**THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM**

Purim is a Jewish holiday recounting the deliverance of the Jewish people from extermination plot by Haman the Agagite. It is an annual celebration held every 14th of Adar, or Adar II in leap years, which is a month in the Hebrew calendar.

**How Purim Is Celebrated**

          Purim is treated more as a national holiday, like Hannukkah. Work is even allowed in most places but it is encouraged that the occasion be prioritized and celebrated in a joyous manner. Jewish *mitzvot* dictate that Jews observe these four activities during Purim:

* ***K'riat megillah*** - listening to the readings of the Book Of Esther in the evening and again in the following morning
* ***Mishloach manot***- giving food gifts to friends
* ***Matanot la'evyonim*** *-* giving charity to the poor
* ***Se`udah*** – partaking in a festive meal

          Since Purim is meant to be a merry occasion, Jews are actually encouraged to be loud and raucous when attending readings of the Book Of Esther in the synagogue. Booing, hissing, stamping of feet and rattling of noisemakers called *gragers* is customary and welcome.

          Traditional Jewish food items prepared include the *hamentaschen* or “Haman's pockets”, which are triangular cookies filled with prunes or poppy seeds said to represent Haman's three-cornered hat. A festive meal is also eaten, often along with heavy drinking.

          Purim is also a day when the Jewish people perform various merry-making activities like plays, pageants and masquerades. Wearing masks and various costumes are popular and some communities even allow cross-dressing, seeing it as in spirit with the jovial theme of the holiday.