

Adar is Coming --- Let's Usher in a Spring of Peace and Joy!

With the start of the Hebrew month of Adar we start the countdown to Spring. The frosty chill of Winter starts to recede, the days grow noticeably longer, and this year, since the first day of Rosh Chodesh Adar is the evening of February 14, it also ushers in a time of enhanced romance! Thus it is taught, *mi-shenikhnas Adar marbim b'simchah*, "*With the start of the month of Adar our happiness is greatly increased.*"

The highlight of Adar is the joyous celebration of Purim. On Purim we read Megillat Esther and recall how the Jewish community of ancient Persia was saved by a remarkable young woman. On the surface, Esther was the most unlikely of heroines.

Like all the Jews of Persia, she was a descendant of the exiles of Judea after its destruction by the Babylonians. Her parents died when she was a child and she was raised by her cousin Mordechai. It was not easy being a Jew in Persia's capital of Shushan. Indeed, Mordechai advised her to conceal the fact that she was a Jew. She shuddered in fear as she witnessed firsthand the evil planned by the vicious anti-Semitism of Haman. But with God's help, Esther and Mordechai heroically saved our people.

The number of Anti-Semitic acts committed in 2017 in the United States has more than doubled compared to the already escalating rate in 2015. The perpetrators of hatred are found on both the extreme left and right. Many are using the camouflage of "simply" being anti-Israel to justify attacking Jews in this country and around the world. Some don the cloak of pseudo-intellectualism; others bluntly wear the colors of neo-Nazis. They all have a common goal: the elimination of Israel and the destruction of Judaism. But we have faced bullies and tyrants before. We know that the best defenses are preparedness, awareness, and our irrepressible spirit --- our love of life.

Purim comes to chase away the darkness. It comes to thaw the oppressive cold. It comes to warm our hearts with the joy and laughter that comes from the knowledge that in every age we have found a way not only to survive but to thrive.

So be sure to join us for this year's Purim celebrations and add your spirit to the strengthening of our people and our faith. This year's Purim begins on Wednesday, February 28 with a traditional service and the reading of Megillat Esther at 6pm. Immediately afterwards (7:00P) we'll join in the Zwerin sanctuary with hundreds of our Religious School students to share in a fun shpiel and to sing the songs of Purim and freedom. Dress up, bring a noise maker, and let's usher in a Spring of Peace and Joy!

T'hiyeh Adar l'hakhnis simchah, May the coming month of Adar bring increased joy to you, your loved ones and to all the world!

B'vrakhah,
Rick
Rabbi Rick Rheins