# **Zionism in the thought of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein;**

# **A Tribute to a Torah Giant**

Rabbi Dr. Sam Lebens

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ת"ר כשנתפסו רבי אלעזר בן פרטא ורבי חנינא בן תרדיון א"ל ר' אלעזר בן פרטא לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון אשריך שנתפסת על דבר אחד אוי לי שנתפסתי על חמשה דברים א"ל רבי חנינא אשריך שנתפסת על חמשה דברים ואתה ניצול אוי לי שנתפסתי על דבר אחד ואיני ניצול שאת עסקת בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ואני לא עסקתי אלא בתורה [בלבד] וכדרב הונא דאמר רב הונא כל העוסק בתורה בלבד דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה שנאמר (דברי הימים ב טו) וימים רבים לישראל ללא אלהי אמת [וגו'] מאי ללא אלהי אמת שכל העוסק בתורה בלבד דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eleazar b. Perata and R. Hanina b. Teradion were arrested, R. Eleazar b. Perata said to R. Hanina b. Teradion: Happy art thou that thou hast been arrested on one charge; woe is me, for I am arrested on five charges. R. Hanina replied: Happy art thou, who hast been arrested on five charges, but wilt be rescued; woe is me who, though having been arrested on one charge, will not be rescued; for thou hast occupied thyself with [the study of] the Torah as well as with acts of benevolence, whereas I occupied myself with Torah alone. This accords with the opinion of R. Huna. For R. Huna said: He who only occupies himself with the study of the Torah is as if he had no God, for it is said: “Now for long seasons Israel was without the true God.” What is meant by 'without the true God'? — It means that he who only occupies himself with the study of the Torah is as if he had no God.

**Rav Aharon’s Sicha on the Assassination of Yitzchak Rabin**

There are several points I would suggest as worthy of reflection. First: the self-confidence that arises from commitment and devotion to a world of values and eternal truths - whether in terms of Torat Yisrael or Eretz Yisrael - sometimes has led to frightening levels of self-certainty and ultimately to arrogance. This arrogance has sometimes led us to act without sufficient responsibility towards other people, and at times even without responsibility to other values. "We are good, we have values, and they are worthless" - this attitude has seeped deeper and deeper into our consciousness.

**Tractate Yoma 23a-b**

מעשה שהיו שניהן שוין ורצין ועולין בכבש:  ת"ר מעשה בשני כהנים שהיו שניהן שוין ורצין ועולין בכבש קדם אחד מהן לתוך ארבע אמות של חבירו נטל סכין ותקע לו בלבו עמד רבי צדוק על מעלות האולם ואמר אחינו בית ישראל שמעו הרי הוא אומר (דברים כא) כי ימצא חלל באדמה ויצאו זקניך ושופטיך אנו על מי להביא עגלה ערופה על העיר או על העזרות געו כל העם בבכיה בא אביו של תינוק ומצאו כשהוא מפרפר אמר הרי הוא כפרתכם ועדיין בני מפרפר ולא נטמאה סכין ללמדך שקשה עליהם טהרת כלים יותר משפיכות דמים וכן הוא אומר ... איבעיא להו שפיכות דמים הוא דזל אבל טהרת כלים כדקיימא קיימא או דילמא שפיכות דמים כדקיימא קיימא אבל טהרת כלים היא דחמירא ת"ש מדקא נסיב לה תלמודא וגם דם נקי שפך מנשה שמע מינה שפיכות דמים הוא דזל וטהרת כלים כדקיימא קיימא

IT ONCE HAPPENED THAT TWO WERE EVEN AS THEY RAN TO MOUNT THE RAMP. Our Rabbis taught: It once happened that two priests were equal as they ran to mount the ramp and when one of them came first within four cubits of the altar, the other took a knife and thrust it into his heart. R. Zadok stood on the steps of the Hall and said: Our brethren of the house of Israel, hear ye! Behold it says: If one be found slain in the land... then thy elders and judges shall come forth . . . On whose behalf shall we offer the heifer whose neck is to be broken, on behalf of the city or on behalf of the Temple Courts? All the people burst out weeping. The father of the young man came and found him still in convulsions. He said: ‘May he be an atonement for you. My son is still in convulsions and the knife has not become unclean.’ [His remark] comes to teach you that the cleanness of their vessels was of greater concern to them even than the shedding of blood … [The Scholars in the Academy] asked this question: Was it that bloodshed became a minor matter to them, whereas the purity of their vessels remained in its original importance, or did bloodshed concern them as before but the purity of the vessels became for them of a still graver concern? Come and hear: Because the Talmud adduces ‘And also innocent blood did Manasseh shed’ that indicates that bloodshed had become a matter of smaller concern to them whilst the purity of the vessels retained its original importance.

**Rav Aharon’s Sicha on the Assassination of Yitzchak Rabin**

Today we must, out of the crisis, assume an educational and ideological task. Someone may say, "The Rosh Yeshiva says that azarot can lead to bloodshed - let's close the azarot!! Let us abandon the Mikdash!" I say, no! We will not close a single azara, nor will we encourage tepid and unenthusiastic service. The challenge is, can we continue to inspire the yearning for sanctity, shake people out of complacency, get them to face the great call of the hour - to understand the importance of the Medina, to understand the historical process in which we live - without losing a sense of morality, of proportion, of right, of spirituality? Do we have to choose between azarot and morality? Chas ve-shalom! But we must purify our hearts and our camp in order to serve Him in truth.

One may ask, but what is wrong with our values? We try to educate people to strive for holiness, to love Eretz Yisrael, Am Yisrael, Torat Yisrael - shall we then stop adhering to and teaching these values? Shall we abandon the azara? God forbid! - not the azara, not the ezrat nashim, not the heikhal, surely not the Holy of Holies, not Har haBayit, not one rung of the ten rungs of holiness of Eretz Yisrael. But if we indeed strive for completeness, if we want to adhere to all these values, then we must at all times keep in mind the whole picture, the balance and interplay between these values. Have we done enough to ensure that our approach to each aspect of our sacred values is balanced? Perhaps even if we have indeed taught the evil of bloodshed - we have exaggerated, as that terrible gemara suggests, the value of ritual purity.