Dear Youth Directors, Youth chairs, and Youth Leaders,

**NCYI is excited to continue our very successful Parsha Nation Guides.** I hope you’re enjoying and learning from Parsha Nation as much as we are. Putting together Parsha Nation every week is indeed no easy task. It takes a lot of time and effort to ensure that each section, as well as each age group, receives the attention and dedication it deserves.

**We inspire and mold future leaders.** The youth leaders of Young Israel have the distinct honor and privilege to teach and develop the youth of Young Israel. Children today are constantly looking for role models and inspirations to latch on to and learn from. Whether it is actual sit down learning sessions, exciting Parsha trivia games, or even just walking down the hall to the Kiddush room, our youth look to us and watch our every move.

**It’s not always about the things we say, it’s about the things we do.** Our children hear and see everything we do whether we realize it or not. This year we are taking our Youth Services to new heights as we introduce our Leadership Training Shabbaton. This engaging, interactive shabbaton will give youth leader’s hands on experience and practical solutions to effectively guide your youth department.

**Informal education is key.** What the summer shows us as educators is that informal education can deliver better results and help increase our youth’s connection to Hashem. More and more shuls are revamping their youth program to give their children a better connection to shul and to Hashem. The NCYI is here to help you reconnect with your youth departments and bring more participation.

**Thank you for being a light to future generations.** You are doing incredible work that should not be taken lightly. You should be proud to call yourself a Young Israel Youth Leader as you have the unique opportunity to make a real difference in so many young people’s lives. Keep up the amazing work.

We are looking forward to hearing great things from everyone.

Our doors are always open.

**NCYI Department of Synagogue Services**

*Youth@YoungIsrael.org*
Program Guide Breakdown

Theme- Each year our curriculum will focus on a theme. By centering the entire year on one overarching theme, our youth group participants will understand different characteristics and concepts that will help them achieve this lofty goal. This year’s theme is Manhigut (leadership). Our goal is for our children to view themselves as leaders and to inspire them to play a leadership role every day.

Purim Review- Each week group leaders will have the opportunity to roundup the parsha in two or three paragraphs. By giving over the parsha in a short and simple way, group participants will be able to grasp the parsha as a whole and to get them to think globally and conceptually.

Purim Questions- No Shabbat morning group is complete without a list of parsha questions. These questions allow group participants the opportunity to win fun prizes while increasing their Torah knowledge. Questions vary from basic understanding of story line to challenging source-based material. The answers are provided as well.

Tefillah Treasure- Many youth directors have asked for help when it comes to teaching tefillah to children. This is a problem that not only shuls are dealing with. Schools, camps, and youth organizations are having trouble developing creative ideas to help children understand tefillah. Over the course of the year, this section will highlight one aspect of davening by providing both the Hebrew and English text, and one explanatory idea. The older the age group, the more we delve into the idea. This section is designed to help group participants follow the flow of tefillah while understanding what they are saying.

Group Activity- Now the fun begins! We start off with a GOAL. Each game has a purpose. The youth leaders should familiarize themselves with the goal before implementing the game.

Discussion Portion- After the game is over and the participants are settled down, the youth leaders should facilitate a discussion. The guidelines for this discussion are broken down into easy to use instructions. Youth leaders should review the discussion topics and goals before the start of morning groups.

Story- Each week we will include a story that addresses a modern day concern with lesson taken from that week’s parsha.

Jewish Leader of the Week- In keeping with our theme of Manhigut, every week a different Jewish Leader from modern Jewish history will be highlighted. This will allow group participants to expand their knowledge of history and to learn how they can be a Jewish leader in today’s society.

Teen Minyan Packet- This packet is filled with stories, riddles, points to ponder, and more.

Leader Tip- Each section has some great tips for leaders and how they should conduct that section.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Duration</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Welcome parents and children in to the group room.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-35 min</td>
<td>Davening</td>
<td>Depending on your group size and level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Introduction to Yearly Theme (Manhigut)</td>
<td>Refer to Handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Purim Review</td>
<td>Prep participants for parsha questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Purim Questions</td>
<td>Prizes and awards should also be given out if participants answer correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Understanding the Goal</td>
<td>Leaders should start prepping for Shabbat activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Your choice of two games to play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Follow Up Discussion</td>
<td>Refer to materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Purim Song</td>
<td>This is for younger groups only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Free Game Play</td>
<td>Groups can break for free game play or continue their own programing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Assemble in a circle and have participants read sections of the story out loud.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10 min</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Refer to handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>Jewish Leader of the Week</td>
<td>Refer to handout</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>Tefillah Treasures</td>
<td>Refer to Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Parent Pick up/Dismissal</td>
<td>Parents pick up their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Time:** 2 hours & 40 min of programing!
Megillat Esther is the only book in the Scriptures that never mentions Hashem's name even once. The miracle of Purim is a hidden one, (with the hand of Hashem only revealed through the incredible events). But when you 'read between the lines' you see the Hand of Hashem. There are no coincidences in the story. The story relates the downfall of the vicious anti-semite Haman, a descendent of Amalek, the traditional enemy of the Jews. As Prime Minister of ancient Persia, around 2300 years ago, he sought to murder all the Jews of that land. Events happen such that Haman himself plays a crucial role in the coronation of Queen Esther, after the beheading of former Queen Vashti. No one realizes that Esther is Jewish. Haman who has become a powerful man in the kingdom, is upset that Mordechai does not bow down to him. He succeeds in getting the King to authorize a royal decree to annihilate an unspecified nation he claims is an enemy of the King. Initially, he does not identify the nation so that the King can later claim that he did not know that the decree was against the Jews. Haman casts lots (called PUR) to determine the day this was to happen. Mordechai and Esther lead the Jews in a return to Hashem, through Prayer and Fasting. Esther invites the King and Haman to join her for dinner, and in response to the king's offer of "half my kingdom for your wishes," all she asks is they come again tomorrow to another dinner "and I'll tell you then." (she'll reveal the reason for her invitation). We then find Haman working through the night to construct a gallows upon which to hang Mordechai. At daybreak, he will appear before the King to denounce Mordechai. Unknown to Haman, the King had not slept the night before, suspecting a coup led by Haman. In desperation to get some sleep, he had asked his servants to read from the Royal Chronicles. The Book opens to a long forgotten story of how Mordechai discovered an assassination plot by two royal servants against the King. At the exact moment the King is inquiring whether Mordechai was rewarded for his loyalty, who should appear, but Haman. Before getting a chance to make his request to hang Mordechai, Haman is ordered by the King to parade Mordechai through the capital city in royal garments on a royal horse while proclaiming "This is what is done to the man the King wishes to honor." Immediately afterwards, a crestfallen Haman is whisked to the second Royal dinner, hosted by Esther. At the dinner she reveals to the King that she is Jewish and that Haman is an enemy of the King because he seeks to destroy the Jewish people. The embarrassed and angry King storms out of the room. Haman pleads to Esther for his life. He "somehow" loses his balance and falls on the couch where Esther is reclining, (The Malach (Angel) Gavriel pushed him.) The King comes back at just this moment. He is very upset and blows up. On the spot, Charvona, a royal minister tells the King about the gallows Haman constructed for Mordechai, who saved the King's life. The King orders Haman to be hanged on the gallows intended for Mordechai. The King elevates Mordechai to Haman's recently vacated position. Mordechai issues orders, with the King's permission, allowing the Jews to fight against their enemies. On the thirteenth and fourteenth days of Adar the Jews won tremendous victories and were saved from the threat of total annihilation. Since that time, we celebrate Purim.

**LEADER TIP:** The Purim story is always an exciting one. Try to make it even more exciting by acting it out with accents.
PURIM QUESTIONS

Questions

1. Who was the King in the Purim story?
2. Why was Haman angry at Mordechai?
3. When do we celebrate the holiday of Purim?
4. Who was Queen before Esther and what happened to her?
5. What did Haman want to do to the Jewish people?
6. What is a popular food that we eat on Purim?
7. How many times are we supposed to hear the Megillah and when?
8. What special Tefillah do we say on Purim?
9. What mitzvoth do we have to do on Purim?
10. What does Purim mean?

Answers

1. Achashverosh
2. Because he wouldn’t bow down to him
3. The 14th of Adar
4. Vashti. She was killed because she wouldn’t go to the King’s party
5. Kill them
6. Hamentashen
7. Twice, once at night and once in the morning
8. Al HaNissim
9. Mishloach Manot, Matanot Le’evyonim, Seudah, and Megillah
10. Lottery

LEADER TIP: Don’t just ask questions. Prepare a board game sort of thing and have them answer questions to move ahead spaces.
**PURIM ACTIVITY**

**GOAL:** The kids should understand that just as Hashem saved the Jews in a hidden way, we act “hidden” on Purim by dressing up in costumes.

**ACTIVITY: **

Game #1: Indian Chief
The kids sit in a circle on the floor. One kid leaves the room. Then the kids pick one kid to be the Indian chief or leader. The point of the game is that the Indian chief will start different hand motions (hand clapping, slapping your knees, snapping your fingers, drumming on the ground... etc), which all the kids will do in unison, and the Indian chief will keep switching the motions every so often. The kid who was outside has to try and guess which other kid is the Indian chief and leading the motions. The Indian chief and the kids have to try and make sure that it’s not obvious who the Indian chief is. If the kid picks correctly, then that kid must go outside and a new chief is chosen.

Game #2: Mystery Freeze
One player is secretly chosen by the group leader be the freezer. He can "freeze" any player by winking at him. If that player sees the wink, he must "freeze" very dramatically. The players try to identify the freezer without being "frozen" themselves. If a player thinks he knows who it is, he whispers to the group leader that person's identity. If he is right, he wins. But if he is wrong, he too must “freeze.”

Variation: Play this game the way Indian chief is played, where all the kids know who the “freezer” is, except for one who is waiting outside. When he returns, he must guess the correct “freezer” before all the other kids are frozen.

**DISCUSSION:** Ask the kids why they think we dress up on Purim? What does dressing up symbolize? What happens when we dress up? Do people recognize us? Explain to the kids that most minhagim that we do on holidays, like here with dressing up, come with a reason behind them. Ask them what they think this reason could be. Try to direct the answers to come to a common theme of hidden ness. But why this theme of hidden ness? Ask the kids what things are hidden in the Megilah? Let’s focus on the role of Hashem. Who saved the Jews at Purim? G-d? Where does it say that? Does it say Hashem’s name anywhere in the Megilah? Some commentators say that wherever it says Melech it is referring to Hashem, and that certain acrostics spell out Hashem’s name, but it does not say anywhere clearly that Hashem is involved at all in this story, everything is done in a hidden way.

Ask the kids – if they were living in Shushan at the time of the Purim story and all these terrible things were happening – decrees against the Jews, Haman...etc, how would they feel? Would they feel that Hashem was with them or no?? Later, when things start to go well, would they think these things are Hashem acting, or just coincidences?

Remind the kids about the games we played before. In Indian chief, if you had been watching from the outside, would you have thought someone was directing the game, or that people were falling at random? Sometimes Hashem is nistar and hidden, and it is hard to see that He is really directing everything. Point out the differences between the Murder game and the Indian chief game, compared
to the last drama game. In the murder/Indian chief games not everyone knew who was directing the action, sometimes people didn’t know who the Indian chief or murderer was. But in the drama game, it was obvious that the “directors” in the audience were controlling the people on stage. Sometimes when you look at the world you think everything is coincidence, but Jews know that sometimes Hashem works in an obvious way, sometimes in a hidden way. Ask the kids why they think Hashem would work in a hidden way? You could point out how in times of Galut, there is hester panim and Hashem’s actions are hidden. But in times of geulah, we have clear hashgacha from Hashem and it is clear that He is in charge.

**LEADER TIP:** What can you do to make other people happy and constantly smiling?
P is for Purim **to the tune of C is for Cookie from Sesame Street**

P is for Purim, a happy holiday (3x), oh, Purim is a happy holiday!
Let's celebrate Purim, hip hip hooray (3x), oh, Purim is a happy holiday!
Let's make lots of noise when we hear Haman's name (boo!) (3x), oh, Purim is a happy holiday!
Let's give a big cheer when we hear Esther's name (yay!) (3x), oh, Purim is a happy holiday!

Hamentaschen, You're the One **to the tune of Rubber Ducky from Sesame Street**

Hamentaschen, you're the one, you make Purim loads of fun!
...Hamentaschen, I'm awfully fond of you, doo doo be doo
Hamentaschen, you're so sweet, you have a taste that's hard to beat!...
Hamentaschen, you're the best, when it's not Purim, I'm so depressed!...

When You Hear the Name **to the tune of If You're Happy and You Know It**

When you hear the name of Haman, stomp your feet (stomp twice) (2x)
When you hear the name of Haman (3x), stomp your feet (stomp twice)
When you hear the name of Esther, twirl around (twirl)...
When you hear Ahashverosh, clap your hands (clap twice)...
When you hear Mordechai, shout hooray (hooray!)...
If you're happy that it's Purim, give a shout (wa-hoo!)...

We'll be Celebrating Purim When it Comes **to the tune of She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain**

We'll be celebrating Purim when it comes (2x); we'll be celebrating Purim (3x) when it comes!
We'll be baking hamentaschen when it comes...
We'll be dressing up in costumes when it comes...
We will shake, shake, shake our goggers when it comes...
Before you read: Purim is a holiday of happiness when we celebrate God's great Purim miracles. What seemed like a desperate and hopeless situation for our people, God turned into a great triumph. God is very happy when we are happy on Purim - and everyday. But it's not always easy to be happy. One big way to increase our happiness is to learn to be 'happy with our lot.' That means to accept and like ourselves for who we are, even the parts of ourselves and of our lives that seem less than ideal.

Sue Silvers stood in front of the mirror wetting and brushing down her hair for about the thousandth time. But as stubborn as she was to brush it out straight, her naturally curly hair was even more stubborn and would spring back up again like a jack-in-the-box.

"I can't s-t-a-n-d it!" she cried out to her mother sitting at her desk in the next room. "My hair is so...ughh!...Why can't it just be nice, straight and beautiful like my friend Laurie's, instead of this dumb, curly mop?" She slammed down the brush and walked into her mother's office. "Mom, this curly hair of mine is making me miserable..."

Mrs. Silvers knew what was coming next. Ever since 'Hair Today' the new high-end hair-care emporium in town had advertised permanent hair straightening, Sue had been begging, pleading, nagging and cajoling her to let her get the very expensive treatment.

"Can't I just go get it straightened today? I called them and they said they had an opening. It would make me sooo happy!"

"Look Sue," her mom sighed. "I happen to think your hair looks great the way it is. Obviously you don't, so I suppose you can go get it straightened..." She opened her wallet and took out what seemed like way too much money to pay any hairdresser.

"Thanks sooo much, Mom! You're the Best!!!" Sue squealed as she pocketed the cash.

"But," her mother went on. "If you think making your hair different - or anything else about you different - is going to make you happy, think again. Because a person's only happy when he can be happy with who he already is."

Yeah, Sue thought, people with nice straight hair, like Laurie - they can be happy who they already are. Not people like me.

"Sure Mom, I'm off to 'Hair Today.' See you!"

As she sat in the chic, spotlight and mirror-filled waiting room, Sue, who was next in line, couldn't believe that in just a few short moments, she would be going in to get her hair straightened and finally get to be like Laurie and all those other happy straight-haired kids.

Suddenly the frosted-glass door to the inner salon swung open and a curly-haired girl about her age who had just had her hair done walked out.

"Who's next?" cheerfully called out a woman dressed like a combination between an artist and a surgeon.
Sue was about to jump up and take her flight to hair-happiness, when something strange caught her eye. The girl who’d been in before her looked oddly familiar. Why, except for all those curls, the kid looked just like...could it be... "LAURIE? Is that you?" Sue called out.

"Oh, hi Sue!" the girl beamed. "I was going to call you anyway, but now you can be the first one to see my new look."

"But ... but..." Sue stammered as the girl went on.

"Finally I got to give my limpo hair a little bit of life - like yours - instead of those miserable stringy strands that I had. It cost a bomb to get this hi-tech hair curling treatment, but it's worth it to be happy, no?" Sue was stunned.

"To be happy? ...Um, yeah," she murmured.

"So why are you here?" Laurie went on.

"Me ... um..." Sue didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Here she was about to try to make herself happier by looking like Laurie and Laurie had just tried to make herself happier by looking like her! Her mom was right. Happiness wasn't about changing hairstyles or changing anything at all. Suddenly the whole idea sounded silly...

"Who ... is ... next?" the hairdresser repeated, this time a little less cheerfully.

"Oh, I think she is," Sue said, pointing to the woman who'd come in after her, who was thrilled at the chance to move ahead in line.
"Come on, Laurie, I'll walk you home. I was thinking of getting my hair treated, but I think I already just got the exact treatment I need."

Discussion Questions:
Q. How did Sue feel at first about getting her hair straightened?
A. She felt it would make her happy.
Q. How did she feel in the end?
A. She realized that she didn't need to change the way she looked to be happy, she just could be happy with who she was already.

**LEADER TIP:** Make sure you’re happy on Purim and every day for that matter! You can even sing the popular song “Happy” with the kids!
JEWISH LEADER OF
THE WEEK

Queen Esther

The Midrash tells us that in the future all the Jewish holidays will be nullified except for Purim. The Talmud says that although the final redemption will be even more miraculous than the Exodus from Egypt, the miracle of Purim -- which basically revolved around the personalities of Mordechai and Esther -- will never be forgotten. It was the unique courage and boldness of Mordechai and Esther together that make them the stars of the beautiful story we read in the Megillah. Since all of us are going through hard times today and there isn't a person who isn't struggling, a little insight into the characteristics of Mordechai and Esther might be a great help to us in our times of tribulation.

Esther had perfect self-control. The ability to be queen over herself is what made her queen over the world.

Self-control stems from the powers of the soul, which all of us possess. The Talmud tells us that a person's greatness or inferiority is recognizable when he gets angry. The logical person does not lose control of himself. It's like a pressure cooker that has a little hole on the top to release the pressure. If you didn't have that little hole, the pot would explode. One should not bottle up his emotions, because that will cause mental anguish. However, although you have to speak, your tone of voice and how you say things make the difference.

Building a successful life requires self-control and knowing how and when to speak. We sometimes lose control of ourselves and out of anger, say things that we later regret. Many times the regret does not rectify the damage that was done.

Let us learn the lesson of self-control and silence from the queen whose name was Hadassah and Esther. Hadassah, the one who suffers, was Esther, the hidden one, who kept silent about her ancestry for nine years in order to redeem the Jewish people.

LEADER TIP: We all go through hard times, but how do we deal with it? Do we fall or fight through them?
Purim is one of the greatest miracles to ever happen to the Jewish people. We would think that we should give the greatest praise to Hashem and say a meaningful energetic Hallel. That being said, we don’t say Hallel on Purim. Why is that the case that we don’t say Hallel on Purim?

The Gemara in Megillah gives a few different answers.

1. Hallel isn’t said over miracles that happen outside of Israel once Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim and entered Eretz Yisrael.
2. Reading the Megillah is in the place of saying Hallel on Purim. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner explains that we read the "hidden Hallel" of the book of Esther for the "hidden miracle" that is Purim. The Meiri, based on this answer, says that if you're stuck without a Megillah, you should go ahead and say Hallel, but generally we don't follow this Meiri.
3. The Jewish people being saved on Purim was only partial, since they remained under the rule of Achashverosh.

LEADER TIP: While we don’t say Hallel, Purim is still an extremely exciting holiday that we should be praising and singing to Hashem.
Megillat Esther is the only book in the Scriptures that never mentions Hashem's name even once. The miracle of Purim is a hidden one, (with the hand of Hashem only revealed through the incredible events). But when you 'read between the lines' you see the Hand of Hashem. There are no coincidences in the story. The story relates the downfall of the vicious anti-semitic Haman, a descendent of Amalek, the traditional enemy of the Jews. As Prime Minister of ancient Persia, around 2300 years ago, he sought to murder all the Jews of that land. Events happen such that Haman himself plays a crucial role in the coronation of Queen Esther, after the beheading of former Queen Vashti. No one realizes that Esther is Jewish. Haman has become a powerful man in the kingdom, is upset that Mordechai does not bow down to him. He succeeds in getting the King to authorize a royal decree to annihilate an unspecified nation he claims is an enemy of the King. Initially, he does not identify the nation so that the King can later claim that he did not know that the decree was against the Jews. Haman casts lots (called PUR) to determine the day this was to happen. Mordechai and Esther lead the Jews in a return to Hashem, through Prayer and Fasting. Esther invites the King and Haman to join her for dinner, and in response to the king's offer of "half my kingdom for your wishes," all she asks is they come again tomorrow to another dinner "and I'll tell you then." (she'll reveal the reason for her invitation). We then find Haman working through the night to construct a gallows upon which to hang Mordechai. At daybreak, he will appear before the King to denounce Mordechai. Unknown to Haman, the King had not slept the night before, suspecting a coup led by Haman. In desperation to get some sleep, he had asked his servants to read from the Royal Chronicles. The Book opens to a long forgotten story of how Mordechai discovered an assassination plot by two royal servants against the King. At the exact moment the King is inquiring whether Mordechai was rewarded for his loyalty, who should appear, but Haman. Before getting a chance to make his request to hang Mordechai, Haman is ordered by the King to parade Mordechai through the capital city in royal garments on a royal horse while proclaiming "This is what is done to the man the King wishes to honor." Immediately afterwards, a crestfallen Haman is whisked to the second Royal dinner, hosted by Esther. At the dinner she reveals to the King that she is Jewish and that Haman is an enemy of the King because he seeks to destroy the Jewish people. The embarrassed and angry King storms out of the room. Haman pleads to Esther for his life. He "somehow" loses his balance and falls on the couch where Esther is reclining. (The Malach (Angel) Gavriel pushed him.) The King comes back at just this moment. He is very upset and blows up. On the spot, Charvona, a royal minister tells the King about the gallows Haman constructed for Mordechai, who saved the King's life. The King orders Haman to be hanged on the gallows intended for Mordechai. The King elevates Mordechai to Haman's recently vacated position. Mordechai issues orders, with the King's permission, allowing the Jews to fight against their enemies. On the thirteenth and fourteenth days of Adar the Jews won tremendous victories and were saved from the threat of total annihilation. Since that time, we celebrate Purim.

**LEADER TIP:** The Purim story is always an exciting one. Try to make it even more exciting by acting it out with accents.
PURIM QUESTIONS

Questions

11. Who was the King in the Purim story?
12. Why was Haman angry at Mordechai?
13. When do we celebrate the holiday of Purim?
14. How many lands did Achashverosh rule over?
15. Who was Queen before Esther and what happened to her?
16. Where did the Purim story happen?
17. What did Haman want to do to the Jewish people?
18. What is a popular food that we eat on Purim?
19. How many times are we supposed to hear the Megillah and when?
20. What special Tefillah do we say on Purim?
21. What mitzvoth do we have to do on Purim?
22. What does Purim mean?
23. What do we do the day before Purim and why?
24. Who wanted to kill the King and who prevented it from happening?
25. What did the King do to thank this person?

Answers

11. Achashverosh
12. Because he wouldn’t bow down to him
13. The 14th of Adar
14. 127
15. Vashti. She was killed because she wouldn’t go to the King’s party
16. Persia
17. Kill them
18. Hamantashen
19. Twice, once at night and once in the morning
20. Al HaNissim
21. Mishloach Manot, Matanot Le’evyonim, Seudah, and Megillah
22. Lottery
23. We fast since Esther asked the Jewish people to fast for three days before she went to talk to the King.
24. Bigtan and Teresh. Mordechai
25. He had him ride on a horse throughout the city with Haman declaring that this is the man who saved the King’s life

LEADER TIP: Don’t just ask questions. Prepare a board game sort of thing and have them answer questions to move ahead spaces.
**PURIM ACTIVITY**

**GOAL:** The kids will come to see that happiness is not something that can be bought and not something that you can fake. Simcha isn't about achievement and isn't about being who you're not. Happiness is something that comes from within and sometimes we have to look deep inside to find it.

**ACTIVITY:**

These are a few cards that describe people and the reason they think they are the happiest people in the world. These cards can be acted out by the group leaders or the kids. If by group leaders, make them as dramatic and funny and entertaining as possible. After the parts are acted out take a vote to see who is the happiest person according to the kids.

_They can also be handed out to groups to be discussed and they can decide on their own if the person on the card they received is really happy or not and then tell the rest why. These are examples if you think of a character that can be closer to the kid’s life- add it to the cards._

Characters-

Ricki- My name is Ricki I'm 11 years old and I live in Beverly Hills. My dad owns a big diamond company. I have a room full of every game I ask for and of course have a maid that is with me all the time. Not too many kids live in my neighborhood so a lot of times I play alone or with my maid. I can have anything I want. I have a wonderful life... And that's why I'm the happiest person!

Zack- My name is Zack I'm 28 years old and I live in New York. I am a clown; my job is to make people laugh. When I get them to laugh I bring them happiness. Because I bring people happiness I get happiness for myself. Also if I'm not really happy all the time- the smile on my face makes me and the people around me happy. Dealing with laughter and happiness all day long makes me the happiest man!!

Moshe - My name is Moshe and I'm 32 years old. Hashem said that we should always be happy and that's why I'm always happy. I always have a smile on my face and I dance very often. Anything that happens I accept with love and happiness. My way of life makes me the happiest man!

Woody- My name is Woody and I'm 25 years old. I have a glamorous life! I'm the star of a great new movie that just came out and that makes me so happy. I get tons of fan mail and my fan club gets bigger every day. I just got a new Jaguar to go with the look- my new girlfriend needs to have a good car to drive around in... To sum it all up I have anything anyone could ever wish for. I am the happiest man!

Chaya- My name is Chaya and I'm 16 years old. I live in a small town with my parents and brothers. I go to school and I of course have some friends there. I have a very good life. I wake up every morning...
thank God that I'm alive and I eat- and go to school. On the weekends I hang out with my friends... What else can I ask for? I am the happiest person I know.

**DISCUSSION:** Discuss why people happy. What can make them happy if they aren't? Can they think of anyone they know that is always very sad? Or someone that is always very happy? Is there a reason for that? What is it? Try to get the conversation to get towards the idea that buying things isn’t what makes people happy, but rather its being with people we love and who love us that is real genuine happiness.

**LEADER TIP:** What can you do to make other people happy and constantly smiling?
Before you read: Purim is a holiday of happiness when we celebrate God's great Purim miracles. What seemed like a desperate and hopeless situation for our people, God turned into a great triumph. God is very happy when we are happy on Purim - and everyday. But it's not always easy to be happy. One big way to increase our happiness is to learn to be 'happy with our lot.' That means to accept and like ourselves for who we are, even the parts of ourselves and of our lives that seem less than ideal.

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"Thanks sooo much, Mom! You're the Best!!!" Sue squealed as she pocketed the cash.

"But," her mother went on. "If you think making your hair different - or anything else about you different - is going to make you happy, think again. Because a person's only happy when he can be happy with who he already is."

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"Sure Mom, I'm off to 'Hair Today.' See you!"

As she sat in the chic, spotlight and mirror-filled waiting room, Sue, who was next in line, couldn't believe that in just a few short moments, she would be going in to get her hair straightened and finally get to be like Laurie and all those other happy straight-haired kids.

Suddenly the frosted-glass door to the inner salon swung open and a curly-haired girl about her age who'd just had her hair done walked out.

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"To be happy? ...Um, yeah," she murmured.

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"Come on, Laurie, I'll walk you home. I was thinking of getting my hair treated, but I think I already just got the exact treatment I need."

Discussion Questions:

Q. What life-lesson do you think Sue learned that day?
A. She didn't like something about her looks and thought if she could only change it, she'd be happy. But when she saw her friend trying to do the same thing, she realized that a person won't become happy by trying to change herself, but rather by liking and accepting herself as she is.

Q. Do you think Sue would have been happy if she'd gone through with the hair straightening? Why or why not?
A. Perhaps she would have gotten a short-term boost, but the feeling wouldn't have lasted long. As long as we feel our happiness depends on things being 'just so' we'll always find something about us or our lives to bring us down. Real, lasting happiness comes only from self-acceptance and understanding that God gave me my looks and my life because, deep-down, it is truly for my best.

LEADER TIP: Make sure you’re happy on Purim and every day for that matter! You can even sing the popular song “Happy” with the kids!
Queen Esther

The Midrash tells us that in the future all the Jewish holidays will be nullified except for Purim. The Talmud says that although the final redemption will be even more miraculous than the Exodus from Egypt, the miracle of Purim -- which basically revolved around the personalities of Mordechai and Esther -- will never be forgotten. It was the unique courage and boldness of Mordechai and Esther together that make them the stars of the beautiful story we read in the Megillah. Since all of us are going through hard times today and there isn't a person who isn't struggling, a little insight into the characteristics of Mordechai and Esther might be a great help to us in our times of tribulation.

The name Esther is related to the word "hester," meaning hidden. When we look deeper into the Megillah, we see something remarkable. For nine years, until Haman's downfall, Esther guarded the secret of her ancestry. She never told anyone that she was a Jewess. Examining her situation, we know that as the wife of Achashverosh she was constantly pressured to reveal the truth. Yet she withstood this pressure. Why?

The Midrash explains that Mordechai realized there was something unique in Esther's becoming the queen. He knew that she was a righteous woman and that it had to be Divine providence that she became the wife of the non-Jewish king, Achashverosh. Mordechai realized that God had something in store for the Jewish people and that Esther would be instrumental in saving them. Mordechai was aware of the impending calamity that would befall the Jews and foresaw that Esther would be the one through whom they would be saved.

Had she revealed her ancestry, she would have defeated this purpose. She therefore carefully guarded her secret until the proper time. The [famous commentator] Ibn Ezra explains that if Esther hadn't kept her secret, she would not have been able to observe her religion (Esther 2:10). Since Achashverosh did not know she was a Jewess, she was able to observe her religion in secrecy.

LEADER TIP: We all go through hard times, but how do we deal with it? Do we fall or fight through them?
Purim is one of the greatest miracles to ever happen to the Jewish people. We would think that we should give the greatest praise to Hashem and say a meaningful energetic Hallel. That being said, we don’t say Hallel on Purim. Why is that the case that we don’t say Hallel on Purim?

The Gemara in Megillah gives a few different answers.

4. Hallel isn’t said over miracles that happen outside of Israel once Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim and entered Eretz Yisrael.

5. Reading the Megillah is in the place of saying Hallel on Purim. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner explains that we read the "hidden Hallel" of the book of Esther for the "hidden miracle" that is Purim. The Meiri, based on this answer, says that if you're stuck without a Megillah, you should go ahead and say Hallel, but generally we don't follow this Meiri.

6. The Jewish people being saved on Purim was only partial, since they remained under the rule of Achashverosh.

**LEADER TIP:** While we don’t say Hallel, Purim is still an extremely exciting holiday that we should be praising and singing to Hashem.
PURIM REVIEW

Megillat Esther is the only book in the Scriptures that never mentions Hashem’s name even once. The miracle of Purim is a hidden one, (with the hand of Hashem only revealed through the incredible events). But when you ’read between the lines’ you see the Hand of Hashem. There are no coincidences in the story. The story relates the downfall of the vicious anti-semitic Haman, a descendent of Amalek, the traditional enemy of the Jews. As Prime Minister of ancient Persia, around 2300 years ago, he sought to murder all the Jews of that land. Events happen such that Haman himself plays a crucial role in the coronation of Queen Esther, after the beheading of former Queen Vashti. No one realizes that Esther is Jewish. Haman who has become a powerful man in the kingdom, is upset that Mordechai does not bow down to him. He succeeds in getting the King to authorize a royal decree to annihilate an unspecified nation he claims is an enemy of the King. Initially, he does not identify the nation so that the King can later claim that he did not know that the decree was against the Jews. Haman casts lots (called PUR) to determine the day this was to happen. Mordechai and Esther lead the Jews in a return to Hashem, through Prayer and Fasting. Esther invites the King and Haman to join her for dinner, and in response to the king's offer of "half my kingdom for your wishes," all she asks is they come again tomorrow to another dinner"and I’ll tell you then." (she'll reveal the reason for her invitation). We then find Haman working through the night to construct a gallows upon which to hang Mordechai. At daybreak, he will appear before the King to denounce Mordechai. Unknown to Haman, the King had not slept the night before, suspecting a coup led by Haman. In desperation to get some sleep, he had asked his servants to read from the Royal Chronicles. The Book opens to a long forgotten story of how Mordechai discovered an assassination plot by two royal servants against the King. At the exact moment the King is inquiring whether Mordechai was rewarded for his loyalty, who should appear, but Haman. Before getting a chance to make his request to hang Mordechai, Haman is ordered by the King to parade Mordechai through the capital city in royal garments on a royal horse while proclaiming "This is what is done to the man the King wishes to honor." Immediately afterwards, a crestfallen Haman is whisked to the second Royal dinner, hosted by Esther. At the dinner she reveals to the King that she is Jewish and that Hamanis an enemy of the King because he seeks to destroy the Jewish people. The embarrassed and angry King storms out of the room. Haman pleads to Esther for his life. He "somehow" loses his balance and falls on the couch where Esther is reclining. (The Malach (Angel) Gavriel pushed him.) The King comes back at just this moment. He is very upset and blows up. On the spot, Charvona, a royal minister tells the King about the gallows Haman constructed for Mordechai, who saved the King’s life. The King orders Haman to be hanged on the gallows intended for Mordechai. The King elevates Mordechai to Haman's recently vacated position. Mordechai issues orders, with the King's permission, allowing the Jews to fight against their enemies. On the thirteenth and fourteenth days of Adar the Jews won tremendous victories and were saved from the threat of total annihilation. Since that time, we celebrate Purim.

LEADER TIP: The Purim story is always an exciting one. Try to make it even more exciting by acting it out with accents.
**PURIM QUESTIONS**

Questions

26. Who was the King in the Purim story?
27. Why was Haman angry at Mordechai?
28. When do we celebrate the holiday of Purim?
29. How many lands did Achashverosh rule over?
30. Who was Queen before Esther and what happened to her?
31. Where did the Purim story happen?
32. What did Haman want to do to the Jewish people?
33. What is a popular food that we eat on Purim?
34. How many times are we supposed to hear the Megillah and when?
35. What special Tefillah do we say on Purim?
36. What mitzvot do we have to do on Purim?
37. What does Purim mean?
38. What do we do the day before Purim and why?
39. Who couldn’t fall asleep at night and what did he do to help himself fall asleep?
40. Who wanted to kill the King and who prevented it from happening?
41. What did the King do to thank this person?
42. How many sons did Haman have and what was his wife’s name?
43. Who saved the Jewish people from being destroyed?
44. How many times is Hashem’s name mentioned in the Megillah?
45. Why do we wear costumes on Purim?

Answers

26. Achashverosh
27. Because he wouldn’t bow down to him
28. The 14th of Adar
29. 127
30. Vashti. She was killed because she wouldn’t go to the King’s party
31. Persia
32. Kill them
33. Hamentashen
34. Twice, once at night and once in the morning
35. Al HaNissim
36. Mishloach Manot, Matanot Le’evyonim, Seudah, and Megillah
37. Lottery
38. We fast since Esther asked the Jewish people to fast for three days before she went to talk to the King.
39. Achashverosh. He had his advisors read him his diary
40. Bigtan and Teresh. Mordechai
41. He had him ride on a horse throughout the city with Haman declaring that this is the man who saved the King’s life
42. 10. Zeres
43. Mordecai and Esther
44. 0
45. Because all the miracles in the Purim story were hidden.
PURIM ACTIVITY

GOAL: To cause the kids to understand that Simcha doesn't come from the things we buy, and get. It comes from things that we do for ourselves and others.

ACTIVITY:

Part 1: Hand out to each kid the "How do you feel today?" sheet. Prompt the kids to think about how they feel today- if someone wants to say how he feels today, let him share with the rest of the kids. Go around the circle, saying why you feel that way and why. (Hadracha tip: If you see that it starts to get really silly or out of hand- stop it!)

Part 2: Before Shabbat, make cards with different values and things that make people happy. A list can be found at the end and feel free to add your own! During the activity, spread the cards around the center of the circle so the kids can see them, or hang them up on a board. You are the owner of all these things and the kids have to buy these things from you. Divide the kids into 3 groups, and give each group fake bills that amount to $100. Each group should decide what values and things make people happy, and then they can come up and buy them from you. (What should happen is: When each group buys it’s values, there will probably be another group that would want to buy the same thing. They will need to fight for it. The group that gives the higher price for the value- buys it!).

Pay attention: After all of the groups have bought their values check if some group bought the value of volunteering. If not- you can ask them why not? Is it not important enough to make us happy? Can we have Simcha without it?

Give each kid a candy. Ask them if the candy makes them happy. If it does, how long does it last?

In this point of the activity, you can do a short summary: Until now, we’ve spoken about things that make us happy but not for too long. A car, clothes and candies. These are kinds of things that come from the outside and don’t stay long enough to make us feel happy forever.

LIST OF VALUES: Getting a haircut, getting a good grade, buying a new car, raising a family, having the ability to walk, singing, dancing, buying new clothes, volunteering with children/elderly, going on vacation, travelling the world, having friends, being successful, and anything else you can think of!

DISCUSSION: Discuss with the kids what things really cause people to be in Simcha? Where do those things come from? The things that cause people to be in Simcha, come when we do things for ourselves and for others, when we create new things for ourselves, and for others. You can definitely live your life being focused on your own goals and objectives, but when you put another person before yourself, and worry about them and what you can do for them, then you learn what it means to really give, and what you receive in return is happiness, and that is something that doesn’t go away or fade. There is no price for happiness- it’s priceless!

LEADER TIP: What can you do to make other people happy and constantly smiling?
PURIM STORY

**Before you read:** Purim is a holiday of happiness when we celebrate God's great Purim miracles. What seemed like a desperate and hopeless situation for our people, God turned into a great triumph. God is very happy when we are happy on Purim - and everyday. But it's not always easy to be happy. One big way to increase our happiness is to learn to be 'happy with our lot.' That means to accept and like ourselves for who we are, even the parts of ourselves and of our lives that seem less than ideal.

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"Come on, Laurie, I'll walk you home. I was thinking of getting my hair treated, but I think I already just got the exact treatment I need."

**Discussion Questions:**

Q. Does self-acceptance stop self-improvement?
A. Not at all. God put is in the world to strive to grow and become the best we can. We just have to know that happiness won't come about by being any certain way or reaching any certain goal, but rather by accepting who we are even as we strive to improve.

Q. How does a stronger connection to God affect one's happiness?
A. It is the key to happiness. Because the stronger we are connected to God the stronger we can feel that our life circumstances - even difficult ones - are His unique gift to us to reach our ultimate spiritual potential and not just random or 'tough luck.'

**LEADER TIP:** Make sure you're happy on Purim and every day for that matter! You can even sing the popular song “Happy” with the kids!
Queen Esther

The Midrash tells us that in the future all the Jewish holidays will be nullified except for Purim. The Talmud says that although the final redemption will be even more miraculous than the Exodus from Egypt, the miracle of Purim -- which basically revolved around the personalities of Mordechai and Esther -- will never be forgotten. It was the unique courage and boldness of Mordechai and Esther together that make them the stars of the beautiful story we read in the Megillah. Since all of us are going through hard times today and there isn't a person who isn't struggling, a little insight into the characteristics of Mordechai and Esther might be a great help to us in our times of tribulation. The name Esther is related to the word "hester," meaning hidden. When we look deeper into the Megillah, we see something remarkable. For nine years, until Haman's downfall, Esther guarded the secret of her ancestry. She never told anyone that she was a Jewess. Examining her situation, we know that as the wife of Achashverosh she was constantly pressured to reveal the truth. Yet she withstood this pressure. Why? The Midrash explains that Mordechai realized there was something unique in Esther's becoming the queen. He knew that she was a righteous woman and that it had to be Divine providence that she became the wife of the non-Jewish king, Achashverosh. Mordechai realized that God had something in store for the Jewish people and that Esther would be instrumental in saving them. Mordechai was aware of the impending calamity that would befall the Jews and foresaw that Esther would be the one through whom they would be saved. Had she revealed her ancestry, she would have defeated this purpose. She therefore carefully guarded her secret until the proper time. The [famous commentator] Ibn Ezra explains that if Esther hadn't kept her secret, she would not have been able to observe her religion (Esther 2:10). Since Achashverosh did not know she was a Jewess, she was able to observe her religion in secrecy. Other reasons are given, but in all cases, there was a sound reason for Esther doing this outstanding act of guarding her secret for nine years. This is due to a character trait that Queen Esther inherited from [our matriarch] Rachel, who likewise did not reveal or give any indication to Jacob that she was not the person he was marrying, and so he married Leah first (see Genesis 29). Esther inherited this quality of silence and discretion, which Rachel had shown under such tremendous pressure. This incredible silence is the outstanding virtue that made Esther queen. She boldly and courageously kept her secret while under terrific pressure from a king and an entire nation. Esther did not dare reveal anything, for she knew that her silence was necessary for the salvation of the Jewish people. She knew that there would come a time when she would have to tell, and that there was a divine purpose in store for her.

**LEADER TIP:** We all go through hard times, but how do we deal with it? Do we fall or fight through them?
Purim is one of the greatest miracles to ever happen to the Jewish people. We would think that we should give the greatest praise to Hashem and say a meaningful energetic Hallel. That being said, we don’t say Hallel on Purim. Why is that the case that we don’t say Hallel on Purim?

The Gemara in Megillah gives a few different answers.

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**LEADER TIP:** While we don’t say Hallel, Purim is still an extremely exciting holiday that we should be praising and singing to Hashem.
Perek 1

1. How many countries did Achashverosh rule over? (Passuk 1)
2. What was the name of Achashverosh’s first wife? Hint: She made a party for women (Passuk 9)
3. What was Achashverosh’s officers name? (Passuk 16)

Perek 2

1. When did Achashverosh decide to look for a new queen? (Passukim 1-2)
2. What was Mordechai’s father’s name? (Passuk 5)
3. What was another name for Esther? (Passuk 7)
4. What was the name of the two people that wanted to kill Achashverosh? (Passuk 21)

Perek 3

1. What was the name of the head of all of Hamman’s servants? (Passuk 1)
2. Why was Hamman angry at Mordechai? (Passuk 5)
3. How much money did Hamman want Achashverosh to give him? (Passuk 9)

Perek 4

1. What did Mordechai do when he found out all the bad things Hamman did? (Passuk 1)
2. What was the name of the servant Esther called to find out what was bothering Mordechai? (Passuk 5)
3. For how many days did Esther ask Mordechai and the people of Shushan to fast? (Passuk 16)

Perek 5

1. Esther was very scared when she went to Achashverosh. Was Achashverosh angry or happy when he saw Esther? (Passuk 2)
2. What did Esther ask Mordechai and Hamman to do? (Passuk 4)
3. What was Hamman’s wife’s name? (Passuk 10)

Perek 6

1. When Achashverosh couldn’t sleep what did he ask his servants to do? (Passuk 1)
2. What did Hamman want to ask Achashverosh to do? (Passuk 4)
3. What did Zeresh (Hamman’s wife) say about the Jewish people? (Passuk 13)

Perek 7

1. Would Esther have asked Achashverosh to save her if Hamman wanted to make the Jews Slaves? (Passuk 4)
2. Who was Charvonah? (Passuk 9)

Perek 8

1. What did Ahashevrosh give to Mordechai? (Passuk 2)
2. What month did Achashverosh send out his decree? (Passuk 9)
3. When do we say the words of Passuk 15?

Perek 9

1. How many people did the Jews kill in Shushan? (Passuk 1)
2. How many sons did Hamman have? (Passukim 7-10)
3. What day of the month did the Jews rest? (Passuk 17)
4. What is a Pur, where Purim gets its name from? (Passuk 24)
TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK

WHAT IS THE STORY OF “PURIM FEST 1946”?

Email your answers to YOUTH@YOUNGISRAEL.ORG along with your NAME and AGE for a chance to win AWESOME PRIZES! Each correct answer will enter your name into a raffle that will happen once a month. Behatzlacha!

THIS JUST IN!

- Women have more taste buds than men
- The longest time between two twins being born is 87 days.
- The world’s deepest postbox is in Susami Bay in Japan. It’s 10 metres underwater.
- In 2007, an American man named Corey Taylor tried to fake his own death in order to get out of his cell phone contract without paying a fee. It didn’t work.

For more info please feel free to contact us at youth@youngisrael.org

Parsha Points to Ponder...

If we study the characters of Mordechai and Esther it is interesting to see the profound influence one’s middot have over one’s actions and personality. We see how a refined character and healthy self-esteem can build and give meaning to life while the converse is also true, that a flawed character, someone who refuses to work on his faulty middot will ultimately self-destruct.

When Mordechai refuses to bow to Haman, “Haman is filled with anger” (3:5). It is fascinating to note that Haman had been promoted to viceroy over the entire civilised world (according to one opinion in the Gemara) and despite this when one little Jew refuses to bow, his world falls apart. This is a sad but common symptom of those who have very big egos, of which Haman was the standard bearer.

If one’s world is dependent on public adulation and built on what others think of me then when one individual, no matter how seemingly insignificant, refuses to pay homage to me this means my identity, who and what I am is being called into question. There is now a gaping hole in the artificial edifice which I have built up in my imagination which serves as my identity. No-one likes being identity-less and a sure consequence of this is insane and blind hatred for those who have robbed me of myself.

The Vilna Gaon points out that Haman did not even notice that Mordechai was not bowing down but had to be told (3:4). Haman’s nose was so high in the sky he did not notice who or what was going on while he passed along. Even once he was told he refused and was even scared to accept this news and was prepared to judge Mordechai with the benefit of the doubt that maybe Mordechai did not realise how hurtful this was to Haman. The loss of one’s identity is not an easy thing to swallow and Haman feared for himself.
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