



our children, our future

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Cantor-Educator Elena Schwartz
cantorelenaschwartz@mysinai.org

Do Not Separate Yourself From the Community

The notion of *Klal Israel*, of caring for one another and belonging to a *kehillah*, surfaces clearly in the Purim story. Purim is the most festive holiday of the Jewish calendar. It marks the celebration of an ancient history – when Queen Esther, a Jewish woman, a stranger to court intrigues, with no political power and no experience, simply saw, understood, and took action. She found the courage to risk her life to save the Jewish people from an evil advisor who plotted to destroy the Jews of Shushan. Esther, having reached a comfortable state in the Persian palace while her people were destined to be killed, was secluded from the Jewish community of Shushan. But after receiving a message from Mordechai saying: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace...” to which she replies: “go assemble all the Jews of Shushan...I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!” The festival of Purim also celebrates the bravery of Mordechai – one stubborn, “impractical” Jew who refused to submit to the Persian authorities. Both Esther and Mordechai knew that without the support and connection from their *kehillah* (community), their existence would be fruitless.

On Purim, it is a *mitzvah* to read *Megilah*, the Book of Esther. Purim festivities center on this reading. The *Megilah* reading of Purim can be a wonderful opportunity to introduce children to a synagogue. Even without understanding the context, very young children can learn to associate Judaism with joy and celebration. Giving *Shalach Manot* is a simple *mitzvah*, which reminds us that being a Jew means being a part of a Jewish community and sharing celebration with relatives and friends. It is a *mitzvah* to celebrate and be happy. A special meal, carnivals, sounding of *rushunim*, plays, and costumes are all part of the Purim celebration.

Happy Purim to all of you! **Do not separate yourself from the community!** Please come to celebrate Purim with our amazing Torah Explorers students as they lead us in a special Erev Purim service on Friday, March 20, where you and your children will have an opportunity to hear *megilah*, sing songs, and sound *rushunim*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Schwartz'.

Cantor-Educator Elena Schwartz
Director of Education