



IT'S PARTY TIME!

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Purim is one of the happiest holidays in the Jewish calendar. This family can't wait to dress up, eat yummy foods, and – yes – head to a party!

JEWISH CONCEPTS

As one might gather from this book, *Purim* is a wonderful holiday for families – truly a party. Purim is filled with noisy fun, costumes, and treats, but at its core is a story. In the Book of Esther, found in the Bible, Ahashuerus, the king of Persia, selects a beautiful woman named Esther to be his new queen. His trusted advisor, Haman, resents that the Jews would not bow down to him. As a result, Haman makes a plan to destroy them all. What neither Haman nor the King know is that Esther is Jewish. When she bravely stands up to proclaim herself as a Jew, Esther foils Haman's plot and saves her people.

The child in this book describes going to synagogue to hear the story of Purim read aloud. The Book of Esther is one of five Biblical books written in a scroll, known in Hebrew as a *megillah*. *Megillat Esther*, the Book of Esther, is read aloud in synagogue, and each time Haman's name is read, the crowd makes enough noise to drown out his name – making it an especially fun time and unique holiday for young children. The child in this story enjoys shaking his noisemaker (known as a *gragger* in Yiddish or as a *ra'ashan* in Hebrew), a must-have during a megillah reading. And of course he revels in dressing up! Children often parade around the synagogue to show off their Purim costumes.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Purim is celebrated on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar, which falls during late winter or early spring. The family in this book takes part in many activities that make for an especially fun family holiday.

Hear the Purim story! The very first commandment of the holiday is to read the Book of Esther aloud. Go to synagogue (in costume, of course) and blot out Haman's name!

Make *mishloach manot*, or little gift bags of treats, to give to friends, neighbors and family. It is traditional to put at least two food items in each bag. Recipes abound on the internet. Even very young children can help decorate and then fill the goodie bags, placing boxes of raisins, granola bars or clementines inside.

Give *matanot l'evyonim*, *tzedakah* or charity for those in need. This commandment, like the sending of mishloach manot, comes directly from the megillah reading. Does your family have a *tzedakah* box? If not, Purim is a wonderful time to make one (construction paper on top of an empty coffee can be decorated with markers and stickers). Getting into the *tzedakah* habit helps children understand the importance of caring for others.