

# Chagim uMoadim

— from the Masorti Movement



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## Happy Purim!

Do you know the expression, “we laugh so as not to cry”? There are times when I think that the entire Megillat Esther can be understood through that lens. What a sad reality the book describes: the Jewish people are saved from the evil decree permitting genocide against us first because a young woman was forced to give up her freedom and join the king’s harem and second because that king allowed the Jews to defend themselves against those who came to kill them. The end of the book, declaring days of celebration forever marking the reversal of that evil decree, follows a death toll of over 75,000 people in two days! Perhaps Esther leads a happy life in the palace following this story, but we don’t hear of her again, and the king’s track record of how he treats his beloved wives is not exactly positive. The book is so full of sadness, we are commanded to be happy in order to truly rejoice.

When we look at “what” is missing from the Book of Esther, however, we understand what the book is really trying to tell us. Esther is notable for not having a single mention of God in the entire book. The result is not lack of law and order but rather a total lack of humanity. When there is no God, there is no ability to see human beings as created in the Divine image. For Ahasueros and his society, human life has no value. Women exist purely for the pleasure of the king and the rule of law (namely, that even the king cannot retroactively cancel a decree that he has signed) are more important than the human lives that the laws cost. Ultimately, what we celebrate on Purim is not that we survived the evil decree, we celebrate that we have God in our midst and our able to see every person as a life of infinite value.

### Rabbi Arie Hasit

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**Rabbi Arie Hasit** is the founding rabbi of the Minyan Shivioni of Mazkeret Batya, Israel and the Education Director for Rav Siach, a partnership of the Masorti Movement and the Diaspora Ministry for connecting Jewish communities in Israel and abroad. Rabbi Hasit previously served as the acting rabbi of NOAM Israel and worked in communities around in Israel and with the arms of USCJ and Camp Ramah in Israel. In addition to serving as the rabbi of a Masorti congregation, he works with the Orthodox, secular, and everyone in between in Mazkeret Batya in building Jewish community and creating meaningful Jewish experiences. He and his wife, Sara Tova Brody, have one daughter.

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