

PURIM!



Dear Friends,

HaDevri Halvrit, or "The Hebrew Word," is the name of one of the most joyous Jewish holidays!

PURIM - pronounce "pu" to rhyme with "to," and "rim" to rhyme with "team." The emphasis is on the second syllable; **pu-REEM**.

PURIM – “LOTS”; PUR is the singular word for “LOT.”

From March 2 through March 4, Jewish people world-wide will celebrate Purim. Purim is a Jewish holiday based on the book of Ester (Esther). "Purim" or "lots" (dice) are what wicked Haman threw in order to determine on which day to carry out his plan of annihilating the Jewish people. The lots landed on 12 and 13, and Haman understood this to mean the 13th day of the 12th Jewish month of Adar. Thus, Purim is celebrated on Adar 13 (Fast of Ester), 14, and 15. The dates of the Jewish holidays are different each year since they follow the lunar calendar, as opposed to the solar.

On Adar 13 (March 2), religious Jewish people fast (from sunup to sundown) in memory of Queen Ester's fast before she went into King Achashverosh (Ahasuerus) to plead for her people.

Conversos, the "converted" Jewish people of Spain who kept their religion secret on pain of torture and death during the time of the Inquisition, observed this fast with particular solemnity. They identified with Queen Esther who, in the words of the Scroll of Esther, "did not reveal her nation's identity or her birthplace", making her a crypto-Jew as they were.

A Yiddish proverb says, "Not every day is Purim!" Centuries ago the rabbis declared that when the Mashiach (Messiah) comes and all the holidays cease, Purim will still continue to be observed!

Purim is the most joyous and carefree of the Jewish holidays. It is a minor holiday only in the sense that work is permitted on it, but many Jewish people choose not to work on this important day.

Anyone who is familiar with the book of Ester can see why Purim is such an exuberant holiday. Even though the name of God is not mentioned in Ester, one can truly see how God intervened in wicked Haman's plot to destroy the Jewish people and saved His people from annihilation (Isaiah 54:17, Psalm 121:4, Genesis 12:3).

The evening of March 2 as well as the next morning, March 3, the entire Megillah, or Scroll, of Ester will be read in the synagogue. Every word must be read, and from a Scroll, not a book. Every time the reader comes to the names of Ester and Mordecai, everyone in the synagogue shouts, "Baruch Ester, Baruch Mordecai!" - "Blessed be Ester, Blessed be Mordecai!" When the reader comes to the name of Haman, though, his name is blotted out by rattling a gregger (Yiddish) which is a special, whirling Purim noisemaker. Loud "boohs" and the stamping of feet are also heard. Cap pistols, alarm clocks, small firecrackers, and other ways a child can blot out Haman's name are employed. Purim is the only time of the year when a child can make all the noise he or she wishes in the synagogue. The children (and some adults!) also dress up in costumes that portray the main characters in the book of Ester. Years ago when Jeff and I ministered in Cleveland, we attended a Purim observance at a Modern Orthodox synagogue. We will never forget what we witnessed! One young boy was dressed up like Haman and had the time of his life as he threw small firecrackers right in the sanctuary!

On Purim one is supposed to send at least two "portions" of pastry and candy to friends and give a present of money to at least two poor people. This is taken from Ester 9:22. This sending of portions to friends is known in Hebrew as "Shalach-Mones (Manot)" or "sending of gifts." These gifts must be sent by a messenger and not handed over personally.

A famous pastry that is eaten on Purim is hamantaschen, or "Haman's pockets" in Yiddish. This is a delicious three-cornered pastry that is filled with poppy seeds, cherries, apples, prunes, peaches, and other fruits. Hamantaschen stands for Haman's pockets (which contained the bribe money he offered to King Achashverosh), his hat

(which was triangular), or his ears, which were cut off before he was hanged. His ten sons were hanged, as well!

Did you know that God did not command His people to celebrate Purim? Ester 9 tells us that Ester, Mordecai, and the Jewish people as a whole ordained that Purim be kept as a holiday.

Tehillah (Psalm) 22, a striking Messianic Psalm, is read on Purim! Jewish scholars have said that this was the prayer Ester offered before she went into the king to plead for her people.

How we thank God that a Greater than Ester and Mordecai has come! He is the Mediator between us and God, the One who died in our place on the Tree for our sins.

The great prophet, Yesha'yahu, or Isaiah, states this marvelous truth in chapter 53, verse 12. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

HaBrith HaChadasha, or The New Covenant, also talks about this One who was sent to be our Mediator. This is found in I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; 9:11-15; 12:24.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:12).

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5).

He is the Scepter that was held out so that we might live eternally. "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel..." (Bemidbar, or Numbers 24:17).

Because He died so we can live,

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