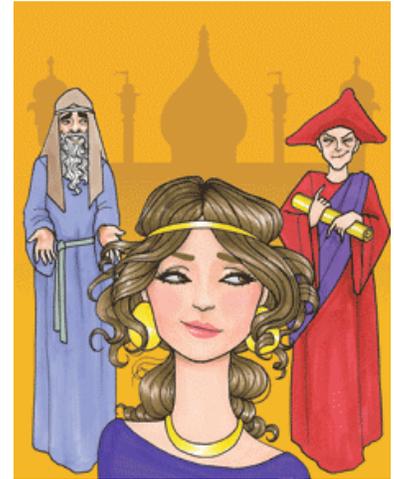


# Story of Joyous Purim

While many of the Jewish holidays are reflective and serious, Purim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. As part of the celebration, plan a time to explain and share the story of Purim. Jewish or not, everyone will be interested.

## About Purim

Purim commemorates a time (about 2,300 years ago) when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved by a beautiful and courageous young woman named Esther. The story of Purim is told in the Book of Esther. An exciting tale of heroism, romance, and intrigue, it is a story with several subplots. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised Esther as his own daughter.



One day, Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus of Persia after Queen Vashti was banished for disobedience. Esther was to become part of the king's harem. However, King Ahasuerus came to love Esther more than his other women, and he made her queen. The king did not know that Esther was a Jew because Mordecai had told her to keep it a secret.

Enter the villain, Haman, a vain and arrogant advisor to the king. Angry that Mordecai refused to bow before him, Haman told the king, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from those of every other people's, and they do not observe the King's laws; therefore, it is not befitting the King to tolerate them" (Esther 3:8). The king was a bit of a pushover and allowed Haman to do as he pleased. So, Haman planned a lottery (or *purim*) to select the day to destroy the Jewish people, and Adar 13 was selected as the date.

Meanwhile, the king was having trouble sleeping, and he began reading the royal log to sedate himself. He discovered in his readings that Mordecai had apprehended two guards who were plotting to kill the king. The king told Haman that he wished to honor "a great and noble man" and needed some ideas. Haman, thinking that he was to be the one recognized, outlined the suitable royal honors. Much to his chagrin, Haman was told to parade Mordecai, riding

the royal steed and wearing royal robes, throughout the kingdom of Shushan, asking all of the royal subjects to bow before him. A furious Haman wasted no time building special gallows to fit Mordecai's neck.

Mordecai learned of Haman's plot to kill all the Jews, and he persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. However, anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, even Esther. However, Esther fasted for three days and then went to see the king. He welcomed her with his royal scepter. Later, she invited Haman to join them at a special dinner party, where she told the king of her Jewish heritage and Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Adar 13 was designated a fast day, followed by the rejoicing on Adar 14, Purim.

### **Discussion Starters**

- Are you familiar with the story of Purim? How would you tell it in your own words?
  - In the end, Esther told King Ahasuerus the truth and saved Mordecai's life and the lives of her people. Do you believe honesty is always the best policy?
  - Haman's plot failed, and he was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Do you feel he met a just fate?
  - Do you or have you ever celebrated Purim? If so, what are some of the things you have done to observe the holiday?
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