

PURIM – THE FEAST OF LOTS

Text: Esther 1-10 (Exodus 17:14; Deuteronomy 25:19; Esther 3:1)

Historical and Thematic focus of the Feast: Purim is a joyous celebration, observed Adar 14 or 15 (March), of the Jewish people's victory over a would-be annihilator. The biblical book of Esther retells the story set in the land Persia, of Haman's decision to destroy the Jewish people on a day determined by lots. Adonai used the position of a young Jewish lady Esther (Hadassah) (Esther 4:14) as the catalyst to turn pending annihilation into an opportunity of divine favour and victory. The significance of the Purim celebration is a thankful and joyous affirmation of Jewish survival against all odds.

Even the enemies of the Jews recognized their identification with Haman. In an eerie prophecy, in 1944, Adolf Hitler declared that, if the Nazis lost the war, the Jews would celebrate a second Purim.¹

Although Adonai is not mentioned even once in the entire book of Esther it is clear that deliverance of the Jewish people came by His awesome hand.

Traditional Observance: Purim is a joyously loud celebration which involves dressing up in costumes usually as the characters of the Esther story. It is traditional to read the Purim story, the book of Esther, every year. While the story is read, when the name Haman is mentioned the congregation will make noise or 'boo' in an attempt to 'blot out' his name. On the other hand whenever the name Mordechai is spoken the congregation will cheer. This is one evening where the usual orderly rules of congregational worship are set aside. Gifts are usually given to friends and at least two poor people (families) in the community on this day as directed by Esther 9:22.

Musing Moment:

In 'light' of the Purim story ponder upon the following Scriptures and touch on their application to daily life and their prophetic significance.

Genesis 12:1-3, 5; Esther 3:1; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Matthew 16:18; Revelation 7:1-8.

The awesome lesson of Purim is that Adonai's people and plan maybe threatened at times but Adonai's sovereignty will not be overcome by the forces of evil. We know the end of the story, Right!

¹ David B. Syme, *The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living*. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1989) 25.

Traditional Foods: The most popular delicacy associated with Purim is the Hamantaschen which is a three-cornered dough cookie most often filled with poppy seed, jam or cheese. The triangular shape of the cookie is to represent the shape of Haman's hat.

HAMANTASCHEN

¼ pound margarine
½ cup sugar
2 eggs
2 ½ cups unbleached flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
Apricot pastry (or other) filling

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cream margarine and sugar until fluffy. Add eggs and combine well. Mix flour, baking powder, and salt into mixture with a spoon.

When well mixed, form into 2 balls and wrap each with plastic wrap or wax paper and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Roll out one of the balls to a circle about 10 inches in diameter. Using a glass or round biscuit or cookie cutter with a 2 ½ inch diameter, cut approximately 15 circles out of the ball of dough. Repeat with the other ball.

Top each cookie with a teaspoon of filling in the center of the circle. Then form a Hamantaschen by squeezing the cookie up in 3 places to form a triangle. Some popular fillings are apricot, prune, poppy seed, almond paste, or jelly. Bake for 30 minutes.²

² Dana Rosen, ed. *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays*. (New York, NY: Michael Friedman Publishing Group, Inc., 1992) 91.