



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

### *Melave Malka Parshas Tetzaveh 5780*

In honor of the upcoming *Hilula Kadisha (yohrzheit)* of the *Pnei Menachem zy”a*, I will tell a story that truly provides us with a glimpse of his greatness.

The *Pnei Menachem* suffered from respiratory problems for years. Exposure to smoke of any kind caused him to choke and cough. Each year, the reading of the *Megilla* was particularly difficult for him, since the children customarily *klap Haman* with cap guns and other items that produce sulphureous smoke. The quantity of children producing smoke in the closed, crowded *beis medrah* created a cloud of noxious smoke.

In the first year that he assumed the mantle of leadership as Gerrer Rebbe, תשנ”ג, as Purim approached, I was bold enough to suggest that all “noisemakers” that produce smoke should be banned from the *beis medrash*. When I presented this suggestion to the Rebbe before *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, he didn’t even let me complete the sentence. He said, “How can I deprive Jewish children of this custom that they look forward to all year?”

Soon afterwards, I accompanied the Rebbe to a doctor’s appointment. He took the opportunity to ask the Doctor’s opinion regarding the smoke in the *beis medrash*. The Doctor responded in no uncertain terms that the smoke could cause actual damage to the Rebbe’s respiratory system, and could even be life-threatening. Nonetheless, on the way home, he once again asked, “How can I deprive Jewish children of this pleasure?”



[1]

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I thank Hashem who enabled me to come up with a good plan. I suggested to the Rebbe that he is probably not the only one who suffers from the smoke. There were many other elderly *chasidim* in the *beis medrash* who were likely to suffer as the Rebbe does. Therefore, even if the Rebbe is reluctant to impose such a ban for his own benefit, shouldn't he do so for the benefit of his elderly *chasidim*?

The Rebbe agreed in principle, but said that he wanted to investigate in order to determine that this was indeed the case. I told him that I would interview many of the older *chasidim* and present the results of my investigation to the Rebbe.

At this the Rebbe laughed, and affectionately suggested that since I was so concerned about his health, I may alter the results of the interviews. Therefore, he told me to find a very simple person who wouldn't even guess that the investigation was initiated by the Rebbe. I would then ask him to speak with the older *chasidim* and report the results to me.

I suggested a potential candidate to the Rebbe, who agreed that he would be an excellent choice. The man took his task seriously and presented me with a list of thirty older *chasidim* who said that the smoke during *Kriyas Ha'Megilla* bothered them. Some added that they felt the smoke endangered them.

Only after the Rebbe reviewed the list and verified the information did he allow the *gabaim* to announce that no items that produce smoke should be used for *klapping Haman*. The *minhag* would be fulfilled by banging, stamping, and other traditional, but smokeless, methods.

Anyone who thinks about this story should be amazed by the *Pnei Menachem's* humility and modesty. He was the leader of thousands of *chasidim*, and in his own *beis medrash* he was prepared to endanger his health rather than deprive Jewish children of a fraction of their *simchas Purim*. Has anyone heard of such a leader who was prepared to be *moser nefesh* for the benefit of any Jew, even a child?



[2]

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I will add something that I personally felt that Purim. It seemed to me that when everyone passed before the Rebbe to wish him a *Guten Purim*, he gave extra attention to the children. Even though he always greeted every Jewish child with a warm smile, on that Purim he greeted each one of those thousands of children with unusual affection. I felt that he did so in order to appease them and compensate them for depriving them of something they enjoyed and had been anticipating as Purim approached.

זכותו הגדול תגן עלינו אכי"ר



[3]

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