. *Muntashen* were pies or “pockets” (– “*tash*” in Yiddish) filled with seeds. Jewish royalty that were made to live in the Persian palace went to great lengths to observe Kosher. They would subsist on a diet of seeds. We assume that Esther ate only seeds, and that is why we celebrate by eating seed filled pies.

Why do Jews masquerade on Purim? Purim recalls a period of history when Jews were exiled, and began to assimilate. The Jew's relationship to G-d always remains intact. No force can obliterate the indestructible roots that link Jews and Torah. But, there are times when the Jewish soul is obscured and lies dormant beneath the surface. Overtly, the Jew may parade with a mask of assimilation. It took a forcefully frightening event to yank the Jews of Persia out of their complacency and for them to realize that they were never accepted as gentiles.

G-d too donned a *mask*. He hid His “face”, the divine providence that protects them from harm. But, underneath, G-d never ceased keeping a watchful and protective eye over his People, just as the Jew never ceased to believe in Torah, underneath the veneer of assimilation. That is what we commemorate when we don masks on Purim.

