

Rabbi Lewis' Message for March, 2013

I've been thinking about Purim costumes. When I was a little girl, I was always Queen Esther. My mother cut a hole in an old white sheet, pulled it over my head, and tied a sash around my waist, and I got to wear some of her costume jewelry. Voila! Who else was there to be, if you were a girl? Vashti wasn't an option because no one told us about Vashti. In the years since then, the options for costumes have exploded, regardless of your gender. I've yet to see a boy dress as Esther at our temple (did you know that crossdressing is a tradition on Purim?), but I have seen girls wear a Haman costume.

Cantor Goldmann asked me what happens to the old Purim costumes when we are done with them. An interesting question, I thought. Some stay in my office at the temple (I think there is one gathering dust up on top of the file cabinet). Some come home with me. Some get lent to other rabbis and cantors. Some simply survive one wearing and are ready for the rag pile.

I haven't reused the costumes because I have enjoyed the surprise of wearing a different one each year. When I first came to the Center, the internet was still a wish and online costume stores had not yet come into existence. Finding a costume meant thinking ahead around Halloween time or finding a costume store that was open year 'round. There used to be one in Westfield. Generally you had to rent the costumes and return them quickly.

Now it is so easy and inexpensive to order costumes online. Over the years, the various cantors and I have been Coffee and a Donut, Ketchup and Mustard, Batman and the Joker, an Angel and a Devil, the Beatles, and more. Each year, we do our own silly spiel before we read from the Megillah. This year the Cantor was a terrific and very frightened Cowardly Lion while I was the Scarecrow who wanted a brain. The Cantor then stayed in costume for her appearance as Nala in the Center spoof of The Lion King.

Purim is always a great day for us. The building is abuzz. People are boiling hotdogs in the kitchen, running the carnival or cavorting on the bimah in the [spiel](#). Kids are in costume (and what a great costume contest we had). People invite their friends. We continue creating our own traditions of how to respond to the familiar names in the Megillah ("You go, girl!"). It's a little bit of everything for everyone.

It won't surprise you to hear that this Purim was bittersweet for me. Someone asked me where I will be for Purim next year when I am no longer with you. The answer is

that I don't know where I will be but I know what I will do. I will be thinking of these 19 wonderful years of Purim I have spent with you.

The Jewish calendar doesn't let us rest this time of year, The minute Purim ends, the planning for Pesach begins. Time moves on and so do we. May you have a *hag sameach v'kasher*, a sweet Pesach.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis