

## The Only Important Holiday

Well, maybe not wearing a toga and riding a Harley, but I'm now betting the Messiah will be arriving in more than just a robe and on a donkey!

The rabbis have some fascinating comments on the 'end of the days' and the Messianic Era. One of the most interesting involves the holiday of Purim which we will be celebrating Monday evening. Purim is the day we recall the events found in the Book of Esther. This holiday commemorates the deliverance of the Jews of Persia from the plot of Haman to exterminate them. As a 'post-Torah' event, Purim, like the Festival of Lights Chanukah, is considered a "minor" holiday.

However, the rabbis tell us that when the Messiah comes, it will be "minor" no longer. In fact, it will become the only holiday that will be celebrated at the 'End of Days'.

Purim? Not Passover, the holiday that marks our liberation from Egyptian bondage? Not Shavuot, the day we celebrate the giving of the Torah? Not even Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement? What is so special about this minor holiday?

Just a thought, but maybe, Purim will be the only holiday that will make sense to be kept during Messianic times. Today, it may be the Rodney Dangerfield of Jewish holidays (it, too, gets no respect), but perhaps the rabbis are telling us that Purim is how religion and G-d ought to be felt.

Look at how Purim is celebrated. Since this date commemorates a time when our physical well being was in jeopardy in ancient Shushan, we are enjoined to celebrate with all things physical: feasting, drinking, music and laughter. Thus, Purim is loud, raucous, and celebrated in a truly festive "Mardi Gras-like" atmosphere.

At services, the Book of Esther is read unlike any other sacred and holy text. Different voices are used to note different characters; noisemakers drown out the name of the villain of the story, Haman. During the reading, we dress up in outlandish outfits; we also decorate the synagogue and are permitted to parody anything. We exchange presents (hear that, kids?) and we are commanded to give food and gifts to the poor as well.

Sounds fun...and it is.

Unfortunately, Purim is sadly overlooked by most Jews.

Chanukah, due to its closeness to Christmas, gets top billing. That's a shame, for pardon the pun, Chanukah doesn't hold a candle to Purim.

Purim is the holiday for children and adults. It is a time of approaching G-d with pure happiness. It is religion without pretentiousness and celebration to G-d with real passion. Purim

allows us to dress any way we want, be ourselves and show our love and gratitude to G-d by eating and partying. We invite everyone to join us and we leave no one out in the cold.

Purim is a day of laughter, merriment and celebrating! It is religion without walls and with a big ol' grin! It tells a Jew to check the Mourner's Kaddish at the door for a day, put on a mask and party, dude!

Purim beats a week of unleaven bread, a day of fasting or even a "hot" game of dreidl any day!

And when the Messiah comes a knockin', the rabbis felt Purim will finally get top billing. It's about time! I believe the rabbis are not just making a statement about Purim, but what the world to come could and should look like.

Because I don't know about you, but frankly, these "end of days" scenarios we keep reading about are getting old. I don't have any problem with the idea of changing our ways and

improving our conduct, but too often, the Messianic Age sounds awfully bleak and frightening(though I do love the bumper sticker: "The Messiah is coming! Quick! Everyone look busy!"). The Messiah's arrival will be marked with days of turmoil, suffering and punishment. I don't know about you, but such a messiah can stay right where he is, thank you very much.

I kind of like this little comment about the Messiah and Purim. I think the rabbis might be projecting what they hope those 'end of days' should really be like: one big religious Mardi Gras celebration(probably without the beads!). It will be a joyous world where everyone will approach G-d with happiness, embrace their neighbors with smiles, and extend their arms to the poor. Our tables will be crowded with food and friends, our cups will be overflowing, and our bellies will ache from laughter.

That is a Messianic age! And for such a  
Messiah, I anxiously look forward to his coming,  
hope for his arrival and pray to one day greet!  
I never thought he would be such a party  
animal!