

## A Sense of Jewish Symbols 24/7



for the Early Childhood & Primary School Classroom  
 A weekly idea from SAJES Dept. of Early Childhood Education  
 Week of March 2 - 7 / Adar 25-30, 5768

### Jewish Symbols -24/7 Groggers & Masks

As most know, during the reading of *Megillat Esther*, at the mention of the name *Haman*, the congregation makes great noise in order to blot out his name. *Haman*, the enemy of the Jews in Persia, was supposedly a descendant of *Amalek*, the ancient enemy of the Jews. In the Torah (Deuteronomy 25:17-19), the Amalekites attack the Jews on their way out of Egypt to Israel. We are told to never forget this, and the Torah concludes with the words that we should "blot out the memory of *Amalek*". The *grogger* is a noisemaker, which is used to drown out the name of Haman during the reading of the Megillah. In Hebrew they are called *ra'ashanim*. "The custom of making noise when Haman's name is read has an old, but uncertain history. In the Middle Ages, children would write Haman's name on stones or pieces of wood and bang them together until Haman's name was erased. Although we don't know exactly when the *grogger* came into use, several wooden ones remain from 18th century Germany. They have metal or wooden gears at the top of the handle, which rattle when the grogger is swung around. The bodies were decorated with sayings and Purim symbols. There are no specifications for the construction of a *grogger* other than it should make enough noise. *Groggers* can be made in any form, filled with anything that rattles, such as beans, beads, bells or pebbles." *From: WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM*

The Hebrew word for mask is *masecah*. The custom of wearing masks and costumes on Purim was first reported in the 14th-century in the area of Southern France and Northern Spain. Later the tradition became popularized in Germany and Italy as carnivals. The established Jewish explanation for the use of masks has to do with concealment. Masks can conceal a person's true identity, and concealment is a major theme in the Purim story. At first, Esther hides her identity as a Jew until Haman's evil plot forces her to reveal herself. One interpretation of the name Esther is "I will hide" ('Astir'). Also it is noted that God does not appear once in Megillat Esther; God is the hidden agent in the story. "Get out your costume gear, Purim is almost here. Whether you're a bear or gorilla, Its time to read the Megilla" *The Purim Song Lyrics by David Lederstein (based on "The Hannukah Song" by Adam Sandler)*

### Multi-Intelligence Integration Ideas

★ This is the website from the Early Childhood Department of the Jewish Agency of Israel. Click here and find MANY ways to integrate Purim into your classroom! There are sites for children, nature, customs and masks! Try it! <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/child/israel/chagim/purim/page.asp>

★ Measuring and pouring are skills that can be enhanced during Purim preparations. With a scale, can weigh the beads, or popcorn, or stones that are put into containers to fill groggers. To pour into the containers, have the children spoon the ingredients into a funnel and decide how much they want. They can listen to how the sound changes with more or less beads added.

★ Children can design a mask to look like themselves! Then they can trade with one another and become their friends! Or you can enlarge and photocopy pictures of the children's faces, they can color them (I like using highlighters for a very artistic effect!) and wear them as masks.

★ ThisNewMonth, an early childhood website from the JCCA, suggests that you play listening games with the children. Ask the class to identify different sounds such as a hammer, clapping, a particular child's voice from the class...



### HEBREW VOCABULARY

פָּנִים / PA-NIM / FACE

רָעַשׁ / RA-ASH / NOISE

תְּלַבֵּשׁת / TIL-BESHT / COSTUME

*The Symbol: the outward expression of the inward signification-  
 should above all charm the senses by and for itself. Heine*

For further information:

Susan Remick Topek - Director, SAJES Early Childhood & Library Services  
 777 Larkfield Road / Commack, NY 11725 / 631-462-8600  
 srtopek@sajes.org / [www.sajes.org](http://www.sajes.org)