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Nessah Honors Rabbanit Heshmat Shofet

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Rabbanit Heshmat Shofet

For nearly six decades she was the solid rock behind the religious and political leader of Iran's Jews, never seeking the limelight nor recognition for her own work in the community. However on November 1st the local Iranian Jewish community's spotlight was on Rabbanit Heshmat Shofet as she was honored with a "Woman of Valor" award by the [Nessah Synagogue](#) in Beverly Hills which her late husband, Hacham Yedidah Shofet helped establish nearly 30 years ago in Southern California. The leadership of Nessah rolled out the red carpet with many of the evening's expenses donated by local vendors in order to welcome the well to do of Los Angeles' Iranian Jewish community. The crowd of nearly 500, both young and old joined together that evening for a celebration of a woman who has in her own rite given to the community for many years in both Iran and in the U.S.

As a journalist who has extensively covered the local Iranian Jewish community, I felt as if the evening was not just another "honoring" of an important person, but rather a reflection of a historical change among Iranian Jewry. Until recent years the predominately male-dominated community has long failed to give proper acknowledgement and thanks to strong giving women from amongst their ranks. Mrs. Shofet, now in her early 90's, is just one of the many remarkable females the Iranian Jewish community has finally come to appreciate and recognize. After her husband's passing in 2005, Southern California's Iranian Jewish community has been struggling to forge its new identity and find new leadership to guide it into the 21st century.

The evening's speakers shed light on the true character of this quiet, humble yet strong woman. Perhaps the most telling story came from her son, Rabbi David Shofet who heads the Nessah congregation and is considered by many as the community's spiritual leader. Rabbi Shofet recalled; "I remember my father telling me a story one day about my mother who was in his office one day when a gentleman was chatting with my father about his marital problems. This gentleman was going on and on about how horrible his wife was and also bad mouthing Jewish women in the community. My father just listened to the man but all of a sudden my mother came up to this man and slapped him across the face. She angrily said to him 'you can say what you want about your wife but you have no right to bad mouth all Jewish women in our community!'"

Other speakers praised Mrs. Shofet for being a strong supporter of the home for the Jewish elderly in Tehran, even to this day and for opening her home to battered Jewish women in Iran who at the time were escaping physical abuse from their husbands. Interestingly enough, the evening also marked what would have been the 101st birthday of Mrs. Shofet's late husband. After a moving video tribute from friends and family, Nessah's current President Mehdi Soroudi perhaps best expressed the community's thoughts to Mrs. Shofet when he thanked her for

sharing her husband with the community and supporting his years of leadership. Nessah, being one of the largest and central Iranian Jewish centers in the region has been trying to bring together the old traditions carried on for 2,500 years from Iran and the newer mentality of those living in the U.S.

The following are just a few of the photos I captured from that evening:



(left to right; Mrs. Heshmat Shofet and her son Rabbi David Shofet).



The evenings guests welcomed on the red carpet.





(left to right; Yedidah Shofet, grandson of the rabbanit and Isaac Gabai



Nessah's current president Mehdi Soroudi





The Shofet family saying prayers of the bread for the special evening together.



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