

What is Purim?

In the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on its thirteenth day ... on the day that the enemies of the Jews were expected to prevail over them, it was turned about: the Jews prevailed over their adversaries. - Esther 9:1 And they gained relief on the fourteenth, making it a day of feasting and gladness. - Esther 9:17

The story of Purim is told in the Book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem. King Ahasuerus loved Esther more than his other women and made Esther queen, but the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, because Mordecai told her not to reveal her identity.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went into the king. He welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the Bible that does not contain the name of God. In fact, it includes virtually no

reference to God. Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 13th of Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews, and the day that the Jews battled their enemies for their lives. On the day afterwards, the 14th, they celebrated their survival. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day. The 15th is referred to as Shushan Purim.

The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

Outwardly, Purim is marked by the reading of the *Megillah*, the Scroll of Esther, sending *Shelach Manot*, (gift baskets) and cranking the *grager* (noisemakers blotting out Haman's name).

The inner meaning of Purim comes from the tradition to get so drunk as to no longer be able to distinguish between Mordecai and Haman, Good and Evil. Haman is the *Yetzer haRah*, your capacity for selfishness and exploitation of others. Mordecai is the *Yetzer haTov*, your capacity for selflessness and sacrifice on behalf of others. The challenge is to move beyond good and evil, beyond Mordecai and Haman and see that God operates in and through both. Knowing

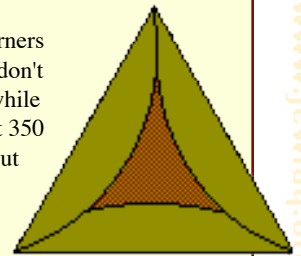
Hamantashan/ Haman Pockets

2/3 cup butter or margarine; 1/2 cup sugar; 1 egg; 1/4 cup orange juice (the smooth kind, not the pulpy); 1 cup white flour; 1 cup wheat flour; 2 tsp. baking powder; Various preserves, fruit butters and/or pie fillings.

Blend butter and sugar thoroughly. Add the egg and blend thoroughly. Add OJ and blend thoroughly. Add flour, 1/2 cup at a time, alternating white and wheat, blending thoroughly between each. Add the baking powder with the last half cup of flour. Refrigerate batter overnight or at least a few hours. Roll as thin as you can without getting holes in the batter. Cut out 3 or 4 inch circles. Put a dollop of filling in the middle of each circle. Fold up the sides to make a triangle, overlapping the sides as much as possible so only a little filling shows through the middle.

Squeeze the corners firmly, so they don't come undone while baking. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15-20 minutes, until golden brown but before the filling boils over!

Traditional fillings are poppy seed and prune. Apricot, apple butter, pineapple preserves, and cherry pie filling all work quite well.



this is reaching the state of Esther, where you realize that all life is the play of God.