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Esther—Queen of Persia, Jewess, Agent for Change

by Abby Korotney

Every year during the holiday of Purim, we read from the Megillah within our congregations. We praise Mordecai. We blot out every mention of Haman's name while vigorously spinning our groggers. However, for many of us, there is an important piece that goes missing in our annual reading of the *Book of Esther*: Acknowledgement of Esther herself and her *chutzpah* in standing up for the Jewish people.



Many of us disdain the idea of a lifestyle solely focused

on external beauty and outward appearance. As post-modern Jewish women, our femininity is defined in much

broader terms. Most of us are driven by a need for significance. We pride ourselves in our intellectual prowess, spiritual gifts, career choices and how we participate in *Tikkun Olam*. Not to mention, for those

who have children, whether or not your children are successful in life!

And yet, here we have Esther, a Beauty Queen, forced into intermarriage and thrown into historical events that are clearly out of her control. However, it is her determination, courage and guile in an obviously life threatening situation that speaks to all of us.

While Esther had the help and support of Mordecai in fighting the decree that was aimed at destroying the Jewish people, it was Esther who was able to implement the plan and who had the foresight to know how it had to be done. It was she who insisted that the story of Purim be written down and *(continued on pg. 2)*

Adar and Purim

by Abby Korotney

Adar is the 12th and final month of the Jewish calendar. The Talmud teaches, "When the month of Adar comes we increase our happiness." Adar is known for its frivolity and joy, because in it we celebrate the holiday of Purim and we begin preparations for Passover.

There are several special celebrations during the month of Adar. Purim, the main holiday, falls on the 14th of Adar and celebrates the heroine Queen Esther who saved the Jews of Persia from the evil Haman. It is a time to dress in costumes and wear masks, as well as

to read from the Megillah (the story of Esther).

The word Purim is derived from the word *pur* which means lottery or lots, a method used by Haman to select the date on which he intended to massacre the Jews. *(continued on page 2)*



**Being hidden is
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Esther—Queen of Persia, Jewess, Agent for Change

(continued from pg. 1)
read, year after year, for she knew that its relevance to the Jewish people would always be pertinent.

This is why the Megillah, "Scroll of Esther" that became part of the Torah and which we read from during the holiday of Purim, is named after her.

The name Esther itself is an indication as to how she led her life and fulfilled her role. The root of Esther in Hebrew is *hester*, meaning "hidden." Often we think that when someone is hiding something, it is out of a situation of embarrassment or discomfort.


Being hidden is in direct opposition to the modern day concept: "if you've got

it, flaunt it." Show the world what you have to offer, be out there, be public, the more the better. It isn't exciting to be the heroine behind the scenes.

If one's desire is to show everyone else what you have to offer, what you are capable of, then yes, it is better to flaunt your gifts and talents. But if one's desire is to use one's capabilities for a higher purpose, to achieve a greater good, not just for one's ego, then the best way to do this is to begin in private, in a hidden way, so that the goal can be accomplished.

One female Jewish commentator has summed this up beautifully: "While Vashti may have made the cover of every magazine, it was

Esther who was behind the scenes being the woman who was really changing the world. Esther epitomized the statement, *kol k'vudah bat melech penimah*, 'the true honor of the princess is within.' The word for 'within', *penimah*, is the same as *penimut* one's internal, spiritual make-up." Through understanding the true meaning of being hidden, Esther revealed an everlasting message to the Jewish people for all time to come.

As Messianic Jewish women, let us be like Esther and remain hidden in the Divine Presence. In this way we reflect Hashem's light on the world around us and fulfill His purpose for our lives. *Baruch Hashem!* 

Adar and Purim

(continued from pg. 1)
The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, on the 13th of Adar. The fast commemorates Esther's three-days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with King Ahasuerus, to save the Jews from Haman.

It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and wildly rattle groggers (noisemakers) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman". In some synagogues, it is a tradition

to cheer at the names of Mordecai and Esther. During Purim, we are commanded to eat, drink and be merry. According to the Talmud, a person is required to drink until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai". Unlike other Jewish holidays, on Purim all manner of work is permitted: fires may be kindled, electricity may be turned on and off, cars may be driven, etc. Purim is a time to give charity to the poor, to prepare and send *mishloach manot*, gifts of food to friends, and

a time to begin putting aside *tzedakah* for *Ma-ot Chittim*, money to buy Pesach supplies for those unable to do so themselves.

In Hebrew, *mishloach manot* literally means "sending portions". In *Megillat Esther* 9:22, we are directed to send these "portions" as a way of expressing joy for Esther's victory. The most popular item in *mishloach manot* is *hamantaschen*--triangular shaped cookies. In some Jewish circles, these triangular shapes are referred to as "Haman's hat" or "Haman's ears". These

*A*dar and Purim

(continued from pg. 2)
sweet pastries are traditionally filled with poppy seed or prune filling. More recently, dates, apricots and chocolate fillings have been introduced. Most rabbis believe the shape harkens back to Queen Esther, whose greatness was inspired by the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In addition to hamantaschen, some people consider using kreplach, or sweet and sour dumplings in their *mishloach manot*. Some Chassidic Jews enjoy sweet and sour foods on Purim because these reflect the sweet and sour aspects

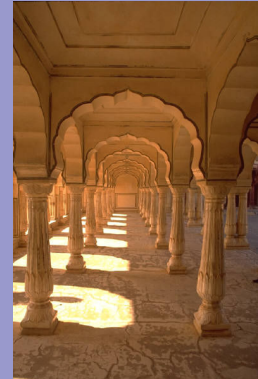
of the time.

Other traditional foods eaten on Purim are seeds and nuts. The Talmud says that Queen Esther ate only these foods in the palace of Ahasuerus, because there were no kosher foods available.

Although the Book of Esther lacks any mention of G-d's name, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, remains hidden throughout the story and plays a large role in its outcome. Some Jewish commentators have expanded on this notion: Throughout Jewish history and especially in the present Jewish diaspora, G-d's pres-

ence has been felt more at certain times than at others. Megillat Esther (and the omission of G-d's name in it) serves to show that although G-d may not be conspicuously present at times, He nevertheless plays (and has played) an important role in everyone's lives and in the future of the Jewish nation.

During the feast of Purim, let us remember the saving power of G-d for His people Israel and in our individual lives. Although it may seem like He is hidden at various times in our lives, He will always remain our Hope and our Salvation. *~*



*A*WORD FROM THE CHAIR

by *Linda Lieber*

*Shalom Alechem v'chol Yisrael...*Peace be upon you and upon all Israel.

This is certainly my cry—may peace be upon every soul. How fast we are seeing the world change. Where is it going and what do I do to help bring *Tikkun Olam*?

These questions are very important in our lives as sisters in HaShem. Why? I do not know about you, but when I think of what the scriptures say about the coming of the Lord, I can feel overwhelmed even though I know that we serve an awesome G-d and that He is more than able to

save me to the uttermost. I believe that now we will need each other and that having a sisterhood where we can build up one another, encourage each other and reach out to the world might be more important than ever.

I want to encourage you if you do not have a sisterhood in your congregation, now might be the time to join with other women and start one. If you have a sisterhood, look around and see how you can serve Hashem with your other sisters.

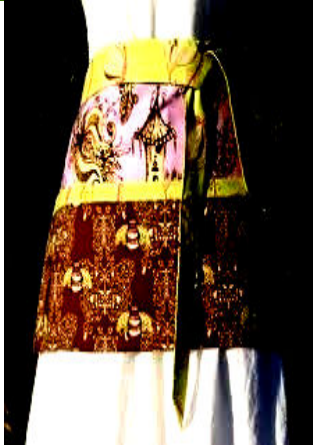
Achot is planning for the

UMJC conference (July 14th-17th, 2011 in Dallas) to help the women become stronger and wiser. We are also planning an Achot retreat this year in Columbus, Ohio. We hope many of you will be able to join us in Columbus. Stay tuned for more details on these upcoming events!

We are enjoined to build up one another as we see the day of the Lord drawing near! We also hope that you have a great Purim and Pesach. B"H that He has defeated our enemies many times and promises to so again. *~*



*Linda Lieber,
Achot chair*



RECIPE CORNER



Hamentaschen

4 cups sifted flour
1 cup of honey
1/2 tsp of salt
1/2 cup softened shortening (*you can use butter if you do not want it to be parve*)

1 tsp. baking powder
4 eggs

Sift dry ingredients, make a hole in the center . Place shortening, eggs and honey in the middle. Work with hands to form a dough. Roll dough and cut into 4 inch squares. Place filling of your choice, chocolate, prune, poppy seed, etc. in center. Fold dough to make a triangle. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 20 Minutes. *B'tayavon!*



Noodle Kugel

12 oz pkg of noodles
1 lb. cottage cheese
2 tsp of cinnamon

10 medium eggs
1 cup of white raisins
1/2 cup of brown sugar

1 cup of cream

Cool noodles according to package, then cool and drain. Mix cottage cheese , noodles and raisins in a bowl. Put mixture in a greased casserole dish. Beat eggs, cream, cinnamon and brown sugar. Pour over noodle mixture. Bake uncovered at 400 degrees for 45 minutes. *B'tayavon!*



A sumptuous beef brisket is a delicious way to enjoy a Purim seudah or a Passover meal

Sweet and Sour Brisket *serves 8*

Roasting the meat uncovered during the last hour helps all the sauce to reduce. Can be made 2 days ahead.

1 1/2 cups of orange juice
4 large cloves of garlic, peeled
5 large soft dates, pitted
1/2 tsp cloves
4 1/2—5 lbs brisket, trimmed of all but 1/4 inch of fat

2 lbs. of onions, thinly sliced

5 tbsp. olive oil, divided

16 large shallots peeled

2 1/2 cups low sodium chicken broth

Preheat oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit. Puree first 4 ingredients (oj, garlic, dates, cloves) in blender until smooth. Heat 3 tbsp of oil in large wide ovenproof pot over medium high heat. Add onions and shallots. Sauté until onions are deep golden and shallots begin to brown, about 20 minutes. Transfer shallots to small bowl and reserve. Add chicken broth to onions. Bring to boil scraping up browned bits. Pour onion mix into large bowl. Add 2 tbsp oil to small pot . Sprinkle brisket with salt and pepper. Add to pot and brown well about 5 minutes per side. Turn brisket fat side up. Return onion mixture to pot. Add puree /orange juice mixture. Bring to a boil, stirring to blend sauce. Cover pot; bake brisket 2 hours. Add shallots and potatoes. Cover, bake 1 hour. Uncover, bake until brisket is tender, occasionally spooning juice over, about 1 hour longer. Let rest 30 minutes. Chill uncovered until cold and then cover and keep chilled. Scrape sauce off brisket. Transfer to work surface and slice thinly. Surround with shallots and potatoes. Re-warm the sauce and spoon over. *B'tayavon!*

Passover Carrot Spice Torte (parve)

(excerpted from *A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Cooking*)

Makes 10 to 12 servings


6 eggs separated	1 1/4 cup ground toasted nuts (almonds or walnuts)
1/4 tsp salt	1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar	1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1 Tbsp Passover vanilla sugar	1/4 tsp. ground allspice
2 tbsp orange juice	Zest of one lemon finely minced
1/4 cup matzah meal	1/4 cup matzah cake meal

1 cup of carrot puree (*to make puree boil 4 to 6 medium carrots in water. Once they are tender mash them with a fork or puree with a fork or in the blender until they are smooth*)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Generously grease a 9 or 10 inch tube pan and line the bottom with a circle of parchment paper.

Place egg whites in a large mixing bowl with salt. Whip on slow speed, just to foam up the whites. Then, increase the speed and dust in 1/2 cup of granulated sugar, beating until the mixture thickens. Blend in the vanilla, sugar, orange juice, matzah meal, cake meal, ground nuts, spices and lemon zest.

Stir the carrot puree into the egg yolk mixture. Then, fold one third of the whipped egg whites in the yolk mixture to lighten it. In 2 more additions, fold the remaining whites gently into the batter. Spoon the batter gently into the prepared pan.

Place cake in the oven and immediately reduce the heat to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Bake until cake springs back when lightly pressed (50 minutes to 1 hr) . Cool in pan for 20 minutes before removing to a serving plate. *B'tayavon!* 



A delicious end to a meal—Passover Carrot Spice Torte

Join Us Today!


As a sisterhood, we have the goal to connect with one another in becoming all that the L-rd G-d of Israel has for us.

We are here to help enhance our love of G-d, Torah and Israel. We are dedicated in the bond of the testimony of the love of G-d as witnessed in Messiah Yeshua, who when asked what the greatest

commandment was, answered, "Love the L-rd your G-d and your neighbor as yourself."

It is in this spirit that we will create stronger bonds with one another and reach out our hands in tzedakah to others. Please join us in this dynamic venture!

Visit:
www.umjc.net/achot.

You can either become a member online by clicking on the menu item "Become a Member", or by filling out our form below on the back page of this newsletter and sending it into the UMJC office. 





LAUGH A LITTLE!

Laundry List

One day Chaim Yankel Sapperstein decided that he wanted to learn how to do the laundry. He started with his sweatshirt.

Seconds after he stepped into the laundry room, he shouted to his wife, "What setting do I use on the washing machine?"

"It depends," she replied. "What does it say on your sweatshirt?"

Mama's Little Girl

"Hello Ma?"

"Shirley darling, what's the problem?"

"Oh, Ma, I don't know where to begin. The kids are sick with the flu. The fridge just broke. The sink is leaking, and in two hours the women from the sisterhood are coming. What should I do?"

"Shirley darling, don't worry. I'm going to get on a bus and go into the City. Then I'll take the train out to Long Island. Then I'll walk the two miles from the station to your house. I'll take care of the kids, cook a nice lunch for the ladies, and I'll even make dinner for Barry."

"Barry -- who's Barry?"

"Barry -- your *husband*."

"But Ma, my husband's name is Steve. Is this 536-3530?"

"No, it's 536-3630."

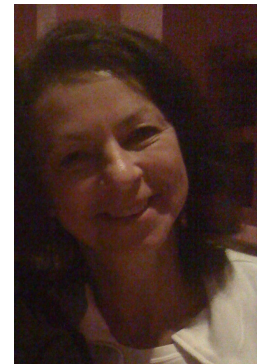
(pause) "So does that mean you're not coming?"



Are you enjoying this month's newsletter? If so, forward this newsletter to 3 women you know. Get the word out about Achat !!

Sisters in the Hood—Linda Lieber

by Abby Korotney



Linda Lieber grew up in Denver, Colorado where her family attended Beth Joseph Congregation, a conservative Jewish synagogue. Linda was *bat mitzvahed* at the age of 12 and she continued her Jewish education until 10th grade, when she was confirmed from Hebrew school. After her confirmation, Linda continued to attend Jewish services and celebrated all of the major Jewish holidays—Passover, Succot, Shavuot and of course, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Considering most Jewish young adults did not attend services, this was highly commendable.

After graduating from George Washington High School, Linda went to the University of Oklahoma. This was a change in her original college plans, occurring just two weeks before her high school graduation. Looking back, Linda sees this as part of G-d's plan, citing that "G-d works in mysterious ways". Before classes even started, she met Walter Lieber. Walter and Linda got married at the end of the year and they will be celebrating 44 years of marriage this June.

During the 1960s, Walter flunked out of OU and the couple moved to Denver, Colorado in order to live with Linda's parents. This was not the best situation and after some serious consideration, Walter and Linda moved to Akron, Ohio.

In Akron, the couple lived next door to a woman who was a believer in Messiah. She asked Linda to attend a bible study in her home. After attending the study for a period of time, Linda started to think that perhaps Yeshua was the Messiah. This

did not sit well with her. If there was one thing that she knew, it was that you just cannot believe in Jesus if you are Jewish. She quit going to the Bible study and decided to study scripture on her own. Linda believed that Torah was the Word of G-d and that Judaism was the one true religion. Up until that time, Linda had only studied *Tenach* (the five books of Moses). As she continued her search, she was surprised to see "pictures of Messiah" throughout the Bible. On one visit back to Denver, Linda met with Rabbi Goldberger and asked him questions that issued from her studies. She continued in her search until she got to a point where she felt she needed a new Bible study group. At one of the meetings, the group read a verse in the Book of John. This verse was the "clincher" for Linda in coming to belief in Yeshua.

The woman who was leading the group came over to Linda and told her that she could not pray for her anymore to become a believer, because the Lord told her that she already believed! Linda went home that night and prayed asking the Lord to reveal himself to Walter. Two days later, Walter, who was close to being an atheist, had a supernatural revelation of Yeshua—her prayer was answered.

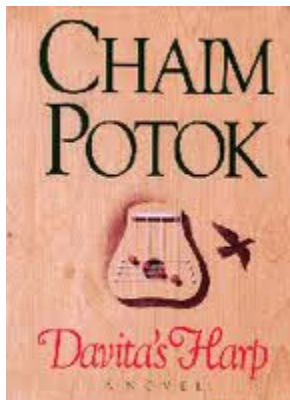
Belief in Messiah made a profound difference in their lives. Linda and Walter began attending a church with "Baptist leanings". Even though they enjoyed church, Linda missed worshipping in a Jewish manner and identifying with other Jews. In addition, the couple was concerned

about how to teach their children about the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At this time, the Jesus movement was taking place and there were many Jews coming to know Messiah. Walter and Linda heard about Messianic Jewish congregations. In particular, they found out about a congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio and they went to visit there. The couple believed that HaShem had called them into ministry. They prayed about starting a congregation in Akron. In 1977, after a series of events, Linda and Walter started Tikvat Yisrael in Cleveland, Ohio. Except for a brief hiatus of a few years, Walter served as the Rabbi of Tikvat Yisrael until 7 years ago when he stepped down and the couple moved to Miami, Florida.

It was during this time that G-d gave Linda a vision about Achot. Linda's dream is to see Achot grow in becoming an important part of the UMJC by fostering women's needs. She currently serves as the Achot Chair. In her spare time, Linda enjoys watercoloring and taking Hebrew classes. She and Walter attend Melton classes at a Hillel that is part of the University of Miami. In addition, she is active in a cancer group that supports research at the University. Since Walter has retired, he has taken up the position of president of a foundation. This provides the couple with a lot of interaction with various organizations—both messianic and non-messianic. Linda says that it is a great privilege for her to be a part of these groups.

However, her favorite role, is that of mother to her four adult children and grandmother to her six grandchildren. They are the joy of her life. *✍*

“At one of the meetings, the group read a verse in the Book of John. This verse was the "clincher" for Linda in coming to belief in Yeshua.”



Good Reads -

A Book Review of Chaim Potok's *Davita's Harp*

This is a lesser known novel by Chaim Potok. A young girl named Davita is the main character. The title refers to the ornamental door harp that Davita's father gives her. As Davita gets a little older she begins to question her parents' devotion to their political cause, and begins to question whether the faiths they each have left, may hold answers to the meaning of life.

"Potok tells the story of this struggling young girl with warmth and understanding."

Davita embraces the Jewish faith. She demonstrates her talent of an intelligent mind, studying and mastering her Hebrew studies at the yeshiva where she has enrolled, only to run into a wall of patriarchal opposition and control. In school she meets Reuben Malter, the protagonist in *The Chosen* and *The Promise*.

There are other memorable characters in this novel. Especially interesting is the sensitive portrayal of Aunt Sarah, a devout Christian on her father's side of the family, who takes care of Davita's mother when her

mother was ill following the death of her baby brother.

Through tragedy and disillusion, Davita must learn to find her way to truth, to find love and acceptance and

encouragement. Davita's mother is on a similar journey. Mother and

daughter are often at odds with each other.

Potok tells the story of this struggling young girl with warmth and understanding. This story starts out slowly at first but becomes complex. This is a story on a personal level and also a depiction of the world political situation in the 1930's. Davita's father gives her.

What do you do when the belief system that you've committed your life to, the belief system you thought was the absolute truth, turns out to have major flaws? And then how do you handle your attraction to a tradition of belief that your parents have left and consider of no use? How do you react to inequalities you see in the faith tradition you have come to love?

These are the questions dealt with in this coming of age story of a young girl. Her name is Ilana Davita Chandal, growing up in NYC during the 1930's and 40's, and the only child of socialist parents, Ana and Michael Chandal. Ilana's mother, Ana, is from an orthodox Jewish family emigrated from Poland and her father, Michael, comes from a long line of Christian Yankee New Englanders.

Both parents abandon their faith and their backgrounds to serve the communist/socialist cause as an answer to their personal wounds and as a solution to injustices out in the world, especially the growing Nazi threat of the 1930's.

(continued on next page)

Good Reads *(continued from page 8)*



In a public lecture, Chaim Potok stated that "Davita's Harp is a confrontation between two fundamentalisms....the secular fundamentalism represented by Marxism, Stalinism, and Communism, and the religious fundamentalism of the extreme right in my own (Jewish) tradition, and how these two fundamentalisms deeply hurt individuals profoundly committed to them, and what those individuals do in the wake of that pain".

The characters suffer much and are understandable and sympathetic to the reader. This reviewer, who comes from a WASP, rural, Republican leaning, religious family found it informing and interesting to get a picture of Jewish, urban, socialist leaning, non-religious people of 1930's New York city.

Allow yourself to get into the story and you'll find a lot to ponder about courage and perseverance and love in the face of disillusionment. *A*

*** Marie Singer is a member of Congregation Zera Avraham in Ann Arbor, MI. She is an accomplished artist and calligrapher and has created many lovely ketubot for Jewish couples. Marie is also an avid reader and she belongs to a local Jewish women's book group. Marie is a regular contributor to the Achot newsletter.*

read

"A small masterpiece, small only in that Leegant needs few pages to say a lot. Her book is eloquent, timely, and thought provoking." —Association of Jewish Libraries

"...an important addition to the canon of fiction about the interaction of American Jews with Israel." —Moment Magazine

"[An] evenhanded consideration of the multifaceted relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel...A sensitively observed work." —Jerusalem Post *A*



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