Rav Aharon - a tribute by a minor student – Ori Einhorn

My Rabbi was the most brilliant Torah scholar that I have ever met. My Rabbi was the simplest man I have ever met. In the straightforward simplicity, lies the Godliness.

I have never cried as much over the loss of a gadol beTorah, as I have about Rav Aharon, and I have been shocked by my raw emotion, having been but the most marginal of all his students. I am mourning the loss of this simplicity in the world, and pining for its beauty within my own worship of God.

Here was a man, a Torah giant, a brilliant expositor, who was too brilliant for me to understand, and here was a simple Jew, my neighbor in Alon Shevut, who would say hello when passing me on the street.

I’ll never forget my shock, after having made aliya, gotten married, and moving to the kollal (in that order), of Rav Aharon passing me in the hall of the yeshiva, saying “How are you doing? Do you miss Staten Island? How are your parents? Do you like the life in yeshiva?” I stammered out some short response, which I have no recollection of, and all I can recall is thinking “What?!? How does he even know who I am? How does he remember anything about me?!? How can he possibly care, with all the important Torah sugiyot he has in his head?” Oh, I know what you’re thinking, he was a charmer, remembering those details about my life, remembering me. But if you knew Rav Aharon you would laugh at the word “charmer” with its fake connotations, and you would realize that he really cared. How could this go together with his unsurpassed brilliance and diligence in Torah study? Unclear. Unique. Unbelievable.

There is a picture of me at my wedding which has made its rounds in the social media today. Rav Aharon was the mesader kiddushin, and when my mother lifted the veil to give me to drink, he put his hand underneath, so that the wine would not spill and ruin my dress. I remember the shock of that moment like it was today. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, the Rav Aharon, cares about my silly wedding dress! The bride needs to stay happy at her wedding, and pretty for her pictures.

There is a story which Chaim Navon told about his brother who had learned in yeshiva. His brother was in the hall, when the screw in his glasses fell. He was on the floor searching for it. Next to him, he turns to see Rav Lichtenstein on the floor, asking him, Did you lose something? This gadol hador, on his knees, to do hashavat aveida.

One of the Rav’s students, told me the following story today. He and his wife were petrified. They got terrible news from the doctors about the possible birth defects of the baby who was in his wife’s womb. They set an appointment to see the Rav, and told him the story. He said, “Can I promise you that this child will be normal? No. But you can absolutely not have an abortion. You are strong. If there is a problem with this child, you will deal with it. And if you have trouble, I will be there to help you.” This is a portrait of Godliness on this earth.

The connection between heaven and earth. The Rav as a clear guide, as a walking example of how to be in all areas: Torah learning, diligence in Torah study (Rav Aharon didn’t eat soup, because it took too long!), human kindness, dignity, family first, Torah uMadda. In every area, he excelled. May his memory be a blessing and may we be zocheh to learn from him still- from his books, his students and his memory. I carry a piece of him with me always.