

CONGREGATION ANSHEI ISRAEL

Experiencing Purim

This year our Purim celebration begins in the sanctuary and on Zoom in a hybrid service where the *Megillah*, the story of Esther, is read for everyone to hear. Full of melodrama and a plot that twists and turns, Purim is all about masks, hidden layers, and double meanings. On the surface the tale represents good overcoming evil. More deeply, it highlights standing up for who you are, fighting against hatred and feeling proud of being Jewish.

Purim tells the story of Esther and Haman, and begins with a feast in the kingdom of Persia, hosted by King Ahashverosh. The king was flaunting his riches and treasures for all to see, and decided that his beautiful wife, Queen Vashti, should also be displayed. But when the king sent for Vashti, she refused to appear before him. In anger, he banished Vashti from the kingdom.

In search of a new wife, the king chose Esther, a strong, smart, and fierce Jewish woman. Esther's relative, Mordecai, cautioned her not to tell the king that she was a Jew.

King Ahashverosh bestowed a special honor on Haman, his power-hungry prime minister, telling all the people in his kingdom to bow down to Haman. As a Jew, Mordecai refused. Haman became enraged and devised a plan to kill all the Jews. He even convinced the king to sign the declaration.

To determine the date the Jews were to be attacked, Haman drew lots (*"purim"* in Hebrew). Mordecai, however, discovered Haman's evil scheme and revealed it to Esther. Esther decided she must tell King Ahashverosh, even if it meant her life.

King Ahashverosh was horrified to learn that Esther and her people were in danger. Haman was condemned



Come celebrate with CAI!



Purim in the Land of Oz Monday, March 6, 2023

Carnival	Dairy Dinner	Megillah Reading
5:00pm	5:45pm	6:30pm
Rabbi Breger Hall	Cantor Falkow Lounge	in the Sanctuary & on Zoom

Wear your costumes & bring your groggers!

Join us for our annual Purim Carnival with games & inflatables and a dairy dinner, followed by Megillah Reading in the Sanctuary and on Zoom!

Dinner - \$5 per person

RSVP no later than Thursday, March 2 at caiaz.org

Join us again Tuesday at 7:00am on Zoom for our Purim service & Megillah reading.

to be hanged on the gallows and Mordecai was elevated to the position of Prime Minister. The Jews were safe once again, and Esther and Mordecai proclaimed the day to be one of feasting and merrymaking.

Today, when the *Megillah* is read, we make a great noise every time Haman's name is read out loud to drown out his evil name. We use *groggers* (noisemakers) to make as much noise as possible. On this holiday, we celebrate by turning everything on its head. We encourage everyone to put on a costume, mask, or silly wig or hat. Join us as we create joy together!



Congregation Anshei Israel

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THE FAST OF ESTHER

The Fast of Esther is held on the 13th of Adar; this year, **Monday, March 6**.

The Fast of Esther is the commemoration of the Fast observed by Mordecai and Esther and all Israel. On that very day, the enemies of the Jews had planned to subjugate and destroy them. The opposite occurred, however, and the Jews ruled over their enemies.

The acceptance of this Fast on the part of Israel for later generations is alluded to in the Scroll of Esther: 'And as they accepted upon themselves and upon their children, the matters of their fastings and their cry' (Esther 9).

The Fast is called by the name of Esther because it was she who first requested the observance of a fast of Mordecai: 'Go and gather all the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast over me, and do not eat and do not drink three days, night and day; and I and my maidens will also fast thus.' (Ibid. 4)

This is a "Minor Fast," which means it is observed from sunrise to sundown.

WHAT IS PURIM?

More than 23 centuries ago, when the Persian Empire dominated the civilized world, an evil chamberlain, Haman, devised a diabolic plot to annihilate the Jewish people. But on the 13th day of the month of Adar, our people were delivered from the wicked Haman's decree. Each year on Purim, we celebrate our victory with feasting and joy. At first reading, the *Megillah* (Scroll of Esther) which recounts the miracle of Purim, seems more like an epic tale of espionage and suspense than Sacred Scripture. In fact, throughout this carefully woven story of evil ambition and palace intrigue, we do not find the name of God mentioned, even once! Yet, within the intricate details of the *Megillah*, we can detect the unmistakable hand of Divine Providence. The closer we look into the events of people, the more we discover that every "coincidence," every seemingly insignificant event, is precisely arranged by the hand of the Almighty.

When Haman denounced the Jewish people to King Ahashverosh, he argued that "there is one people, dispersed, and divided among the nations . . . and their laws are different from those of any other people." What Haman did not realize, however, was that his very "accusation" held the key to our redemption and ultimate victory over his evil plan. We are "the people" and by strengthening our connection to the Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments), we survive and flourish. Enemies may arise in every generation to attack and destroy us, but when we affirm our unique heritage and hold fast to our essential character as the Jewish People.

The *Megillah* tells us that Mordecai "did not bend his knee, nor bow down." Mordecai refused to compromise the eternal values of the Torah, even at the risk of his life. . Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, or in the case of a leap year, the 14th day of Adar II. This year, Purim falls on the evening of **Monday, March 6 and Tuesday, March 7**.

PURIM MITZVAH LIST

WHAT	WHEN	WHY
Fast of Esther	Monday, March 6	To commemorate the three days Esther and the Jewish people fasted before she approached the King without permission.
Listening to the reading of the entire <i>Megillah</i> , including the three <i>brachot</i> (blessings) preceding it.	Once on Monday evening, March 6 and again the next day, Tuesday, March 7 (14 Adar)	To commemorate the great Purim miracle in accordance with the <i>mitzvah</i> (commandment) to hear the whole <i>Megillah</i> .
Sending two types of ready-to-eat food to at least one friend.	During the day Tuesday, March 7 .	To symbolize the spirit of unity which kept the Jewish people together in the face of the threat from Haman and his cohorts.
Giving a gift to each of at least two less fortunate people.	During the morning, preferably after the reading of the <i>Megillah</i> .	These gifts are a special <i>mitzvah</i> (commandment), not to be included in the amount of money a person may set aside for charity during the rest of the year. The custom on this day is to give unquestioningly to any and all who ask for aid.
Eating a feast to celebrate the holiday.	Purim Day, usually in the afternoon (Tuesday, March 7).	To commemorate the parties Esther made for Haman and King Ahashverosh.
Reciting the special prayer of thanks <i>Al Hanissim</i> (for these miracles).	In the Grace After Meals and in the <i>Amidah</i> on Purim (Monday, March 6 in the evening, and morning and afternoon Tuesday, March 7 itself).	We express gratitude to God Who brought miracles for us in Biblical times, and we pray for God to do so in our time.