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## Envoi

Liebe's summary of Aaron's life:

*Aaron is basically a conventional person who has led an unconventional life, both personally and scientifically. He didn't choose it, but that is how it turned out.*

True, Aaron is conventional, but his implementation of conventionality led to a number of revolutionary changes in the way structural cell biology is done. Blessed with an excellent memory and a fine analytical mind, Aaron was driven by an unbridled and intense curiosity. Few human activities escaped his enquiries except, as his son Adam would remark, music and football. He was keen to share his insights, which made him an excellent teacher.

Aaron is a private person. He never said much about his mother's death, but the trauma seems to have reinforced his natural reserve. Not that he was without emotion: his love for his family was intense; he felt deeply about literature. Rosalind Franklin's death hit him hard. He inherited Rosalind's car, but it was more than a year before he could bring himself to drive it.

Aaron appreciated loyalty, supported his co-workers and derived pleasure from their success. He carried out little experimental work himself. John Finch (Plate 13), a gifted experimentalist, was his very effective collaborator for 40 years. All new data were subject to Aaron's Talmudic

scrutiny. The method worked well and led to an enormously successful research group. Usually of a generous nature, he could be angered by what he judged to be attempts to steal his results. Nor did arrant thick-headedness escape his public excoriation.

Aaron himself thought that zinc fingers were his most important discovery. Rows of zinc fingers with the appropriate protein sequences would allow the specific recognition of any DNA sequence. Aaron foresaw the ability to target specific DNA sequences as critically important for developmental biology and gene therapy. Unfortunately, specific zinc fingers are difficult to make. In 2012, another gene editing system (CRISPR/Cas9) derived from bacteria was discovered. It was much easier and cheaper to set up than zinc fingers and appears to be the method of choice. Nevertheless, recent progress owes much to Aaron's vision.

The State of Israel, with Jewish traditions and Hebrew as the spoken language, is a manifestation of secular Judaism that fascinated Aaron, but he was deeply disappointed by the politics of the present State of Israel. Once, when interviewed on Israeli television, Aaron was asked whether he believed in God, to which he replied, 'You should live your life as if there were a God.'

While waiting on Cambridge station for the train to London, where Aaron was to receive his Order of Merit, he and Liebe sat next to a classics scholar who was reading a history of Rome. Aaron turned to Liebe and said, 'That's what I really wanted to do,' to which Liebe responded:

'You've left it a bit late now.'