

# Purim: The Story of Esther



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## Overview

Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from a plot to exterminate them. The story of Purim is told in the biblical book of Esther. This article provides an engaging overview of the biblical story of Esther, its historical context, and its significance in Jewish culture.

## The Biblical Story of Esther

The story of Purim begins in the Persian Empire during the reign of King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes I). Ahasuerus was known for his lavish parties, and one day he decided to throw a party that would last for 180 days. On the seventh day of the party, Ahasuerus sent for his queen, Vashti, to come and show herself to his guests. However, Vashti refused to come, and this angered Ahasuerus. He banished Vashti from his presence and began looking for a new queen.

Esther was a young Jewish woman who had been taken captive by the Persians. She was chosen to be one of the women who would come before Ahasuerus, and she was eventually chosen to be his new queen. Esther kept her Jewish identity a secret from Ahasuerus, and she also kept it a secret that she had been adopted by her cousin, Mordecai, who was a high-ranking official in the Persian court.

One day, Mordecai overheard two of the king's officials plotting to assassinate Ahasuerus. Mordecai told Esther about the plot, and she told Ahasuerus. The plot was foiled, and Mordecai was rewarded for his loyalty. However, this made Haman, the king's chief minister, angry. Haman was a descendant of the Amalekites, who were enemies of the Jews, and he hated Mordecai because he was a Jew.

Haman convinced Ahasuerus to issue a decree that all of the Jews in the empire should be killed. Mordecai and Esther were horrified when they heard about the decree, and they knew that they had to do something to save their people. Esther decided to go to Ahasuerus and plead for mercy for the Jews. This was a risky move, because it was against the law for anyone to approach the king without being summoned.

However, Esther knew that she had to do something, and she trusted in God to protect her. She went to Ahasuerus and told him about the plot to kill the Jews. Ahasuerus was furious when he heard about the plot, and he ordered Haman to be hanged. Mordecai was given Haman's position, and the decree against the Jews was revoked.

The Jews were overjoyed when they were saved, and they celebrated their deliverance with a feast and a day of rejoicing. This day became known as

Purim, which means "lots," because Haman had cast lots to determine the day on which the Jews would be killed.

## **Historical Context**

The story of Purim is set in the Persian Empire during the reign of King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes I). Ahasuerus ruled from 486 to 465 BCE, and his empire stretched from India to Egypt. The story of Purim reflects the historical context of the time, which was a period of great upheaval and change for the Jewish people.

The Jews had been exiled to Babylon in 586 BCE, and they had only recently been allowed to return to their homeland. They were still a small and vulnerable community, and they were surrounded by hostile enemies. The story of Purim shows how the Jews were able to overcome their enemies and survive.

## **Significance in Jewish Culture**

Purim is one of the most important holidays in the Jewish calendar. It is a time for celebration and rejoicing, and it is also a time for remembering the courage and faith of Esther and Mordecai. The story of Purim teaches us that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope. It also teaches us that we should never give up on our faith, and that we should always stand up for what is right.

Purim is celebrated with a number of traditions, including:

- Reading the Megillah (the book of Esther)
- Eating hamantaschen (triangular pastries filled with fruit or nuts)

- Giving gifts to friends and family
- Dressing up in costumes
- Playing games

Purim is a time for joy and laughter, but it is also a time for reflection. The story of Purim reminds us of the importance of courage, faith, and hope. It also reminds us that we should never take our freedom for granted.

The story of Purim is a powerful and inspiring story that has been told for centuries. It is a story of courage, faith, and hope. It is also a story that reminds us of the importance of standing up for what is right.

Purim is a holiday that is celebrated with joy and laughter, but it is also a holiday that has a deep meaning. The story of Purim reminds us of the importance of courage, faith, and hope. It also reminds us that we should never take our freedoms for granted.



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