

Rabbi Eliyahu Shamoula A”H



A Tower of Strength and Humility

Sarina Roffe

He had long delicate fingers, like those of a doctor. He stood tall, at well over six feet. Yet he was often seen with small snack bags filled with dried fruit and nuts, hardly enough food to sustain a man of his size and stature.

Rabbi Eliyahu Shamoula A”H was a listener, not a talker. He was not known for empowering charismatic speeches, but rather for his objective advice, his ability to hear what you said, sort through the unimportant information and summarize the facts in his soft-spoken voice. In every conversation, you felt important, like what you said mattered, and like he was focused on only you.

Rabbi Shamoula was a tower of strength, humble to the core, and the man behind the incredible accomplishments of Shehebar Sephardic Center (SSC). He was the person who made things happen, who assured that every detail was taken care of. The co-founder and director of the SSC, he provided the vision and directional outlook



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for the yeshivah. Under his guidance, the SSC matured from a small Sephardic yeshivah with 10 students into a global outreach program.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1949, Eliyahu Shamoula spent the first 12 years of his life there before immigrating to the United States with his family. It was a time of tremendous hardship in Egypt, as

the country underwent an overthrow and most of the Jewish population had to leave, while others were imprisoned under Gamal Abdul Nasser, who overthrew the Egyptian government in 1956, nationalizing the Suez Canal.

After completing high school, and receiving a degree in civil technology from Staten Island College



Rabbi Yosef Bitton, Albert Laboz with his award, and Rabbi Sam Kassim

Continued on page 84

Rabbi Eliyahu Shamoula A"H...

Continued from page 82

in 1971, Rabbi Shamoula moved to Israel where he pursued his dream and studied at the famous Porat Yosef Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

He earned his rabbinical ordination in 1977, and worked in the beginner's program for American youth at the Aish Hatorah Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Subsequently, he worked at a company in Tel Aviv that constructed the Ovda and Ramon Airbases in the Negev. Rabbi Shamoula married in Israel, and he and his lovely wife had four children.

Jewish education was in his blood and in 1980, together with Rabbi Sam Kassin, Rabbi Shamoula opened the SSC Yeshiva in the Old City. The Yeshiva has grown in number, reach and purpose into the present day Shehebar Sephardic Center.

Since its inception in 1980, the Shehebar Sephardic Center has provided rabbis, dayans, teachers, mohels, shochets and spiritual leadership to communities around the world. Each project is designed to help Sephardic communities combat assimilation and intermarriage.

The well-known rabbinical college was touched by tragedy when it lost Rabbi Shamoula A"H to cancer on December 18. All who knew him were touched by his humbleness, kindness and knowledge. Many of our lives have been enriched by his teaching, friendship and guidance.

For the past 35 years, Rabbi Shamoula dedicated his life to the SSC. It was under his vision, that the yeshiva had many firsts.

The SSC, named for Brooklyn's Chehebar family, was the first to create a one year post high-school Sephardic program in 1981.

In 1983, the SSC began the first successful one-year Spanish language Torah program.



Harry Adjmi with his award

The rabbinical college, which carries the name of Abe M. and Geri Cohen, was opened in 1985.

In 1990, the SSC opened schools in Russia and Uzbekistan.

By 2010, more than 300 rabbis had graduated from its renowned program.

In 2013, Rabbi Shamoula supervised and managed the yeshiva move to its new building, assuring every detail was taken care of. The Al and Sonny Gindi Building in the Jerusalem's Old City holds the Stephen Isaiah Ades Library, a Bet Midrash, study rooms and everything needed to be a place where Torah study can thrive.

As of 2014, there were 183 rabbis placed in communities around the globe.

And in 2015, the revolutionary Golden Leaves Program, centered in Israel and Shanghai, opened for young men.

All of these accomplishments happened due to Rabbi Shamoula. He was methodical, thinking of every angle, always objective, making sure everything ran as smoothly as possible.

Rabbi Eliyahu Shamoula Scholarship Fund

To honor the memory of this unique gentle man, American Friends of Shehebar Sephardic Center recently began the Rabbi Eliyahu Shamoula Scholarship Fund during a breakfast held at the lovely home of Richard and Alison Sutton. The couple graciously opened their warm and inviting home to all who could attend.

At the breakfast, Ricky Cohen spoke with passion and heart, about the wonderful accomplishments of the SSC and how many people around the world were touched by their outreach program and Richard Sutton spoke of his personal connection.

Harry Adjmi did an amazing job as Master of Ceremonies, passionately leading with his own commitment. Albert Laboz, President of Project Education, received the Educational Leadership Award, for his vision in addressing the community's tuition assistance crisis. Harry was surprised with an award for community leadership, as he has personally done so much to lead the community.

The fund will be used to plant the seeds for startup Jewish communities in the world. A rabbi will be sent to nurture and provide religious guidance to a new community or a community with no rabbi. Once the rabbi is established, the funds will be paid back to the fund to be used for another community. In addition, a Sefer Torah in memory of Rabbi Shamoula will be dedicated. This Sefer Torah, will be used in the new community, until the community can afford one of its own.

We miss Rabbi Shamoula. □

Sarina Roffe is a community member and frequent contributor to IMAGE Magazine.