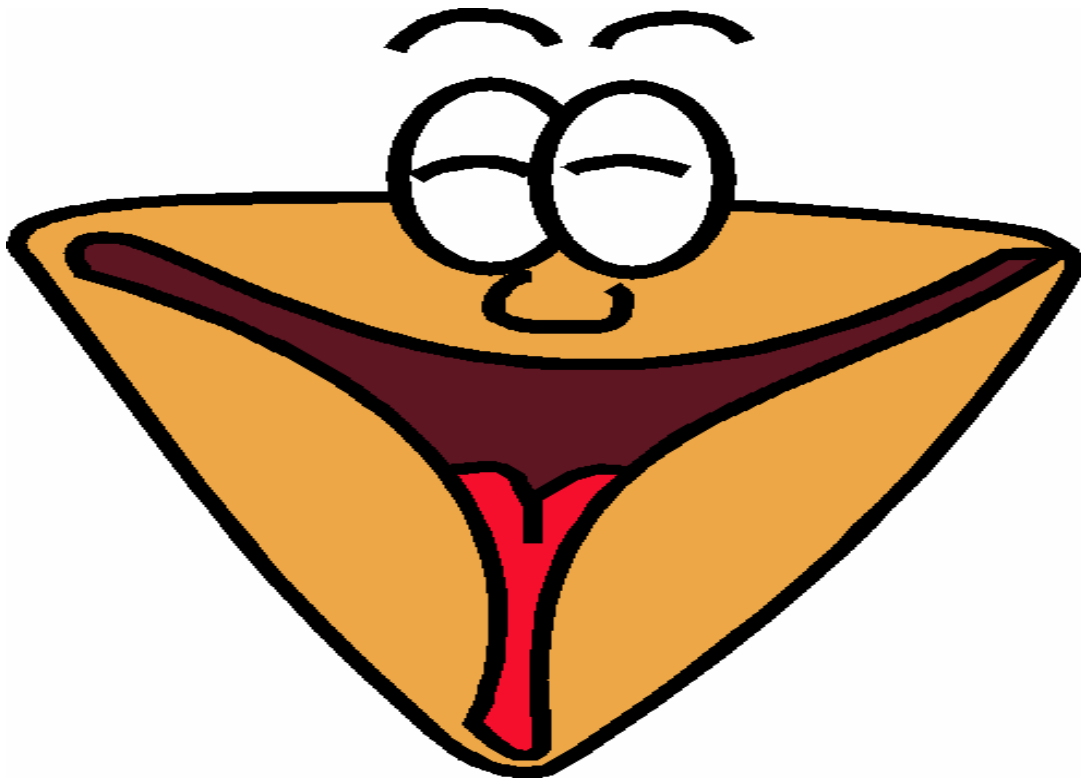


The Richmond Jewish Day School

A Family Guide for Purim



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The story of Purim

The story of Purim is recounted in *The Megillah*, the Scroll on which the Book of *Esther* is written. It tells the story of *Queen Esther*, *King Achashverosh*, Esther's cousin *Mordechai*, and the king's chief advisor *Haman*.

Following the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonian king *Nebuchadnezzar*, the Jewish people were sent away from the Land of Israel and were forced to live in Babylonia. Fifty years later, Babylonia was defeated by Persia. *Achashverosh* was the second Persian king. He ruled 127 provinces from *Hodu* (India) to *Kush* (Africa) the largest, strongest kingdom in the world.

Achashverosh selected the city of *Shushan* as his capital. He made a great feast for all the important people in the kingdom and ordered his queen *Vashti* to come and present herself. But *Vashti* was too proud and refused to appear. The king gave the order to execute her. *Achashverosh* needed a new queen and he wanted someone even more beautiful than *Vashti*.

In *Shushan*, there was a Jewish orphan by the name of *Hadassah* who lived with her cousin *Mordechai*. As soon as the king saw her, he chose her to be his new queen. No one knew she was Jewish. *Mordechai* instructed her to say that she was not Jewish and to use her Persian name - *Esther*. *Esther* was kind, gentle, and very beautiful.

Everyday *Mordechai* sat outside the palace gate to wait for news from *Esther*. One day outside the palace, *Mordechai* heard two men plotting to kill the king. He warned *Esther* and the two men were caught and killed. Although it was recorded in the Book of Record that *Mordechai*, the Jew, had saved the king, the matter was soon forgotten. *Achashverosh* appointed *Haman* as his new prime minister. All the king's subjects were ordered to honor *Haman* and bow down to him. Everyone did, except for *Mordechai*.



Haman was furious. He asked the king for his permission to kill all the Jews. *Achashverosh* gave *Haman* his royal ring to seal the orders and decrees to kill all Jews. *Haman* cast lots (*pur* in Hebrew) to choose the day. Then he sent out letters, sealed with the king's royal ring, to each of the 127 provinces in the kingdom. "On the 13th day of the month of Adar," the decree said "you are to destroy, kill and slaughter all Jews, young and old, women and children, all in one day. Their money and property will then belong to you." When *Mordechai* heard of the decree, he ripped his clothing and put ashes on his head as a sign of mourning. He told *Esther* that she must go to the king to try and save the Jews. *Esther* was afraid, for it was forbidden to come before the king without being invited. *Esther* asked that the Jews in *Shushan* to fast and pray for three days. When the three days of prayers and fasting were over, *Esther* went to the king and asked that the king and *Haman* come to a private banquet she was making.



At the banquet, Esther invited the king and *Haman* to a second party. One night, the king could not sleep. He tossed and turned and finally called for his servant to bring out the Royal Book and read him to sleep. In the book he read how *Mordechai* the Jew had warned of the plot against the king and saved the king's life. *Achashverosh* asked *Haman* what shall be done for a man the king wishes to honor. *Haman* said: "Let him wear the king's royal robes. Place the king's royal crown upon his head. Let him ride the king's royal horse, and let a servant walk before the horse and cry out: Thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!" *Achashverosh* ordered *Haman* to do what he recommended to *Mordechai*, and *Mordechai* was led with royal honor through the streets of *Shushan*.

At the second banquet Esther told *Achashverosh* about *Haman's* evil plan. The king was astounded and angry. *Haman* was hung on the gallows that he had built for *Mordechai*. *Mordechai* became the king's new prime minister in place of *Haman*. *Mordechai* sent out a royal letter that said, on the 13th of Adar, all the Jews in the kingdom would organize to defend themselves. On the 13th of Adar, Jews across the kingdom assembled and defended themselves. Thousands of their enemies were killed, including *Haman's* 10 evil sons who were hung from a tree. On the 14th of Adar, the Jews gave thanks to God and celebrated. But in the walled capital city of *Shushan*, the Jews continued to fight an additional day. On the 15th of Adar, the Jews of *Shushan* celebrated their victory. Therefore we celebrate:

The Fast of Esther on the 13th of Adar

Purim Day on the 14th of Adar

And in the walled city of Jerusalem, the main celebration is: *Shushan* Purim on the 15th of Adar.

Scrolls - *Megillot* – were written and sent to the Jews throughout the kingdom.

The rabbis commanded the people to keep the holiday of Purim as a day of thanksgiving feasting and joy and of sending gifts to friends and money to the poor.

מצוות פורים

THE FOUR MAIN MITZVOT OF PURIM

1. MEGILLAT ESTHER - we read the story of Purim in the evening and the next day. Whenever *Haman* is mentioned, we make as much noise as possible to blot out his name and his memory!

2. SENDING GIFTS OF FOOD to at least one friend or relative, because Purim is a time of love and friendship between Jews.

3. GIVING GIFTS OF MONEY TO THE POOR because Purim is a time of sharing and caring and helping.

4. EATING A FESTIVE PURIM MEAL – the special holiday meal eaten on Purim afternoon.

AND DON'T FORGET, PURIM IS COSTUME-TIME! We celebrate how everything can turn upside-down and into something else and nothing is exactly what it seems to be.



חג שמחה!

Recipe for Hamentaschen

- 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 (DO NOT substitute white flour! The wheat flour is necessary to achieve the right texture!)
- 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 (roll it between two sheets of wax paper lightly dusted with flour for best results). 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, but apricot is my favorite. Apple butter, pineapple preserves, and cherry pie filling all work quite well. I usually use Pathmark grocery store brand fruit preserves, and of course, the traditional Simon Fischer brand prunes lekvar.

The number of cookies this recipe makes depends on the size of your cutting tool and the thickness you roll. I use a 4-1/4 inch cutting tool and roll to a medium thickness, and I get 20-24 cookies out of this recipe.

Purim Songs

אני פורים

אני פורים, אני פורים
שמח ומבדח
הלא רק פעם בשנה
אבוא להתארח.

רבי פורים, רבי פורים
אמור נא לי מדוע
מדוע לא יהול פורים
פעמיים בשבוע

הידד פורים, הידד פורים
הכו תוף ומצילתיים
הו מי יתן ובא פורים
לחודש לחודשיים.

CHAG PURIM

Chag Purim
Chag Purim
Chag gadol layehudim

Masechot, ra'ashanim,
shirim verikudim.

Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Bara'ashanim.

Chag Purim
Chag Purim
zeh el zeh sholchim manot,

Machmadim, mamtakim,
Tunifim migdanot.

Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Hava narishah - rash, rash, rash,
Bara'ashanim.