

# The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend  
Monthly Newsletter

## Purim 2017



VOLUME 4, ISSUE 6

MARCH 2017  
ADAR 5777

The jolly festival of Purim is celebrated every year on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar (March 11-12, 2017). It commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia from Haman's plot "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day," as recorded in the Megillah (book of Esther).

### The Story in a Nutshell

The Persian Empire of the 4th century BCE extended over 127 lands, and all the Jews were its subjects. When King Ahasuerus had his wife, Queen Vashti, executed for failing to follow his orders, he arranged a beauty pageant to find a new queen. A Jewish girl, Esther, found favor in his eyes and became the new queen, though she refused to divulge her nationality.

Meanwhile, the Jew-hating Haman was appointed prime minister of the empire. Mordechai, the leader of the Jews (and Esther's cousin), defied the king's orders and refused to bow to Haman. Haman was incensed, and he convinced the king to issue a decree ordering the extermination of all the Jews on the 13th of Adar, a date chosen by a lottery Haman made.

Mordechai galvanized all the Jews, convincing them to repent, fast and pray to G-d. Meanwhile, Esther asked the king and Haman to join her for a feast. At a subsequent feast, Esther revealed to the king her Jewish identity. Haman was hanged, Mordechai was appointed prime minister in his stead, and a new decree was issued, granting the Jews the right to defend themselves against their enemies.

On the 13th of Adar, the Jews mobilized and killed many of their enemies. On the 14th of Adar, they rested and celebrated. In the capital city of Shushan, they took one more day to finish the job.

### Why Is It Called Purim?

Purim means "lots" in ancient Persian. The holiday was thus named since Haman had thrown lots to determine when he would carry out his diabolical scheme. You can pronounce this name many ways. In Eastern tradition, it is called poo-REEM. Among Westerners, it is often called PUH-rim. Some Central-European communities even call it PEE-rim. (WARNING: Calling this holiday PYOO-rim—as English speakers are sometimes wont to do—is a surefire newbie cover-blower.)

### Purim Observances

- Reading of the Megillah (book of Esther), which recounts the story of the Purim miracle. This is done once on the eve of Purim and then again on the following day.
- Giving money gifts to at least two poor people.
- Sending gifts of two kinds of food to at least one person.
- A festive Purim feast, which often includes wine or other intoxicating beverages.

### Purim Customs

There is a spirit of revelry and fun on Purim that is unparalleled on the Jewish calendar. If there were ever a day to "let loose" and just be Jewish, this is it!

It is also customary for children (and adults, if they desire) to dress up in costumes.

A traditional Purim food is hamantaschen (or oznay Haman), three-cornered pastries bursting with poppy seeds or another sweet filling.

On the day before Purim (or on the Thursday before, when Purim is on Sunday), it is customary to fast, commemorating Esther's fasting and praying to G-d that He save His people.

### When to Celebrate

One of the unique aspects of Purim is the diverse timing for its celebration.

- Common Custom: Jews all over the world celebrate Purim on Adar 14, the day when our ancestors rested from the war against their enemies.
- Walled Cities: Since the Jews of Shushan rested one day later, their Purim was deferred to the 15th. This was extended to include any city that was surrounded by walls in the days of Joshua, notably Jerusalem.
- Small Towns: In ancient times, villagers only banded together with fellow Jews in the larger towns on Mondays and Thursdays, which were market days. Thus, the sages decreed that they should read the Megillah on the market day preceding 14 Adar. This custom is no longer practiced.

### The Significance of Purim

In addition to the miracle of Jewish survival despite the efforts of our enemies, Purim celebrates G-d's intimate involvement in every aspect of this world. Even though there were no overt miracles recorded in the Megillah—indeed, His name is not even mentioned once—G-d was actively “pulling the strings” to care for His nation.

Additionally, Haman's edict catalyzed a spiritual revival among the Jews. In a sense, this was even more significant than the Covenant at Sinai—an overwhelming spiritual experience that compelled the Jews to accept the Torah—since it occurred of their own volition, even as they were scattered among the Persian people and immersed in their culture. It was in the merit of this spiritual reawakening that G-d orchestrated their salvation.

### Other Cool Purim Facts

All too often, Jewish communities have narrowly escaped catastrophe. More often than not, the plot involves an evil tyrant who follows the ways of Haman. And just like the Purim story, G-d is

there to save His people from certain doom. Some communities make their own “Purim” holiday on the anniversary of the date of their respective salvation. Some even read the chain of events from specially-made “megillah” scrolls.

In modern times, the plans of some of our nation's worst enemies have have been thwarted on this day.

In the early 1950s, Joseph Stalin, the ruthless butcher of millions of innocent people, had bloody plans for dealing with the “Jewish problem” in the U.S.S.R. Just as things were reaching a crisis point in 1953, he died . . . on Purim!

In 1991, Saddam Hussein of Iraq defiantly invaded nearby Kuwait. As pressure ramped up from the international community, his army began firing SCUD missiles into Israel. The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, repeatedly assured the people of Israel that they would be protected. After the U.S.-led forces attacked Iraq, they were quickly victorious and the hostilities ended . . . on Purim!

By the Grace of G-d  
Purim, 5712 (1952)  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

### A Letter by The Rebbe

The Study Group  
Worcester, Mass.

Shalom u' Brocho;

I was pleased to learn of the formation of a study group in your community, and I wish you much success.

Although the name ~ "Study Group" ~ implies that study and the acquisition of knowledge are the main objectives of your group, the first step to real understanding of G-d and the deeper aspects of life is the realization that we cannot and must not make our own understanding a prerequisite condition of our practicing the Divine precepts. In other words, we cannot say to G-d, Let us first understand your laws; then we will follow them.

When our people came into being, on receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, they declared: "We will do (first), then we will (try to) understand." This proclamation has remained our guiding light for all times and at all places. The Jew must observe the Mitzvoth whether or not he understands their deeper significance; his experience of the Mitzvoth eventually will develop the faculties of his understanding, and in this he has Divine assistance.

Jews have, likewise, always realized that our history is not shaped by understandable natural laws or forces, but by Supreme Providence, which is above and beyond our understanding.

A case in point is the festival of Purim which we celebrate today. Ahasuerus, an absolute ruler, had signed, sealed and delivered the decree to annihilate the entire Jewish population in all the 127 provinces of his vast empire. There seemed not a glimmer of escape. The Jews could not logically understand why such a terrible decree was hanging over their heads. Haman had accused them of adhering to their own laws and way of life. But, if he was right, then precisely for this reason they should not have become exposed to such mortal danger, inasmuch as the Torah is a Torah-Chaim, a law of life and a way of life, not death.

Yet, during the entire year that the decree was pending, the Jews remained steadfast in their faith and loyalty to G-d, although there was but one avenue of escape from certain death, as our Sages tell us, and that was precisely the opposite: abandonment of their way of life and merging with the non-Jewish population. But not a single Jew or Jewess chose this apparently "logical" solution.

Their salvation also came through a miraculous chain of events which completely turned the wheel of fortune from destruction to renewed life, physical and spiritual, and from mourning to gladness.

Now the words of the Megillah, "These days shall be remembered and practiced", can be better understood. Remembering our relationship with G-d must immediately lead to our practicing His precepts. Through practicing G-d's precepts, despite any inclination to the contrary stemming from one's inner enemy (Yetzer-Hora) or external hindrances or influences, the Jew remains rooted in G-d's Torah and His Mitzvoth which make our people indestructible.

I trust that you will follow this true approach and will extend your good influences throughout your community,

With Purim Greeting and Blessing,

[Signed: Menachem Schneerson]

## Jewish Story

By Mendy Kaminker

"This year we're not going to allow even one mishloach manot (food gift) in the house," Shira announced as Purim approached. "All that candy is bad for the children's teeth, and Passover is coming! How can we clean the house if there are pretzels under the couch and cookie crumbs in the playroom?"

Stan sighed. He could never understand what was so bad about the children enjoying a little candy. It was true that Passover was coming, but his wife had been talking about it since Rosh Hashanah. Actually, the minute Passover was over she had started saying, "Don't go into that room with chametz (leavened food)!"

But Shira was determined, and when Purim arrived, she was ready.

"Happy Purim!" the neighbor called as she knocked on the door and entered holding mishloach manot. Shira was standing in the kitchen surrounded by the mishloach manot she had packed. On the table, there was cellophane for wrapping more mishloach manot, and cards decorated with colorful clowns.

When the neighbor left, Shira took the candies out of the mishloach manot and repackaged them, so they could be sent to other neighbors.

Late in the afternoon, Shira was finally able to relax and smile. There wasn't a trace of candy to be found in the house. She had checked off every name on the list of people to whom mishloach manot had to be sent. Every mishloach manot that came into the house had been repackaged and sent to someone else. Only two handfuls of chocolates remained, one for the children and one for their parents.

The festive Purim meal was cooking, and a wonderful smell filled the house, when there was another knock at the door. Who could it be?

"Hello! Happy Purim! How nice! Thank you for coming. Just one minute. I have something to give you!" Shira ran to the kitchen and said goodbye to the chocolates. The Feinbergs! Who knew they'd be coming? She was sure they had gone to visit their grandparents. Apparently not! And now Shira was left with an enormous mishloach manot full of the foods she so feared: crumbly cookies, a whole package of toffees, crackers. Oy! What was she going to do now?

"Stan, could you come here?"

"I'm sorry, I'm busy."

"It's urgent! Really urgent. Please come to the kitchen."

Stan came in. One glance told him all.

"An extra mishloach manot, huh?"

"Yes. We have to get it out of the house."

"It's just one mishloach manot . . ." he began, but Shira cut him off.

"One? There's enough here for thirty families. We can't keep this in the house. Do you have any idea what we can do with it?"

"Let's think. We've already given to all the neighbors, all the teachers and your cousin. Who else is left? No one."

"Then let's give it to someone we didn't plan on giving to. Someone we don't usually give to. Someone like . . ."

"Like?"

"Nu. Think."

"Someone, someone . . . I have a great idea! Howard the Hermit! I'm sure the Feinbergs didn't give him mishloach manot. I'll give him the whole package. Just take their card out and stick in one of ours."

"You're a genius! I hope he's home."

Howard the Hermit lived across the street. No one knew who had given him the name "Howard the Hermit," but everyone agreed that it suited him to a T. He almost never spoke, and he was always a little disheveled. Nobody ever visited him. The children didn't like him, and he didn't relate to the children. He came and went without attracting any attention. Sometime he muttered under his breath. Even Stan didn't really know him. Sometimes they'd pass each other in the street, but that was all.

Stan made sure that the Feinbergs were nowhere in sight, took the mishloach manot and made his way to Howard's house. He was a little apprehensive about meeting him. Who knew how he'd react? Would he yell? Smile? Or would he mutter under his breath?

Stan knocked.

A voice called out from the other side of the door. "I'm sorry. I have no money for you!"

"Howard . . . uh . . . I don't want money," Stan stuttered. "It's me, Stan, from across the road."

"One minute."

Stan sensed that there was an eye at the peephole studying him. After a quiet moment, the door opened wide.

"Good afternoon! Happy Purim! I've come to give you mishloach manot."

"Me?"

Stan blushed and nodded.

"You're the first one to bring me mishloach manot this year." Howard nodded his head as if he were trying to remember something. "In fact, I don't think I've received any mishloach manot for at least five years."

Stan wanted to say that he was sorry. He wanted to apologize for the neighbors, to say that they were just embarrassed to come because they didn't really know Howard, and that from now on he would try to be a little nicer, and maybe invite him over for a Shabbat meal, and . . .

But Stan didn't say anything.

"This is very nice of you," said Howard, who suddenly didn't seem so odd. "I really appreciate it. Could you wait here one moment?"

A minute later Howard appeared with a beautiful package of tropical fruits and a bottle of good wine. "This is for you. I prepared it last night in case someone came with mishloach manot, so that I'd have something to give in return."

Stan wanted to cry, but he didn't let himself. "This is beautiful. You have good taste."

"Thank you. Have a happy Purim." Howard smiled widely and closed the door.

[http://www.chabadsiu.com/holidays/purim/article\\_cdo/aid/2879898/jewish/Mishloach-Manot-for-Howard-the-Hermit.htm](http://www.chabadsiu.com/holidays/purim/article_cdo/aid/2879898/jewish/Mishloach-Manot-for-Howard-the-Hermit.htm)

# The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend

9401 Margail Avenue  
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Phone: 847-296-1770  
Email: chabad@chabadandfree.com



**HINDAHELPS.COM**

In loving memory of  
Mrs. Hinda Scheiman OBM

## Rabbi B. Scheiman or

### Rabbi S. Scheiman

Danville  
Decatur  
Dixon  
E. Moline  
Hill  
Illinois River  
Jacksonville  
Lincoln  
Logan  
Pontiac  
Sheridan  
Statesville  
Western Illinois

## Rabbi M. Scheiman

Big Muddy River  
Centralia  
Graham  
Lawrence  
Menard  
Pinckneyville  
Robinson  
Shawnee  
Southwestern  
Taylorville  
Vandalia  
Vienna

## NOTICES:

Please make a request to your Chaplain that you would like a visit from a Rabbi in APRIL.

**HINDA Family Division** Connect your family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child etc.) with our Family Division! Please contact us for more information.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** All mail sent to the Hinda Institute should be addressed to our Inmate Advocate. Letters should NOT be addressed to Rabbi Scheiman. Please use this mail-

ing address to contact us by mail:

*Inmate Advocate  
The Hinda Institute  
9401 Margail Ave  
Des Plaines, IL 60016*

**Housing Resource:** For any families trying to find a rental for their loved one to parole to upon release. Contact Mr. Marcus. This applies even to register with the state upon release. There is a fee for his services . Don Yosef Marcus--(847) 361-7770

## DID YOU KNOW?

...Haman was hanged on the second day of Passover?

...Queen Esther's Hebrew name was Hadasaah? ("Esther" is Persian)

...Achashverosh searched four years for a queen, during which he considered more than 1400 contestants, before choosing Esther?

...Vashti (Achashverosh's first queen) was the great-granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor who destroyed the first Holy Temple?

...Haman was the one who advised Achashverosh to kill Vashti?

...Haman was once Mordechai's slave?

...Mordechai, who refused to bow to Haman, was a descendant of Benjamin, the only one of Jacob's sons who didn't bow to Haman's ancestor Esau?

...Esther's plan was to make Achashverosh jealous of the attention she was giving to Haman so that he should kill them both?

...Haman's decree was never revoked? (Achashverosh only issued a second decree, giving the Jews the right to defend themselves)

...Mordechai was a very old man during the story of Purim? (He was already a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest court of Torah law in Jerusalem, 79 years before the miracle of Purim!)

...Every single Jew in the world lived in Achashverosh's kingdom, so that they were all included in Haman's decree?

...G-d's name is not mentioned even once in the entire Book of Esther?

## Jewish Joke

Back in the cowboy days, the westbound wagon train was lost and low on food. No other humans had been seen for days. And then they saw an old Jew sitting beneath a tree.

The leader rushed to him and said, "We're lost and running out of food. Is there someplace ahead where we can get food?"

"Vell," the old Jew said, "I wouldn't go up dat hill und down de other side. Somevun told me you'll run into a big bacon tree."

"A bacon tree?" asked the wagon train leader.

"Yah, ah bacon tree. Trust me. For nuttin vud I lie."

The leader goes back and tells his people that if nothing else, they might be able to find food on the other side of the next ridge.

"So why did he say not to go there?" some pioneers asked.

"Oh, you know those Jews-they don't eat bacon."

So the wagon train goes up the hill and down the other side. Suddenly, Indians attack and massacre everyone except the leader, who manages to escape back to the old Jew, who's enjoying a "glassel tea."

The near-dead man starts shouting. "You old fool! You sent us to our deaths!"

We followed your instructions, but there was no bacon tree. Just hundreds of Indians, who killed everyone."

The old Jew holds up his hand and says "Oy, vait a minute."

He then gets out an English-Yiddish dictionary, and begins thumbing through it. "Gevalt, I made myself ah big mistake."

"It vuz not a bacon tree. It vuz a ham bush!"