

# Introduction to Purim

Purim commemorates the saving of the Jews in the Persian Empire from Haman's plan to wipe them out completely. The story is a classic example of how God intervenes in human history in a hidden manner. The essential element was that the Jews were saved from physical destruction/death (contrast with Chanuka, where the Jews were not being threatened with physical death but with the destruction of their religious beliefs and practices).

## Halachot

- Giving charity to poor people.
- Giving gifts of ready-to-eat food to friends.

**REASON** To promote friendship and a feeling of community.

- Reading the megila of Esther at night and the next day.
- Eating a festive meal.
- Giving three half-dollars (or whatever the local unit of coin currency is where you live) to charity in commemoration of the half-shekel, which was given by all Jews to the Temple when it stood in Jerusalem.

**NOTE** This is not actually an observance of Purim, but it has become traditional to give the 3 half-dollars on Purim.

## Widespread Customs

- Dressing up in costumes.
- Making noise during the reading of Haman's (and his wife's) name in the megila, in order to wipe out their names.
- Drinking more wine than normal.

**NOTE** Jewish women are required to fulfill all of the commandments of the holiday, just as men are, since the women were also saved.