



Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz died on August 7, 2020 at the age of 83

01.10.2020 | Elio Passeto

The Jewish world loses one of the most prominent names in Judaism today, Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael Steinsaltz (1937-2020). He left as a legacy a colossal work in which he addresses religious Judaism in its various dimensions. He wrote more than 60 books in the field of Israel's religious tradition concerning education, instruction, training and interpretation.

The President of the State of Israel, Rubens Revlin, paid his last tribute to Steinsaltz with those words: “[...] a man of spiritual courage, depth of mind and depth of thought. He plunged into the depths of the spiritual treasures of the pearls of the people of Israel and made the Talmud accessible to the people of Israel in limpid and clear Hebrew, as was Rashi in his day. He did not hesitate to make his own way in total dedication to the Torah of Israel and to the people of Israel ”. (Yedioth Ahronoth 9.8.2020 (heb.)

It is worth remembering that this comparison with the great sage Rashi (1045-1105) makes Steinsaltz the most exponent of Judaism of the present time. This attribution to Steinsaltz comparing him to Rashi for his influence on Judaism throughout his life through his teachings and his work, was not given to him at the time of his death, but comes from a few decades, evidenced by the numerous awards received both in Israel and abroad. Rashi commented on practically the entire Talmud and the entire Bible, applying his 'Peshat' method, giving the direct, simple, literal, obvious meaning of the text. His method became a school and was a watershed in Judaism, there is a before and after Rashi. His commentary, the updating of the oral tradition of Israel, through its genius, has caused the Talmud Tora to be reborn with strength and clarity in all layers of the Jewish people throughout history, up to the present day. He is a mandatory source for understanding the Talmud, the wisest and the beginner find in Rashi's commentary an indispensable tool for understanding the text of the Bible and the Talmud.

Similarly, for our time, Steinsaltz's work was a source of renewal for Judaism from within. His translation of the Talmud, from Aramaic to modern Hebrew, and his explanatory commentary on expressions, phrases, suguiots..., made this greater source of the Jewish soul accessible and attractive to all Judaism even going beyond the borders of Judaism, being the gateway for non-Jews who sincerely seek to get closer to the oral tradition of Israel.

Steinsaltz founded several Talmud Tora study centers in Israel and abroad. His colossal work was translated into English, Russian and French, making it easier for these Jewish communities to understand their own tradition. Far from promoting the vulgarization of Jewish knowledge, his work seeks to alleviate the difficulties that prevent or discourage the 'Talmid' to advance in the discovery of the treasure that is 'Talmud Tora'. In the arduous effort to delve into the ocean of knowledge of the Jewish tradition, sometimes there is a risk of losing precious time in technical or language difficulties and there is little time to go deeper and bring out the new in the text (Hidush). For those who do not come from the world of Yeshivot, the Talmud is a closed book. In addition to the text being in Aramaic, it assumes the knowledge of the orality that decipher the statements and explains the discussions (mahloket) that compose it. Steinsaltz, when translating the Talmud into modern Hebrew, giving appropriate explanations in each situation, also clarifies the mechanism

and dynamics that make up the text, thereby providing the means of accessing the text's language.

Rabbi Steinsaltz was an open-minded man, he lived without contradiction with the modern. He was an orthodox Jew, he dedicated his life entirely to the study and teaching of the Torah, on the other hand he did not fear the non-religious world, he saw no barrier of separation between these two realities. Therefore, hundreds and thousands of Jewish people came into contact with the Jewish religious tradition through personal contact with him or through his works. Time Magazine, 2001, will already define he as the man of the millennium. Justifying that someone with the extraordinary ability to renew and innovate Judaism from within takes place every 1000 years and Steinsaltz renewed, without canceling or replacing any of the received Tradition, he enriched it and updated it, so he was considered the man of the millennium[1].

In addition to his great wisdom (Talmid Hacham), having mastered his tradition, of being an observant Jew, Steinsaltz was recognized for his openness of spirit, for knowing how to live perfectly with the complexity of the modern world and above all for his simplicity and modesty. A righteous man (Tzadik) of his generation. Its existence was an enrichment for the Judaism of its time and for the future as well as the Christian world that seeks to better understand its own identity of faith that is ontologically linked to the Jewish people and Judaism, benefited from its teachings and its work left .

The Talmud's commentary on Psalm 112 can be applied to him, which says: "Happy the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commands. His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth; the upright generation shall be blessed (Ps 112: 1-2). 'He delights greatly in His mitzvot.' Rabbi Elazar says: The person delights in His mitzvot themselves and not in the reward for performing His mitzvot. And this is the same as we learned in a Mishna (Avot 1:3): Antigonus of Sokho would say: Do not be like the servants who serve the master on the condition of receiving a reward; rather, be like the servants who serve the master not on the condition that they receive a reward (tb Avoda Zara 10a).

To serve without waiting for reward, to delight, so that the Word of God grows in the world (garden) and becomes a thunderous tree. The Talmud Tora in all its dimensions. Confirm his own words in the following text, taken from Time of Israel Magazine:

"I will tell you a final story, in my garden, years ago, I planted two cypress trees. One was stolen, and the other was a small cypress whose head was shorn off. I simply had mercy on it, I took its head and taped it to the still-fresh trunk. I didn't do anything else. I let it grow, I hoped the fissure would heal. Today, that cypress is almost three meters tall, a mighty tree! That's what I would have wanted to have done, to plant a small cypress, even one that was chopped, that will grow into a large tree." [2]

[1] Cf. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,148438,00.html>.

[2] Cf. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rabbi-adin-steinsaltz-who-made-the-talmud-accessible-dies-at-83/>