



# BARNYARD PURIM

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*There's nothing more fun on Purim than putting on a Purim play. On this farm, even the animals get into it! But can the timid sheep really pull off playing Haman?*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

Purim is a holiday filled with fun, food, laughter, costumes, noise – but at the center of it all is a Biblical story. As recounted in the Book of Esther, the Persian King Ahashuerus picked a beautiful woman named Esther to be his new queen. His trusted advisor, Haman, resented that the Jews would not bow down to him. As a result, Haman made a plan to destroy them all. What neither Haman nor the King knew was that Esther was Jewish. When she bravely stood up to proclaim herself as a Jew, Esther foiled Haman's plot and saved her people.

The Book of Esther is one of several books of the Bible 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. In some circles, people also imbibe in wine, so much so that they cannot differentiate between the names of Haman and Mordechai, Esther's cousin. The somewhat raucous nature of the Purim celebration makes it a unique holiday! A noisemaker (known as a *gragger* in Yiddish or as a *ra'ashan* in Hebrew) is a must-have during a megillah reading. It's customary to dress up for Purim – as a character from the story or anything else – and children often parade around the synagogue to show off their finery.

Another Purim custom is to put on a *shpiel* (Yiddish for "play") -- a reenactment of the story of Purim that often has a funny twist. *Barnyard Purim* definitely falls in this category.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Purim is celebrated on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar – which generally falls during late winter or early spring. There are many meaningful Purim customs and commandments, all of which make it a fun holiday for the whole family!

**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 enjoy the revelry of the holiday!

**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. Try to include *hamantaschen*, traditional 3-cornered Purim cookies, representing Haman's hat. Recipes abound on the internet.

**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.

**Put on a *shpiel*.** Encourage your children to put on their own Purim play, just as the animals do in this story. The basic plot is always the same, but feel free to embellish with as much silliness as you like.