

The Story of Purim (very abbreviated)



Many years ago in far away Persia, there lived a king named AHASHVERUS (Ah-hahsh-VER-us). He had a beautiful queen named VASHTI (VASH-tee). KING AHASHVERUS invited all the men in the Capital to a feast with lots of drinking. He commanded QUEEN VASHTI to show off her beauty to the men at the feast. But VASHTI refused to appear before the men. The King became so angry, he consulted with his advisors and announced that she could no longer be queen.



AHASHVERUS wanted a new queen, so he sent his messengers to look for the most beautiful young women in Persia. Among the women, they found a young Jewish woman named ESTHER. She was living with her cousin MORDECAI, a very pious and good man. When the King saw lovely ESTHER, he chose her as his Queen. MORDECAI instructed her not to tell the King she was Jewish, and so she did not tell him.



One day when MORDECAI was at the palace, he overheard two of the guards plotting to kill the King. He used messengers to tell ESTHER about the evil plot. The Queen warned KING AHASHVERUS (in Mordecai's name), who had the guards killed immediately.



The King's Prime Minister at that time was HAMAN (HAY-men), a very wicked man. He wanted everyone to bow down to him. Almost everyone did; however, MORDECAI refused to bow down. HAMAN became very angry at MORDECAI and at all the Jews. He decided to have all the Jews in the land of Persia killed. The date was chosen by lottery, and the 13th day of Adar (Ah-DAHR) was the date chosen for the terrible deed. Of course the Jews were frightened, and MORDECAI begged ESTHER to save her people. ESTHER said that she would try. She appeared before the King in her most beautiful robes and invited the King and HAMAN to a banquet. At that banquet, the King asked ESTHER what she wanted so badly. ESTHER invited the King and HAMAN to join her at another banquet the next night, and then she would tell them.

Later that night, the King could not sleep, so he called for one of his servants to read to him from his diary. The servant read to AHASHVERUS about how MORDECAI had saved his life. The King wanted to reward MORDECAI, but did not know how to do so. In the morning, he asked HAMAN, "There is a man I must reward. How shall I do so?" HAMAN thought the King was talking about him, and he was very happy. He said, "I would dress this man in royal robes and have him led through the streets on a royal horse. Let one of the King's officers run before the horse and shout 'This is what the King does when he wants to honor someone!' Let everyone see the man you have chosen to honor." The King then told HAMAN that MORDECAI was the man to be so honored, and HAMAN was to lead him through the streets!

Later that same day was the second private banquet to which Queen ESTHER had invited the King and HAMAN. The King said to ESTHER, "You look unhappy. What is bothering you enough to invite us to two banquets?" ESTHER answered, "O King, HAMAN is going to kill my people. He has built a gallows on which to hang my cousin MORDECAI. Please save my cousin and my people."

The King loved ESTHER very much and remembered that MORDECAI had saved his life. He called his palace guards and ordered them to hang HAMAN on the gallows that HAMAN had prepared for MORDECAI.

So, on the 13th day of Adar, the Jews, instead of being killed, celebrated a happy holiday. They called the day "PURIM" (POOR-im), which means "lots" in Persian.

MORDECAI became a wise and caring Prime Minister in place of HAMAN. Today, people send pastries called Hamantashen to one another and give charity to the poor in celebration of ESTHER'S bravery.

