



WHEN IT'S PURIM

Written by Edie Stoltz Zolkower

Illustrated by Bob Bjornson

With simple rhyming text we share the experience of little children making hamantaschen to give as gifts on Purim.

Purim, celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Adar, celebrates the story of Queen Esther found in the Book of Writings in the Bible. The Jews were living in Persia, ruled by King Ahashuerus who held a contest was held to find a replacement for the current Queen Vashti. Esther, a Jew participated and was chosen queen. The king's power-hungry advisor, Haman, was angry that the Jews refused to bow down to him. A date was set to hang all the Jews, but Esther stepped forward on behalf of her people. By demonstrating tremendous courage, Esther was able to save the Jews.

One lovely tradition of Purim is the giving of gifts of food to friends and family. *Mishloach manot* (literally, "sending of portions") are gift packages, generally of home-baked goods and other small treats, which fulfill a *mitzvah* (commandment); as stated in the Book of Esther, chapter 9, verse 19: "The Jews of the villages...made a day of gladness and feasting, a holiday, and of sending portions to one another." *Matanot le'evyonim* (giving funds to the needy) is another *mitzvah* completed on *Purim*. It is traditional that on days of rejoicing, Jews consider the needs of those less fortunate and share their bounty; by doing so we help make it possible for all to celebrate the holiday.

CELEBRATING PURIM

Purim is especially beloved by children as it is celebrated by getting dressed up in costumes, making noise, putting

on plays and eating treats! To observe the holiday, Jews traditionally dress as characters from the story and read the Book of Esther in synagogue, accompanied by shaking noisemakers at the mention of Haman's name in order to drown it out.

Hamantaschen are three-cornered pastries filled with fruit spreads or poppy seeds, and in more modern-day bakeries, chocolate. Tradition has it that the shape of *hamantaschen* is reminiscent of the hat (in Israel, the ears) of the wicked Haman. *Hamantaschen* are usually included in *mishloach manot*. Bake some of these treats for your family and friends, allowing children to help. (Mixing and kneading the dough are good jobs for little hands!) Consider hosting a *mishloach manot* party, where the focus is on baking *hamantaschen* and making *mishloach manot*. Recipes can be found online or in many Jewish cookbooks—*The Children's Jewish Holiday Kitchen* by Joan Nathan is especially geared to cooking with youngsters. One suggestion: make more than you expect to use, as *hamantaschen* have a way of disappearing very quickly!

Consider observing Purim by preparing a special dinner or brunch for your family and friends. This is also a joyous opportunity to learn about and celebrate *Purim* by having a costume party—great for children and adults. *Chag Purim Sameach! Happy Purim!* Pj