



Gragger

Purim is often considered the most cheerful and colourful of all the Jewish holidays. Its story takes place in Shushan, the capital city of the Persian Empire, in the 3rd year of King Ahashverosh's reign. The holiday celebrates the Jews' victory over oppression, which is recounted in great detail in the "Esther Megillah" (The Book of Esther).

This holiday is celebrated each year on the 14th day of the Hebrew month Adar, following a day of fasting (the 13th day of Adar), which commemorates Queen Esther's fast before she turned to the king for help. It is written that in Shushan, the Jews' celebration took place a day later, because traditionally holidays were celebrated a day later in walled cities. Therefore in Jerusalem Purim is celebrated on the 15th day of Adar even today. Once every 3 years, when an extra month is added to the Jewish calendar, Purim is celebrated in "Adar-B", the second month of Adar.

The name "Purim" comes from the Hebrew word "Pur" which means "raffle". Haman wanted to hold a raffle in order to choose the date on which all the Jews would be killed. Throughout the holiday of Purim, the Book of Esther is read once in the evening, and re-read during the next day. It is customary to wear costumes, eat Hamantaschen, and spin rattles while reading the scroll. The obligations of Purim include, besides reading the Book of Esther, sending out Mishloah Manot, giving presents to the poor, and drinking wine - often accompanied by an Adloyada.

One of the Purim customs is dressing up- wearing masks and costumes, being someone else. The reason for this is the sudden twist in the story, which turned a day of mourning into a day of celebrations.

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Also called "noise-makers", these devices make a noise when they are spun. While reading the Megillah, children spin their rattles every time the name "Haman" is mentioned, in order to wipe him out symbolically.

