The title of Rabbi Reuven Zigler's important work, Majesty and Humility, summarizing the philosophical principles of Rabbi Yehuda Amichai, reflects the essence of the pursuit of human perfection.

Most often the results of striving for perfection, in real terms, fall short of acquired goals and destinations, the reason being, as The Rav contended, that both majesty and humility are Divine attributes. The journey towards these attributes is a never-ending process. It follows that we must strive for perfection — as much as is humanly possible — while simultaneously grasping from a practical point of view, that, at best, only partial success is attainable.

Partial success varies from person to person. Even the most successful Biblical rendezvous to the Divine understanding of the Divine service — notably Moses at Mt. Sinai — lacked absolute perfection. Our Sages, in Sukkah 46a, declare that Moses' ascension to Mount Sinai was not immediately followed by ten handbreadths from heaven. The challenge to attain further spiritual heights never ceases until the end of days.

Living his life based upon his father-in-law and mentor's credo, HaRav Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l exemplified the best in a life striving for perfection, a life characterized by majesty and humility. Raw Aharon — as he was affectionately referred to by his students and admirers — was a majestic personality who set a high bar for all of his peers both physically and intellectually. The combination of a gifted intellectual mind, diligence and discipline in his learning, along with a totally uncompromising commitment to the “Service of G-d” via Torah study, produced a Torah giant of awesome proportions.

Coupled with this remarkable achievement was his vast endurance in general knowledge, wisdom and thought as depicted in the worlds of literature, philosophy and the sciences. As the head of the Kollel program, Rav Aharon, at age 38 — just entering into his prime — was prepared to sacrifice a guaranteed future as one of the leading Torah spokesmen on American soil, although he continued to influence Torah in America through the many students who came under his guidance. His dedication to Torah learning in the Har Elzon Yeshiva’s one-year programs and through his writings.

Waiting for him in the embryonic community of Eretz Yisrael were two communities which served as theBeth Midrash of Yeshivat Har Elzion at the time. Rav Aharon would soon partner with Rav Yocheved Akhtar in jointly nurturing this fledgling Yeshiva to the heights of a Torah empire of global proportions.

Rav Aharon was awarded the country’s coveted “Israel Prize” on Israel’s Independence Day in 2014 in recognition of his Torah accomplishments and contributions to the State of Israel. To many, this was a clear vindication of his decision to establish his place in this world in Eretz Yisrael.

No less central to Rav Aharon’s persona was his role as spiritual leader, normally acquainted with Rav Aharon witnessed humility in the finest sense of the word. Rav Aharon was keenly aware of his greatness and position, and always served the Torah world and functioned as a “servant of G-d” in accordance with this self awareness, but never flaunted nor exploited it for any personal gain.

The awesomeness of his humility was perceived while observing him during prayer or by witnessing his exceptional dedication to his children’s religious education. In his capacity as a towering teacher of Torah, where he would listen carefully to comments and questions while analyzing their intrinsic worth.

Upon presenting halakhic inquiries to Rav Aharon, one could ordinarily expect an immediate and appropriate response. However, on a particular personal issue once brought to his attention, Rav Aharon felt the need to consult with his fellow Besh Yeshiva and colleague, HaRav Amiatl zt”l, and then to jointly bring the question to the great Posek, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l for his final decision on the matter.

Intellectual honesty and impeccable integrity were hallmarks of Rav Aharon’s character. No less noteworthy was Rav Aharon’s crowning achievement, while concurrently serving as his father’s successor, in partnership with his wife, Tova, of six sons and daughters all imbued with deep Torah knowledge and kindness, and all dedicated to the principles laid out by their saintly father. As students of Rav Aharon, we were constantly impressed by his majesty and inspired by his humility. His role model and guiding light in clarifying social issues as well as domestic and global concerns. He will be sorely missed by all. With reverence, we pay tribute to him as a leader, a servant of G-d, and a role model of kedusha — the greatest rabbinic model of kedusha.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik speaks of the Jews as a people possessing a “touchstone of history.” His words are an emotional and wrenching juxtaposition of Israel’s Memorial and Independence Days.

One of the themes important in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s theology sheds light on what this means to modern Jewry.

In his essay, Kol Dodi Dofei (“The Voice of my Beloved Knocks”) Rabbi Soloveitchik speaks of the Jewish people: the covenant of coercion and the covenant of choice.

The first covenant, commonly called the “Pact Between Halves” (Genesis 15), is with Abraham: overwhelmed with the fear that his descendants will suffer because he was an outcast, he swore to G-d that he would give him a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove and a young pigeon; the animals, except for the birds, are then split in half, the blood of each animal is placed into two large bowls, and the rest he sprinkles on the altar. “He took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; they responded, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do and will we obey’ (Exodus 24:7).”

Here, too, there is the blood of covenant. However, at Sinai, the Jews are not coerced into accepting the Torah. Instead, they voluntarily take it upon themselves, crying out with one voice, “We do and we will obey,” meaning that we will not be Jews merely because we were born Jews, or because the Gentile world defines us as Jews. At Sinai we chose, freely and openly, to accept a binding system of obedience and service, which Lord has spoken we will do and will we obey”.

The second covenant is of choice, and it takes place at Sinai, in Parshat Devarim.

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