

The next celebration on the Jewish calendar is coming up quickly:



which this year is on **MARCH 12TH**.



Purim is perhaps the happiest Jewish holiday. Children in costume, everyone acting silly, and especially, eating those excellent three-cornered hamantaschen.

Purim actually begins on the night of March 11th, when the *Megillah* (The Book of Esther) is read. It tells the story of Purim. It takes place in ancient Persia. We all know in advance who the bad guy is—Haman. So, whenever his name is mentioned, we make all the noise we can with our awesomely loud groggers. (His name is said quite a bit.)



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The actual story of Purim isn't very funny. Why do we dress up, and go to carnivals? More important, why does the Rabbi where wear a wig? Here's a very, very, very short version of why:

The story begins in the city of Shushan, ruled by King Ahasuerus and his beautiful wife Vashti. After a drunken party, the King wanted to show off Vashti, but she refused. So, he had Vashti killed. This left the King without a wife. He arranged for a beauty pageant and chose the most beautiful woman there to be his queen. This was Esther. He didn't know she was a Jew! Meanwhile, one of the King's favorite cronies, Haman, was going about town asking people to bow to him whenever he passed. Esther's cousin, Mordechai, wouldn't do it because, as a Jew, he bowed only to God. Haman was very angry and asked the King for permission to kill all the Jews, including Mordechai. Well, it almost happened! But Esther saved the day by revealing she was Jewish, so instead of Mordechai being killed, Haman was. And rather than the Jews being killed, they were given permission to kill all their enemies, which they did. In other words, it ended up being all backwards from what everyone thought it would be. And despite all the violence, that is one theory of why it is a silly holiday: In honor of the improbability of the entire Jewish population being saved in such a backwards and unexpected way, we get silly-happy and behave in ways that are backwards from normal—especially during the Purim spiel.

The day almost always includes games and sweets and costumes of all kinds. We look forward to seeing all the Vashtis, Queen Esthers, Mordechais and maybe even some Batmen and Moanas on **MARCH 12 AT THE PURIM CARNIVAL** Most important, bring yourselves. But go easy on the hamantaschen.

