

Origins of Noise Making to Wipe Out the Evil Name on Purim

© Shelomo Alfassa / Purim 5768

“Noise, caused by dripping water into a vessel,
causes serpents to be driven away.” --Avodah Zarah 30b

Purim has long been a holiday on which merriment and frivolity has been welcomed within the walls of the synagogue. On Purim, in most of today’s synagogues, you will encounter a certain amount of boisterous hissing, banging, stamping and rattling during the public reading of the *Megillah (Book of Esther)*, at the mention of the evil *Haman* or his sons.¹ Even so, the custom of making noise to drown out / scare away or ‘blot out’ evil (in this case an *evil name*) is one firstly of pagan origin and does not have its foundation from within the Jewish world.

In some Jewish (and non-Jewish) academic circles, the story of Queen Esther is not universally accepted as history, and some go as far as supposing that the story of Queen Esther was developed to *explain* the festival of Purim.² One opinion indicates that the beating and noise making that takes place on Purim, originally had nothing to do with Haman:

It comes from ancient times, when Purim was still a nature festival, bound up with the passing of winter and the approach of spring. It is an ancient belief with people that at the time when the seasons change the evil spirits have great power and strive to do mischief to all. One of the surest safeguards against the spirits was noise.³

¹ [There are 54 occurrences of Haman] Some of the rabbis protested against these uproarious excesses, considering them a sinful disturbance of public worship (cf. Horowitz, Isaiah. *Shene Luhot ha-Berit*. Amsterdam, 1653: l.c., 260a, 261a) but often in vain (Bruck, M. 1c; Pharisäische Volkssitten, 56, 156, Frankfurt-on-the-Main, 1c.; and Zunz, *Ritus*, 69). Yet, noise making during the reading of the *Megillah* remains a serious and valid concern even in the 21st century, for the *halakah* states that we must hear every single word of the *Megillah*, and if we even miss one word, then we do not fulfill our obligation.

² Famous Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz suggested that the *Book of Esther* was a complete fabrication modeled on the Greek *Pithoigia* holiday. This is most likely because the names Mordecai and Esther sounds like the Babylonian gods *Marduk* and *Ishtar*; Jacob Hoschander, *The Book of Esther in Light of History*. (Philadelphia, 1923) defends the historical accuracy of Esther. / Philip Goddman in his revered, *Purim Anthology* writes that Jews could have participated in the pagan holiday by gift giving before the Haman incident. He says we can see this today when so many assimilated Jews exchange gifts on Christian holidays. 11

³ Schauss, Hayyim. *The Jewish Festivals*. New York, 1938. 265 (Hayyim Schauss taught for more than twenty-five years at the Jewish Teachers Seminary in New York and at the College of Jewish Studies and the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. He was the author of many books and articles on the Jewish religion and its customs, ceremonies and folklore.) Dr. Louis Jacobs says that modern biblical scholars have questioned the historicity of the events told in the *Book of Esther* and have tried to discover the origins

Background on Noise to Ward Away Evil

It can be theorized that one of the earliest uses of sound/noise to scare away things or people, considered wicked or evil, may reside in the practice of the ancient Israelites who blew the *shofar* (ram's horn) and the *hazozerah* (silver trumpet) to, among other things, panic the enemy in battle. This took place during the battle of Jericho which consisted of an invasion and conquest under Joshua of West-Jordanic Palestine, considered the first battle of the Israelites during their conquest of Canaan. The *Sefer Y'hoshua* (*Book of Joshua*) records the Jews conquered the city of Jericho with the blast of the shofar.⁴ The *Sefer Shoftim* (*Book of Judges*) says, Gideon and his army confused and scattered the enemy with the shofar.⁵ While the shofar may be considered a unique type of noisemaker, noise making instruments are not unique to the Jews.

Noisemakers of all sorts have been used by various cultures around the world to scare or dispatch evil. This is the reason why fireworks have become an integral aspect of Chinese New Year. Even though gunpowder, the active ingredient in fireworks, was said to have been used in the 9th century CE, the earliest unequivocal documentation of fireworks dates back to 12th century China, where they were first used to frighten away evil spirits because of their loud sound.⁶

Noise is also a reason why tin cans were tied to the rear bumper of newlywed's cars, and why church bells are rung in the Christian religion, both said to help scare away evil spirits that may be shadowing the joyful couple.⁷ The *charivari*, a wedding custom that was brought to Louisiana by the early French colonial settlers, includes a 'mock serenade' for the newlyweds made up of discordant noises using pots and pans, cowbells, guns and other noisemakers; it has been practiced in France since pagan times. The loud noises made during this ancient celebration are believed to drive evil spirits away from newlyweds.

of Purim in a Babylonian festival, later adapted by Jews. But, "there is evidence that Jews celebrated Purim as early as the first century BCE."

⁴ 6:1-6:20 / After crossing the Jordan, Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan where they laid siege to the city of Jericho. The Almighty spoke to Joshua telling him to march around the city several times. Eventually, after marching around the city the seventh time, the *kohanim* (priests) blew their *shofarot* (**ram's horns**), and Joshua ordered the people to **shout**. The walls of the city collapsed, and the Israelites were able to charge straight into the city, completely destroying it.

⁵ 7:19-22

⁶ Needham, Joseph. *Science & Civilisation in China*. Vol. 5, Part 7: "The Gunpowder Epic." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1986. 131-132

⁷ Hole, Christina. *The Encyclopedia of Superstitions*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996. / also see: Opie, Iona and Moira Tatem. *A Dictionary of Superstitions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. (Note: In Talmudic times, a *tabla* {Heb.} was sounded before the wedding. It was an instrument from which bells were suspended, used at bridal and other processions.) *Baba Batra* 145b

Mongolian *shaman* used sound generated from specialized instruments to create noise that is thought to scare away demons.⁸ In Burma, part of the treatment indicated for the disease cholera was to expel demons by scaring them out of the houses with noise.⁹ The Irish custom of the ‘wake,’ where friends and family gather around the dead, consuming alcohol and talking happily about the deceased, also includes vocal laments (often loud), said to have been established as away to scare evil spirits away.¹⁰ In the Hindu world, on certain holy days, young boys are sent to bang on drums, pots and pans and gather with other villagers to scare away the evil spirits with shouting and noise.¹¹

It is well established that noisemakers (handheld devices which have a single purpose—to make loud sounds) were used by 16th century German Christians as part of their Easter scapegoat ceremony which took place in darkened churches where clappers were sounded as a means of ‘driving Judas’ [Iscaiot] from the buildings.¹² “German children in Bohemia drive Judas out of the church by running about the sacred edifice and even [in] the streets, shaking rattles and clappers,” said the Scottish social anthropologist, Sir James George Frazer, in *Balder the Beautiful*.¹³ Easter in Prague and the Czech Republic still bring about the sounds of children playing with rattles and clappers, also to ‘drive out Judas.’ The annual secular New Year celebrated across the globe on January 1st has been welcomed in with loud noise since ancient times, thought to scare away evil spirits. By the 18th century, early Americans were continuing this tradition with cheers, shouting and using noisemakers on New Year’s Eve.

⁸ Znamenski, Andrei A. *Shamanism*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 242

⁹ *Sacred Spiral*. “Magic” (sacredspiral.com/reference/masks/magic.htm) Available: Feb. 3 2008.

¹⁰ Chisholm, Hugh. *The Encyclopædia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*. 1910. 331 / Also see: Uris, Leon. *Trinity*. New York: Doubleday, 1976.

¹¹ *Asia Institute of Management*. “The Mystique of Bali.” rvr.aim.edu.ph/mcga/bali/bali2.htm Available March 1, 2009

¹² Hsia, R. Po-chia. *The German People and the Reformation*. New York: Cornell UP, 1988. 138-139 / Also see: Lewinski, Yom-Tov. *Haman-Smiting in the Diaspora: Compilation of Purim Folklore*. [Hebrew] Tel Aviv: The Hebrew Folklore Society, 1947. / Cassel, a Protestant from England writes in his, “Explanatory Commentary on Esther” that: “...The Jews were wrongly reproached for expressing their feelings of approval of Mordecai and of hatred to Haman in this dramatic spectacle. But similar scenes used to take place in the Roman Catholic Church in Passion Week, when, after the candles were extinguished, a great noise was made in imitation of the tumult which the Jews raised before Pilate. We read in an old book: ‘On Good Friday people rattle and make a noise in the Church.’ And not only so, but scenes were exhibited in which Martin Luther in the effigy of an active boy received terrible blows, such as the Jews have not dealt to Haman. For the latter did only strike on wood and stone, and not men; but not so the former. Johannes Pauli tells an old story of a peasant who was frightened in the scene on Good Friday, in which, while the singing was going on, the priest put out one candle after the other, and then ‘every man began to beat and to strike as on such nights was the custom in the Papacy.’”

¹³ Vol. 1 part 4.

Jews Making Noise

The Jewish practice of making noise (verbal or otherwise), to wipe out the name of the evil Haman, is not mentioned in the *mishna* (c.200 CE) or *gemara* (c.500 CE), nor by Maimonides (1138-1204), but it seems to trace its origin to the emergent Ashkenaz communities of 13th century France and Germany, where in accordance with passage in the Torah, *Parashat Ki Tese*, it says:

Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way as you were leaving Egypt; that he happened upon you on the way, and that he killed those of you who were hindmost, all the weaklings at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted; and he did not fear God. It shall be that when Hashem, your God, gives you rest from all your enemies all around, in the land that Hashem your God, gives you as an inheritance to possess it, *you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek*¹⁴ from under the heaven—you shall not forget!¹⁵

There was once a custom to write the name of Haman (considered a descendant of Amalek) on the soles of shoes, and at the mention of the name, loudly stamp the feet as a sign of contempt.¹⁶ Some used a rattle for the same purpose, known in Yiddish as a ‘gregar’¹⁷ (from the Polish, *grzęgarz*), which produced much noise. This custom has become standard in almost all Ashkenazi synagogues, and those which have been culturally influenced by the same. A British account from 1825 says: “Whenever Haman’s name is pronounced, they make a terrible noise in the synagogue; some drum with their feet on the floor, and the boys have mallets, with which to knock and make a noise.”¹⁸ An 1888 British observer recorded:

In the evening of the same day, the synagogue is well illuminated, and the minister unfolds the whole scroll and reads the narrative. When he comes to the passages which speak of Mordecai and of the final victory, the people repeat them after him in a loud voice and triumphant manner; but when the name of Haman is mentioned, then the young people, and especially the children, make a great noise, and knock at the benches as if they were to kill him again.¹⁹

¹⁴ Emphasis added

¹⁵ *Devarim* 21:10-25:19

¹⁶ Amalek is a son of Esau's first-born son Eliphaz.

¹⁷ Also commonly known as a *grogger*, it’s a device made of wood (traditionally) or today metal or plastic, that makes an extremely loud clacking noise when a strip of material slaps against the teeth of a gear that is powered by manually generated centrifugal force applied via a downward extending handle. In Hebrew these are known as a *ra’ashan*, from ra-ash, meaning ‘noise’.

¹⁸ Jennings, David. *Jewish Antiquities*. London: William Bayned and Son. 545

¹⁹ Cassel, Paulus. *An Explanatory Commentary on Esther*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888. xxvii / Rabbi Uri Auerbach (*Kof-K*) says that in Europe, in some communities they would draw a chalk caricature of

Rabbi Shelomo Yitzhaqi, *Rashi* (1040-1105), wrote that there had been a custom to sing a certain poem immediately following the reading of the Megillah that concluded with the words, “Cursed be Haman, and cursed be [his wife] Zeresh.” Upon saying those words, the entire congregation would either stamp their feet, bang stones together, or break pottery dishes in order to hear a loud crash.²⁰ Banging stones together was a common custom, as stones were readily available and served the purpose of creating noise. More specifically, people would write the name of Haman onto two smooth stones, then knock them together until the letters drawn upon the rocks rubbed off, thus ‘blotting out’ the name of the enemy of the Jews.²¹ Ultimately, the stones fell into disuse, with only the audible knocking remaining.

Poland’s famous *Ramah*, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1520-1572), the Ashkenazi adaptor of Yosef Karo’s *Shulhan Arukh*, (*Code of Jewish Law*), stated in his commentary:

Some have written that children are accustomed to draw the likeness of Haman, or write his name, on pieces of wood and stones, and to strike them against each other in order that the name of Haman be blotted out (Deut. 25:19), [as it says] ‘the name of the wicked will rot.’ (Proverbs 10:7) From this custom got mixed up and turned the practice of striking Haman when they read the *Megillah* in the synagogue (Abudarham²²). But one should not abrogate a single custom or mock it, for they were not established for nothing (*Bet Yosef* in the name of *Orhot Hayim*).²³

Haman on a blackboard and erase it and that some *Tzadikim* [sic] would try out a new pen by writing the name Amalek and then scratch it out. This was done by the Sephardic community in London who wrote the name with pencil and removed it with a rubber eraser when the name was pronounced (Goodman, 324).

²⁰ Rashi is mentioned in *Shibbolei Haleket*, Italy, ~1230-1300

²¹ Rabbi Dr. Henry Hasson of Brooklyn, New York indicates that his father Nathan Hasson (born in Damascus, Syria then moved to Beirut, Lebanon before coming to North America) was taught to rub his feet on the floor when Amalek was spoken of on *Zachor* or when Haman was mentioned on Purim. Dr. Hasson recalls: “My father was taught to do it as a kid in Beirut, and he still does it every year. I think also it may be silly and somewhat disruptive, but it certainly works at getting people to pay attention to the reading. It gives people something to do. Many people who do not necessarily know how to appreciate the Torah reading get bored and may easily miss the reading while talking to their friend or reading the synagogues Torah sheet in English instead of listening to the *sefer* reading. When they are waiting all year to rub their feet on the floor (which is how my dad was taught to do it instead of banging loudly), they are acting out the ‘erasing’ of the name. It is like at the *sefer*, people get more involved and understand it because we act it out. The part where we put the *matza* on the shoulder is payed attention to more than any other part of the *magid*. I don’t think we should take this away from them as long as it is done in a proper manner without disrespect to the synagogue and without being too loud to drown out the *hazan*. (Private correspondence with the author March 12, 2008).

²² Abudarham (~1340) was a rabbi who lived at Seville, Spain, and who was known for his commentary on the Synagogue liturgy. Although disputed, it has been said he was a student of Jacob ben Asher (Baal Haturim).

²³ *Orach Hayyim* 690:17

Shimmie Kaminetsky, the Executive Director of *The Hebrew Institute of Riverdale*, an Orthodox Jewish institution writes in an unpublished paper:

Rabbi Abraham ben David (France 1125-1198), in his *Sefer Ha-Minhag* (Laws of Purim), and Rabbi Solomon Kluger (Poland 1785-1869) in his *Hakhmat Shelomoh*,²⁴ independently suggest, the custom actually dates back to the Jerusalem Talmud.²⁵ The Talmud lists a series of statements that it is customary to declare on Purim. For example, “Cursed is Haman and cursed are his children,” or “May the bones of Nebuchadnezer be ground up.” When exactly is one to recite these formulations? The Talmud implies that they are recited during the actual reading of the Megillah, upon coming to the name of either Haman or Nebuchadnezer. However, later scholars found this difficult because it would mean interrupting the reading with speech, which is prohibited. Thus, Kluger suggests that the noise making, which does not include speech, replaced the recitation of the prescribed formula. Alternatively, one can suggest that children who would be unable to recite a long formula upon hearing Haman’s name would be more comfortable fulfilling the spirit of the Talmud’s teaching simply by cursing Haman with the ancient equivalent of the Bronx cheer.

Rabbi Leon de Modena (1571-1648)²⁶ wrote that the Jews in Venice would “clap their hands at the name of Haman as a testimony to their utter abhorrence and destation [*sic*].”²⁷ An account from the first decade of 20th century Jerusalem recalls noise making:

The women are busy preparing sweets, cakes, and dishes of all kinds for the morrow’s rejoicing. In the evening the book of Esther is read in the synagogue, amid wild noise and shouts. Whenever the name Haman is mentioned, a hideous noise is made.”²⁸

Today, the stomping of feet has become near universal, and in some communities, it’s done not only during the reading of the Megillah but also the week prior, during *Parashat Zakhor*.²⁹ The Ladino speaking Turkish Jews had the custom to make much

²⁴ 690

²⁵ Megillah 3

²⁶ Born in Venice of a notable French family which had migrated to Italy after the expulsion of the Jews from France.

²⁷ Goodman, Phillip. *The Purim Anthology*. Philadelphia, JPS: 1973. 324

²⁸ Masterman, E. W. G. “Feasts and Fasts of the Jews in Modern Palestine.” *The Biblical World*, Vol. 23, No. 1., Jan. 1904. 24-36.

²⁹ A small paragraph in the weekly Torah reading (*Parashat Ki Tese*), that is often called ‘*Parashat Zakhor*’ (remember). It is in the book of *Devarim* (*Deuteronomy*) 25:17-19. For specifics on various communities,

noise when Amalek was mentioned in *Parashat Zakhor*, by stomping their feet, although this was often stopped by the rabbis because of disruptions.³⁰ In the Seattle Sephardic congregation of Jews from the Island of Rhodes, during the reading of *Zakhor*, they are encouraged to “bang their hands and stomp their feet in order to blot out the name of Amalek.”³¹ In the Brooklyn Syrian Sephardic community, when *Zakhor* is read, people stomp their feet in quick succession, creating a muffled battering sound. In 19th and 20th Sarajevo, the Sephardic community [mostly descendants of Spanish-Turks] stamped their feet when Haman was mentioned.³² Today, the few Turkish Jews in America, like most other Jews, use commercially made noisemakers when attending a Megillah reading. Jews of the Ottoman Empire had another tradition, that children would use hammers to beat a symbolic effigy of Haman (made of sugar) and to loudly bang out his name during the Megillah reading.³³

In Afghanistan, Jewish children drew pictures of Haman on planks or cardboard. During the Megillah reading, the planks were thrown to the ground and trampled on, making a lot of noise. Wooden gloves were held in the hands and clapped together, also making a loud noise.³⁴ Dr. David Kazzaz, born in Baghdad, tells that on Purim, children in Iraq scampered around with different sizes of *dumbuks* [drums] tucked under their arms, in addition to various other noisemakers. He remembered, “When I close my eyes I imagine the children making their clunking noises, I hear a cacophony of sounds...”³⁵

So why do Jews use noisemakers? And should they?

Some feel the custom of the Purim noisemaker was introduced to amuse children, it was a way to keep all children over six interested, as the obligation to hear the Megillah starts at this age. Customs of old and new vary, but no matter what the origins of noise making are, the actual *halakah* is to hear every word of the Megillah, not to make noise. In 1866, the *Kehillah of Rogasen* in the province of Posen, Poland, promulgated a set of rules concerning synagogue demeanor and included the prohibition against using gragers on Purim.³⁶ The Spanish and Portuguese (Dutch Sephardic) tradition mandates that decorum remains in order, and thus people were discouraged from banging and

see: Dobrinsky, Herbert C. *A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs: The Ritual Practices of Syrian, Moroccan, Judeo-Spanish and Spanish and Portuguese Jews of North America*. New York: Yeshiva University Press: 1986 381

³⁰ Dobrinsky 387

³¹ Congregation Ezra Bessaroth

³² “Purim.” *Vidas Largas*. Paris: 1983. 237 No. 2.

³³ Molho mentioned this in his original *Usos y Costumbres de Los Sefaradis de Salonica*, and it was mentioned in *Traditions and Customs of the Sephardic Jews of Salonica*.” and also by Dobrinsky 387.

³⁴ *Image Magazine*: “Purim Around the World.” 2008

³⁵ Kazzaz, David. *Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews*. New York: Sepher-Harmon Press, 1999. 99

³⁶ Zarchin, Michael M *Jews in the Province of Posen*. Dropsie College, Philadelphia, 1939

noise making during the reading of the Megillah.³⁷ In 1783, the *ma'amad* (Board of Trustees) of the Spanish-Portuguese congregation in London ruled that anyone causing a disturbance was to be evicted from the synagogue.³⁸ Today, at *Shearith Israel*, the famous Spanish-Portuguese synagogue in New York City, people are not welcome to make noise during the Megillah reading. In actuality, other than those that follow the latter Sephardic tradition, most Sephardic communities engage in using noisemakers during the reading of the Megillah, even though many rabbis do not encourage it.

Rabbi Moshe Shamah of Brooklyn's *Sephardic Institute*, a predominantly Syrian synagogue, writes:

Stamping the feet during the reading is disturbing and inappropriate and should not be done. Very young children or those with noise-making toys should, who will possibly create a disturbance and interfere with the fulfillment of the misvah, should not be present in the synagogue during Megillah reading.³⁹

Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe of Queens, New York states that:

The general noise-making at every mention of Haman's name throughout the reading poses problems in many synagogues, as we are obligated to hear every word of the reading. It is appropriate, therefore, to limit this to banging one's foot at the first and last mention of Haman's name and the names of his sons.⁴⁰

The *Sephardi Association of Victoria* (Australia) advises their members:

The general noise-making at every mention of Haman's name throughout the reading poses problems in many synagogues, as we are obligated to hear every word of the reading. It is appropriate, therefore, to limit this to banging one's foot at the first and last mention of Haman's name and the names of his sons.

This is similar to the custom in Egypt, where to avoid delay by constant interruptions at the reading of the name of Haman, the custom was to allow the beating of Haman only at the reading of the names of his ten sons and at the end of the Megillah.⁴¹

³⁷ De Sola Pool, David & De Sola Pool, Tamar. *Old Faith in a New World*. New York. 1955 120

³⁸ See: *An English Purim*, by Gabriel Acosta

³⁹ *Halakhot of Purim* 8, in Shamah, Moshe. *Halakhot Regarding the Jewish Calendar, Festivals and Special Days*. New York: Tebah, 2007. 109

⁴⁰ (midrash.org/halakha/purim.html) January 10, 2007.

⁴¹ Raphael Aaron ben Shimon, *Nahar Mizraim*, "Hilkhot Purim" 10.

Joseph Mosseri, a notable Hazzan (Cantor) in the contemporary Sephardic community of Brooklyn, NY, acknowledges that the custom of making noise by the people was frowned upon by the rabbis.⁴² “Rabbi Rahamim Haim Yehoudah Yisrael of Rhodes wrote against it in the 1800’s and he even got the Rabbis of Izmir, Istanbul, and Jerusalem to agree with him,” he says. “Rabbi Eliyahou Hazzan of Alexandria, Egypt also went wild against this custom, one he called an ‘evil custom.’” Hazzan Mosseri said that the custom caused (and still causes), “a raucous in the Synagogue.” Further, he indicates:

The non-Jews that work in the synagogue or those who pass by, hear the noise and it’s a *Hilloul Hashem* [profaning the name of the Almighty]. Back then, people brought hammers to bang on the wooden benches and chairs of the synagogues and that caused destruction of *Bet Hashem* (the House of God). The noise prevents people from hearing all the words of the Megillah or of *Perashat Zakhor*.⁴³

Summary

Noise making has been believed and utilized by various cultures to dispatch evil for thousands of years, independent of any Jewish tradition. Use of noise making instruments by Jews was adopted post-establishment of the observance of Purim, and seemingly was brought into the Jewish tradition only with in the last several hundred years.

Today, when Haman is mentioned almost anywhere in the Jewish world, noisemakers are twirled and feet are stamped in an effort to affront the evil name.⁴⁴ The Ashkenazi custom of spinning the gregar to make noise, has spilled over into the non-Ashkenazi synagogues and has become universally popular over the last seven to eight decades.

⁴² Private correspondence between the author and Mosseri – March 4, 2008

⁴³ Private correspondence between the author and Mosseri – March 4, 2008

⁴⁴ It’s interesting to note that Elliot Horowitz of Bar-Ilan University records in his, *The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence*,⁴⁴ that during the era of the Holocaust, in the synagogues of Europe, many Jews were “rediscovering forgotten forms of Purim festivity that, although once considered indecorous, were suddenly taking on new meaning.” He goes on to note that Rabbi Joachim Prinz⁴⁴ of Berlin recalled how after 1933, ‘people came by the thousands to the synagogue to listen to the story of Haman and Esther,’ which ‘became the story of our own lives.’ Horowitz states: “To those relatively assimilated German Jews, the Megillah, read in Hebrew and then translated, ‘suddenly made sense,’ for ‘it was quite clear that Haman meant Hitler.’ And not only did the long repressed spirit of vengeance reassert itself in the synagogue, but also the ‘frightful noises’ of which Basnage and others had written. ‘Never had I heard such applause in a synagogue when the names of the ten sons of Haman were read, describing their hanging from the gallows,’ recalled Rabbi Prinz. ‘Every time we read ‘Haman’ the people heard Hitler, and the noise was deafening.’” (See: *Poetics Today* 15: 1., Spring 1994) *This is a collection of Purim occurrences during the Shoa*.

Jewish law dictates that the public reader of the Megillah is to cease reading when the congregation is making noise when Haman's name is read.⁴⁵ If when hearing the Megillah read, *noise* continues after the mention of *Haman*—to a point where it subsequently obstructs further words from being audibly perceived—then the law of the holiday has been willfully disregarded.

Jews are mandated to hear all the words of the Megillah which contain the important story of the Jews of Persia and their escape from certain death. Purposefully created noise distracts one from fully fulfilling the misvah of Purim which is to hear each spoken word of the Megillah. Thus, the desire to fulfill the legal requirement of hearing the Megillah should be the primary reason for being in the synagogue; and the desire to hear the Megillah should most definitely supercede the craving to make noise, which was never originally a Jewish tradition.

⁴⁵ *Shulhan Arukh*, (Kitzur 141:13)