

Costumed Ultra-Orthodox Jews Celebrate Purim Holiday



(Reuters/Baz Ratner)

An Ultra-Orthodox Jewish boy stands dressed in a costume during celebrations for the holiday of Purim at the Belz Hasidic dynasty synagogue in Jerusalem on Thursday. Purim is a celebration of the Jews' salvation from genocide in ancient Persia, as recounted in the book of Esther. It is estimated that the custom of wearing masks and costumes most likely originated with Italian Jews at the end of the 15th century. Other Purim traditions include giving mutual gifts of food and drink, giving to the poor, sharing a celebratory meal and a public reading of the Scroll of Esther.