A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein was born on 28 Iyar 5693 (May 23, 1933) in France to Rabbi Dr. Yechiel and Bluma Lichtenstein. In 1940, his family had been trapped for several months in Vichy France when Hiram Bingham IV, the American vice consul in Marseilles, broke American policy by granting the Lichtenstein family exit visas to the USA. (Mr. Bingham is known to have saved the lives of some 2,500 Jews and non-Jews in this way, until he was transferred out of France in 1941.)

As a young man, HaRav Aharon was recognized as an outstanding student at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, where he studied under HaRav Yitzchak Hutner zt"l. He continued his studies at Yeshiva University under HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l, who granted him rabbinic ordination.

In 1957 HaRav Lichtenstein 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 Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). In 1960, he married HaRav Soloveitchik's daughter, Tovah.

In 1968, HaRav Yehuda Amital invited HaRav Lichtenstein to serve as Rosh Yeshiva of the recently established Yeshivat Har Etzion. HaRav Lichtenstein accepted the position only on condition that HaRav Amital would remain Rosh Yeshiva as well. HaRav Lichtenstein made aliya with his family in 1971, and HaRav Amital and HaRav Lichtenstein served together as co-Roshei Yeshiva for four decades and taught thousands of students.

HaRav Lichtenstein also served as Rector of Herzog College and as Rosh Kollel of Yeshiva University's Gruss Institute in Jerusalem.

Throughout his career, HaRav Lichtenstein combined mastery of the vast expanses of Torah knowledge with breathtaking analytic depth and sharpness. His diligence in Torah study, day and night, was legendary. Hundreds of his students became educators, roshyeshiva and rabbis in Israel and throughout the world. Alongside his Torah greatness, he was renowned for his deep humility, nobility and love of humanity.
Over the years, HaRav Lichtenstein published many articles on Talmud, halakha and machshava. Many of these were collected in his books Minchat Aviv, as well as in his books on Jewish thought and ethics, Leaves of Faith (2 volumes), Varieties of Jewish Experience, and By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God. The eight-volume series Shiurei HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein al haTalmud is based on his shiurim, as recorded by talmidim. A series of conversations between HaRav Lichtenstein and Birkat Moshe Rosh Yeshiva and author Rav Chaim Sabato was published under the title Mevakshei Panekha and quickly became a bestseller.

In 2012, HaRav Lichtenstein was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature, in recognition of his volumes on the Talmud. On Yom HaAtzma'ut 2014, HaRav Lichtenstein was awarded the State of Israel’s highest honor, the Israel Prize, for his extensive and varied contribution to Torah literature.

HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein passed away on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 5775, at the age of 81. His funeral, which was attended by thousands of people of all ages and walks of life, took place on Tuesday, the 2nd of Iyar at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shevut, and he was buried on Har HaMenuchot in Jerusalem.

HaRav Lichtenstein leaves behind two sisters, his wife, Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein, six children, including Yeshivat Har Etzion Rosh Yeshiva Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, and Head of the Women’s Beit Midrash in Migdal Oz Mrs. Esti Rosenberg, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Past and Future

The death of HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein marks the end of an era for Yeshivat Har Etzion. For the first 40 years of its existence, the Yeshiva was defined by the joint leadership of HaRav Yehuda Amital and HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein. The sound of their voices created the rhythm of the Yeshiva. The weekly alternation between the shiur klali of HaRav Amital and the shiur klali of HaRav Lichtenstein brought the tractate to life from two complementary perspectives; one week the Achronim spoke (via HaRav Amital) and the next week it was the turn of the Rishonim (by way of HaRav Lichtenstein), to be followed the next week by the Achronim once again. The Yamim Nora'im were defined by the Mussaf of HaRav Amital and the Haftarah of HaRav Lichtenstein, the sound of HaRav Lichtenstein announcing each shofar blast, and the singsong of HaRav Amital speaking before Ne'ilah.

For students in the Yeshiva, the harmony, respect and love between two such different men was akin to the space between the keruvim, from which the Divine voice could be clearly heard. With each of the Roshei Yeshiva sitting on either side of the aron kodesh, the Beit Midrash was physically defined by their presence.

With the loss of HaRav Lichtenstein, it has become clear not only what unique individuals these two talmidei chakhamim were, but how well they taught their students. With characteristic thoughtfulness and modesty, they also planned for the future and their enduring legacy is carried on by Roshei Yeshiva Rav Yaakov Medan, Rav Baruch Gigi and Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein. The Yeshiva continues to flourish as a place in which Torah is learned with intense dedication, and multiple viewpoints within Torah are cherished.

The Funeral

The funeral of HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein was an outpouring of grief, and many former students and admirers from abroad flew to Israel to attend. In advance of the levaya, Roshei Yeshiva Rav Yaakov Medan and Rav Baruch Gigi published a letter saying that "while the halakha of a rav muvhak, for whom a student is obligated to tear his clothes, does not apply today, there is place for someone who feels that his spiritual world was built by HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein to tear kri'ah" and many students did tear their shirts in mourning, as did many of the staff, themselves students of HaRav Aharon.

HaRav Aharon’s children eulogized him, as well as Rosh Yeshiva Rav Baruch Gigi and Ram Rav Ezra Bick. Translated excerpts from the hespedim appear on p. 4-5. All the hespedim can be viewed in their entirety at http://haretzion.org/RALztl-levaya
Rosh Yeshiva Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

I can only point out one of the central aspects of his personality: his constant inner awareness of service, of mission as a servant of God. He often spoke of the service of the levi'im as a model for the service of God. The concepts of "to stand and serve" and "to serve and to guard" were the basis of his existence. He defined the service of God as placing God in the center, and understanding that man is God's worker, and that is how he lived his own life. He loved the line of Milton, "they also serve who only stand and wait." His modesty came, in a large degree, from the feeling that man is intended to serve a higher and more exalted purpose than his own self. I have no doubt that today we can say, "There died Aharon, servant of God."

Rav Yitzchok Lichtenstein

To eulogize a great man is a difficult task. We see that Chazal summarized. They would choose a few points and base the hesped on that. About my father, one can say: "He was an anav, he was a shakdan, he was one of the disciples of Hillel the elder." Modesty was not just a character trait of my father; it was his entire life existence, and the essence of his being. The trait of anav is what enables a person to love others, he does not think about himself. It is the trait that enables him to pursue peace…His shakdanut was total. I don't recall even one time that Abba just sat on the sofa and didn't learn or do something that he felt was a mitzvah. He didn't just sit and pass the time. About a year ago, I was sitting by Abba's bedside in the hospital on Shabbat, when, in a semi-conscious state, he gave an entire shiur on the difference between borer on Shabbat and Yom Tov. That was the degree to which he was one with the Torah.

Rav Mayer Lichtenstein

In the Gemara, in Shabbat 23, Rava says, "It is obvious to me that Shabbat candles take precedence over Chanukah candles because of shalom bayit." The Chanukah lights, which are lit at the entrance of the courtyard, shine light into the public space and symbolize public responsibility, while the Shabbat candles which are lit in the home to enable the family to eat together, symbolize the family sphere and our investment in the family.

Abba, you lived this Gemara and never put your public responsibilities before your role as our father. When we studied in Yeshivat Netiv Meir, you would come twice a week to learn with us after seder. When you were asked how you found time to do this, you simply didn't understand the question. "What could possibly be more important than learning with my children?" you asked.

But actually, you knew how to light both lights at the same time. The Gemara goes on to relate that Rav Huna used to pass by the house of Rav Avin the Carpenter, and he saw that there were many lights lit. He said: "Two great men will come from here." The Ran explains that the multiple lights the Gemara is talking about are Shabbat candles and Chanukah candles. My father knew how to light both lights together, never one at the expense of the other. And indeed, he succeeded in producing many great people, both within his family, and within the Beit Midrash.

Esti Rosenberg, Rosh Beit Midrash at Migdal Oz

"A ladder set on the earth, and its head reaches heaven." Your head reaches heaven for all of your students and for all of Am Yisrael – a heaven of Torah, a heaven of yirah and emunah and greatness, ethics, kindness and tremendous modesty, sensitivity and righteousness in middot.

For us, your family, you were also a ladder set firmly on the ground – with a smile and simple fatherly love and concern. Yet even at home, you continued to reach for the heavens. You invested so much in our religious lives, gently and with love, but with clear standards and high goals for each one of us. And we followed you – to the edge of the heavens.

Rav Shai Lichtenstein

Every moment was dear to him, yet he gave so freely of his time to others. I remember him sometimes coming home at 11 o'clock at night from the Yeshiva because one of the students needed to speak with him personally. Other times, he would be learning in his study and we would come home with Mommy and call out, "We're home!" and he would always come downstairs and chat with us. So many of our phone calls would end with him asking if there was anything he could do to help us. He would come back from a trip overseas and go from the airport right to the Yeshiva and give all the shiurim that he had missed while he was gone. Back to back!

For me, Abba was the solid ground, the responsible adult who watched over us and was there to catch us if we fell. Yet beneath that solid ground, what a fire burned in him! Last Thursday, the last time I saw you, I could see that you were unsettled. I couldn't tell what you were saying. I came closer and you said to me: "Let’s learn together." I felt it might be the last time. We studied halakhot of tumah and taharah. How fitting, Abba, that your soul left you in purity.
Brazil, Germany, Serbia, Poland, Uruguay, Canada, South Africa, the United States, in Jewish communities in England, Australia, and additional memorial events were held in HaRav Lichtenstein’s memory, worldwide took part in a global Tikun Leil Shavuot to list them all. Over 200 communities were so numerous that it is impossible simply felt the need to recognize the loss of one of the Jewish people’s great leaders.

The commemorations took so many forms of his students, yet he often said that he saw his family as his crowning accomplishment. [Turning to the family] This place, and the Torah which will continue to be heard here, following along the path that he blazed, may these be your comfort and ours.

Many times in staff meetings he would exhort us to inspect our educational path and to see if we were completely fulfilling our obligations to our students. He spoke mostly to himself, and HaRav Amital zt”l often said to him “Rav Aharon, stop worrying so much, you can also get a little nachas from your students, yet he often said that he saw his family as his crowning accomplishment. [Turning to the family] This place, and the Torah which will continue to be heard here, following along the path that he blazed, may these be your comfort and ours.

Tony Mittelman

“His father brings him to this world...and his Rav brings him to the next world” (Bava Metzia, mishna 2:11). Abba, you brought us into this world. You were so involved in our lives. You did laundry, took pictures of us, brought us back presents from America. You knew all our friends and came to our school plays.

And you brought us into the next world. You embedded in us the desire to seek God, and the love of Torah. You dedicated yourself to building our Olam Haba. When I asked you to give a regular Gemara shiur for women in Migdal Oz, because I wanted to experience what it was like to be in your shiur, not just to learn with you in chavruta, you put another shiur into your schedule, just because I asked... Everything you did, you did with complete dedication. Dedication to Mommy and to the family. Dedication to the Yeshiva, dedication to Torah, dedication to Saba and Savta.

Rosh Yeshiva Rav Baruch Gigi

The Gemara in Moed Katan (24a) says that when Shmuel heard that Rav had died, he tore [his] twelve garments and said, “A man from before whom I feared has died.” Rav Aharon was indeed “a man from before whom I feared,” an awesome man in his knowledge of the Torah, in his service of God, in his middot, in his morality, in his tremendous human sensitivity.

Rav Ezra Bick, Ram and Director of the VBM

I have been a student of HaRav Aharon for the past 50 years. I met him when I was 15 and since then I have followed him. I ask myself, what does a student, who knows only how to be a student, do when his rebbi is gone? How do we go forward? In what way can we continue to be his students?

HaRav Lichtenstein’s unceasing Talmud Torah, his personal righteousness...we can try to emulate those, but it will be hard to succeed. But one middah unifies all of HaRav Lichtenstein’s middot — his complete dedication to Avodat HaShem.

When Eliyahu the prophet first meets Elisha he tosses his cloak, his aderet, on Elisha and Elisha follows him. I was 15 when HaRav Aharon tossed his aderet on me. When Eliyahu is called to the next world, Elisha is lost until he finds the aderet, picks it up, and puts it on. Our teacher is gone and we cannot fill his place. To be a good student is to know how to carry on. Let us pick up the aderet of Avodat HaShem and strive to continue in his path.

The Reaction Around the World

The passing of HaRav Lichtenstein was marked around the world, both by students of HaRav Lichtenstein, and by others who simply felt the need to recognize the loss of one of the Jewish people’s great leaders. The commemorations took so many forms and were so numerous that it is impossible to list them all. Over 200 communities worldwide took part in a global Tikun Leil Shavuot in HaRav Lichtenstein’s memory, and additional memorial events were held in Jewish communities in England, Australia, Canada, South Africa, the United States, Brazil, Germany, Serbia, Poland, Uruguay, Hungary, and, of course, Israel.

The Shloshim

The Yeshiva marked the end of the shloshim for HaRav Lichtenstein zt”l with an event in the Beit Midrash. The speakers were: Moshe (“Moshko”) Moskovics, Chief Rabbi of Ramat Gan Rav Yaakov Ariel, Rosh Yeshiva Rav Yaakov Medan, Rosh Yeshivat Yerucham Rav e liyahu Blumenzweig, and Rav Herzl Rosenberg, Rosh Ulpanat Rosh Tzurim and son-in-law of HaRav Lichtenstein zt”l. The event included a collective siyum on Tanakh led by Ariel Rosenberg ’14H, grandson of HaRav Lichtenstein zt”l, and a siyum on Shas led by Ram Rav Daniel Wolf. Son-in-law Oded Mittelman led the learning of mishnayot which closed the program.

Rav Medan said, “One cannot specialize within Torah. The Torah understanding that we seek demands a breadth of knowledge that can only be acquired through many, many hours of hard work. We don’t have the intellectual gifts of HaRav Lichtenstein, but
we can aspire to his love of Torah, and his work ethic in the study of Torah."

The Etzion Foundation held a Shloshim Program at the Jewish Center in the Upper West Side. Speakers included: Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshiva Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, Rabbi Dr. Michael Rosensweig ’73, Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS of Yeshiva University and Rav Shlomo Brin, Ram and Deputy Chairman of the Etzion Board.

Dr. Lichtenstein spoke about HaRav Aharon’s educational, moral and political leadership and also addressed his relationship with American Jewry. She said, “Rav Aharon left the United States out of a deep inner conviction that a Jew needs to live in Eretz Yisrael, but he was able to listen to the voices of those who remained where fate, destiny and choice had put them. He listened to these voices, respected them, understood them, and was committed to educating their sons, and in later years, their daughters. And he went about doing this in his usual thorough and careful manner...The deep bond forged between my husband and his talmidim was as meaningful to him as it was to each and every one of you. He loved you no less than you loved him and your love, devotion and respect are precious to me, to his children, and to his Yeshiva. יי זכרו נר לרגלנו”

The Next Generation

Moshe (Moshko) Moskovics, founder of modern Gush Etzion, said, “The mishna in Avot tells us to be like the students of Aharon. Why does the mishna tell us to be like Aharon’s students rather than instructing us to be like Aharon himself? Because one can only judge the success of a teacher from his students. We, the rabbanim, students and staff of the Yeshiva have been blessed to be students of HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein. May God help us to continue the great tradition that HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein has left us.”

Leeza Hirt ‘13MO

I owe a lot of my personal Torah learning and hashkafa to HaRav Lichtenstein, a staunch supporter of women’s learning. Dr. Shmuel Wygoda always talks about how when he initially approached HaRav Amital and HaRav Lichtenstein with the idea of opening a beit midrash for women, HaRav Lichtenstein said that he needed time to think about it. Three days later, he called Dr. Wygoda and said, “This will happen. Let’s give it the right character.”

From the moment that he committed to the idea, HaRav Lichtenstein was actively supportive every step of the way. HaRav Lichtenstein gave the first shiur at Migdal Oz, and taught women at Migdal Oz for many years. Although he was already very sick by the time that I got to the Beit Midrash, he was the rebbe of most of my teachers, and through them, I feel privileged to have learned his Torah and to have inherited some of his worldview.

Amitai Shalom Miller ‘14

This past year, my seat in the Beit Midrash was next to the door through which HaRav Lichtenstein usually entered, and every morning I would get a warm smile from him as he came in to the Beit Midrash. I remember him moving with great purpose and determination, even when he was using his walker. I had never seen someone use a walker like that! Rav Mordechai Friedman explained that HaRav Lichtenstein always – literally – ran to learn Torah.

Only with his passing did I fully understand his impact, not just on my own teachers, but on the entire dati leumi world. It is a huge zechut to be a student of the students of HaRav Aharon. I feel that I am continuing the tradition, that the derech halimud of the Yeshiva is the continuation of HaRav Aharon’s derech and his Torah.
REMEMBRANCES

Almost everyone has a story to tell about HaRav Lichtenstein, perhaps because encounters with him were more intense than those experienced in “regular” human interaction. HaRav Aharon’s level of concern and consideration for each person, and his absolute personal integrity, made every meeting an extraordinary experience that left a searing impression on all who met him. We share with you below a small selection from the many, many anecdotes sent in to the Yeshiva following HaRav Aharon’s death. Read more at http://haretzion.org/RLztl-anecdotes.

Rabbi Scot Berman ’77

For my admission exam, I had prepared the sugya of ma’amad shloshtan in Gittin. Upon being asked how the mechanism worked, I commenced to recite all the opinions of the Rishonim that I had prepared. The Rosh Yeshiva listened intently, without interruption, for what seemed to me an eternity. I was so proud of myself at that moment. I thought I possessed all the requisite knowledge for a Gush education. And then HaRav Aharon threw me with his two-word question — “U-mah da’atcha?” (And what’s your opinion?)

With those two words he taught me so much. He taught me to think for myself. He showed me that a great man cares about what a kid thinks. He demonstrated that being an independent thinker is essential to being a religious person.

Michael Eisenberg ’89

The story takes place in HaRav Lichtenstein’s home in Katamon, where I had gone to talk to him about a few issues. One of the issues was charitable giving to people who you knew were not trying to make a living or who would do nothing good with the charity.

As we were sitting in his office, surrounded by sefarim, there was a knock on the front door. At the door was someone soliciting charity for himself, and it was clear that he was not even attempting to make a living. HaRav Lichtenstein sat down at his desk and wrote a check. When he gave the young man the check, HaRav Lichtenstein kindly, sensitively and firmly suggested to the collector that this was no way to live life. He needed to get himself a profession to support himself and his family. He could not live on handouts forever.

Since it was on topic, I asked HaRav Lichtenstein why he gave the young man money if he knew it was reinforcing the behavior that he was trying to persuade him to change. HaRav Lichtenstein told me that he could not sleep at night knowing he had turned someone away at the door, that the man and his family might be hungry and perhaps he [HaRav Lichtenstein] had misjudged the man. I was fortunate to watch this scene play out numerous times in HaRav Lichtenstein’s house and always marveled at the sensitivity, deep humane kindness, and patience he displayed while he explained to the collectors that they needed to earn an honest living.

Rav Ron Yitzchak Eisenman ’79

One precious incident that I remember occurred on Yom Kippur 1973 at the beginning of the war. Buses arrived at the Yeshiva to pick up the “boys” and bring them to the front, and the boys asked their commanders for one minute to go to the Beit Midrash and ask HaRav Aharon for a bracha before they went out to defend the Jewish people.

But the Rav was nowhere to be found. Crestfallen, the boys disappointedly began to board the buses. Suddenly an apparition appeared; it was a tall, lanky figure clad in a white kittel running toward the buses, carrying something white.

As the figure neared, the boys were astounded as they realized what they were witnessing. They were witnessing greatness. Rav Aharon was the apparition, running toward the buses with his hands laden down with rolls of toilet paper. As he breathlessly approached the boys he blurted out, “I want to help in some way; so I figured that in everyone’s haste to leave on Yom Kippur perhaps no one had remembered to bring this vital necessity!”

Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Finkelman

Back in the early 70’s, YU students opposed to the role of the United States in the Vietnam war held a teach-in. We attended classes in limudei kodesh in the morning and early afternoon, but refrained from attending secular classes in the afternoon and evening. The highlight of the program was the evening teach-in to which the committee had invited HaRav Lichtenstein to deliver the keynote talk. I attended that night, along with my bride of a few months.

HaRav Lichtenstein began by apologizing, explaining that his words would probably not satisfy his audience. He then spoke in his usual measured way, considering alternatives and counter-arguments, generously treating with respect the range of possible opinions, including that of the government in pursuing the war.

When he concluded, the master of ceremonies announced that HaRav Lichtenstein had agreed to take some questions from the floor. HaRav Lichtenstein then asked the m.c.’s permission to allow one person in the audience to ask the first question, as this person had requested of HaRav Lichtenstein earlier that day.

Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein then stood up and lit into her husband’s talk, explaining that he had given the position of the U.S. government far more respect than it had
to be, above all, compassionate and non-judgmental. As we spoke at length about the intellectual and existential difficulties I was having, he communicated tremendous sympathy with my plight, and, characteristically, did not pretend to have any easy answers to my problems.

But there was something more, something warm and encouraging, as if he could see in my troubled soul that something good was trying to work its way out, that this was not a meaningless and angry rebellion but a necessary stage in my development. It was almost as if his faith in me allowed me to have faith in myself, to feel that I was actually engaged in something meaningful, that my better self had not been entirely duped.

David Koppel '77

Rav Aharon once appeared on Popolitica, a talk show usually characterized by panelists screaming at each other. The topic was clearly one of importance to the Rav, or he would not have agreed to come. Nevertheless, he absolutely refused to raise his voice or interrupt anyone, even if that person was in the process of interrupting him. At some point, Dan Margalit, the host, realized he would never hear Rav Aharon’s opinion if he didn’t intervene so he took the unusual step of asking the others to allow Rav Aharon to speak uninterrupted. I no longer remember what the discussion was about, but I’ll never forget the kiddush HaShem caused by Rav Aharon’s refusal to be rude or loud in order to make his point.

Rabbi Benji Levy '04MTA

My father and I were privileged to have a private lunch with Rav Aharon a few years ago. At one point, the conversation moved to sports. In all the question-and-answer sessions and shiurim I heard Rav Aharon deliver, there was never a topic on which he did not have a chiddush. When my dad started talking rugby, I thought this would be the exception. Yet the Rosh Yeshiva proceeded to tell us, in intricate detail, about rugby’s origins in England in the 1800’s.

He then started to describe the different positions and explain how it is a great sport educationally, as it offers each body-type a place in the team, a parable for life. My father was involved in professionalizing the sport, my brother plays internationally, I grew up on the sport, and yet my Rosh Yeshiva was teaching us about "the game they play in heaven" – that was Rav Aharon.

Nathan Weissler ’12

I attended Yeshivat Darkaynu during the 5773 school year. HaRav Lichtenstein helped me to have a more clear understanding of what I would like to accomplish in life and helped me to have more appreciation for how, with the help of Hashem, people are able to change an individual's life.

For example, one day I purchased a copy of one of his books. I decided that it would be very special if HaRav Lichtenstein could inscribe the book to me. To the best of my recollection, that is the first occasion on which I had a conversation with HaRav Lichtenstein. I introduced myself to him in the beit midrash, asked if he would be willing to inscribe the book and said that I would be honored if he could do so. HaRav Lichtenstein responded that he would be delighted to write an inscription. Another aspect of his kindness that I noticed was that he thought carefully about what to write. Both HaRav Lichtenstein agreeing to inscribe the book, and the attitude with which he did so powerfully impacted me.

The kindness of HaRav Lichtenstein inspired me to think more about the importance of offering encouragement and acting with kindness to others. I regularly ask myself, "What would HaRav Lichtenstein do in this situation?" and I think of how HaRav Lichtenstein’s encouragement and kindness touched my soul.
Jonathan Wiesen '99

One of the most poignant moments that I can recall was from a Gush Alumni Shabbaton in New Rochelle. We were at se'udah shlishit and began to sing ‘Om Ani Chomah. I can still see HaRav Lichtenstein’s intense face, eyes closed, complete focus and concentration while singing the first verse…only to be met by awkward silence…none of us knew any of the other words!!! Without missing a beat, Rav Aharon picked up precisely where we left off, filling in the missing words, singing the words slowly and out loud so that we could join in the tune despite our deficient knowledge. He was again picking us up where we failed, without hesitation, without regret, without condescension but rather with sincerity, love and passion. By singing with us he was in essence carrying us.

I don’t know what we will do at the next Gush Shabbaton without Rav Aharon to carry our tune, to fill in the missing words of our song. But I can at least hope that we will still all be singing together.

Rav Eliyahu Yaniger '78

As much as he shaped my mind and my will, there are two scenes of HaRav Lichtenstein which left indelible impressions on my heart. I used to sit in the front of the Beit Midrash, close to HaRav Amital and with a good view of HaRav Lichtenstein. During the tefillot on Rosh Hashanah, I noticed that while everyone was singing Areshet Sefatenu he was not saying the words. But you could see the longing and the thirst for God just by looking at him, without his saying a word.

The second was watching him listening to the reading of Shir Hashirim. Watching his passionate swaying during the reading, I felt like I was watching an embodiment of Rabbi Akiva, who said that “Shir HaShirim was the Holy of Holies,” expressing the love of the Jewish people for God.

Who for me could express love of God more than this man, whose intellect encompassed the world and, at the same time, whose every action and thought was an expression of service of God?

Pesach Mansouri

I work for the Yeshiva and often drove HaRav Lichtenstein to visit students in the army. One time I took him and a group of students to visit our guys in the south. By the time we came back to Alon Shvut and dropped off the students it was late and cold and raining. I was supposed to drive the Rav back to his home in Jerusalem, but he told me he would just get out in Alon Shvut and catch a bus! I couldn’t let the Rosh Yeshiva stand in the rain for the (infrequent) bus service to Jerusalem, so I made up a story about something else I needed to do in Jerusalem anyway. I will never know if he believed me or simply chose not to embarrass me by insisting further.

Zvi Schindel

I attended The Gruss Kollel during 2005-2006 year, and was fortunate to attend Rav Aharon’s Gemara and Machshava shiurim. Rav Aharon would deliver the Gemara shiur in Lashon HaKodesh, and the Machshava and Q&A shiurim in English. More than a few of the members of the Kollel, regular attendees of Rav Aharon’s shiurim, proposed a switch to English for the Gemara shiur. We thought the proposed change was a minor detail. Rav Aharon, however, felt otherwise, and requested to meet with us seven or so Gruss Kollel members. After submitting our thoughts and opinions, Rav Aharon looked troubled, even crestfallen. He then said something that struck me, and in a manner I will never forget. He mentioned that his opposition to giving the shiur in English was not merely halakhic or cultural, but also psychological. It was clear that it pained Rav Aharon to deliver shiurim in Arzeinu HaKedoshah in any tongue other than Lashon HaKodesh. We ended our conversation without a clear resolution.

The next week Rav Aharon began to deliver the Gemara shiur in English. That, to me, was another sign of his greatness. Talmidim had asked for a change, a change which caused Rav Aharon pain, yet he conceded. Looking back, I realize our faulty inexperience as much as I recognize Rav Aharon’s tremendous humility.

Phillip Vedol

Once after Rav Aharon gave a sicha at YU, I was part of a group of talmidim that rode with him to Monsey, NY, where he was staying. It was 20 degrees outside. After we dropped him off, we found there was a hole on the floor of the car that must have let a cold draft onto his feet. The whole 40-minute ride he didn’t mention it. He talked throughout the ride, but never mentioned the draft.

Betzalel Posy ‘92

I would like to share one incident that occurred on Monday morning, 16 Kislev 5758, at 9:15 in the morning, when Rav Aharon uttered a phrase that has left a brand on me forever. Dov Daniel and I were preparing for a shiur on takfa Cohen, on 6b in Bava Metzia. I needed the Rosh Yeshiva to sign a form to certify that I was in Yeshiva, in order to defer a loan. My seat was near his desk, and I was waiting for him to arrive so that I could catch him right as he sat down. As he approached his desk, I stood up and said to him, "I did not want to interrupt the Rosh Yeshiva, but I was hoping that he could sign this form before he starts learning this morning." HaRav Lichtenstein zt”l looked at me with genuine puzzlement and confusion, and said, "But we are always learning, aren't we?" He read my form carefully and signed it. The next morning in shiur, when discussing

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the Rambam on takka Cohen and the issue of a “safek rachok,” one of the examples he gave was a situation in which someone had agreed to defer a loan based on the assumption that the debtor was engaged in study, but there was a question of certification.

An eyewitness account from the funeral of Gil-ad Sha’er hy”d, one of the three boys kidnapped and killed last summer. Gil-ad’s father Ophir is a Gush almunus.

The funeral ceremony in memory of Gil-ad had finished, and the many people who had attended moved through the plaza to try to greet and hug Gil-ad’s family. Government and military officials and other important people squeezed through the crowd to meet the family. It was crowded and there was a lot of commotion. The family didn’t want to wait, and they asked to leave quickly to head towards the cemetery.

To my left, I could see amidst the crowd Rav Aharon supported by his wife and his daughter Esti Rosenberg, and suddenly Gil-ad’s father, Ophir Sha’er, looked behind him and also saw Rav Aharon. And just as if the Red Sea had split, he crossed through all the government and military officials, and fell upon HaRav Lichtenstein’s shoulder. They embraced one another and the floodgates of tears were opened, the two of them weeping and weeping on one another’s shoulders for a few, endless seconds.

Ophir left HaRav Lichtenstein, and again crossed through the crowd in the direction of the exit. Even after Ophir had left, the elderly Rav could hardly move as he wept bitterly, as though he were standing before the body of his own child, God forbid.

Steve Ehrenhalt ‘78

I recall going to ask Rav Aharon zt”l a question on Tzom Gedalia and his voice being so hoarse it was barely audible — the result of having spent the last two days shouting davening into his blind father’s nearly deaf ears. This, and the way he treated his father in every interaction I saw, was seared in my mind as the gold standard for treating a parent. Even when I fell from this standard, my mental model of personal behavior was always: What would Rav Aharon do? While I learned a lot by listening in shiur, I learned even more by watching.

Doniël Zvi Kramer

Back in the late 60’s-early 70’s, I was the only shatnez tester at YU, and Rav Aharon used to bring me the suits he had purchased to check. Even after he made aliya, sometimes he would return to the U.S. and buy a new suit. Once I saw him at Ma’ariv in YU but he didn’t mention that he had a suit for me to check, knowing that I’d then have to climb 3 flights up the stairs to the RIETS Dorm where I resided to get my testing equipment. Rather, later in the night, I heard a knock on my door, and there was Rav Aharon, standing with a new suit in hand to be tested! When I asked him why he didn’t tell me earlier in the evening, he said that he didn’t want to bother me. This happened a second time, too, during his next trip.

I then realized that when I saw Rav Aharon in YU, visiting from Israel, I should make sure to ask him if he had a suit to be tested so that I could go to him. That was just a simple example of his selflessness.

Dean Lutrin ‘94

There was a member of the Yeshiva who was saying kaddish and was the chazan for Shacharit some mornings. Rav Lichtenstein got up one morning and said he’d heard that some people were making this student uncomfortable for taking so long for davening and that the talmid was going elsewhere to daven Shacharit. I remember how upset Rav Aharon was that a talmid in the Yeshiva was made to feel so uncomfortable. I also remember how he acknowledged those who valued those extra five minutes for learning in the morning.

Rabbi Chaim Strauchler ’95

On Ta’anit Esther, March 4 1996, the Dizengoff Center terrorist attack culminated a period of eight days in which four terrorist attacks killed 60 people and wounded 284. Immediately after news of the attack spread through the Beit Midrash, the learning stopped and we recited Tehillim for those injured in the attack. Amid our tears, Rav Lichtenstein rose to address us. He spoke about Jewish history and how we could not despair, how the trials of a sovereign Jewish people in their own land were categorically different from the terror we faced in a stateless exile. He then addressed the question that was on all of our minds: How could we celebrate Purim that evening, with the unbridled joy that had always typified this day in Yeshiva? Rav Lichtenstein demanded that we immerse ourselves in our celebration despite our tears. He used the categories of halakha to speak of how avelut is pushed away by a communal yom tov — and the categories of the heart to speak of how terror’s true aim is to cause us to lose our sense of who we really are.

That evening he led us in dancing like a man half his age. With remarkable strength, he literally held up his students who would embrace him amid the singing and the tears. In the middle of the dancing, Rav Yaakov Medan handed the microphone to Rav Lichtenstein. The entire Yeshiva sat around them both, as Rav Lichtenstein responded to Rav Medan’s questions about God and faith.
To continue to learn from *Moreinu VeRabeinu* HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l, we offer a list of resources below.

**By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God**
Based on addresses by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, adapted for print by Rav Reuven Ziegler ’86
Ktav Publishing House, 2003

This volume contains twelve chapters on Jewish values and the development of the religious personality. It explores the individual’s responsibilities to his Creator, his community and himself, and the balance between them. This volume originated as a series of speeches and has been adapted for print by Rav Reuven Ziegler, with an emphasis on accessibility to a broad audience. The Hebrew version, titled *BeOr Panekha Yehalekhun*, was translated into Hebrew by Rav Elyakim Krumbein ’72, and published by Tzvunot Press in 2006 and by Yediot Aharonot Books in 2012.

**Leaves of Faith, vol. 1: The World of Jewish Learning**
by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein
Ktav Publishing House, 2003

This volume contains eleven articles revolving around the theme of Torah study — its rationale, methodology, interaction with other areas of life, and application in halakhic decision-making — and concludes with portraits of two Torah masters greatly admired by the author: Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l.

**Leaves of Faith, vol. 2: The World of Jewish Living**
by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein
Ktav Publishing House, 2004

This volume contains sixteen chapters on the practice and implementation of Torah. It covers broad issues such as religion and state, the relation of Halakha to an independent ethic, spiritual response to suffering and the parameters of tolerance, as well as specific issues such as conversion and abortion. The volume concludes with analyses of the place of modernity within Judaism, and suggestions for Orthodoxy’s future direction.

**Varieties of Jewish Experience**
by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein
Ktav Publishing House, 2011

Collected essays on topics of ongoing modern relevance such as marital relations, leadership, *da’at Torah*, spirituality, philanthropy, the erosion of *yirat Shamayim* and more.

**Mevakshei Panekha: Conversations with HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein** (Hebrew)
by Rav Chaim Sabato
Yediot Aharonot Books, 2011

In this bestseller, Rav Sabato, celebrated novelist and Rosh Yeshiva of Birkat Moshe (the Hesder yeshiva in Ma’ale Adumim), interviewed HaRav Lichtenstein on a wide variety of topics including the value of non-Jewish literature, the legacy of Rav Soloveitchik zt”l, Torah learning for women, the role of *kabbalah*, the Brisker method and more.

**Shiurei HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein** (Hebrew, 8 volumes)
Edited by Rav Amichai Gordin ’91 and Rav Daniel Wolf ’83

These sefarim demonstrate the Brisker method of Talmud learning, as taught by HaRav Lichtenstein, in *Bava Metzia, Bava Batra, Pesachim, Taharot, Dina d’Garmei, Gittin, Zevachin* and *Horayot*. The volumes, which were compiled from students’ notes, were originally published one at a time, and a complete set of the 8 volumes was published in honor of HaRav Aharon’s 80th birthday in 2013.

**Minchat Aviv: Chidushim VeIyunim BaShas** (Hebrew)
by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, edited by Rav Elyakim Krumbein ’72
Maggid Books and Yeshivat Har Etzion Press, 2014

A comprehensive collection of HaRav Lichtenstein’s original writings on topics in the Talmud and *halakha* (*Aviv* is an acronym for *Aharon ben Yechiel v’Bluma*). The 36 essays span a period of forty years of scholarship, and cover topics ranging from how soldiers should light Chanukah candles while out in the field to the concept of *lishma* throughout Torah literature. This monumental sefer, almost 700 pages long, includes both a source index and a topical index.
JOURNALS

Tradition – Special Issue: Essays on the Thought and Scholarship of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein

The Winter 2014 issue of Tradition Magazine included fourteen in-depth analyses of Rav Lichtenstein’s hashkafa, derekh limmud, and psak.

The articles cover a wide variety of topics such as the place of liberal arts in Jewish education, faith, abortion, Tanakh study, humanism and more.

DAAT Volume 76: Edut le-Aharon (Hebrew)
Edited by Dov Schwartz and Moshe Hallamish
Bar-Ilan University Press, 2014

In January 2014, The DAAT Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah dedicated its jubilee issue in honor of Rosh Yeshiva HaRav Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein. The journal contains articles on HaRav Aharon’s philosophy and methodology, as well as original research into Jewish thought carried out in his honor.

VBM

The Yeshiva’s Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (VBM) contains hundreds of articles and audio files of shiurim by HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein which can be accessed by searching under his name or by topic. The VBM staff has also compiled a collection of seminal articles by HaRav Lichtenstein. These must-read articles, which define essential elements of HaRav Aharon’s worldview, can be accessed directly at http://etzion.org.il/en/RAL