

Letter from a Landsman

[Heart of Love, Spine of Steel / Issue 1099]

Thank you to the staff at *Mishpacha* for the weekly enjoyment and inspiration. I enjoyed the recent articles on my *landsman*, Hagaon Rav Elyakim Shlesinger *ztz"l*, and while I understand that the articles were written on very short notice, I feel it necessary to point out a couple of inaccuracies.

The article asserted that Yeshivas Harama, the yeshivah Rav Elyakim opened when he arrived in London in the 1950s, was a pioneering yeshivah. Actually, Rav Moshe Schneider and Rav Zeidel Siemiatycki had already established a yeshivah as early as 1938. In fact, when Rav Elyakim established Yeshivas Harama, he called upon Rav Moshe Schloss *ztz"l*, a Schneider's *talmid*, to serve as *maggid shiur*. Similarly, the Getter's cheder was up and running, with virtually no *limudei chol*; the Schneider's *talmidim* and various chassidim sent their children there. Contrary to what was written in the article, by the mid 1950s it was standard for frum boys to go to yeshivah, at least for a year or so.

An additional point that I felt was somewhat misrepresented was Rav Elyakim's approach to Zionism, which was often misunderstood. Rav Elyakim did not disagree that the Chazon Ish had a pragmatic approach to the secular state. Unlike others, however, he felt that the

Chazon Ish did not *encourage* voting, and rather that he encouraged Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz to run as an MK so that those who were voting anyway would vote for him. In later years Rav Shach would announce this opinion even more sharply, saying that the Chazon Ish held it was actually forbidden to participate in elections, unless one was voting for the frum parties.

Many in England were acutely aware of British antisemitism, both in Eretz Yisrael and at home. They knew about the Allies' passivity that kept them from saving millions of Yidden from annihilation during the war and the British refusal to allow refugees to enter Eretz Yisrael afterward. Accordingly, their sympathies lay with the new state, although most of them had never even visited it. Rav Elyakim, on the other hand, arrived in London after having lived in Eretz Yisrael, where he was active in the Pe'ilim movement. He knew about the plight of the Yaldei Teheran and the Yemenite immigrants, which lent him a different take on the nascent state.

His approach to the death of his father-in-law was presented in the article as somewhat of a conspiracy theory, with the official story presented first and then his opinion. I believe it would be unfair to share the story without mentioning the tragic story of the *kadosh* Dr. Yisrael De Han *Hashem yikom damo*, who was asked by Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld to explain to the British the chareidi view on the establishment of a Zionist secular state, and was undeniably murdered.

Similarly, Rav Meir Karelitz and Rav Moshe Blau *zichronam livrachah* were asked by the Maharitz Dushinsky to travel to England and explain their viewpoint to the British, and Rav Moshe Blau mysteriously perished on the way. At his *levayah*, the Maharitz Dushinsky shed copious tears and asked the *niftar* for *mechilah* for having sent him.

I also felt that the article made little reference to the true uniqueness of this unusual person. Rav Elyakim never shed his

delight in learning, his *simchas hachaim*, and his unbelievable enthusiasm for Hashem, His Torah, His *mitzvos*, His people, and His land.

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