An emotional return to Montague Road

Chaim Zelig

A large group has paid an emotional visit to Edmonton Federation Cemetery where they davened at the kevorim of gedolim and inspirational figures from the past. The trip to North London was organised by the Federation of Synagogues and follows on from the recent publication of a book of biographies of rabbonim and communal leaders buried at the beis olom, authored by Rebbetzin Aviva Landau.

Dayan Y. Y. Lichtenstein, Rosh Beis Din, introduced the tour by explaining the crucial role which the Federation played in preserving the frum way of life for the East End immigrants who began arriving in their droves from the 1880s. Desperate to maintain their minhagim, they struggled to find shuls at which they felt at home, shechita which was acceptable, and jobs which allowed them to keep Shabbos. Often impoverished, they could not afford regular burial fees. The Federation cemetery was opened in 1890 as a response to this need, the first burial being of an eleven-month-old girl.

Rabbi Shalom Y. Bixenspanner, rov of Hendon Adass, guided the tour and presented both informative historical accounts as well as divrei mussar and lessons to learn at each kever. Dayan Yonosan D. Hool and Dayan Y Posen, dayonim of the Federation Beis Din, accompanied him and led Tehillim.

The first kever visited was that of Rabbi Moshe Grunwald, a rov who was brought to London to be the Rav Rashi of the Federation but was tragically and suddenly niftar before delivering his first drosho. Rabbi Bixenspanner spoke movingly of the influence a tzaddik can have on a place, just from a fleeting visit.

There were few dry eyes as the crowd walked past a vast stretch of kevorim of young children from the early 1900s. Many of them were marked with a simple sign, as their families could not afford matzeivos. A current scheme to provide dignified matzeivos for these kevorim is underway, with all collections from tzedoko boxes onsite going to this fund.

Tehillim were said at the kevorim of the Telze Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Eliezer Gordon, the Sassover Rebbes, Rav Reuven Dessler-the father of Rav EE Dessler and many more. Participants spontaneously related stories, with one person recalling details from the table of the Sassover Rebbe.

Reminding everyone that World War Two is a large part of our history and that there were many Jewish casualties in England, Rabbi Bixenspanner took the group to a matzeivos chaveirim, consisting of one stone for four kevorim. They are Mr and Mrs Israel Goldberg, their daughter Lottie and her son Victor, who were killed at the same moment in August 1943 by a WW2 RAF bomber which crashed over the sleepy village of Winslow in Buckinghamshire. It is ironic that the family had been evacuated there from Stoke Newington. Sadly, this type of kever is not uncommon in the beis kevoros.

An unusual visit was made to a matzeivah which does not actually mark a kever. Rebbetzin Sara Leah Lopian was reinterred

From l-r: Dayan Hool, Dayan Posen, Rabbi Bixenspanner PHOTO BATSHEVA PELS

to be buried next to her husband, Rav Elya Lopian, in Eretz Yisroel. Nevertheless, Rabbi Bixenspanner explained that the site was still *admas kodesh* and therefore Tehillim were said. In a courageous act of mesiras nefesh, Rebbetzin Lopian is famously known to have davened when her husband fell seriously ill, that she should be niftar in his place so he could continue teaching Torah (this occurred during his tenure as Rosh Yeshivas Etz Chaim). Incredibly, as he recovered, she became progressively more unwell and was niftar at a young age.

Dayan Lichtenstein commented, "The tour was very interesting and informative. Rabbi Bixenspanner impressed us with his knowledge of Anglo-Jewish history and gave people the opportunity to daven at the kevorim of these gedolim, which is of course the main purpose for visiting kevorim."

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- Miskolctapolca Bobsleight track.

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