

Fascinating Facts in Jewish History...It's all about Purim!

In the year 356 BC in the month of Adar Haman launched his plot to kill the Jews. Being a large empire, getting the word out and getting everyone together took time. The actual day of annihilation was scheduled for the 13th of Adar the next year. Within weeks word of the impending disaster got out. Mordechai reached out to Esther. Esther invited Achashverosh and Haman to the two famous meals on the 15th and sixteenth of Nissan. At the second meal Haman was denounced and hanged. Mordechai was promoted to prominence, and everything seems good for the Jews. But the story does not end there. The problem was that even with Haman removed, his order to kill the Jews 11 months hence was still in effect. Esther begged to have the decree rescinded. Achashverosh, who secretly hated Jews, politely reminded her that by law he was unable to rescind the first decree. Finally, two months later on the 23rd of Sivan Esther coaxed out of Achashverosh an order allowing the Jews to defend themselves on the upcoming Adar 13. The Jews had to be happy with that, but no one knew how 13 Adar would play out.

When the 13th of Adar 355 BC arrived, the Jews were ready. They fasted and arose to defend themselves. Due to the new political reality of Mordechai's promotion the general populace did not rise up against the Jews. The Jews for their part were not going to miss their opportunity. Throughout the empire they sought out and slaughtered 75,000 committed Amalekites on that day. In Shushan the fighting lasted two days and 800 Amalekites were killed. Also killed and then hung were the notorious 10 sons of Haman.

Therefore, we annually observe the 13th of Adar as a day of fasting and repentance as it was a day of battle against our enemies. We then observe the 14th of Adar as a day of celebration for our victory on the previous day. Walled cities like Jerusalem remember the events in Shushan where the fighting lasted two days and celebrate on the 15th of Adar.