

The story of **PURIM**

Designed and written by Sorah Cohen

1. The feast

A long, long time ago, in a town called Shushan, there lived a king named Achashverosh. King Achashverosh loved to make parties. He would invite all his friends to the palace where they would eat and drink the most delicious food. The parties sometimes went on for days and weeks! At the party, King Achashverosh asked his queen to dance.

“Vashti, the king commands you to come to his party now and dance for the guests,” said the King’s messenger. Vashti looked in the mirror and saw that her face was full of pimples. “I’m so sorry,” she said. “Tell the King that I will not be able to come to the party to dance.”

The king was very angry that Vashti didn’t do as he asked and he told the guards to take her away far from the palace.

The next day, when the king woke up, he started to miss his queen. He felt lonely and decided to choose a new queen. He commanded all the girls to come to his palace so he could choose his favorite one.

2. Esther and Mordechai

There was a Jewish girl named Esther, who lived in Shushan too. She didn’t have a Mommy or a Daddy, but she lived with her kind *uncle* Mordechai, whom she loved very much. When Esther heard about King Achasverosh’s command she was very worried. Oh no! she thought. I don’t want to go to the king’s palace. I don’t want to be the queen! I want to stay with my Uncle Mordechai.”

Esther stayed hidden in their house, hoping no one would find her. Mordechai was also worried. She loved Esther, and didn’t want her to go to the Palace.

But one day, there was a knock on the door.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

The King’s guard came in and said, “I hear there is a wonderful girl who lives in this house and I’m here to escort her to the palace.”

Esther felt scared and very sad. She didn’t want to go, but the guard said she had to come with him. She gave Mordechai a hug as she cried big tears.

Mordechai tried to comfort Esther by saying, “I can see you are very sad Esther. I am sad too. I wonder if this is what Hashem (God) wants from you. Maybe this is all part of His plan”

When Esther visited King Achashverosh, he liked her very much. “I can see kindness and

strength in your eyes. I want you to be my new queen.” And so she became Queen Esther.

3. Haman’s Plan

In the same town lived a man named Haman, who cared only about himself and said very mean things. He wanted everyone to bow down to him, so he could feel important.

But Mordechai would not bow down to Haman. “I only bow to Hashem.” he said in a firm voice. This made Haman mad. He didn’t know what to do with his bad feelings, and thought that if he sends Mordechai and all the Jewish people away, he would feel better. But Mordechai would not bow down to Haman. “I refuse to bow to you. I only bow to Hashem” he said in a strong voice. This made Haman very angry. He didn’t know what to do. He decided that he would get rid of Mordechai and all the Jewish people. He would find a way!

Haman went to the king to see if he could get permission. “There are some people living in your kingdom who are different from us. They don’t keep your rules and they have their own ways. I think we should send them away. I will pay you money if you give me permission to do that.”

Achashverosh was the king, and kings are in charge of making good rules; but he wasn’t a very smart king. He let Haman do what he wanted. “Okay Haman. If you think it’s a good idea.” The king gave Haman his special ring so he could sign the letters and new rules about the Jewish people.

The Jewish people were sad and scared about Haman’s plan. What could they do? They knew they could ask Hashem to help them. Esther’s uncle Mordechai was a very wise man. The people saw that he did not lose hope. He gathered all the Jewish people children to daven (pray).

Meanwhile, Mordechai told Queen Esther of Haman’s plan. When Esther heard the news, she said, “Oh no! That is terrible! I’m so sorry to hear! What can I do to help?” She davened and asked Hashem to help her think of a plan.

“I must go and speak to the king. I know this is dangerous. The King’s rule is that he only talks to people when he is in the mood to see them. If I go to him and he doesn’t put out his scepter, it means that he does not want to talk. I will be in trouble. But I want to help my people.”

Esther used all her courage to go to the king. When Esther entered the king’s throne room, the king stretched out his scepter and said, “Esther my dear, it so nice to see you. What would you like?”

Esther replied, “Your majesty, I would like to have a party with you and Haman.”

“Yes! My dear queen”, said the king, “I would love to feast with you and Haman.”

4. King cannot sleep

That night, the king could not sleep. He asked his guard to bring him his special journal where he wrote down important things that happened. When he opened the journal, he read about Mordechai and how he did helpful things for the King and yet, he did not give Mordechai a reward. “Hmmm...What reward should Mordechai get?”

Right then, in the middle of the night, Haman came to visit the king. “Oh Haman, perfect timing! I need an idea. What is a grand reward I can give to someone special?”

Haman thought it was for him and said, “Dress the person in the king's crown and cape and take him throughout the town on the king's royal horse and say, “This is what is done to the man that the king wishes to honor””.

“Great idea!” said the king. “Please do that, to Mordechai the Jew”.

Haman was shocked. He couldn't believe his ears. He thought:

I do not like Mordechai!

Mordechai, the Jew refused to bow to me!

Now, the king wants me to honor Mordechai?

Haman was upset. He did not want to do this, but he had no choice. He dressed Mordechai in the King's cape and he put the King's crown on Mordechai's head! Then Haman took the king's horse and rode Mordechai around the city. Everyone cheered for Mordechai.

5. Party with Esther

Later at the party, Esther sat with the King and Haman. There was delicious food and drinks. Esther knew this was her chance to say something. “Dear king, I have something on my heart that is bothering me.”

“What is it, my dear queen?” said King Achashverosh.

“I am scared. Someone is trying to hurt me and my people.” Said Esther.

“Who is that?!” asked the King, starting to get upset, “I will not allow anyone to hurt my queen!” Tell me who it is!

“It is him it's Haman”, Esther said, pointing to Haman.

“Haman? Oh no Haman, you cannot hurt people! You must go far away from the palace.

The Jewish people of Shushan were so relieved and happy to hear that Haman was sent away and wasn't going to hurt them. They celebrated this by dressing up in costumes, giving delicious food to their friends and giving tzedakah (charity) to poor people.

We celebrate this miracle every year on Purim.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What would be your favorite food to eat if you were at the king's feast? What would you serve the King and Haman at your party if you were Esther?
2. Vashti did not want to come to the king's party. Have you ever said no to a friend who asked you to play? Why did you say no? How did you feel? How do you think the friend felt? Is it okay to say no to a friend? (It all depends on what is happening)
At times, it's OK to say no. Sometimes it is good to say no. Can you think of an example when it is good to say no?
3. It is a king's job to make good rules. Do you think King Achashverosh was a fair King? Why or why not? What would you have said to Haman if you were the king?
4. Haman didn't like the Jews because they were different from him. Do you know people who are different from you? (Different color skin, different religion, look different)
5. Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman. Why? What would you do if you were in his situation?
6. Which character in the story do you like the best? Which character do you like the least? Why?
7. Why are Mordechai and Esther seen as the heroes of the Purim story? Can you think of a time when you were brave? What happened?

PURIM SONGS:

#1 King Achashverosh made a great feast,
He told his wife Vashti to come,
She had many pimples, one hundred at least,
She said, "I can't join in your fun",
The king got so angry he said to his guards,
"Take her! I don't want her, she's mean"
And from all the maidens, that Shushan town had,
Esther became the new queen.
Haman told everyone, bow down to me,
But Mordechai said, "That I'll never do,
I bow only to Hashem, Hashem Elokim
And I'm proud, so proud to be a Jew."

#2 (Tune: If you're happy and you know it.)

1. When you hear the name Queen Esther clap your hand
2. When you hear Achashverosh stamp your feet
3. When you hear Haman we say "Booo!"
4. When you hear Mordechai shout "Hooray"

#3 When the Yom Tov Purim comes, oh how happy I will be.
I'll dress up in some funny clothes and you won't know it's me!
I'll be busy all day long, guess what I will do?
I'll give some Shalach Manos to you, and you, and you too.