



The Biblical holiday of Purim is based on the book of Esther. It tells the story of what took place among the Jewish people who remained behind in Persia after the Babylonian captivity ended. Persia, at that time was under the reign of King Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes. The central thesis involves the way that the Jewish people were slated for destruction, but were able to overcome that threat.

Traditionally, the key feature of the holiday is the reading of the *megillah* scroll of Esther. This type of scroll is elaborately decorated and wound on a single roller. The name of God is never mentioned.

The Hebrew word *purim* literally means “lots” because Haman, the evil character of the story, cast lots to determine the date for killing the Jews of the land.

Whenever the name of Haman is mentioned while reading the story, it is customary to boo and to sound noisemakers, called groggers, in order to “erase his name.”

A special pastry is eaten, called *hamantaschen*. The name originates from the German term *mohn taschen*, meaning “poppy seed pockets.” But it is also a word that sounds like Haman’s name. They are made with three sides which is said to remind us of the type of hat that Haman wore, but that was introduced during the early 19th century when the fashion was to wear a Napoleonic triangular hat.

The holiday is festive in Israel, with children and adults dressing up as characters from the story.

The narrative concludes with an exhortation for every generation to remember what took place in those days. So what should we remember from Purim?

- Esther—was called to speak forth the truth, especially on behalf of the Jewish people in spite of the risk of persecution for doing so.
- Mordecai—has Messianic characteristics: weeping and interceding for the people, risking his life, humbling himself, yet ultimately being exalted to a position of authority.
- Haman—serves as a messenger of Satan, the Accuser of the Jewish people, who seeks their destruction
- God turns that which is intended for evil into good (Gen. 50:20).
- God’s Name is never mentioned, yet His presence and intervention is felt through the actions of His righteous and called out ones. Psalm 121:4 reflects that reality: “He that watches over Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.”
- Because of the actions of Esther and Mordecai, the sorrow of the Jewish people was turned to joy.
- And faith in Adonai was expanded to many Gentiles in Persia because of what happened.
- According to Esther 4:14
“For if you remain completely silent in the task that God is calling you to do, then He’ll find someone else to get it done, but you will miss out on a blessing. For who knows if this is your role in God’s kingdom.”

This verse is a reminder that God will preserve the Jewish people in keeping with the Abrahamic Covenant and that He blesses people who stand with Him in that regard.