



Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

We dedicate this issue for HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, who left this world on Rosh Chodesh Iyar

Parshat Tazria-Metzora

6 Iyar, 5775/April 25, 2015

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A Hespel (Eulogy)

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

For my mentor and teacher, HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l

Rashi opens our parsha by referring to a similarity between the order of the laws of tumah (ritual impurity) and the order of Creation. In both, he says, quoting Rabbi Simlai, man comes last: he was created in the sixth day of creation, after all was done, and he is mentioned here, in Tazria, after the laws of kashrut/tumah in animals were laid down last week, in Parshat Shemini.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l commented that in both places Man was brought last for the same reason. Man's importance or purity stems not from what he is, as in the animal kingdom, but from what he does. Therefore, his creation, as it was, is incomplete and comes last; also, his state of purity is undecided and always temporary, and so it is described only after the fixed laws of kashrut/tumah are set.

His message, in short, was that unlike animals, the human being can, should and must shape himself.

My master and teacher, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, shaped himself in multiple dimensions: he was a *posek* (halachic authority) whose rulings were respected by many; he was a leader who expressed political views which challenged the mainstream ones; and he was a main figure in the shaping of the *tzurat halimud* (format of learning) in Hesder Yeshivot, and through them, in the entire Religious Zionist Torah world.

Nevertheless, for me, as for, I believe, countless other students, Rav

Lichtenstein was most and foremost a *melamed* – a teacher. Moreover, as often happens in teaching, most of the lessons were transmitted not in the lessons themselves but in between them; not only by his talk but mainly by his walk – and that I mean literally:

Anyone who saw Rav Lichtenstein run for a mitzvah - be it a shiur or tefillah, an *aliyah* to the Torah or a poor man asking for tzedakah at the door – immediately understood Ben Azzai's statement, "Always, you should run after a minor mitzvah as after a major one." (Avot 4:2) This was better than what thousand lectures could had achieved;

And anyone who saw the slow, steady and thorough manner in which he analyzed a question – be it during a shiur or in answer to the most mundane and trivial questions that students sometimes asked him – forever understood the advice given by the members of the Great Assembly, "Be moderate in Judgment" (Avot 1:1).

Rav Lichtenstein was not only a wonderful teacher; he was also endowed with the rare ability to make others into teachers. Never did he tire of emphasizing the importance of good educators as a basic requirement for any education. Again and again he reminded us of Alfred North Whitehead's words in his *Aims of Education*: "Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness".

Much more should be added, and will be, G-d willing, at the right time. However, I see this as the essential point that underlies the great impact that our master had on his students: he

was the vision of greatness. Every day he showed us, in a thousand ways, that what we see as a human limitation is merely a narrowness of our mind. With this, his greatness enabled us to deepen our commitment to Torah, to sharpen our sensitivities as human beings, and to expand our horizons in the service of G-d.

His message, in short, was that the true teacher is the one who can teach his student this one important lesson: who you are depends on your level of commitment to who you want to be. This lesson was embodied in his very being, and radiated in every single act.

A proper ending, I believe, would be the Rav Lichtenstein's words himself, writing about Rav Aaron Soloveichik: "Reb Aaron, while an inspiring vision, yet somehow seemed within reach, and truly presented a model. It wasn't so much what he said or did. I was simply enthralled by what he was--a remarkable fusion of mastery and simplicity, of vigor and humility and, above all, a pillar of radical integrity. To an extent probably far beyond what he knew or could even have imagined, he was to me, for many years, a polestar." (Leaves of Faith: The World of Jewish Living)

Now our polestar has gone out; the world is in darkness. Nevertheless, strangely, the road is still lit. Our master has passed on – but the Torah he kindled within us still burns, illuminating for us our responsibilities and duties as the servants of heaven.

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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

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We are grateful to
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Leaves of Faith: The World of Jewish Living

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein
KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2004

About the Author

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's works, which largely appear in article form rather than in books, are known as a pillar of contemporary Jewish thought. They clearly show the author's mastery of Torah, his awareness of contemporary issues in society, and his desire to understand both to their core. Rabbi Lichtenstein was also a master of the English language, and *Leaves of Faith* demonstrates this fact.

About the Book

Leaves of Faith is a two-volume work; Volume One deals with themes present in learning Torah, and Volume Two focuses on the Torah and its lessons as a part of our lives. Given that both of these arenas are vast, perhaps the specific topics that Rabbi Lichtenstein isolated and wrote about can give a glimpse into what he felt was important, for himself and for others.

- **Ch. 2 - Does Judaism Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakhah?** – On one hand we see that the Torah clearly acknowledges natural morality, “[W]e would have learned modesty from the cat.” (Talmud

Eruvin 100b). Yet, the dominance of Torah is inescapable, “The Torah has been given and Halakhah innovated” (Talmud Shabbat 135b). Rabbi Lichtenstein boils his question down to its essence: “...the question is whether Halakhah is self-sufficient.” In our tumultuous world, this is a critical question for all.

- **Ch. 9 - Patterns of Contemporary Jewish Self-Identification** – Self-identity comes in a variety of forms; some focus outward, while others focus inward. Rabbi Lichtenstein ponders, “What does it mean, personally or collectively, to be a Jew? Is Jewishness an axiological or a sociopolitical category?” Further factors explored include Zionism and the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish self-identification.
- **Ch. 16e - The Source of Faith is Faith Itself** – Rabbi Lichtenstein begins the final chapter of *Leaves of Faith* by stating very clearly that much of his personal inspiration is sourced in people as opposed to facts. From all of his role models and guides, he learned that, “[T]he key to confronting life, particularly modern life, in all its complexity: [is] the recognition that it was not so necessary to have all of the answers as to learn to live with the

questions.” This is not a new idea. What is special here is that we are being given a crucial insight: living with questions is not an intellectual exercise, but a way of life. Rabbi Lichtenstein saw those he looked up to struggling with questions without their lives being brought to a halt. In a fitting end to this chapter and the work as a whole, Rabbi Lichtenstein presents words of comfort to those struggling with faith, noting that by virtue of their struggle they, “[H]ave already become *mevakshei Hashem* [Seekers of G-d].”

A worthwhile read

Rabbi Lichtenstein's powerful mind is not the only thing that shines brightly throughout *Leaves of Faith*; his heart does as well. Even the most abstract portions have a clear emotional impact. In this work, the love of knowledge is one and the same with the love of life itself. What better teacher and example could there be? What is our focus in learning any new knowledge, especially Torah, if not to be more aware of the lives that we have been gifted? Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's teachings and memory should both serve as guides for our journeys through life.

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613 Mitzvot: #433: Prayer

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

According to the count of *Sefer haChinuch*, the Torah's 433rd mitzvah is the obligation to pray, as recorded in Devarim 10:20. How, though, can a human being think to address the Creator of the Universe? Certainly, one who lacks an appreciation for Divine greatness would think nothing of approaching G-d, but what about the person who believes in Divine majesty? How does he dare to pray?

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein discussed this in a lecture in 1996, translated and recorded by his students at <http://etzion.org.il/vbm/english/archive/ralpray2.htm>. As part of his remarks, he said:

In his essay “Ish HaHalakha” (Halakhic Man), Rav Soloveitchik examined the subject of praise in the course of his discussion of the Rambam's theory of Divine attributes set forth in his “Moreh Nevukhim” (Guide for the Perplexed). The Rambam maintains that it is preferable to altogether avoid descriptions of G-d's attributes; however, if one is already doing so, then he should word it in the negative rather than affirming a certain trait or ascribing a certain graphic description to G-d.

But according to the Rav, a person may indeed approach G-d and present his requests. Human beings who dwell in this physical world have all kinds of deficiencies, wants and aspirations, and as a result they sometimes choose to knock on the gates of Heaven, to break through the barricades, and to present themselves before G-d asking that He answer their requests.

Would we dare act in this way before a king of flesh and

blood? Would we shout, demand, request and plead? Where do we find such audacity? How do we allow ourselves such “chutzpa” in our relationship with G-d?

This led the Rav to speak at length of the necessity for the existence of “permission” (a “mattir”) for tefilla, something that would serve as a license of sorts...

In 1953, the first year in which I studied privately with the Rav in Boston, he taught Berakhot. Ever since that time I have been captivated by those issues and have even come to feel something of the sensation experienced by a person who simply stands in wonder: “What are we; what are our lives? What are we in relation to G-d?” The Rav's teachings made a deep and lasting impression on me. Later on, I had certain reservations regarding this line of thought, and even more so regarding such an existential state. Indeed, the feeling of “What shall a person complain of so long as he is alive, in light of all his sins?” (Eichah 3:39) arises in one's heart. As the midrash explains, “It is sufficient that he is alive; he should ask for nothing else beyond this.” Moshe Rabbeinu's words, “And I entreated G-d at that time...” (Devarim 3:23) indicate, according to Chazal, that all is given as a free gift. G-d owes us nothing. At the same time, though, can anyone imagine that G-d would plant us on earth - weak and dependent as we are - with only Himself for us to rely upon, and then block our channel to reach Him?

Indeed, can there be any meaningful human existence, either spiritually or materially, without access to our Father in Heaven?

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Biography

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein

Adapted from the
Yeshivat Har Etzion website

Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein was born on 28 Iyar 5693 (May 24, 1933) in France. In 1940, several months after the Nazi conquest of France, his family managed to escape to the United States. In his youth, he was recognized as an outstanding student at Yeshivat Rabbi Chaim Berlin, where he studied under Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner zt"l. He continued his studies at Yeshiva University under Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l, who granted him rabbinic ordination. In 1960, he married Rabbi Soloveitchik's daughter, Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein.

In 1957, he completed a doctorate in English Literature at Harvard University, after which he returned to Yeshiva University to serve as an instructor in Talmud and as rosh kollel at Yeshiva University's affiliated Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan.

In 1970, Rabbi Yehuda Amital zt"l invited Rabbi Lichtenstein to serve as co-rosh yeshiva of the recently-established Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shevut, Israel. Rabbi Lichtenstein accepted the offer and made aliya with his family in 1971. They served together as rashei yeshiva for four decades and taught thousands of students, among them many rabbis and educators. Rabbi Lichtenstein also served as rector of Herzog College and as rosh kollel of Yeshiva University's Gruss Institute in Jerusalem. He resided in Jerusalem from the time of his aliya until 2006, when he and his wife moved to Alon Shevut in Gush Etzion, near Yeshivat Har Etzion. In 2011 he announced his retirement from daily teaching, and devoted himself mainly to writing.

Over the years, Rabbi Lichtenstein published many articles on Talmud, Halakha and philosophy. Many of these were collected in his books *Minchat Aviv* and the eight-volume series *Shiurei HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein on the Talmud*, as well as in his books on Jewish thought and ethics *Leaves of Faith* (2 volumes), *Varieties of Jewish Experience*, *By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of G-d*, and in the recent series of interviews by Rabbi Chaim Sabato, *Mevakshei Panekha*. On Yom HaAtzmaut 2014 he was awarded Israel's highest honor, the Israel Prize, for his extensive and varied Torah literature. He also was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature in 2013 for his volumes on the Talmud.

Rabbi Lichtenstein passed away on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 5775.

Torah and Translation

Holiness and Impurity

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, <http://etzion.org.il/he/> קדושה וטומאה

Translated by Rabbi David Ely Grundland

...לאורך ספר ויקרא, באופן כללי, ניתן לראות את שני העולמות - עולם הקדושה (קרבת וכו') מחד, ועולם הטומאה (יולדת, זבים, מצורע) מאידך.

הגישה היהודית בעניין זה שונה משתי הגישות הנפוצות בעולם - הגישה המאגית והגישה המדעית. הגישה המאגית טוענת שאמנם יש בעולם כוחות קדושה וטומאה אך הם קמאיים ומצויים בטבע. ישנם שדים, רוחות רעות וכד' והם לא נוצרו ע"י אדם אלא נבראו ביחד עם הטבע. לעומתה, סוברת הגישה המדעית, שאין בעולם כוחות קדושה וטומאה כלל - אין חפץ קדוש יותר מחפץ אחר, אין מקום קדוש ממקום אחר ואין טומאה שרויה במתים או בכל דבר אחר. המדע, כמובן, מתכחש לכל המושגים האלה.

היהדות חולקת מצד אחד על המדע, וסוברת שיש בעולם קודש וחול, טומאה וטהרה, ולא זו בלבד אלא שיש גם דרגות שונות של קדושה ודרגות שונות של טומאה. מצד שני חולקת היהדות על הגישה המאגית בכך, שסוברת שכל הקדושה והטומאה מקורם באדם ולא בטבע. את הקדושה יוצר האדם - הוא כותב ס"ת ותפילין, הוא מקדיש בהמות לד' והוא גם מקדש את הזמנים.

הרב סולובייצ'יק כותב שבהר סיני, חרף המאורע הנשגב ומלא הקדושה שהתרחש בו, אין היום שום קדושה ואף אין ידוע מיקומו. ואילו המקום המקודש ליהדות הוא דווקא הר המוריה שנתקדש ע"י האדם - בו ניסה האדם להתקרב לקב"ה ולא להיפך. כך הם הדברים גם לגבי הטומאה - דברים הנמצאים בטבע והאדם לא נגע בהם אינם מקבלים טומאה - חיות, צמחים, חומרי גלם. מקבלים טומאה רק האדם ואביוניו - כלים, מאכלים ומשקים שנועדו לצורכו. יתירה מזו, גוי אינו מקבל טומאה - מי שאינו בעולם של קדושה אינו יכול לקבל טומאה. גם הטהרה מתבצעת ע"י חזרה לטבע - אדם טובל במעיין או במקוה שמימיו לא שאובים, כלי חרס נשבר וחוזר להיות חומר גלם וכו'....

Throughout the book of Vayikra, generally, one can see two worlds: the world of Holiness (offerings, etc.) and the world of impurity (post-partum, emissions, leprosy).

The Jewish approach to this matter differs from the two popular approaches: Magic and Science. Magic claims there are "powers" of holiness and impurity, ancient and natural. This includes the existence of demons and evil spirits and the like, which were not created by humanity, but were created together with nature. On the other hand, Science claims that there are no forces of holiness and impurity at all: no object is holier than any other object, no place is holier than any other place, and impurity does not dwell on the deceased or on anything else. Indeed, Science rejects the existence of these concepts.

On one side, Judaism differs from Science, claiming the existence of holiness and mundanity, impurity and purity. Further, there are varying levels of holiness and impurity. On the other side, Judaism differs from Magic, claiming the source of all holiness and impurity is humanity, not nature. Man forms holiness - he writes Torah scrolls and tefillin; he consecrates animals to Hashem; he even sanctifies times.

Rabbi Soloveitchik writes that at Har Sinai, despite the lofty and entirely holy event that occurred there, there is now no holiness, and its location is not even known. The place that is sacred to Judaism is specifically Har HaMoriah, which was sanctified by a human being - there a person attempted to draw close to G-d, and not the inverse. Similarly, regarding impurity: natural entities untouched by Man do not contract impurity - animals, plants and raw materials. Only Man and his accessories - tools, food and drink, which serve his purpose. Furthermore, a non-Jew cannot become impure: without a world of holiness, one cannot contract impurity. Purity, too, is obtained by returning to nature: one immerses in a spring or a ritual bath of undrawn water, clay vessels are broken and returned to raw material, etc...

This Week in Israeli History

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein goes to Yeshivat Har Etzion

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

As we mourn the passing of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, we look back at his decision to go to Yeshivat Har Etzion in 1971. In an interview filmed more than thirty years ago, and available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDvaOZAN7OE>, Rav Aharon explained what motivated him to join Rav Yehuda Amital at the elm of the nascent yeshiva:

What, I am frequently asked, is there [at] the Yeshiva, Har Etzion, which attracted you there?

I could answer very briefly: An inspiration and a challenge.

It is of course, first and foremost, an institution of Torah learning at a high level, located in the foothills of Hebron on the one side, Jerusalem on the other, and the very thought

that here one stands, engaged in the intensive study of Torah, within the very [geographic] context that the *avot*, the patriarchs, followed on the one hand, or that led of old to Jerusalem on the other, is a source to me of continuing inspiration.

The yeshiva itself is here part of what is, after all, a program of building, in the most literal sense of the term, of development in a truly physical sense, of a community. Fellows of the yeshiva here are imbued with a sense of commitment to the destiny of the Jewish people, view themselves as a part of the contemporary scene, not all of which is of course to our taste, but which nevertheless we regard to be something of which we are a part, and to which we contribute.

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Weekly Highlights: Apr. 25 – May 1 / 6 Iyar – 12 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Apr. 24-25				
After hashkamah	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Meshech Chochmah	Clanton Park	
4:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	NEW!
Before Pirkei Avot	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	<i>Rabbi's Classroom</i>
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Benefit from an Idol?	BAYT	<i>West Wing Library</i>
Sun. Apr. 26				
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Ethics: Charging for Healthcare	BAYT	Non-Doctors Welcome
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	<i>Not this week</i>
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	with light breakfast
8:00 PM	Azkarah (Memorial) for HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l at Shaarei Shomayim Rabbi Michael Rosenzweig, Rosh Kollel, Machon haGavoh l'Talmud, RIETS/YU			
8:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Gemara: Mind, Body, Soul	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>Not this week</i>
Tues. Apr. 28				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Job: Is Evil Punished?	Shaarei Shomayim	
Thu. Apr. 30				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua: The Levites and the Land	101 Tangreen Circle Thornhill	For Women Only
Fri. May 1				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Advanced Shemittah: Spices	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
Coming Soon!				
Sunday May 3: Midreshet Yom Rishon for women at Yeshivat Or Chaim				
Wednesday May 6: Business Ethics Lunch at Zeifmans LLP				
Shabbat May 8-9: Shabbaton at Shaarei Tefillah				
Sunday May 10: Legal Ethics Seminar at BAYT				
Sunday May 10: Midreshet Yom Rishon for women at BAYT				

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