

# *Purim*

Celebrate the Day of  
Rejoicing!

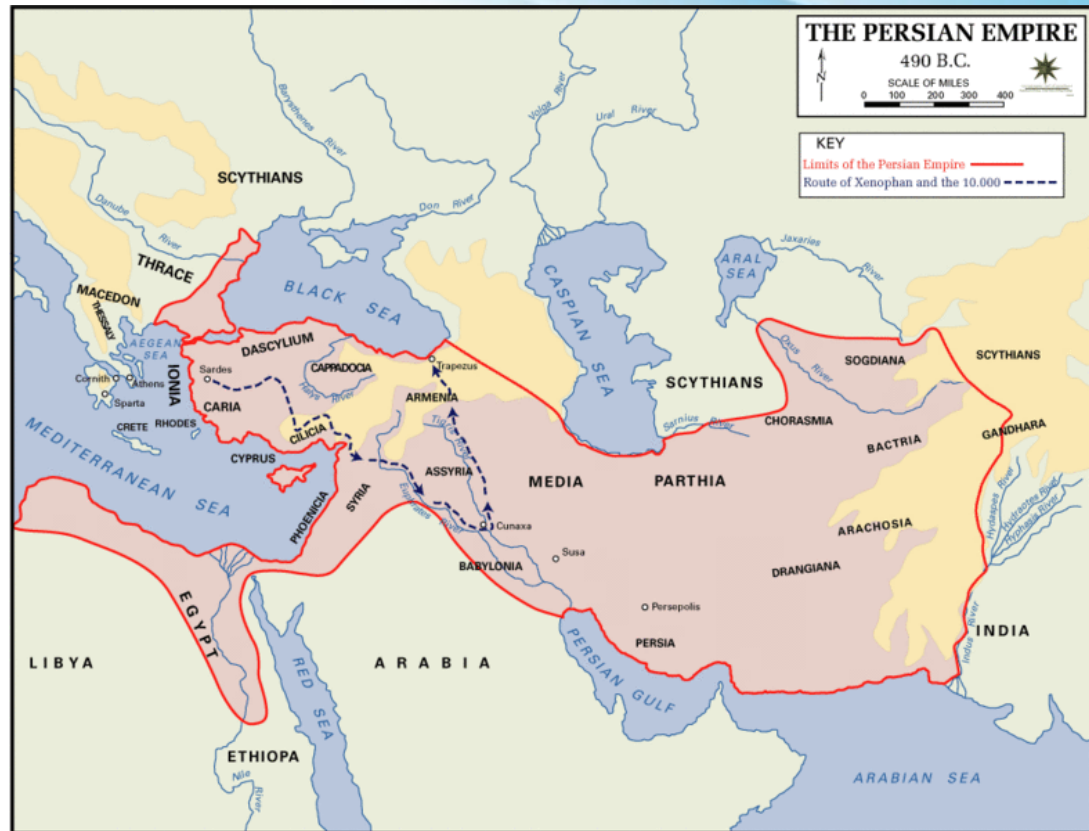


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# Background

*Purim* (pronounced POOR-im) celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from their enemies while exiled in the lands of Media and Persia.

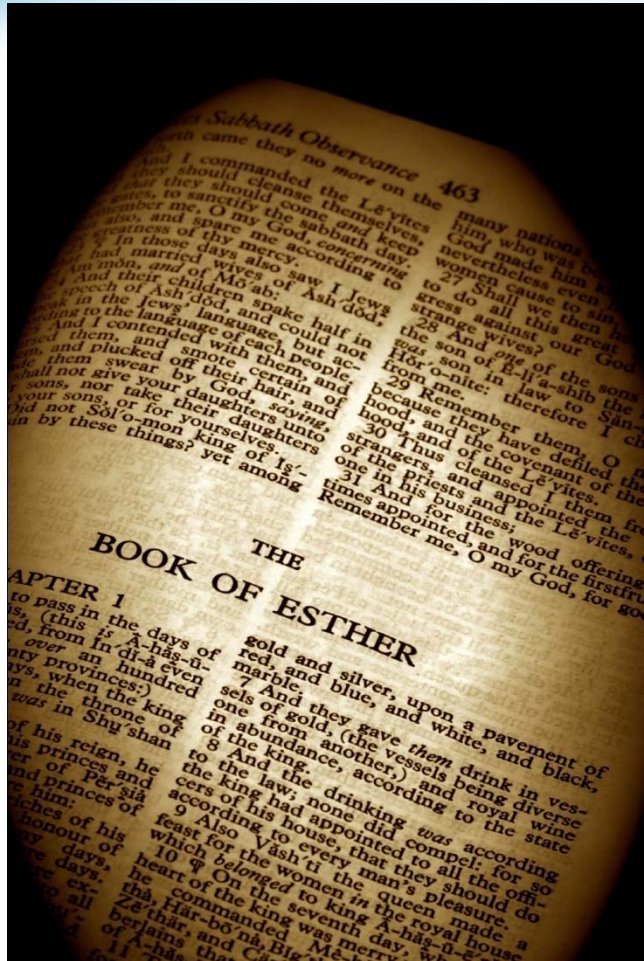


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# Background



The origins of this celebration occurred more than 2,400 years ago. They are recorded in the biblical book of Esther.



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# The Story



After Queen Vashti is removed for disobeying King Xerxes, a beautiful young Jewish girl named Esther wins the king's favor and is chosen as the new queen.



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# The Story

Haman, the villain of the story, is the king's top advisor. He is a descendant of the Amalekites, an ancient enemy of the Jews.

Haman hates the Jews, mainly because Mordecai refuses to bow in his presence.

Mordecai, a Jew, is also Esther's cousin and advises her not to tell the king that she is Jewish.



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## Esther 3:8–9

*“Then Haman said to King Xerxes, ‘There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.’”*



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## Esther 3:8–9

*“If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king’s administrators for the royal treasury.”*



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# The Story

Haman tricks the king into issuing a decree that all of the Jews in the land will be killed on a certain day.

Discovering the plot, Mordecai persuades Esther to appear unannounced before the king, risking her life, in an effort to rescue her people.



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# Esther 4:14



Esther and Mordecai plan for “such a time as this.”

*“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”*



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# The Story



Queen Esther comes before the king, begging to save her people from Haman.

Revealing herself as a Jew, Esther exposes Haman's wicked plot to the king. While King Xerxes can't change his decree, he gives Mordecai and the Jews permission to defend themselves.



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# The Story



Because of Esther's bravery, and her faith that God put her in a place "*for such a time as this,*" the Jewish people are saved, and Haman is hanged on the same gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.



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# The Story



Esther 9:20–32 establishes the *Purim* holiday:

*“to . . . celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration.”*



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# Celebration

Today, *Purim* is still celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of *Adar* according to the Jewish calendar. It is a day of rejoicing that includes carnival-like parties, plays, parades, and costume parties.



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# Celebration

Many Jews dress in costume on *Purim*, making it one of the most anticipated holidays for young children.



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# Celebration

The ninth chapter of Esther establishes several *mitzvot* (religious duties or commandments) that are specific to *Purim*.



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# Celebration

The first *mitzvah* is the reading aloud of the *Megillah* (a scroll containing the book of Esther), which occurs twice—once on *Purim* eve and again on *Purim* day.



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# Celebration



While the scroll is being read, Jews boo, hiss, stomp their feet, and rattle groggers (noisemakers) whenever Haman's name is mentioned. The goal is to blot out Haman's name entirely.



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# Celebration



The second *mitzvah* is the requirement that all Jews be happy during the *Purim* celebration.

They accomplish this by dressing in costume, holding festive celebrations, and gathering with family and friends.



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# Celebration



Another tradition is the preparation of *hamantaschen*, which are triangular, fruit-filled cookies that represent Haman's three-cornered hat.



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# Celebration

The third *mitzvah* is sending food to friends. On *Purim* morning, Jews visit loved ones and deliver specially prepared food baskets.

This gift is to symbolize the spirit of kinship and love that will help prevent the appearance of any future Hamans.



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# Celebration



The final *mitzvah* of *Purim* is giving gifts to the poor. Tradition holds that Jews are to give charity to at least two needy people. The intent is to ensure that all Jews are able to experience the joy of *Purim*.



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# Celebration



Many Jews also observe the Fast of Esther on the day before *Purim* to commemorate Esther's three days of fasting and praying in preparation for meeting with the king. Unlike some other Jewish fasts, it is not a time of sadness, but rather of elevation and inspiration.



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# Application

Esther is the only book of the Bible that does not mention God by name. Thus, *Purim* helps us remember that God is with us and working for His people—even if we are unaware of His presence.



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# Application

The actions of Esther throughout the story also remind us that bravery, self-sacrifice, and obedience are positive qualities for those who wish to serve God with their lives.



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# Application



Haman, too, is more than just a biblical figure. Jews recognize the face of Haman in world leaders who denounce Israel and modern terrorists who attack Jewish people around the world.



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# Application

One of the messages of *Purim*—a message that applies to Jews and Christians alike—is that in a world with no shortage of "Hamans," we need more "Esthers" committed to stand humbly before God and seek to defend His people in the face of all difficulties.



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