

# Purim

The Jewish holiday of Purim (Poo-rim or Puh-rim) also known as the “Festival of Lots,” is a fun commemorative holiday celebrating the rescue of the Jewish people from the Ancient Persian Emperor Haman’s plot to kill all the Jews in his kingdom as told in the Book of Esther. Like other Jewish holidays, the date of Purim on the Gregorian Calendar can vary from year to year, but it generally falls between the end of February and the middle of March. In 2024, Purim begins on the evening of **March 23<sup>rd</sup>**, and continues through **March 24<sup>th</sup>**. In Jerusalem and other communities, the celebration of Purim will occur on **March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024**.

## History of Purim

Purim is told through the biblical Book of Esther, taking place in Ancient Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus. In the Persian capital of Shushan (also spelled Susa), the King’s Prime Minister Haman plotted to kill the entire Jewish population of the city after a Jewish man named Mordecai refused to bow in front of him. Haman convinced the Persian king to issue a decree ordering the extermination of the Jewish population on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of Adar. A young woman named Esther, who was raised by Mordecai, managed to become the Queen of Persia, albeit hiding her Jewish identity. Mordecai convinced Esther to reveal her Jewish identity to the king and Haman at a feast, at the risk of her life. After revealing her identity to the king, Esther convinced him to let the Jews live and have Haman and other enemies of the Jews punished. Mordecai became the new Prime Minister, and the Jewish community of Persia celebrated their victory on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar or Purim.

## Observance of Purim

Celebration of Purim varies among Jewish communities, families, and individuals; yet it is universally noted for its spirit of liveliness and fun. At home, many will celebrate Purim with a festive meal called a *Seudah*, which is held during the daylight hours of the holiday and accompanied by lots of wine and Hamantaschen, or triangular pastries. Some also may choose to fast from dawn to nightfall the day before Purim, which is known as Ta’anit Esther. Purim is also an important holiday where the community comes together at a synagogue to read or dramatize the Book of Esther, known as the *Megillah* or Purim spiel. Many people wear costumes, sing songs, perform skits, and use rattles or noisemakers every time someone mentions Haman’s name during the reading of the story.

## Scheduling

During Purim, Jewish employees may request time off work to attend a *Megillah* or *Seudah*, observe the holiday, or even prepare for the holiday. Some employees may choose to fast the day before Purim, while others might celebrate the holiday on different days. Invite your employees to share how they personally observe Purim and what practices they have that should be respected during the days of Purim.

### **Greetings for Purim**

Typical holiday greetings included the Hebrew “*Chag Purim Sameach*,” or the Yiddish “*ah freilichen Purim*,” both of which mean “Happy Purim.”

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