

Moreinu Horav Eliyahu Simcha HaLevi Chazan zt'l

5668/1908 – 5742/1982

With Torah Vodaath from 1945-1982

Horav Elya Chazan zt'l was born to a family of Gerrer Chasidim, and spent his primary years of growth in the Kaminetz Yeshiva under the tutelage of Rav Baruch Ber Lebowitz zt'l. For the rest of his life, he was known as the talmid muvhak of Rav Baruch Ber. After learning there for twelve years, he went to learn in the Mir while Rav Baruch Ber was in America raising funds for the Yeshiva. When Rav Baruch Ber arrived in Kaminetz and did not see his prize talmid amongst those who received him, he immediately asked, “*Vu iz Elinka?*” (Where is ‘Elinka’?, as he was called). When he was told that Elya transferred to the Mir during his absence, Rav Baruch Ber was crestfallen.

Back in the Mir, Rav Elya heard what transpired, and immediately packed his meager belongings and returned to Kaminetz. He hurried to see the Rosh Yeshiva, and explained the reason for his departure. “I am substantially older than the rest of the talmidim, and since the Rosh Yeshiva was absent for such an extended period of time, I felt that it was prudent to transfer to the Mir. However, the Rosh Yeshiva can speak to me in learning, and if he feels that I changed my learning even one iota from the time I spent in Kaminetz, I will remain here. For this reason, I returned with all my packages.”

Rav Chazan was considered the top lamdan of his generation, and was respected as one of the ‘lions’ of the Mir. Due to his encyclopedic knowledge of the sugyos that were studied in the Yeshiva world, no less than Rav Aharon Kotler zt'l crowned him “the *Sar HaTorah* of *Nashim* and *Nezikin*”. He was revered for his lightening grasp of any question posed, and the brilliant and penetrating answers that he gave. Indeed, many Roshei Yeshiva would inquire of him the interpretation of the often cryptic words of the *Birchas Shmuel* (Rav Baruch Ber’s *Sefer*). Yet in his true humility, he would never display any arrogance or self-importance. “I was asked, and I answered,” was the way he would reply when anyone tried to get him to reveal the details of such conversations.

Following World War II, Rav Chazan took a position in Yeshiva Mercaz HaTorah in Montreal, Canada. He joined Yeshiva Torah Vodaath soon after, and delivered the highest shiur for three and a half decades. In his daily shiur, he presented the *Daf* in all its glory, explaining the words of the *Rishonim* and *Achronim* in a comprehensive manner. Once a week, he delivered a chaburah for the advanced talmidim, where he presented his own dazzling chidushim. These chaburos are the mainstay of his seforim, called *Divrei Eliyahu*.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak Sekula shlit”a related that he once asked Rav Chazan a kushya, to which Rav Chazan supplied his customary immediate answer. In the meantime, Rav Chazan engaged him in conversation about other matters. Suddenly Rav Chazan said, “Regarding your kushya, this is the answer.” He then proposed a novel solution. Surprised, Rav Sekula asked him when he had thought of the answer, since they were discussing other matters. Rav Chazan replied, “I am not like Reb Chaim Ozer, who was able to think in several matters at once; I never stop thinking in Torah!”

Upon the petirah of Rav Gedalia Schorr zt'l in 5739 (1979), Rav Chazan joined the Vaad Hanhallah of the Yeshiva, and took on a leading role running the day to day affairs of the Bais Medrash. After suffering a heart attack in the beginning of the zman of 5742 (1982), he returned for a few brief weeks to deliver his beloved shiurim with tremendous mesiras nefesh. Rav Elya Chazan was niftar on 12 Teves, 5742 (1982).

*Yehi Zichro Baruch!*