

## 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar, or in the case of a leap year, the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar II. This year, Purim falls on the evening of **Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24.**



**Congregation Anshei Israel**  
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## The Fast of Esther

This year, Purim starts on the evening of Saturday, March 23, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar II, so The Fast of Esther is held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Adar II; this year, **Thursday, March 21.**

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 we at Congregation Anshei Israel conclude the fast at 12:30pm with our Mincha service on Zoom.

### PURIM MITZVAH LIST

WHAT	WHEN	WHY
Fast of Esther	<b>Thursday, March 21</b>	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 <b>Saturday evening, March 23</b> and again the next day, <b>Sunday, March 24</b> (14 Adar II)	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 <b>Sunday, March 24.</b>	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 ( <b>Sunday, March 24</b> ).	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 ( <b>Saturday, March 23</b> in the evening, and morning and afternoon <b>Sunday, March 24</b> 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.



# **HAMENTASCHEN for HUNGER**

## **Sunday, March 17 at 11:00am**

### **In Cantor Falkow Lounge**

Plan to join us for our annual Hamentaschen for Hunger event on Sunday, March 17 at 11:00am, in the Cantor Falkow Lounge. Executive Director Debra Lytle will walk participants step-by-step through the recipe, giving tips and tricks along the way. When the dough is chilled we will roll, stuff and shape our cookies to bring them home to bake.

**\$18 per set-up.**

**Each set-up makes a dozen cookies**

*(complimentary for our B'Yahad students.)*

**Please RSVP no later than Tuesday, March 12.**

Designed to satisfy both the body and the soul, profit will be split evenly between the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona and Leket Israel, the National Food Bank of Israel. Please give as you can on our secure website. Donations of \$100 or more will receive a custom-printed Hamentaschen for Hunger Apron, as supplies last.

**RSVP and secure donations can be made at [caiaz.org](http://caiaz.org) or scan the QR Code.**



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