

Chabad Will Feature Purim at the Circus

Purim is the most joyous holiday on the Jewish calendar and has been celebrated for over 2500 years in Jewish communities around the world. Purim commemorates the miraculous change of events in ancient Persia, when the wicked Prime Minister Haman convinced the foolish King Achashverosh to kill all the Jews in his kingdom.

The Persian Empire of the 4th century BCE, extended over 127 lands and all the Jewish people of that time were subjects of the Empire. Haman chose the 13th day of Adar as the day to annihilate and destroy all the Jews in the

kingdom.

Mordechai the Jew, a minister in the king's cabinet, galvanized all the Jews to repent, fast, and pray to God for salvation. Esther the queen, Mordechai's cousin, revealed her Jewish identity to the king. Haman was hanged and Mordechai was appointed Prime Minister.

On the 13th of Adar the Jews mobilized and defended themselves against their enemies. On the 14th day of Adar they celebrated and this day was permanently declared as an eternal, joyous holiday by Esther and Mordechai. In Shushan, capital of

Persia, they extended the fighting by one day and they celebrate Purim on the 15th day of Adar.

The holiday of Purim is extreme in its joy and merrymaking. The dress up is rooted in the fact that everything turned on its head. The downtrodden Jews were suddenly propelled to the top and Mordechai and Esther radiated with light and splendor.

Esther's request was universally accepted as well as the five special observances of the Purim day. They are: reading of the scroll of Esther; sending at least two ready-to-eat food gifts to a friend; giving gifts to the poor;

thanking God for the miracle; and rejoicing with a festive feast.

At Chabad of Charlotte the joy of Purim is serious business. We have a full schedule of events planned. This year's Purim theme at Chabad is "Purim at the Circus."

Wednesday, March 20, is the fast of Esther. The Purim festivities begin in the evening with the reading of the Megillah at 8 PM. Circus costumes are the recommended attire for all the Purim festivities at Chabad.

Purim day, Thursday, March 21, morning service is at 6:30 AM with the second Megillah reading at 7 AM. There will be an additional reading at 5:30 PM.

The Purim main event will be held Thursday evening at 6:30 PM with a fantastic Circus

themed feast which will include hot dogs, mini burgers and relish, cotton candy, popcorn, and of course gourmet Hamantaschen.

Circus entertainment for the children and exciting activities for grownups as well.

Fee is \$25 per person and \$65 per family. (Early bird special - \$20 per person and \$54 per family if paid by March 14). For more information, please visit Chabad-nc.org or call our office at 704-366-3984. ✪



Celebrating Purim in a Topsy-Turvy World

By Rabbi Asher Knight, Temple Beth El

"Read me another book" These are the regular words of the sleepy children in my household who are negotiating just before bedtime. Stories help to shape our understanding of ourselves and root us in the narrative of the world.

"Sing me another song...." These are the regular words of the children in my household - tucked into their beds, eyelids fluttering, listening to the melody of the Sh'ma. Songs help us to express our values and ideals: joy and gratitude, safety and friendship, sadness and mourning, longing and love.

As a parent and rabbi, I often wonder how to engender and encourage my children to feel knowledgeable enough to ultimately make their own Jewish journey when they become adults. The challenge, of course, is that Charlotte's prevailing culture is decidedly not Jewish. Jewish culture, food, songs, stories, lessons, and virtues will not randomly seep into our consciousness without deliberate action. How do we create a strong sense of Jewish identity? Reading certain books and singing certain songs, celebrating certain holidays, and joyously living with the seasons and cycles of Jewish time.

This March brings us to Adar II, which brings us Purim, which brings us Haman. On Purim we are commanded to mirth and

merriment. We read the story of Mordechai and Esther in the Megillah. We sing songs. We wear costumes. The Talmud goes so far as to say that we should drink until we can't tell the difference between the "good guy," Mordechai - and the "bad guy," Haman.

Not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordechai is not just about tempering the categories of "good and evil." It's a powerful spiritual message. Our people's journey isn't over - sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between safety and security. The tides of trouble are still prevalent in our lives today. And on Purim, we tell the story of a people who dared to hope. We tell how they fought for safety, freedom, and opportunity. We learn that our ancestors could not have done it alone. In this crazy, topsy-turvy world, neither can we.

Come celebrate Purim with Temple Beth El on Sunday, March 17 at 11 AM. Members of our congregation will tell the story of Esther, Mordechai, and Haman to the music of the wildly popular *Hamilton*. The shpiel is appropriate for community members of all ages. We will conclude shortly after noon so that we can head over to the LJCC Purim Carnival. And as we celebrate - whether you wear a costume or not, whether you raise a toast or not, try to think of one way the songs and the stories of this holiday bring you a sense of Jewish

belonging, purpose, connection, and joy. Chag Purim Sameach! ✪



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