

## Purim Curriculum Guide

### Background

The holiday of Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of the month of Adar. Purim commemorates the day the Jewish people were saved from annihilation, planned and decreed by Haman (around the 5th century BCE in ancient Persia), as described in the biblical Book of Esther. There are some places, such as the city of Jerusalem, where the holiday is celebrated on the next day, the 15th day of Adar, which is called **Shushan Purim**.

A note about the month of Adar: 7 out of every 19 years, the Jewish year is adjusted to ensure that Pesach (Passover) will always fall in the spring. These adjusted years are commonly known as “Leap Years”. In a Jewish Leap Year, there are 13 months instead of 12, and the additional month is a second month of Adar. When there are two Adars, Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of the **second** Adar (“Adar Bet”). The 14th day of the first Adar (“Adar Aleph”) is known as “Purim Katan” (the small Purim).

Taa'nit Esther, The Fast of Esther, is usually observed on the day before Purim (13 Adar). If the 13th falls on Shabbat, the fast is moved earlier, to Thursday (11 Adar).

Below, you'll find ten themes that are associated with the holiday of Purim. Each topic is the subject of a clue in ***HolidayQuest: A Megillah Mystery***.

### V'Nahafoch Hu

One of the central themes of the Purim story is ונהפוך הוא - V'Nahafoch Hu - things get turned around. Just when you think the story is going one way, it “turns around” and goes the opposite way.

One moment it looks like the evil Haman is going to be victorious, and then (spoiler alert!) suddenly he meets his downfall. Just when it seems that the Jews are going to be destroyed, Mordechai and Esther save the day!

This theme has become central to the day, with people going out of their way to do things differently than usual on Purim. This may be one of the reasons for dressing in costume for Purim.

### Costumes

While it's not clear exactly when and where the custom of wearing a costume on Purim originated, many people, young and old alike, dress as somebody else on Purim.

It's been suggested that a possible reason for wearing costumes on Purim has to do with the series of hidden miracles and the hidden identities involved in the story. Esther concealed her Jewish identity for much of the Megillah. Mordechai's identity as the one who saved the king's life also remained hidden from the king until just the right time. Hashem (G-d), too, is hidden, as His name is not mentioned in the