

International Day of Study

LEADER'S GUIDE Children Ages 5 to 7

SESSION I – CHILDREN ONLY

(1 hour, 15 minutes)

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be exposed to Purim as a day of disguises and masquerade.
- Students will talk about the role of frivolity in the Purim celebration.
- Students will read a modern story (*midrash*) about Purim as a day of fun.
- Students will create handmade *midrash* illustrating the differences between Purim and all other days.

Activity 1

The Name Game

(15 minutes)

Leader: *Begin with an icebreaker that involves a name game. Participants introduce themselves by saying their names and any word that begins with the first letter of their name (i.e., Zoe: Zebra).*

Leader: How many of you would want to become someone or something else for just one day? Imagine that you could be anyone or anything you wanted to be for one day. Think of what or who you would want to be. You are going to make a mask now of what or who you would want to be.

Activity 2

Who Am I?

(30 minutes)

[See mask-making directions, page 4]

Leader: Now we are going to share our masks with each other. As each of you stands up and puts on your mask, the rest of us will guess what or who you are.

- Why did you choose this character or person?

Activity 3
The Purim Story
(text #1)

Leader: How many of you have ever heard the story of Queen Esther?

Leader: It's a story from the Bible that we read every year on Purim. It has a lot of interesting characters – some are brave, but one is *very* evil. But before we start, I just want to tell you their names, and a little about them. [*Give each character's name – ask the children to repeat it – and ask if someone can tell the group something about him/her; if not, provide a brief description.*]

- Queen Vashti [first wife of Ahashverus]
- King Ahashverus [king of Persia]
- Haman [king's evil top advisor]
- Mordecai [Jewish uncle of Esther]
- Queen Esther [Jewish young woman who wins the pageant to become queen]

Leader: In Hebrew we call the Esther story *Megillat Esther*. We read it every year in the synagogue/temple during the holiday of Purim. While you are listening, think about who you think is a hero in this story.

[*Read aloud A Purim Story*]

Leader: What did you think about this story? Who do you think was brave? Who do you think was evil?

Leader: Now I have another question for you. On Purim, besides going to the synagogue/temple to hear the story of Queen Esther, what else do we do?

Possible answers include:

- make noise when Haman's name is read
- eat *hamantaschen* and other treats
- give out baskets of treats to friends and to poor people
- go to Purim carnivals and play games
- wear costumes

Leader: Do you ever wonder why we act differently on Purim – even silly? We get dressed up in costumes, and play games and eat lots of treats? Why do you think we do that?

Leader: When we want to find information about such things as animals or thunder and lightning, or anything else, where do we look? [*encyclopedia, Internet*]

Leader: When we want to find an answer to a Jewish question, where do you think we look? [Jewish books] Can you name any Jewish books? [Torah, Talmud, *Siddur*]

To find out why Purim is so different from other holidays, we will look in a Jewish story. It is called a *midrash*, which is Hebrew for a special kind of story that answers a question. After we finish reading it, perhaps you can figure out why we get dressed up like Jewish heroes and have so much fun in the synagogue/temple.

Activity 4 **The Angel's Day Off** *(text 2)*

Leader: Read the story and ask the following questions, giving ample time for discussion

- What is a “day off”? Why did Bea want a day off?
- What things do we do on Purim that we don't do on other days?
- Why was Bea upset at the Purim party?
- Was God angry about what happened at the Purim party? Why?

Leader: Now that we have talked about how special a day Purim is, we are going to come together with the grown-ups to share with them some of the things we did today.

Mask-Making Directions *(for Activity 2)*

Suggested Supply List

- white paper plates
- markers
- scissors
- plastic spoons, Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors
- tissue paper
- construction paper
- wiggly eyes (optional)
- feathers
- yarn
- glitter
- sequins
- felt scraps or Fun Foam pieces

Instructions

Decide if you are going to glue on eyes, nose and mouth or cut them out.

- If you are going to cut out the eyes nose and mouth, hold the plate to a child's face and mark where their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cut out the holes where you made the marks

Ask the children to decide what characters they want to be and instruct them to design the plate using the various materials.

Glue the back of the spoon or a stick to the bottom of the plate so the handle sticks out beyond the plate. Wait for the glue to dry.

Using the spoon or Popsicle stick as a handle, have children hold up their masks and let everyone guess who or what they are.

SESSION II – FAMILIES TOGETHER

(45 Minutes)

Leader: It's very exciting having everyone here together today to learn about Purim. Today we read the story of Queen Esther and a *midrash* about how we celebrate Purim.

Activity 1

(15 minutes)

Leader to children: Now you are going to teach the grown-ups about what you learned today. We will tell them about some of the heroes of the story, and why we celebrate Purim the way we do. After that we are going to do a project together.

Direct participants to split into family units; distribute Parent Summary Sheet

Activity 2

Handmade *Midrash*

(30 minutes)

Leader: We have talked about the Purim story and now we are going to work on a special activity called handmade *midrash*. In this project we are going to show what our life is like on Purim, and what it's like on other days. [*directions on separate page*] When you are finished, we will come together again and share them with each other. [*families work on project*]

Leader: Now we are going to share these fabulous and interesting handmade *midrashim* with each another. The members of your family will talk about your piece to the group, and explain it to us.

Closing Circle

with parents and children

Leader: First, I want to compliment all of you on the hard work you did today. Later we are going to work on more Purim projects. One of the projects is masks that we wear to hide who we are, just like Esther hid that she was Jewish.

Leader: There are just a few more questions for the children.

- Do you think it is disrespectful to have yelling and noise-makers in the synagogue/temple?
- Do you think that God approves of our behavior on Purim?

Leader: I hope you all had a good time today, that you learned new things and made something special for celebrating Purim.

It's also very important to remember that *learning can be fun!*

Text #1

A Purim Story

The children were restless: they scowled at the snow;
They whined and they quarreled and wished it would go;
“It’s been ever so long since we last built a sukkah,
And it’s almost a year until next Hanukkah.
Tu B’Shvat it was hard to plant trees in the ice!
Now if Pesah came sooner, that would be nice...”

Then in walked their father; he listened and said,
“Purim is coming, so why don’t you get
Your costumes and groggers, ‘cause soon we’ll
fulfill a
Mitzvah when all of us hear the megillah.

“The story took place a long time ago,
We read it each year, so that each Jew will know.
In a country called Persia—now known as Iran,
A queen wouldn’t appear and the trouble began...”

“You see, King Achashverosh (can you say his name?)
Gave a big dinner party; the whole kingdom came
From all of the provinces where the King reigned,
To his palace in Shushan, and there they remained.
And after they’d feasted on good food and wine,
The King, very pleased, said, ‘This party is fine.
I’ll summon Queen Vashti to put on a show.’
But when Vashti was called, her answer was ‘No!’

“She refused to show up and be seen by the guests.
The angry King roared, ‘She refused my request!’
His advisers advised, ‘Put an end to her life.
We’ll find you a Queen who will be a good wife.
We’ll gather the loveliest girls ever seen,
And you shall decide who will be the next Queen.’

“In Shushan lived Mordechai, good Jewish man,
Whose cousin Hadassah was prettier than
All of the others; and when the King saw her,
There was hardly a thing he wouldn’t do for her.

They called her Queen Esther; the kingdom rejoiced;
And King Achashverosh was pleased with his choice.

But Esther kept secret that she was a Jew.
For that was what Mordechai told her to do.
One day, Mordechai, sitting by the King’s gate,
Overheard two men plotting to assassinate

Achashverosh. He told Esther, ‘Go warn the King!’
So the two villains failed to accomplish a thing.
And in the King’s books, these events were recorded.
Although Mordechai was never rewarded.

“Now trouble arose for the Jews of Shushan:
The King’s wicked minister, known as Haman,
Ordered that each man bow down to the ground,
And glorify Haman when he was around.

“But Mordechai would not bow down to Haman.
‘Jews worship no man, only God, Who is One.’
Furious, Haman cried, ‘Since he refused,
I’ll tell Achashverosh to kill all the Jews!
I will first choose a day for the deed to be done,
By throwing a pur,’ said the evil Haman.

“(He used to throw pur – just like dice in a game;
And that is how Purim acquired its name.)
‘The day that comes up is the date we will use
To kill Mordechai and the rest of the Jews.’
So he went to the King; Achashverosh agreed;
The thirteenth of Adar was the day they decreed.

“All the Jews would be killed – every one in Iran.
Mordechai tore his clothes when he learned of the plan.
And in sackcloth and ashes, sat by the King’s gate,
To warn his good cousin, the Queen, of their fate.
Perturbed and distressed, good Queen Esther
then said,
‘I must help them out, though I might wind up dead.’

“(For though she was Queen, Esther never forgot,
That she was a Jew, and their pur was her lot.)
‘Tell the Jews,’ said Queen Esther, ‘not to eat – not a thing! –
For three days and three nights, then I’ll plead with the King.’

“Meanwhile, one night, when the King could not sleep,
He asked for the history books that kings keep.
He read there how Mordechai warned of a plot,
Had he been rewarded? Oh, no! He had not!
So the King asked himself, ‘Now what should we do
To honor a man who’s so loyal and true?’

“At that very moment, someone knocked at the door.
‘Twas none other than Haman who’d come to ask for
The King’s royal permission to hang Mordechai
High on a gallows that reached toward the sky.
But first the King asked him, ‘What would you do
To honor a man who’s been loyal and true?’
Not having heard what had been said before,
Haman thought it was he whom the honors were for.

“‘Let him wear the King’s robes! Ride his horse!
Wear his crown!
Have a servant announce as he’s led through the town,
“The King’s friends are honored in this special way!”’
Achashverosh agreed, ‘We’ll do as you say
For the Jew Mordechai who sits at my gate!’
Haman burned up with rage, for his envy was great.

“Then Esther made feasts for Haman and the King;
Achashverosh was pleased, and said ‘most anything
That she asked would be granted. So Esther’s request was
That her life be spared and the lives of the rest of
The Jews in the kingdom. The King was dismayed
When he realized what terrible plans he’d okayed.

“Enraged, the King left, but returned to the scene,
And thought he saw Haman attacking the Queen!
Thus all Haman’s schemes were disrupted that day,
As the royal guards grabbed him and dragged him away.
To the very same gallows which he had constructed
To hang Mordechai, he himself was conducted.
“‘Mordechai,’ said the King, ‘you have my consent;
Inform all your people that they may defend
Themselves from their enemies. Here, take my ring.
They’ll know that these orders came straight from the King.’

“And the King, realizing that no one was wiser,
Made Mordechai act as his Royal Adviser.
‘On Adar the thirteenth, let the Jews take up swords
And kill all their foes, be they peasants or lords.’
In Shushan the Jews received extra permission
To fight on Adar the fourteenth in addition.

“Soon it was over, the fighting all through;
Haman’s ten evil sons were killed and hanged too.
With feasting and gladness, the Jews celebrated;
Thus was the holiday Purim created.

“Ever since then, the fourteenth of Adar
Is a day of rejoicing for Jews near and far;
But Adar the fifteenth is when Purim falls
In Jerusalem, Shushan and cities with walls.

“To celebrate Purim, four *mitzvos* we do:
The *megillah* we read (or we hear) two times through;
We enjoy a great feast, and everyone sends
Tzedakah to the poor, gifts of good to our friends.

“And that my dear children, is how this book ends.”

by Linda Davis www.sefarimsale.com

THE ANGEL'S DAY OFF

One day, as Purim was approaching, God saw a 7-year-old angel named Bea moping around. When God asked her what was wrong, Bea sighed and said, "Oh, I just need a day off from being an angel. Please God, can I have just one day off so I can have some fun?"

God thought about it and replied: "Bea, *Shabbat* is a day off. I made it especially as a day of rest." Bea didn't look happy. God said, "Look, today is already Thursday. In two days you will have your day off." Bea shouted back, "That's a day of rest, it's *not a day off!* A day off is when people do something fun."

God said: "Bea, you're an angel. You're one of my special helpers. That's your job, and you have a day of rest on *Shabbat* like all of the other angels."

Angrily Bea answered, "Well, I am not so happy with my job and I don't want a day of rest. I want a day *off!*" She started to cry. That night, Bea was too upset to sleep. God heard her tossing around in her bed and began to think about how He could make her feel better.

The next morning, God said to the very sleepy little angel: "All right Bea. I have a plan. I am sending you to a place where there are human beings who are being very loud and acting silly. It's called a synagogue (temple), and children are there playing games and making a terrible racket."

Bea was indignant. "The synagogue (temple) is where people go to pray to You, and children go to Hebrew school. That's like they're making fun of You! Why would they act like that?" God answered: "Listen, Bea. You don't have much time. Your job is to go see what's going on down there, and have a day off, all at the same time."

Bea was ecstatic and sure the job would be easy. *And* she was going to have her day off! God said goodbye and reminded Bea that the humans would see her as an angel. But Bea was so excited she didn't hear what God said.

When Bea reached her destination, she was surprised to find herself surrounded by monsters, heroes, animals, characters, and creatures. She was trying to figure out where she was, when suddenly something bumped into her, knocking her to the floor. It was Superman.

Superman said to Bea: "Hey, sorry about that. I was just trying out my flying act. I guess it needs work." Bea got up from the floor, dusting off her wings, and asked: "Who are you?" Superman said: "Tonight I'm Superman, but usually I'm Charlie. Hey, excellent angel costume! *Who* are you?"

Bea thought to herself, "Angel costume? I really *am* an angel!" By the time Bea could answer Charlie, he had walked (or perhaps flown) away. She ran after him. "Charlie," Bea said. "I'm Bea. And why are you wearing that funny outfit?" Charlie looked at her as if she had come from another planet. (I guess she did). "It's a Purim party. You can be whatever you want. Isn't that why you're dressed up in that cool angel costume?" He flexed his arms: "Don't I have great muscles?" Charlie was off again.

Bea was still confused, not knowing anything about Purim parties. She turned around and knocked into a big green monster. She jumped three feet into the air. The monster said: "Sorry. I didn't see you there! I'm Marty. Wow, nice angel costume." In a shy voice Bea said: "Thanks. My name is Bea. What is your costume?"

He answered: "I'm the Incredible Hulk. I want to be strong just like him."

Soon Marty and Bea were playing games, bobbing for apples, eating candy, and playing a funny game called Twister. She also ate three soft pretzels and two hot dogs and drank a glass of a bright red fruity drink they called Bug Juice. She listened to an exciting story about a queen who saved her people from an evil man named *Haman* and got to make a lot of noise with a wooden rattle every time they said his name. She didn't really understand it all, but Bea was very happy. She said to herself: "God was just teasing me about having a job to do here. This is my day off that God has given me. *I love it!*"

Everyone at the party gathered together to listen to a man on a stage who was dressed as a pirate. Everyone was laughing. Bea began to think that they were having way too much fun in the synagogue (temple) and that they all seemed to be making fun of Purim. And they were dressed up as people in the Bible like the good Queen Esther and the wicked Haman. "Are they making fun of God, too?" she asked herself.

Bea began to get very angry. She found Charlie and asked him what was going on. He just kept laughing and shaking a noisemaker that was beginning to irritate her. Bea looked for Marty and asked him what was going on. Marty said, "Chill, Bea, we're just having fun. It's Purim. We're supposed to have fun and make jokes. Join in!"

A light went on in Bea's head. "God did send me here for a reason," she thought. "I'm supposed to stop these people from making jokes in the synagogue (temple)!" In a flash, Bea ran up onto the stage and shouted into the noisy room: "This synagogue (temple) is a holy place. It's where we come to worship God. God does things no one else can do. We must respect God!" But everyone kept laughing and making noise. Bea was furious! Why couldn't she make these people understand that God is wonderful and not something to joke about? She was so angry that she left the party without even saying goodbye to her new friends.

When Bea got home, God asked about her day off. She moaned: "That was such a *terrible* experience. At first it was great. But then it got awful. I did love the party and playing games. I ate lots of food and danced. I really thought You were giving me a wonderful day off. But then, there was this pirate on stage making fun of everything. And they were so disrespectful! I was so angry. I tried to tell everyone, but nobody listened to me! I couldn't stop them. I'm soooooo sorry." Bea just wailed and wailed.

God waited for Bea to get it all out and then said, "Let me explain something to you, Bea. You asked me for a day off because you wanted to have fun, to play and to pretend. So I sent you to the best place I could think of – a Purim party."

"A Purim party." Bea sighed. "Everyone kept saying it was Purim, but nobody told me what it was. We just heard a story about a queen who saved her people from an evil guy named Haman. But I still don't understand why everybody is dressed up in costumes *in the synagogue (temple)?*"

God explained that Purim is when Jews all over the world tell the story of Esther and celebrate a great victory for the Jewish people. Jews want to celebrate *their* Jewish heroes – like Queen Esther and Mordecai. They have fun, they eat and drink and make a lot of noise to show how happy they are every year at this time.

Bea asked God, “But don’t You get angry when You see people being disrespectful in the synagogue (temple), wearing Superman outfits and playing games? Doesn’t it bother you that on Purim Jews seem to act crazy?”

God replied: “Normally I would be hurt, but not on Purim. Purim is a different kind of day. It’s like a day off for Jews from thinking and acting seriously about Me. And it’s a day that children can dress up like *their* superheroes. After all, everyone needs one day when they can just have fun.”

“Wow, God,” Bea exclaimed. “That’s amazing!”

“Well, Bea, I am glad you discovered something new,” God said.

Bea resounded: “I also discovered something about myself.” She told God that she realized how much she like being an angel and helping God.

God seemed pleased.

Then she added: “Maybe You could send me to a Hanukkah ski party next year?”

God looked at Bea and said, “Don’t push it. You already have wings. I’m not ready to give you legs and feet!”

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PARENT SUMMARY SHEET

1. We made masks of the characters we would most like to be for a day. Can you guess who I am?
2. We read the Purim story together and talked about:
 - who was brave in the story
 - who was evil in the story
3. We discussed the things we do on Purim including:
 - going to synagogue
 - listening to the story of Purim and making a lot of noise
 - giving baskets of treats to friends/family
4. We read a *midrash* (story) called *The Angel's Day Off* to answer the question: Why and how do we act differently on Purim?

Use the chart below to discuss how Purim is different from other days.

Things we do on Purim	Things we do every day

Handmade Midrash

(30 minutes)

Materials

- 1 sheet of 8 ½ x 11” (or larger) sheets of white construction paper @ family
- glue sticks
- colored construction paper
- assorted decorative paper: tissue, magazines, gift wrap (this can be scraps)

In this activity you will create your own handmade *midrash*. What is handmade *midrash*?

The word *midrash* refers to the way the rabbis of long ago looked for meanings in Bible stories that were not necessarily part of the story. For example:

- The Bible doesn't tell us how Adam and Eve *felt* when they were sent out of the Garden of Eden.
- The Bible doesn't tell us how Joseph *felt* when his brothers threw him into the pit and stole his coat of many colors.

It was up to the rabbis to imagine their thoughts and feelings, and then explain them in new stories that they called *midrash*.

Handmade *midrash* is a way of creating our own ideas about stories in the Bible. But rather than speaking or writing about *how* Adam and Eve were sad or terrified, we show it through creative images using colors and shapes to express these feelings.

That's why with handmade *midrash* there is no right or wrong image, no good or bad image, no badly or beautifully created image. But unlike art where we paint or draw images that approximate a real face or thing, handmade *midrash* uses torn pieces of paper to create feelings and ideas.

You and your mother/grandmother are going to create your own handmade *midrash* to answer questions about Purim. It only has to have meaning for you. You will explain it to others.

1. Decide which of these questions you want to respond to or answer:

- What is my life like on days other than Purim?
- What is my life like on Purim?

2. Choose colored papers and decorative papers and rip them into the shapes that you want to use. As you select and tear the different colors, kinds and shapes of paper, ask yourself:

- What do the shapes mean?
- Why did I use these colors?
- What does this mean to me?

3. Arrange the ripped papers on the white construction paper in a pattern/design/image that answers the question, for you. Glue them down.

A Sample Handmade *Midrash*

Noah was the only righteous man in his generation (Genesis 6:9)

The question I wanted to answer is: What does it mean that Noah was the only righteous man in his generation?

Explanation of my handmade *midrash*

My image has three different parts to it.

- The bottom third is the ark that Noah built.
- The top half of the page is divided into two parts with a dividing line. On the right side is an image of a lone character, Noah, black with a white beard. The only other images on his side are a sea creature that would have survived the flood, and the dove that Noah later sent out of the ark after the rains stopped.
- On the left side of the page are many shapes, the people destroyed by the flood. There are several images on the left side of the ark, trying to climb on board. On the top is a large black cloud, that looks like it is gobbling up one of the images.

I chose black and white for this midrash, because it seemed to represent the world divided into good and evil. The form of Noah is the only one with a human shape, the rest are formless. It is as if God did not think of them as human creatures.

