



JFS Jewish Journal

Engaging Your Jewish Residents



Purim

Purim: A Celebration of Determination



Purim: Celebrating Jewish Deliverance

Purim is a biblical holiday that originates from The Book of Esther. It commemorates the Jewish people of ancient Persia being saved from the murderous plot of a man named Haman.

The Story of Purim

In 5th century Persia, King Achashverosh sought a beautiful wife. His right-hand man was named Haman. One day, a Jew named Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman, insisting that Jews only bow to G-d. As revenge, Haman picked a random date to kill all the Jews. Meanwhile, Mordechai's niece, Esther, went undercover as a non-Jew and was chosen as the king's new wife. Through prayer and courage, Esther revealed to the king that she was a Jew. The king then stopped Haman from carrying out his plot and made Mordechai his second in command.

JFS is Here & This is How We Help

Jewish Family Services (JFS) enriches lives and strengthens the community by providing compassionate support and resources to individuals and families from all backgrounds. Guided by Jewish values, JFS specializes in supporting older adults' safety and independence, assisting families with resources and guidance, providing private transportation to appointments, offering expert counseling and care management, and more. You can learn more about JFS and our chaplaincy program on *page 6*.



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How to Celebrate Purim with Your Residents

Purim is often compared to Halloween or Mardi Gras due to its festive nature. You can celebrate with your residents by completing the four commandments, singing songs and enjoying crafts!

Complete the Four Commandments

There are four main *mitzvot* (commandments) of celebrating Purim: reading the *Megillah*, giving gift baskets to friends, giving to charity, and eating a grand feast.



Read the *Megillah*:

Reading the *Megillah*, the biblical scroll that tells the Purim story, is an exciting feat that calls for lots of energy and audience participation. When attending a reading of The Book of Esther, it's customary to wear a costume, emulating Esther who disguised her true identity in order to save the Jewish people. The *Megillah* is usually chanted in a special tune in Hebrew, and its 10 chapters are split up within a congregation. Whenever the name of the wicked Haman is said, the reader pauses while the listeners jeer, boo, and shake their *groggers* (noise makers) to drown out his name. [Full English versions of the Megillah are available online](#) and can be printed out for residents to follow along!



Create & Give Gift Baskets:

Hand-crafted gift baskets called *mishloach manot* are handed out to friends and family on Purim. For a fun Purim activity, buy some brown paper bags and various candies and treats and have your residents decorate their own *mishloach manot* to distribute!



Give to Charity:

In Hebrew, *matanot l'evyonim* translates to “gifts for the poor”, or, giving charity. Having residents put a few coins in a piggy bank may help them feel that they're fulfilling this important commandment.



Purim Feast:

Like most Jewish holidays, food and drink are a big part of the Purim celebration. Drinking wine is highly encouraged – but grape juice works just as well! The most common Purim food is a *hamantaschen*, a small, triangular cookie usually filled with jam, poppy seeds, or chocolate. *Hamantaschen* can be found in many grocery stores with Kosher food sections or bakeries, but the real fun comes from filling and shaping them yourself! [There are many great and simple recipes online to try.](#)

Hebrew ...	It is pronounced ...	It means ...
<i>Chag Purim Sameach</i>	Hahg poo-reem sah-mey-ach	Happy Purim!
<i>Megillah</i>	Meh-gi-lah	Biblical scroll
<i>Mishloach Manot</i>	Mee-shlo-ach Mah-note	Gift baskets for friends
<i>Hamentaschen</i>	Hah-men-tosh-in	Triangular Purim cookies
<i>Grogger</i>	Grog-er	A noisemaker

How to Celebrate Purim with Your Residents (cont.)

Sing Songs

Since Purim is a festive holiday, having music really helps set the tone of the day. By playing some of the following songs for your residents, you can help them get into the spirit of the holiday. Musical traditions vary from community to community, so ask them their favorite Purim songs!

 **Chag Purim:**
This song title literally translates to “The Holiday of Purim”; it’s the quintessential Purim song! Folksy and fun, [you can listen to the song here.](#)

 **Mishe Nichnas Adar:**
This song celebrates Adar, the Hebrew month that Purim takes place in. “When Adar begins, our joy increases!” [Click here to play this song and celebrate the month of Adar!](#)

 **Al Hanissim:**
Al HaNissim is a song all about miracles, celebrating the miracle of the Jewish people being saved on Purim. Fun fact – it’s also a popular Hannukkah song! [Check it out by clicking here.](#)

 **Achashverosh:**
This comedy song, a parody of “Rock Me Amadeus” tells the story of the king of the Purim story, Achashverosh. [Listen here for a fun musical time!](#)

Make a Grogger

When reading the Purim *Megillah*, it’s tradition to drown out the name of Haman, the evil henchman, whenever it is mentioned in the text. To do so, we use a *grogger*, a small noisemaker. The word *grogger* is Yiddish, meaning “to rattle.” Traditionally, a *grogger* is made of wood or metal and spins on its handle, but here are two that can be made with common household objects:

Paper Plate Grogger:

Gather these materials:

- 2 paper plates
- A popsicle stick
- Stapler
- Beads, dried beans or pasta, paper clips, or anything that can make noise



Lay one plate flat and put noise making objects on it. Lay the popsicle stick so it’s half on the plate, half hanging off. Place the other plate on top-down on the first, and staple all around the edges. It should look like a giant lollipop. Decorate and shake!

Plastic Cup Grogger:

Gather these materials:

- 2 plastic/paper cups
- Masking tape
- Beads, dried beans or pasta, paper clips, or anything that can make noise



Fill one cup with the noisemaking objects. Place the other cup top-down on the first, like a cocktail mixer, and tape all around the mouths of the cups until they’re securely together. Decorate and shake!

Bubbe's Corner

You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for “grandmother”) for her wisdom, stories and Purim traditions. Whether you are a Bubbe or have a Bubbe figure in your life, spend time learning about Purim celebrations. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!



My favorite *hamantaschen* filling is apricot jam, but I make sure to bake chocolate for my granddaughter.

I recently learned that Esther was thought to be a vegetarian in the palace to remain kosher while not outing herself as a Jew. That's a smart woman!

At our Hebrew school Purim celebration, all the girls would want to dress up as Esther, so would have 10 Esthers and not enough kings or Mordechais to go around!

Did you know The Book of Esther is one of two books that do not include G-d's name?

As a girl, my mom and I would make Purim gift baskets with sweet savory snacks like applesauce, *hamantaschen* and crackers.



About JFS

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY provides counseling, promotes independence, aging well, and access to basic needs, mitigates food insecurity and social isolation.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families from all backgrounds and strengthen the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values. This is amplified by volunteers and sustained by donors to ensure support for our community is within reach.

Our staff has expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
- Offering private transportation to medical appointments and synagogue services
- Counseling and care management (JFS is part of major insurance networks, including Medicare)

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS provides spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term and elder care in the Capital Region.

Online: jfsneny.org/donations

Call: (518) 516-1102

Thank you!

For all Jewish Journals and this year's holiday dates, visit jfsneny.org/chaplaincy-support.



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