

PURIM: A Celebration of Determination

Purim is a biblical holiday that originates from *The Book of Esther*. It commemorates the Jewish people of ancient Persia being saved from the murderous plot of a man named Haman. **This year, Purim will be celebrated from sundown on Monday, March 6 until sundown on Tuesday, March 7.**

The Story of Purim

In 5th century Persia, King Achashverosh was seeking a beautiful woman to be his wife. His right-hand man, Haman, felt disrespected by Mordechai (a Jew) who refused to bow down to Haman, insisting that Jews only bow to God. As revenge, Haman draws random lots ("Purim" translates to "lots") to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, and he randomly picked the 14th of the month *Adar*. Meanwhile, Mordechai's niece,

Esther, went undercover as a non-Jew and is chosen as the king's new wife. Through prayer and a three-day fasting period, Esther gains the courage to reveal to the king that she is a Jew. This made the king stop Haman from carrying out his plot to kill the Jews. Haman and his family are executed, and Mordechai became the king's second in command.

To commemorate Esther's fast, many people will fast on the day before Purim. The modern traditions of Purim celebrations are meant to reflect the joy and liberation felt by the Persian Jews after narrowly escaping extermination.

How We Celebrate

Purim is often compared to Halloween or Mardi Gras due to its festive nature. When attending a reading of *The Book of Esther*, it's customary to wear a costume, distribute treats to friends and family, drink wine, and be celebratory.

The 4 Commandments

There are four main *Mitzvot* (commandments) of celebrating Purim: Reading the *Megillah*, giving gift baskets to friends, giving to charity, and eating a grand feast (*See page 2*).

Purim Traditions

We dress in costumes on Purim to emulate Esther who disguised her true identity in order to save the Jewish people.

Some synagogues or community centers will put on an annual Purim *Spiel*, or a small play, often comedic and musical, that retells the Purim story.

Eating special cookies called *Hamentaschen* and crafting noise-makers called *groggers* (see image to the right) are other common Purim traditions.



In This Issue

<i>More on Mitzvot</i>	2
<i>Purim Terms</i>	3
<i>Bubbe's Corner</i>	3
<i>Music & DIY</i>	4
<i>Coloring Page</i>	5
<i>Calendar</i>	6

More on Mitzvot and How to Celebrate

The four commandments of Purim are an essential and easy part of celebrating the holiday.

MEGILLAH

Reading the *Megillah*, the biblical scroll that tells the Purim story, is an exciting feat that calls for lots of energy and audience participation. It is usually chanted in a special tune in Hebrew, and its 10 chapters are split up within a congregation.

Whenever the name of the wicked Haman is said, the reader pauses while the listeners jeer, boo, and shake their *groggers* (noise makers) to drown out his name. [Full English versions of the Megillah are available online](#) and can be printed out for residents to follow along!



MISHLOACH MANOT

Hand-crafted gift baskets called *Mishloach Manot* are handed out to friends and family on Purim. Anything can be in these baskets, and they can be decorated as simply or extravagantly as you like! For a fun Purim activity, buy some brown paper bags and various candies and treats and have your residents decorate their own *Mishloach Manot* to distribute to one another!



MATANOT L'EVYONIM

This translates to “gifts for the poor”, or, giving charity. Having residents put a few coins in a piggy bank may help them feel that they’re fulfilling this important commandment.

PURIM FEAST

Like most Jewish holidays, food and drink are a big part of the Purim celebration. Drinking wine is highly encouraged – but grape juice works just as well! The most common Purim food is a *Hamantaschen*, a small, triangular cookie usually filled with jam, poppy seeds, or chocolate. *Hamantaschen* can be found in many grocery stores with Kosher food sections or bakeries, but the real fun comes from filling and shaping them yourself! [There are many great and simple recipes online to try.](#)



Bubbe's Corner

You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for "grandmother") for her wisdom, stories and Purim traditions. Whether you are a Bubbe or have a Bubbe figure in your life, spend time learning about Purim celebrations. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!



My favorite hamantaschen filling is apricot jam, but I make sure to bake chocolate for my granddaughter.

I recently learned that Esther was thought to be a vegetarian in the palace to remain kosher while not outing herself as a Jew. That's a smart woman!

Did you know that The Book of Esther is one of two books that do not include God's name?

As a girl, my mom and I would make Purim gift baskets with sweet savory snacks like applesauce, hamantachen and crackers.

At our Hebrew school Purim celebration, all the girls would want to dress up as Esther, so would have 10 Esther's and not enough kinds or Mordechai's to go around!

Important Terms for Purim

Hebrew...	It is pronounced...	It means...
Chag Purim Sameach	Hahg poo-reem sah-mey-ach	Happy Purim!
Megillah	Meh-gi-lah	Biblical scroll
Mishloach Manot	Mee-shlo-ach Mah-note	Gift baskets for friends
Hamentaschen	Hah-men-tosh-in	Triangular Purim cookies
Grogger	Grog-er	A noisemaker

Music and More!

Since Purim is a festive holiday, having music really helps set the tone of the day. By playing some of the following songs for your residents, you can help them get into the spirit of the holiday. Musical traditions vary from community to community, so ask them their favorite Purim songs!

CHAG PURIM

This song title literally translates to “The Holiday of Purim”; it’s the quintessential Purim song! Folksy and fun, [you can listen to the song here.](#)

MISHE NICHNAS ADAR

This song celebrates Adar, the Hebrew month that Purim takes place in. “When Adar begins, our joy increases!” [Click here to play this song and celebrate the month of Adar!](#)

Making a Grogger

When reading the Purim *Megillah*, it’s tradition to drown out the name of Haman, the evil henchman, whenever it is mentioned in the text. To do so, we use a *grogger*, a small noisemaker. The word *grogger* is Yiddish, meaning “to rattle.” Some people also call them by their Hebrew name *Ra’ashan*. Traditionally, a *grogger* is made of wood or metal and spins on its handle, but they can be made from common household objects! Making a *grogger* is a fun and easy way to engage your residents with the holiday and provide a creative outlet for this festive time. Here are two DIY ideas to make a grogger.

PAPER PLATE GROGGER

Gather these materials:

- 2 paper plates
- A popsicle stick
- Stapler
- Beads, dried beans or pasta, paper clips, or anything that can make noise

Lay one plate flat and lay the noise making objects on it. Lay the popsicle stick so it’s half on the plate, half hanging off. Place the other plate on top-down on the first, and staple all around the edges. It should look like a giant lollipop. Decorate and enjoy!

AL HANISSIM

“Al HaNissim” is a song all about miracles, celebrating the miracle of the Jewish people being saved on Purim. Fun fact – it’s also a popular Hannukkah song! [Check it out by clicking here.](#)

ACHASHVEROSH

This comedy song, a parody of “Rock Me Amadeus” tells the story of the king of the Purim story, Achashverosh. [Listen here for a fun musical time!](#)

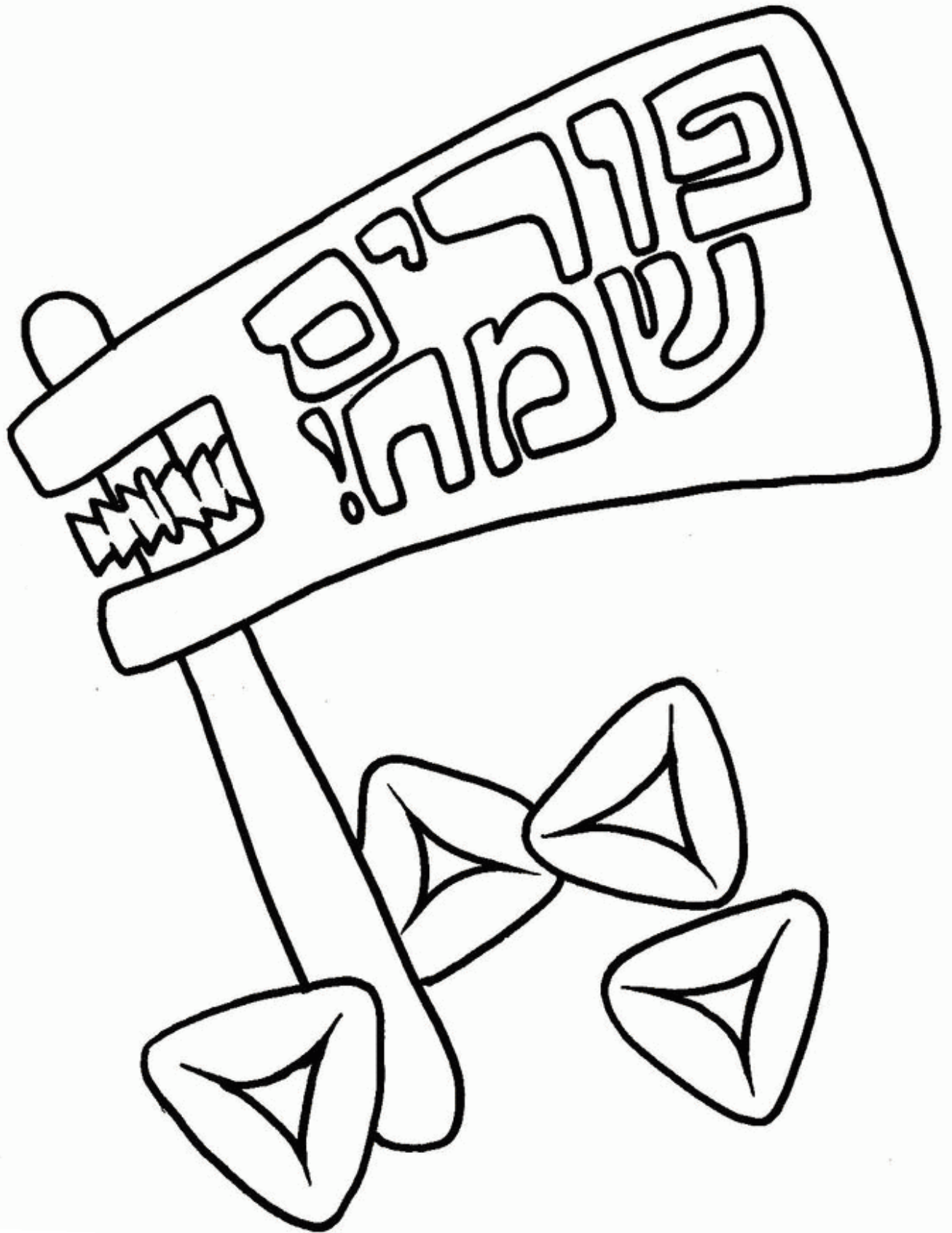


PLASTIC CUP GROGGER

Gather these materials:

- 2 plastic/paper cups
- Masking tape
- Beads, dried beans or pasta, paper clips, or anything that can make noise

Fill one cup with the noisemaking objects. Place the other cup top-down on the first, like a cocktail mixer, and tape all around the mouths of the cups until they’re securely together. Decorate and enjoy!



Jewish Holidays Calendar 2023*

HOLIDAY	DATE
Purim (1 day)	Monday, March 6* – Tuesday, March 7, 2023
Passover (8 days)	Wednesday, April 5* - Thursday, April 13, 2023
Shavuot (2 days)	Thursday, May 25* – Saturday, May 27, 2023
Rosh Hashanah (2 days)	Friday, Sept. 15* – Sunday Sept. 17, 2023
Yom Kippur (1 day)	Sunday, Sept. 24* – Monday, Sept. 25, 2023
Sukkot (7 days)	Friday, Sept. 29* – Friday, Oct. 6, 2023
Shemini Atzeret (1 day) & Simchat Torah (1 day)	Saturday, Oct. 6* – Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023
Hanukkah (8 days)	Thursday, Dec. 7* - Friday, Dec. 15, 2023

*** All holidays begin at sundown**

About JFS

JFS has continuously provided a range of support, services and resources for individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds since 1854.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals, families, and the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values.

Our staff have expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence.
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families.
- Spiritual support and guidance
- Counseling and case management.

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS created the Dr. Rela Mintz Geffen Jewish Community Chaplaincy Fund to enable us to provide free spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term settings as well as those older adults who are living alone.

This publication and the visits and program offered by our Community Chaplain, Rabbi Ami Monson, are made possible through philanthropy.

Please consider supporting this program so that we can continue to offer this complimentary service:

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Chaplaincy Services are a service of Jewish Family Services through a grant from Jewish Federation of NENY in cooperation B'nai B'rith Gideon Foundation, Daughters of Sarah Community for Seniors and Temple Israel.