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A Rich Life, An Incredible Loss

RABBI NOSSON SCHERMAN

There's a well-known expression "jack of all trades, master of none." It describes someone who can do many things well, but none of them expertly. Harav Yisroel Belsky zt"l. was different. He was a jack of all trades and master of all. The range of his expertise was astounding.

He was fluent in all of Shass, but it was not merely a matter of memory – although his memory was indeed phenomenal – he *understood* Shas, as the thousands who attended his shiurim can testify. He was equally familiar with the corpus of Halachah, both theoretical and practical. I remember consulting him about a Choshen Mishpat matter, and he immediately pulled out a Shulchan Aruch and without hesitation showed me a Shach. As a primary posek of the Orthodox Union Kashrus Division, he had to be familiar with a dizzying array of technical, chemical, and scientific process all over the world. Many years

ago, Agudath Israel sponsored a symposium on kashrus. Representatives of 3 or 4 certifying organizations were on the firing line, but Rav Belsky was clearly the main target. One questioner was very well-prepared, and fired challenge after challenge at Rav Belsky. He answered every one calmly and authoritatively, giving chapter and verse, for every one of his rulings.

Let's not forget that every Orthodox Jew in the world relies on his rulings, in one area or another. And although he was supremely self-confident, he did not hesitate to inform rabbanim and laymen of the basis for his rulings and tell them if their mesorah required them not to rely of certain leniencies. That's why he was so universally respected. Truth was important; ego not.

He was an extraordinary ba'al korei. A knowledgeable listener could hear in his laying infinite nuances of dikduk that very few listeners knew ex-

isted. He was a fine baal tefillah. As a maggid shiur, he was totally devoted to his talmidim, always available with time, advice and encouragement, always trying to boaden them and bring out their full potential.

In Torah Vodaath, he would take his classes to a kosher slaughterhouse to show them the process of shechitah and koshering. In Camp Agudah, where he was rav and maggid shiur for the masmidim, he would explain the constellations and the molad, and he would take his talmidim on overnight canoeing trips, showing them the wonders of *mag gadlu ma'asecha Hashem*.

His life was incredibly rich. His loss is incredibly great. May his family, his extended family of talmidim, and all Klal Yisrael find *nechamah* in his emnourous legacy.

Yehi Zichro baruch.

Insatiable Thirst

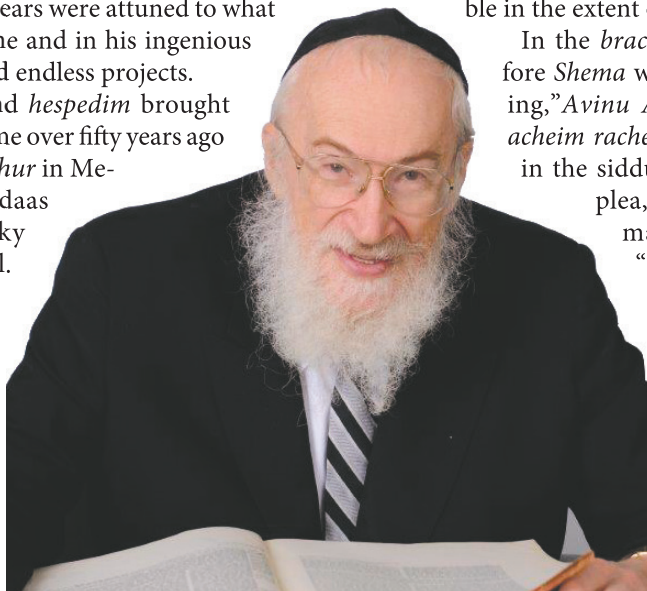
HARAV SHLOMO ASCHKENASY

Attending the *levaya* of Harav Belsky, zt"l, at Kamenetz Yeshivah in Yerushalayim I was inspired by the beautiful exact descriptions given in concise fashion by Harav Sheiner, *shlita*, Rav Yisrael Reisman, Rav Moshe Samsonowitz and one of the sons-in-law.

They were very accurate in describing the breathtaking breadth of Rav Belsky's knowledge, his passionate love for Torah, *yiras Shamayim* and *Am Yisrael* and his inexhaustible *hasmadah* which knew no limits in time and place. Under all conditions he was absorbed in Torah, yet he never lost sight of the needs of his surroundings. Whether it was *tzedakah* or chessed for the individual or the *klal*, his eyes and ears were attuned to what needed to be done and in his ingenious ways spearheaded endless projects.

The *levaya* and *hespedim* brought me back to the time over fifty years ago when I was a *bachur* in Mesivta Torah Vodaas and Rav Belsky was in the kollel.

I remember how Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l, our Rosh Yeshivah, proudly said, "We are witnessing the growth and development



of one of the Gedolim of the next generation." Later as a maggid shiur in Mesivta he gave me the *zechus* of learning the upcoming *masechta* with him at nights. He shared with me many profound insights and broadened my Torah vistas. In fact in the summer in Camp Torah Vodaas he took me for a tour of the sky through his telescope, showing me Jupiter and the rings of Saturn and more.

The most memorable experience was when he prepared me for a talk I was to give at a *mesiba* of *chizuk* for those of us who were learning all day without going to college. He exhorted me to focus the attention of the *bachurim* on the tefillah which we say every day which has nothing comparable in the extent of its beseeching.

In the *bracha* of *Ahavas Rabba* before *Shema* we appeal to Hashem saying, "Avinu Av *harachaman, hameracheim rachem aleinu*." Nowhere else in the siddur is there such a strong plea, in which we beg in so many words for mercy. "Our Father, the merciful Father, who has constant mercy, have pity on us." We beg, appeal and plea – have mercy! Please be pitiful!

And what are we asking for? "*Visein belibeinu binah...*" We beseech Him to give us all the types

of knowledge, understanding and insight into all kinds of aspects of Torah, with the power to know Torah, disseminate it and fulfill it to the hilt – all together a long list of requests to enable us to master the diverse facets of Torah.

But Rav Belsky highlighted it all with the exclamation: "Did you notice which part of the Torah we are talking about? All of it, completely, totally – *es kol divreio Talmud Torasecha*. Every single inch of Torah, every drop of the wellsprings of Torah. We ask for, nay, we beg and beseech! For us every bit of Torah is life, and knowing it is a matter of life and death. It's a must because in Torah knowledge nothing is a luxury; it's all our lifeblood!"

That was Rav Belsky. That was the secret of his greatness, as the Mishna says of Rav Eliezer ben Horkenus, "He was a water cistern which didn't lose a drop." The Chofetz Chaim commented, "not just because he had a phenomenal mind, but also because his love for Torah was so insatiable that every drop of Torah was priceless and couldn't be lost or forgotten.

That lesson of youth is ageless and is a legacy which we can inherit from Rav Belsky. Whether we will be giants like him or some more miniature size, we should never stop thirsting, beseeching and attempting to grow more – so that we achieve the most each and every one of us is capable of achieving in Torah, *avodah* and *gemilus chassadim*. Then, although we have lost a *tzaddik yesod olam*, the pillars of world he erected will be perpetuated.

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An Impact for Generations

🕎 RABBI YAIR HOFFMAN

Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky zatzal, 75, a remarkable Talmid Chochochom and Tzaddik that served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Torah Vodaath, a Posek in the largest kashrus agency in the world, and the Rav of Camp Agudah for many years passed away this evening. Rav Belsky studied in Yeshiva Torah VaDaas, under Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, and in Beis Medrash Elyon in Monsey.

He received Smicha from Torah Vodaath in 1962 and then went on to receive shimush from the Gadol HaDor, Rav Moshe Feinstein zatzal. He received Smicha from Rav Moshe in 1965. His grandfather, Reb Binyomin Wilhelm, was one of the founders of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg. Later the Yeshiva moved to Flatbush.

His recall of Tosfos throughout Shas was well known. His ability to rule in numerous areas of halacha was uncanny. His proficiency and familiarity with Kol HaTorah kullah was veritably unmatched. Aside from his vast knowledge in all these areas, he was also a mohel.

Rav Belsky developed a close bond with campers in Camp Agudah. He not only gave deep shiurim in Gemorah and Halacha, but had a vast

knowledge in mili d'alma, worldly matters. He had a solid grasp of astronomy, botany, and biology and would often lead campers in trips where he identified for them every tree, plant, insect and star charts. In his work as one of the two Poskim in the Orthodox Union he had a deep grasp of the manufacturing process, never refraining from climbing or getting his hands dirty to investigate manufacturing processes.

On one occasion, a man had passed away in Far Rockaway without leaving a child. His only brother was retarded, and the man's wife faced a difficult halachic question. Could her brother-in-law perform Chalitzah or was he considered a halachic shoteh making him ineligible?

The last time this question arose was in the early 1960's with Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Belsky came down to the shiva home and spent three hours with the deceased man's family. Rav Belsky consoled and comforted the parents while simultaneously determining the status of the brother. The nichum aveilim was so comforting to the parents that they thanked the Rabbi who had brought them this "wonderful holy Rabbi."

Rav Belsky's care and concern for Klal Yisroel was manifest in the time that he had spent consoling and comforting all people that came to him with their problems. His mastery of Halacha was legendary. His ability to calculate complex mathematical calculations that pertained to halacha was also well known.

Four years ago Rav Belsky developed a life-threatening illness which almost took his life. Miraculously, he recovered to the extent that he was able to resume activities in Yeshiva, in the OU and at Camp Agudah.

About two months ago he arranged a Get for an Agunah whose husband had violated the trust of numerous young people. Rav Belsky's remarkable personality was instrumental in arranging for this woman's freedom. The Agunah expressed remarkable emotion to this author in how instrumental Rav Belsky was in freeing her.

Rav Belsky's imprint on Torah Judaism in the past half century will certainly have an impact for generations to come. Nafla Ateres Rosheinu.

Reflections from a Close Talmid

🕎 RABBI MOISHE D. LBOVITS

As I write these words about my Rebbi, just before I leave to the airport for the *Kovod Acharon* in N.Y., I am faced by my Rebbi's picture in my study and cannot believe that he is not here anymore. The loss is immeasurable, the pain is deep, and the feeling of emptiness is real.

I had the great privilege of learning by Harav Belsky zt"l for nine years while in the wonderful yeshiva, Torah Vodaas. Throughout those years, I had the experience of hearing *shiurim* on many topics and *sugyos*. Each *shiur* was such a pleasure to hear; it was an overflowing wellspring of gems of Torah. Rebbi always made sure we all understood what the Gemara and *Shulchan Aruch* were saying. He was a person who had an answer to each question posed to him. During and after *shiur*, people would ask random questions on a variety of topics and Rebbi always had an answer. I never wanted the *shiur* to end.

During my years in Torah Vodaas and learning at Rebbi's *shiur* I began writing *Halachically Speaking*. The goal was and still is to be able to present a topic in halachah which people do not learn or knew existed but have difficulty in finding the sources. Rebbi always encouraged me to make sure each word is accurate and can be relied upon for *halachah l'maaseh*. After each topic was researched I would always sit with Rebbi and ask questions on the material which I researched, wanting to make sure I was able to present the opinion of Rebbi prop-

erly. Before each article went to print we sat to make sure each line quoted in Rebbi's name was accurate, and many times Rebbi would himself write in his own handwriting what message I should incorporate in the article. He agreed to have his *pesakim* incorporated into my articles since they were going to be read by so many hundreds *ba"h*. Over the years I had the great privilege of walking Rebbi home, driving him home, and we discussed hundreds of questions, many of which appeared in the *sefer* written four years ago, when Rebbi was first sick, as well as the hundreds of articles written in *Halachically Speaking*. Hopefully, in the very near future, another volume will come out containing much more of Rebbi's *pesakim*, in *Piskei Halachah* volume 2.

Rebbi had a great ability to write *teshuvos* which would be music to the ear to read.

Anyone can say something is forbidden, but the real strength of a *posek* is to be able to permit. Before many of the major kashrus agencies decided on a question and how to implement a solution, they checked to see what Rebbi's opinion on the matter was. No one knew more about how equipment works and operates more than Rebbi. In working in the kashrus field I can attest to the countless pages of *teshuvos* I have read across the entire gamut of the kashrus world dealing with many of the practical implications of kashrus in today's world.

When one listened to a *shiur* from Rebbi one felt that he was connected to the previous generation.

Harav Elyashiv zt"l is reported as having said that he was concerned who would be the *gadol* in America to lead the generation once the *gedolim* of last generation were *niftar*, and he was relieved once he met and spoke with Rebbi that he would be the leader. No one will be able to replace Rebbi. It is said that even when Harav Elyashiv zt"l was advanced in age, when Rebbi would come visit, he would rise and say "Rav Belsky, Rav Belsky."

Often, when new innovations would come out, Rebbi would be the one to deal with the topic when no one else wished to comment on it. When Rebbi said a *psak* one felt relieved that he was doing the right thing by following Rebbi's lead.

I had the *zechus* to host Rebbi in my home for a Friday night *seudah* a number of years ago. Rebbi was asked a question by my son Mordechai, a question any six-year-old would ask: Why is wearing a coat not carrying on Shabbos? Rebbi answered him as if the question was asked by a *gadol b'Torah*. His care and devotion for every person, every question, will surely be missed. My son Mordechai still cherishes the warmth Rebbi showed him.

Rebbi was always bothered by the fact that people try to make sure certain *halachos* would be able to fit into their convenience. One case in point that Rebbi always mentioned was *Mezonos* rolls. There is no such thing, and Rebbi would point to

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RABBI MOISHE D. LEBOVITS

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this fact on multiple occasions. Why would one want to lose out on the ability to say *brachos* and thank Hashem for the food he ate?

Rebbi always wanted us to be careful to make sure that whatever we put into our mouths was with the highest standards, even if it was toothpaste or mouthwash.

Besides for the fact that Rebbi worked in the OU, people don't realize that all kashrus agencies need to rely on the ingredients which the OU cer-

tifies. Therefore, one needs to realize that kashrus in America and abroad has been relying on the guidance of Rav Belsky זצ"ל.

Rebbe always stressed that although when one is learning in yeshiva he focuses on learning the yeshiva masechta one has to make sure to learn practical halacha to know how to act. The point of learning is to know what to do. Rebbe was a living example of this as he knew all of Torah on a practical level. We must make sure to make time to do our best in learning halachah on a practical level.

Moshiach should come soon for various reasons, but hopefully Moshiach is really on the way so that we can once again see and hear the words of Torah from Rebbi. It will be great challenge to go on without him. Hashem should give us all the strength to emulate his great ways, and follow his path of Torah, *Avodah*, and *chesed*, and stand up for the truth in halachah.

May he be a *meilitz yosher* for his family, his *talmidim*, and all of Klal Yisrael.

Yehi Zichro Baruch.

Quotes From the Hespeidim

RABBI MOSHE BOYLAN

On Yud Tes Shevat, Klal Yisroel was saddened by the tragic petirah of one of the Gedolei Roshei Yeshiva and Manhigim of Klal Yisroel, Maran Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky זצ"ל. While this is a tragedy for all of Klal Yisroel, it's especially a loss for the Flatbush/Kensington community, as he was so involved in giving shiurim, Piskei Halacha and Hadracha especially for our community. Truly it can be said that Yetzias Tzadik Min HaMakom Oseh Roshem. The impact of Rav Belsky's loss will be felt for many years to come, as he served such an important role for our community (in addition to all of Klal Yisroel).

The following are some highlights of the Deraschos given at the levayah, which was held on Erev Shabbos Parshas Yisro in Mesivta Torah Vodaath. Maspidim at the levaya included Harav Yosef Savitzky, Harav Shmuel Kamenetsky, Harav Meir Weinberg, Harav Elya Katz, Harav Elya Brudny, Harav Yeruchem Olshin, Rav Menachem Genack, Rav Mendel Belsky, Rav Aryeh Belsky, Rav Avrohom Belsky, Rav Yaakov Gross, R' Shlomo Yehuda Rechnitz, Rav Tzvi Belsky.

We are mispallel that the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky זצ"ל should be a mailitz yosher for his Mishpacha, Talmidim, and all of Klal Yisroel.

The Rambam tells us that the Ri Migash was "Sichlo Mavis Bechol HaTalmud", his intellect was scary in the entire Talmud. Rav Belsky זצ"ל was someone that was absolutely brilliant and displayed this brilliance in his knowledge.

In addition to his knowledge of Torah, Lehavdil, he was also brilliant in so many other topics, which were able to help him deal with areas relevant to these topics in the OU and in many other Torah venues. Examples of the above include when he dealt with the issue of transporting oil (and the Kashrus issues involved), his knowledge of astronomy which was used to help Artscroll in explaining various Sugyos in Shas, and so many other topics.

Another midah tovah that Rav Belsky had relates to Moshe Rabbeinu. The Torah tells us how

Moshe Rabbeinu saw an injustice being perpetrated by an Egyptian hitting a Jew. Moshe Rabbeinu immediately hit and killed the Mitzri, which caused Moshe Rabbeinu to have to run away to Midyan.

The obvious question was why Moshe Rabbeinu should do such a thing? Shouldn't he have realized that he would get in big trouble by doing this? Even if he wanted to do such a thing, couldn't he have at least waited until he would be in a situation that he would have the power to do something without such severe repercussions? The answer is that Moshe Rabbeinu had such a sense of justice that he couldn't wait. He couldn't make any cheshbonos when there was an injustice, and had to stand up for someone who was BaAveled (someone who was treated or acted to inappropriately).

Rav Belsky זצ"ל had a similar middah. With all of his Gaonus and brilliance, he always stood up for justice, even for people who were forlorn and everyone else gave up on them.

This reminds us of a story from Maran Rav Chaim Brisker זצ"ל. When Rav Chaim was a young boy in Cheider, the Melameid had a hard time in class, and decided to hit the Yasom in the class, who he falsely blamed for the ruckus which had occurred.

Rav Chaim stood up and defended the yasom, and walked away from this class. He told his father that he refused to stay in a class with a Rebbi that acted so inappropriately. Afterwards, he learned with his father, the Beis HaLeivi זצ"ל, and never again learned from this rebbi.

Some time later, Rav Chaim was very sick with fever, and the doctors thought that he wouldn't survive. Somehow he started to get better, and he related the following story: He saw the Beis Din Shel Maalah paskening Misah (death) on him (R"l) and suddenly the father of the yasom spoke up in his defense, pushing away the Malach HaMaves. This tipped the scales in his favor, and he was zoche to have a Refuah Shelaimah.

Rav Belsky had such a middah tovah, and would stand up for the truth. He had the courage and te-

nacity to swim against the current and state the Emes as he understood it.

His mesirus nefesh for maintaining the halacha had great ramifications for the Torah community. This included giving guidance in many Kashrus issues (such as the issue of worms in the fish), Metzizah BePeh and Eiruv in Brooklyn.

Once I remember meeting Rav Belsky in a massive tanker which was stories high. Rav Belsky climbed on the ladders in order to see what was necessary. This showed great courage and tenacity to see what the Metzius was (the physical reality), which is necessary to pasken the halacha.

Some of the other things we saw from Rav Belsky were the gevaldige Divrei Chizuk he would give in our office every Aseres Yemei Teshuva. He also would bring over many of his talmidim from Torah Vodaath to the office, and give them Shimush in the practical aspects of halacha.

Thinking about Rav Belsky reminds me of what Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik זצ"ל (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Rav Yitzchok Elchonon) said on his uncle Rav Yitzchok Ze'ev Soloveitchik זצ"ל (the Brisker Rav) upon his petirah: Er iz nisht Gresser, Er iz Anderish (he is not greater, he is different). Mi Yitein Lanu Temuraso. Bila Hamaves Lanetzach U'Macha Hashem Elokim Dimah Maial Kol Panim.

Chazal tell us that when Avrohom Avinu did chesed for the three Orchim (who were really Malachim), he was rewarded for every act he did. He gave them bread personally, and therefore his children got Man in the Midbar. In contrast, the water he gave them was through a Shaliach (Yishmael) and therefore his children got the Be'air through a Shaliach (Moshe Rabbeinu).

The question is that Rashi tells us that Avrohom Avinu told Yishmael to give the water to the Orchim so as to be Mechaneich him in the mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim. Why then was it a Taanah on him that he brought the water with a Shaliach, causing that his children would only get the

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RABBI MOSHE BOYLAN

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Be'eir through a Shaliach? We can answer that this shows us a big yesod in Chinuch. The best way to be mechaneich children is not to tell them to do actions. Rather, the greatest chinuch is for your children to see how you do the actions you expect from them.

As a child of Rav Belsky, I can testify that the way he was mechaneich his children was not merely through giving shmuessen as to what is appropriate. Rather, he actually did the actions he expected from us, and this was his way of being mechaneich us, his children, to act appropriately.

One thing we remember vividly was the way he took his Seforim, whether a Gemara or a Mishnayos, with him when he took us to various places. If we had a Chol HaMoed outing for the children or grandchildren, Rav Belsky would take along a Sefer, and we would see him learning while we were playing or enjoying ourselves. This gave us an idea of how we should spend our time and what activities are really important.

In addition to Torah, Rav Belsky was known for his commitment to Avodah. He was the Baal Tefilah for the Yomim Noraim for many years, inspiring the Kahal with his Koach of Neginah. He loved beautiful Nigunim, and liked to sing them, including Nigunim of great Gedolei Torah like Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz zt"l.

Gemilus Chassadim was part of our house. Our house was "Yehi Baysecha Pasuach Lirvacha", it was open for so many different people. Even when family members would complain that we should not allow certain people in (as they were acting too "Meshuga"), he would tell us Maasei Tzadikim, such as the famous story of the father of the Baal Shem Tov. {Someone went into his house and acted in a very uncouth manner. He still showed him great respect and Hachnasas Orchim, and in this zechus he had a son like the Baal Shem Tov zt"l.}

He showed respect for others, even when they acted disrespectfully to him. Once someone came in to ask him for a donation, and he gave him a check. The person said with chutzpa "Rav Belsky, you can't give me more money?" Rav Belsky didn't get angry at him and instead asked me if I had some money to also give to the person raising money.

One of Rav Belsky's favorite stories was about when a Torah mosad for Russians was in danger of being closed down. Rav Shneur Kotler zt"l protested that it was not Shayach, possible to close down such a mosad that does such important work for Russians, just due to money. Eventually, Rav Shneur's words inspired the Olam to come up with the money necessary for the mosad to continue.

The reason Rav Belsky liked this story was because this was him! He also showed such great mesirus nefesh for Yidden, whether on a Klal level or on the level of a Perat, individual.

The Viduy of Rav Nissan Gaon said "Ais Asher Haikalti Hechemarti Ve'Eis Asher Hechmarti

Haikalti". {We confess that what Hashem said to be lenient in I was stringent in, and what Hashem said to be stringent in I was lenient in.} We see that our obligation is not merely to always be machmir on everything. Rather, we have to learn Torah to the extent that we have a clarity which enables us to see when we should be machmir and when we should be maikil. {Perhaps we can add that there is an inyan of Kol HaMosif Goraih. If one is machmir when the Torah said to be Maikil, he will eventually be Maikil when the Torah said to be Machmir.}

Rav Belsky truly lived up to this responsibility. Rav Belsky learned Torah and was meshameish his Rebbeim to the extent that he saw with a clarity when something was Mutar or Assur. If Rav Belsky understood (based upon his own Torah knowledge and the mesorah he had from his rebbeim) that the Torah told us to be Maikil (such as with the famous tumult of worms in the fish), then Rav Belsky clearly stood up for being Maikil, and didn't just say "what does it hurt to be machmir". Conversely, when Rav Belsky understood (based upon his own Torah knowledge and the mesorah of his Rebbeim) the Torah said to be machmir, such as with regards to Eiruvin in Brooklyn, then Rav Belsky stood up clearly and explained that this was Assur, and there was no room to be Maikil.

Chazal tell us that a Talmid Chochom that can pasken and doesn't, violates an aveirah which has terrible ramifications for the Klal. Rav Belsky took this obligation seriously, and paskened for thousands of people, including pesakim for individuals and for the Klal.

It is the obligation of the Klal to get together the Piskei Halacha, Shiurim and Shmuessen that have not been published as of yet, and make these available for future generations.

The Torah tells us the Maaseh Avos Siman Labanim for Gemilus Chassadim from the actions of Avrohom Avinu, who was the Av of Chesed. One of the classic stories the Torah tells us was how Avrohom Avinu was very sick after he underwent a Bris Milah, and it was very hot outside. This caused that no Orchim would be going around outside. Normally, a person would think that this is lucky, as he is not feeling well and therefore is happy that he has no obligation to do chesed. Instead, Avrohom Avinu felt bad he couldn't do chesed, and looked to have Orchim. In order that Avrohom Avinu should be able to do chesed, Hashem sent him three Malachim that looked like Orchim.

We see from this that the madreigah of Gemilus Chassadim the Torah wants from us is not only to do chesed when there is a need that comes in front of us. While this is one level of Gemilus Chassadim, it is not the ultimate. The ultimate Gemilus Chassadim is Ahavas Chesed, when one loves Chesed so much that he wants to do chesed.

For such a person, even if there is no chesed available to do, he will feel bad that he can't do chesed.

This was the madreigah of the groisse niftar, Rav Belsky zt"l. He not only did the chassadim that came his way, but also desired chesed and loved it. {A story that happened at the end of his life shows this. Rav Belsky was very sick, and had to take medicine that took away his ability to think and speak normally. When people are in such a condition, their inner essence is revealed. Rav Belsky started to say loudly that we have to give food and help to poor people. It is not enough to give them inferior food, but rather they must get very good food. The fact that this should be mentioned by him showed that this was part of his essence, not merely something he did because it was expected of him.}

Halo Taidu Ki Sar Vegadol Nafal BeYisroel. Gadol refers to the gadlus of the person who was niftar. Rav Belsky was truly a Gadol. He was a Gaon Amiti, who was a great Rosh Yeshiva and a Baki, including Talmud Bavli and Talmud Yerushalmi.

Sar refers to the hashpaah he had on Klal Yisroel. Rav Belsky was a great Rosh Yeshiva who had a hashpaah on thousands of talmidim. He also helped to ensure that Yeshiva Torah VeDaas should continue on, even when it went through difficult Tekufos. Torah Vedaas was part of his essence. {It was also in his blood, as his zaide, Reb Binyamin Wilhelm zt"l was the meyaseid of the Yeshiva.}

Now is Eis Lispod for the gantze Olam HaTorah, that is bereft of one of our Gedolei Torah. However, for Yeshiva Torah VeDaas we can say that Aivel Yachid Asi Lach. While it is a time of pain for all Bnai Torah, it is so much more so for the talmidim of this Yeshiva, who have lost one of their groisse Roshei Yeshiva.

Maran Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l said the following vort: Chazal tell us that for someone that learns Torah, there is a shiur of 600,000 people that should be there at the levayah (and until this point is reached, one must be mevateil Torah to attend the levayah). The reason for this is "Netilasah Kinesinasah", the Torah is taken like it is given. Just as Matan Torah had 600,000 there, so too at a levayah of one that has learned Torah, there should be 600,000 people there.

Rav Aharon explained that when a Talmid Chochom is niftar, at his levayah there is a hashpaah of Torah, just as by Har Sinai. The Bnai Torah should realize this, and take advantage to use this hashpaah to get the hashpaah of Torah that descends at this time.

The Bnai Torah, the talmidei HaYeshivos must realize that they are the Ligyono Shel Melech, the army of the King (Hashem). It is from them that the Torah is supposed to be received and given over to the next generations. Through getting the hashpaah from the Rosh Yeshiva zt"l and learning from his life, we can fill the void of his petirah and carry on the groisskeit of the niftar (at least to some extent). ”

May the Rosh Yeshiva be a Mailitz Yosher for his mishpacha, talmidim and gantze Klal Yisroel.

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PHOTO CREDITS: JDN, Tsemach Glenn, Shulem Goldring, Moshe Gershbaum, Moshe D. Yarmish

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A Great Loss to the Russian-American Jewish Community

✦ R' EZRA KLEIN

Last week's petirah of our Rebbe and guide, Rabbi Chaim Yisroel Belsky has left a great void for all of us.

Rabbi Belsky was my Rebbe and mentor for the past twenty-five years. I never had the zechus of attending Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. I never heard a shiur from Rabbi Belsky. But I, like so many others in the kiruv community, stood by Rabbi Belsky's side while he mastered and directed the field of Russian kiruv, especially here in Brooklyn, New York.

I had the great honor and privilege of working together with Rabbi Belsky for the cause of bringing back Russian Jews who immigrated to America in the massive immigration wave of 1985 through 1995. That short period of time saw the emigration of over a million Jews from Russia to Israel, the United States and other locations.

Rabbi Belsky worked feverishly to bring tens of thousands of these newly liberated Russian-American Jews back into the fold of Yiddishkeit. The job that many others gave up on was perfectly suited to Rabbi Belsky.

He worked with many Russian-American Kiruv organizations, such as the Vaad Hatzalas Nidchei Yisroel, Beer Hagola and other organizations. But I learned the meaning of Chesed, Middos Tovos and attention to the details of bringing back our Russian brothers and sisters, when I joined Rabbi Belsky in the creation of the Russian-American Kehila, Kehilas Moreshes Yakov.

When Rabbi Avrohom Binsky and Rabbi Aryeh Katzin (among others) were brought to the United States in the early 1990s to attend to the increasingly large Russian Jewish population, Rabbi Belsky contributed whatever time and energy it took to make sure that the cause of Russian return to Judaism would thrive and succeed.

In the early 1990s Russian baalei Tehuva were few and far in between. I could venture to say that they consisted of perhaps a few hundred Orthodox Russian emigres.

Today we have several tens of thousands of Russian Orthodox Jews here in America. This success, to a large extent, is due to the heroic efforts of Rabbi Belsky to make the cause of Russian Jewry a cause celebre.

In an earlier period, Rabbi Belsky was one of the founders and movers behind the Beer Hagola project begun fifteen years earlier by Rabbi Yakov Kaminetsky, Zatzal. Rabbi Belsky moved on from Beer Hagola to start the Russian Kehila, together with Rabbi Avrohon Binsky. Whether it was creating a nucleus of interested BaaleiBatim who would further the cause of creating a proper environment for the new immigrants. Whether it was the need to find funding to renovate Rabbi Binsky's basement to act as a shul in 1995 when the Kehila first coalesced as a thriving kiruv institution of Torah and Avodah. Whether it was finding the people who would eventually build the current location

of Kehilas Moreshes Yaakov, Rabbi Belsky always stepped up to the plate and accomplished his mission.

The Russian Kehila had its inaugural dinner on December 14, 2003, where Rabbi Belsky was installed as the Nasi of Kehilas Moreshes Yaakov. The Kehila was also celebrating the construction of the new building at 1749 Ocean Avenue in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Rabbi Belsky, who had taught himself to speak Russian fluently, prepared two Drashos. One in English and one in Russian. He started with his Russian Drasha and spoke for over five minutes, fluently, to the large Russian audience. Five hundred Russian returnees and American supporters celebrated Rabbi Belsky's ascension to the Nesius of the general Russian community throughout Brooklyn, New York.

Rabbi Belsky's trail blazing work on behalf of Russian Jews led to the creation of other Kehilos composed of Russian immigrants throughout the tri-state area and beyond. Graduates of the Kehila currently run emigre communities in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Lakewood, New Jersey; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and elsewhere. Other operating Russian kehilas, based on the principals of Kehilas Moreshes Yakov, have been opened successfully in Mill Basin, Brooklyn; Flatbush; and several locations in New Jersey and Texas. The concept behind all of these institutions is that the Russian immigrant requires a safe haven, reminiscent of life back in the Soviet Union, in order to be able to relate their Yiddishkeit to their returning souls. This was a controversial issue then and remains controversial to this day. However the proof is in the pudding. Many thousands of Russian returnees have been created and fostered by this Kehila and all the others that currently operate throughout the United States.

When Rabbi Binsky approached Rabbi Belsky with the concept of creating a Russian Kehila, Rabbi Belsky embraced the idea wholeheartedly. Rabbi Belsky supported the kehila day and night for the twenty-two years since the Kehilas' inception.

Rabbi Belsky suggested that the Kehilah be named after Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky because Rabbi Kaminetsky himself was born in Russia and he was one of the early supporters of attempting to bring Russian immigrants back to their Jewish roots. Therefore Rabbi Belsky thought it very appropriate to name the Kehila after Rabbi Kaminetsky.

When Rabbi Binsky started mainstreaming the next generation – the children born to the Russian immigrants in the 1990s – Rabbi Belsky fought for their admittance into all the mainstream Yeshivos. Rabbi Belsky reasoned that the science and mathematics abilities amongst the Russian Jewish immigrants was on such a high level that he was sure they would succeed in any Yeshiva. Rabbi Belsky turned out to be correct since the community has close to a hundred students of various ages in the

American Jewish school system and all of them are doing very well.

One of the friends of the Kehila told me a very telling story about Rabbi Belsky. This happened some thirty-five or more years ago. Rabbi Belsky was leading a group of campers on a trip to Niagara Falls. One of the campers was unable to walk, so he was unable to go down and enjoy all the sites and scenes of Niagara Falls. So what did Rabbi Belsky do? He took the boy on his shoulders (and the boy was not a small skinny fellow) and carried him down the many steps to see all the sites of Niagara Falls. He then carried the boy up all those same steps, just so the youngster should not feel in any way that he missed out on an opportunity to see the Falls. Rabbi Belsky cared about everyone. He cared about all his campers, he cared about his talmidim, he cared about Russian Jewry; he cared about everyone. This attribute came through in every encounter Rabbi Belsky had with almost everyone.

This writer had the particular honor of inviting Rabbi Belsky to speak at almost 15 parlor meetings and dinners for the Russian Kehila over the past fifteen years. Whenever I asked Rabbi Belsky to honor us with his presence, he never gave the issue a second thought. He was always ready willing and able to jump at the opportunity to help his Russian brothers and sisters. He was gibor k'ari - strong like a lion, to do the will of Ha-shem when it came to virtually any request made of him.

Rabbi Belsky worked behind the scenes for many troubled cases in the immigrant community included touchy issues of divorce; the question of Geirus in the community; the issue of who really is a Russian Jew and who is not, and the list goes on and on. Rabbi Belsky officiated at many weddings for Kehila members thereby inducting these members into the Torah view of marriage.

I had the wonderful opportunity to share the Vaad L'Hatzala Nidche Yisroel intercontinental journey to Baku, Azerbaijan in December 2012 with Rabbi Belsky. We traveled 15,000 miles to celebrate the resurgence of Yiddishkeit in the formally communist wasteland of Azerbaijan. This was around the same time that Rabbi Belsky was formally elevated to the co-Nesius of the Vaad Hatzala Nidche Yisroel. Even after his earlier illness shortly prior to this trip, Rabbi Belsky travelled so far, to give Chizuk to those few Jews left in Baku and Tbilisi, Georgia of the FSU. The Rav's energy level was amazing. The warmth that each of the children we encountered on the trip felt had to be experienced. It was perhaps one of Rabbi Belsky's last journeys for the cause of Russian Jewry.

I will miss my Rebbe very much. The Kehila will miss him very much. Russian-American Jewry will miss the Rebbe very much. Russian Jewry throughout the United States will be hard pressed to fill his shoes, as will all Klal Yisroel.

Yehi Zichro Baruch.

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Our Rosh Hayeshiva zt"l

RABBI MOSHE SHOCHET

The Rosh Hayeshiva is gone. I got the word 7:40 Thursday night while I was in middle of making MM calls for Torah Vodaath, and I was numb. I couldn't go on, and so I sat down to send pictures around of the multi-faceted Rosh Hayeshiva. Rav Belsky was involved in everything. There were pictures of him in Georgia Russia being *mekarev yidden* to *Yiddeshkeit*. I saw pictures of Rav Belsky dissecting an animal after *shechting* it to show talmidim *hilchos shchita & treifos*. There was a picture with him as a younger man with the Bluzever Rebbe zt"l in Camp Aguda. I saw him with HoRav Ruderman zt"l, HoRav Pam zt"l, with HoRav Yitzchok Scheiner shlita, with HoRav Yeruchem Olshen shlita. I cried when I saw what we had lost.

We lost a Goan, a Tzaddik, a Posek Hador, a tremendous Talmid Chacham who was a *Baki* and a *lamdan in*; *Shas, Poskim, Torah Sh'bksav & Torah Sh'baal peh-daled chelkei Shulchan Orech, Tnach, Chumash, Shisha Sidrei Mishnah*. He was a *mechaber seforim on Shaylos & Teshuvos Shulchan Halevi*. You were able to ask Rav Belsky anything and everything. There was nothing that he didn't know. Horav Elyashav zt"l called him the Pe'er Hador, and told him that he was very weak, and was not able to answer everyone *b'ksav*, but for Rav Belsky he took out the time to answer him. Rav Belsky would debate the PETA activist about *Shechita*, and the NY City health officials when it came to *Metzitzah B'peh*. I asked the Rosh Chabu-

ras Choshen Mishpat who was close to the Rosh Hayeshiva for 40 years, if he ever stumped the Rosh Hayeshiva, Rav Belsky? And of course the answer was NO! He was an expert in all knowledge, medical, science, history, Jewish History, language, math, and the stars of the Universe! We lost our Captain of the Ship!

I remember racing to the hospital in Manhattan for my own Father Z"l, and my brother asked me to call Rav Belsky to ask him about DNR. The Rosh Hayeshiva said vehemently absolutely not. You keep your father alive and keep on resuscitating him. Interesting, that's exactly what Horav Dovid Feinstein shlita paskened for the Rosh Hayeshiva now when he was in the hospital. I went to Maimonides Hopital last night to give some *chizuk* to the family and to show our support. I told the daughter that; "The world needs your Father"! She answered me; "I know, that's what I told Hashem"! Hashem needed him in *Shomayim*!

He will join the other Roshei Yeshiva who he was so close to such as; Harav Reuvein Gozovsky zt"l, HaRav Pam zt"l, Horav Yaakov zt"l, Horav Zelik Epstein zt"l, the Menahel, Horav Nesanel Quinn zt"l. He will also be reunited with his Zeide who founded the Yeshiva, R' Binyomin Wilhelm Z"l, who the Rosh Hayeshiva always told over with tears in his eyes, how he went around the different shuls on Yom Kippur and making an appeal not for money, but instead gathering talmi-

dim for Torah Vodaath without hardly davening. It was with *Meseras Nefesh* to save *neshomos of Klal Yisroel*. The Rosh Hayeshiva lived with that *Mesiras Nefesh* in his blood for his Home the Yeshiva & Mesivta Torah Vodaath. He said over this year that in his 50 years of teaching that he loved all his Talmidim.

How interesting that he was *niftar Erev Shabbos parshas Matan Torah*; [*yud ches, chof beis*] "*V'shaftu Es Ha'am B'Chol Es V'hayah Kol Hadavar Hagodol Yaveu Elecha....*Rav Belsky loved to tell over how the first time that he was substituting out of Town, he told the class that Noah was 600 years old at the time of the Mabul. A young kid raised his hand and asked the young substitute that it wasn't true, since he had seen the movie and Noah was only 60 years old? Rav Belsky didn't miss a beat, and answered him with *Chachmah & Siyata D'Shmaya* that really Noah was 600 years old at the time of the Mabul, however when Hollywood searched and looked around for a 600 year old actor, they couldn't find anyone that old, so they had to settle unfortunately for a 60 year old man- sorry! Rosh Hayeshiva; we will miss you very much. I was hoping that we would have been able to dance for you like 4 years ago when you recovered miraculously, but Hashem has other plans, and we'll now cry for you. *Es L'rkod V'Es L'vkos Lech B'Shalom L'yom Sh'kulo Shabbos*.



PHOTO CREDIT: Tsemach Glenn, JDN, Moshe D. Yarmish, Shulem Goldring & Moshe Gershbaum

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Rebbi, I Miss You

It's hard to believe a loss like this is a reality. I can remember Rav Belsky as a tall strong man playing racquetball every summer on the courts in Camp Agudah. I can remember him swimming across the Olympic size pool and barely even taking a breath. I can even remember one summer when we went together on a day trip hike up a mountain with the masmidim in Camp Agudah. As we were making our way back down the mountain one of the boys fainted and could barely walk. I was quite a bit ahead so I couldn't see the commotion, I had only heard about it from some other guys making their way down. I asked how the boy made it back down the mountain if he couldn't walk. My friends responded, "Rav Belsky carried him" ... "on his shoulders." As I think back now, we were all carried by Rav Belsky in one way or another.

I well up with emotion as I sit here and try to recall my memories of Rav Belsky and bring myself to accept that he is no longer here with us.

I went to Camp Agudah for about 10 years starting in 1988. In my last two years in camp I learned by Rav Belsky in his beloved Masmidim Program. He would walk around the Beis Medrash in the morning and loved talking to all of us. I went to his shiur both in the morning on the sugya we were learning and Shabbos afternoon when he would give his famous shiur in Pirkei Avos which was widely attended; standing room only. I even had the zchus to learn with him one on one in his office every morning after shachris for one summer.

As I sat in his office and we tried learning a few words the phone wouldn't stop ringing. People would call him non stop asking him to help them. This was his supposed vacation and it would have been perfectly fair for him to simply not answer or tell people he was sorry he couldn't help; but that's never what happened. He couldn't tell someone

that he couldn't help. We were all his children to him. How could he tell his child he was too busy when he knew they needed him?

Rav Belsky loved his Masmidim so much and we enjoyed every moment we had with him. We learned with him, we sang his nigunim with him, we went on hikes with him and sat around camp fires with him. We learned about the solar system and the constellations on our late night walks and he explained gemaras and Midrashim that discussed everything about them. No matter what it was we were doing together, we cherished every moment we had with Rebbe.

One year during the winter my friend and I mustered the courage to ask Rav Belsky if we could come for Shabbos. He was happy to have us and we truly enjoyed it so much. I'm still embarrassed to admit that the Rosh yeshiva himself came upstairs to wake us for Shachris. For him though, it was no big deal. He was happy we were comfortable and treated us better than he would a guest; we were his children.

My Mother was the nurse in Camp Agudah for 7 years and pretty quickly my father and mother developed a strong relationship with Rav Belsky. They too felt as though he was a father figure to them. He was available to help with my brother and me getting into yeshivos and was instrumental when it came to Shiduchim for my sisters.

Years after we left camp and we no longer had our day to day relationship, Rav Belsky would call us just to check in and see how we were doing, as if he had nothing else to do. He attended all of our Simchas including my Bar Mitzvah and was the Mohel at my nephews' bris'. He would see my father from time to time in Yeshiva and would ask him "how are my boys doing?" My brother and I were *his* boys. That was Rav Belsky.

The fact that Rav Belsky had Kol Hatorah Kullah Shagur Bpiv didn't stop him for one moment

if someone, needed him. He didn't feel he was too big or too great or too busy to help any of us with the smallest things if that's what he thought we needed. He sacrificed his own time and health to help another Yid.

True Gedolim are able make us feel that they really care. It isn't an act or something they feel they *should* do. They simply don't know any other way to be. Their love for all of us can only be compared to that of a parent that loves unconditionally. Rav Belsky was certainly a gadol in every sense of the word and being a father for all of us was simply who he was. He loved us all at least as much as we loved him. Who he was, was someone who didn't have a "self" or a "me". He lived for all of us. He lived for Klal Yisroel.

I want to also mention that when it comes to a Gadol of this magnitude whose heart was so big that he literally took klal yisroel under his wing, I want to personally thank The Rebetzin and the entire family for being so gracious and for "sharing" their father with us. I know what Rav Belsky did for me and my family and I can only imagine what he did for others. Thank you for being so very giving of your father, knowing what he meant to all of us.

Rebbe, I miss you so much. The Torah you have taught, the gmilas chesed you have done without anyone knowing, the friendly phone call you would make, we will have to go on without it. You have been a Maylitz Yosher for Klal Yisroel for so many years and there is now a gaping hole that can't be filled.

May you continue to be a Maylitz Yosher for your family and all of Klal Yisroel and may Hashem to give us strength so that we can go on without a Gibor

Yehi Zichro Baruch.

**One of "your boys",
Mordechai Dornbush**

NEW
WEEKLY
SERIES

Piskei Halacha Of HoRav Yisroel Belsky

COMPILED BY RABBI MOISHE D. LEBOVITS

Actions That Cause Forgetfulness of Torah — קשה לשכחה

Most *poskim* maintain that women may perform actions that cause forgetfulness of Torah. Practically speaking, though, they should *l'chatchilah* be stringent.

The halachah of not walking between two women applies whether a man is walking between two women that are stationary, or if a man walks between two walking women. Certain *poskim* question whether this *issur* applies to one walking between non-Jewish women. Practically speaking, one should

be stringent. One should not walk between his wife and daughter.

The Gemara uses the expression, "You should not pass." Two men may walk together between two women.

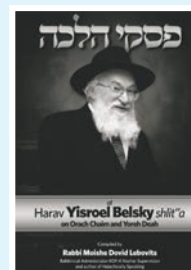
Regarding an airplane or bus, it is very common that one will have to sit between two women. The *poskim* say that this practice is permitted. Nonetheless, if one can easily persuade a female passenger to switch seats, then this is preferable.

It is permitted to wait on line between two women in a bank

or store. Nonetheless, some say that whenever possible one should be careful to avoid this situation and move to the side.

The *poskim* state that putting on two garments of clothing simultaneously causes forgetfulness of Torah knowledge. Removing two garments at one time is permitted.

When placing a hat on one's head, some people tend to place



the yarmulke in the hat and then place both of them on the head. This practice should be avoided. One should be careful not to turn his yarmulke inside-out.

There is a misconception that one who eats the end piece of a loaf of bread is susceptible to forget his Torah knowledge. However, there is no real source for this *minhag*, and one is permitted to eat it.

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"וכל בית ישראל יבכו את שדיפה..."

הספד מר

לכלות השבעה של רבינו הראש הישיבה

מרן הגאון האדיר
הרב חיים ישראל הלוי בעלסקי
זצוקלה"ה

לתלמידיו לעולם הישיבות
ולכל מי שנתקרב לרבינו לתורתו ולהוראותיו

ישמיעו דברי הספד והתעוררות מאת:

הרה"ג הרב ישראל רייזמאן שליט"א
ראש ישיבתנו הק'

הרה"ג הרב דן סג"ל שליט"א
המשגיח

הרה"ג הרב ארי' מלכיאל קוטלר שליט"א
ראש ישיבה, בית מדרש גבוה ליקווד

הרה"ג הרב קלמן עפשטיין שליט"א
ראש ישיבה, ישיבה שער התורה

הרב דוד גולדשטיין שליט"א
ר"מ בישיבתנו הק', חתן של רבנו זצ"ל

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אבל גדול ליהודים

שבורים ורצוצים אנו יחד עם אחינו
 כל בית ישראל עטופי יגון קודר

על השבר הנורא אשר
 הושברנו בהסתלקותו לשמי מרום
 של הגאון האדיר, האי גברא רבא,
 מרא דשמעתתא, איש האשכולות

**מין הרב חיים ישראל
 הלוי בעלסקי זצ"ל**

שנתבקש לישיבה של מעלה
 הרבה לפעול בעד אגודת ישראל
 ובעד כלל ישראל
 גדולה האבידה ואין לה תמורה
 וכל בית ישראל יבכו את
 השריפה אשר שרף ה'
 המקום ינחם את משפחתו הכבודה
 בתוך שאר אבולי ציון וירושלים

אגודת ישראל באמריקה



Camp Agudah
 Machane Ephraim
 Camp Bnos
 Camp Bnoseinu
 Camp Chayl Miriam

OUR HEARTS ARE BROKEN OVER
 THE TRAGIC PASSING OF

**Moreinu Hagaon
 Harav Chaim
 Yisroel Belsky זצ"ל**

As our beloved Mara D'Asra for 47 years, he inspired the campers and staff of Camp Agudah with his gadlus baTorah, his exceptional midos, warmth and humility.

How we yearn once again to hear his perfect leining, his heartfelt tefillos, his sweet zemiros. How we will miss seeing him being escorted by his beloved masmidim to his bungalow after an uplifting seudas Shabbos. How we would love to once again hear his powerful voice at our end-of-summer banquet, imploring his "dear campers" to take the lessons of bein adam lachaveiro home with them.

Harav Belsky taught through his brilliant shiurim and through the essence of his beautiful personality.

We will never forget him.

May he be a meilitz yosher for his chashuva rebbetzin, who stood by his side with great devotion; for his children and grandchildren, for his beloved yeshivah, for our camp — for which he had such love and served with such dedication — and for all of Klal Yisrael.

Signed with great sorrow,

THE CAMP AGUDAH FAMILY

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ישיבת ומתיבתא תורה ודעת

**YESHIVA & MESIVTA
 TORAH VODAATH**

נפלה עטרת ראשינו

נשארו המומים ורצוצים,
 על אבידה הגדולה שנאבד ממנו בפתאומים,
 בלב קרוע ומרותח לארץ אנו יושבים, כאבלים ואין להם מנחמים,
 ובאנו אל שדה בוכים, על הסתלקותו של שר התורה גובהו כגובה ארזים,
מורינו ורבינו רועינו ורועה ישראל פאר ראשינו וראש ישיבתנו

מֵרֵן הַגָּאוֹן הָאֲדִיר

הרב חיים ישראל הלוי בעלסקי

זצוקלה"ה

לדאבונו ולדאבון כל בית ישראל, הי' נר לרגלנו ואור לנתיבתנו מורה דרך החיים לאלפים בכל העולם ובפרט לתלמידיו הרבים מהם רבנים ודיינים ומורי הוראה והיו קשורים אליו בלב ונפש, ועכשיו נשארו כיתומים ואין אב, כל אחד מהם אבל יחיד עשי, על אבידה שאבד נהי, מי יגלה אורים, ומי יתרוץ קשים, מי ישדד מעמקים, ומי יראה סתרים, מי יסתת בהרים, ומי יפרק הויות הרבים, מי ילחום מלחמתנו וישוב לשערים, מי יגדור גדר ויעמוד בפרץ, ומי ידריך את התלמידים וילמדם דרך ארץ.

אבל בכל צערנו לא שכחנו את משפחתו של הראש הישיבה שיבדלו לחיים טובים,

האלמנה החשובה תליט"א

והבנים והחתנים החשובים שיחיו כל אחד בשמו יתנחם ויבורך,
 מהם רבנים, ראשי כולל, מגידי שיעור, מורי הוראה, ותומכי תורה באופן נפלא
 והבנות והכלות נשי חיל החשובים שיחיו

והם מתפלשים באפרים, מרותחים וקרועים, נשברים לשברי שברים, המקום ינחם אותם, ויחזקם ויאמצם, שיוכלו להמשיך דרכי אבותם הגדולים, בתורה ועבודה וגמילות חסדים, עד שנוזכה כולנו יחד לראותו שוב בחיים חיותו בקיום הפסוק הקיצו וירגנו שוכני עפר בביאת גואל צדק ובבנין הבית במרום ההרים במהרה בימינו אמן ואמן.

הרב יוסף סאוויצקי
 הרב ישראל הלוי רייזמאן
 ראשי הישיבה

יצחק הכהן גוטדינער
 מנהל כללי

חיים לעשקאוויטץ גדלי' וויינברגר
 בשם ועד הדירקטורין

TRIBUTE SECTION TO HORAV CHAIM YISROEL BELSKY זצ"ל



HESPED BY HORAV YISROEL REISMAN

RABBI MOSHE BOYLAN

It is hard to believe that Shiva for Rav Belsky זצ"ל has ended, and now we must determine where we should go from here. Over the last number of days I have heard around 30 Hespelim. I would like to mention a Nekudah, point, that has not been mentioned as of yet.

What is the Kav, the flowing line, which connects the Rosh Yeshiva's accomplishments and was their basis? It appears to me that this was his Gevuras HaRuach, his self confidence and his feeling that he could do anything, fix anything and that there was nothing too hard for him to solve or accomplish. It was with this Yesod, foundation that he accomplished so much.

This meant that whether it came to fixing a sink, solving a problem of a woman who was an Agunah, ר"ל, dealing with a raging halachic crisis, or any other issue or problem, he could tackle it and deal with it.

The Rosh Yeshiva זצ"ל, until recently was available at all times. He would often have appointments after Midnight, and he still made it to his early morning Seder before Shacharis.

Once someone had a very difficult shailah. He first asked a Rosh Kollel, who told him it was a difficult question he would have to think about. Then he asked a local Rav, who told him the same answer. After asking a third talmid chochom and still not receiving an answer, he

decided to call Rav Belsky. The Rosh Yeshiva told him it was interesting that he asked this shailah, as it was the fourth time it was asked to him that day!

It is well known that the Rosh Yeshiva used to take his beloved Masmidim in Camp Agudah for hikes in which he showed them the stars. I personally didn't understand everything the Rosh Yeshiva said, and I assume that many people likewise couldn't follow his brilliant explanations of astronomy. However, whether one understood these explanations or not, a mussar seder. Just watching his enthusiasm in explaining the heavens was inspiring.

Rav Belsky had gevaldige Lebidikkeit and a feeling of always wanting to solve things. Just like Lehavdil one enjoys solving a riddle, Rav Belsky felt excited to solve any difficult halachic problem or issue. This could include a difficult Tosfos, understanding a complex halacha in Hilchos Teraifos or understanding the Halachos of Kailim in the times of Chazal.

His Gevuras HaRuach together with a feeling of the Geshmak, sweetness of Torah, led him to feel that there was nothing too hard or impossible to accomplish.

In the first beracha of Shemone Esray it said "Koneh Hakol". The simple explanation is that Hashem acquires everything. Rabbeinu Av-

rohom Ben HaGR" A זצ"ל explains these words as saying that Hashem Kiveyachol is Mesakein Hakol, fixes everything. Rav Belsky, in emulating Hashem, similarly had this middah of feeling he could fix everything.

On the plane, going to the levayah in Eretz Yisroel, I met a friend who was not a talmid in Torah Vedaas and I thought had nothing to do with the Rosh Yeshiva. When asked why he was on the flight, he said that he was escorting the Rosh Yeshiva. I wondered out loud what he had to do with Rav Belsky? He explained that years ago he came from L.A. and was a talmid in Yeshiva Torah Temimah and he didn't like the dormitory. When he told Rav Belsky his quandary, the Rosh Yeshiva immediately said that he should stay at his house. For the next couple of months, Rav Belsky gave him a bed in his house.

When the big tumult about the bugs in the water of N.Y.C. started, we were both in Toronto for a chasunah. The Rosh Yeshiva immediately started to review (by heart) the intricate halachos of Tolaim, and said "If the Metzuis, reality, is like A, then this would be the halacha, as is in Shulchan Aruch. If the Metzuis is like B, then this would be the halacha, as in Shulchan Aruch, etc."

Rav Belsky was an Ish HaMaaseh who dealt with things practically and with zerizus. This reminds me

of a story in Tanach. Dovid HaMelech wanted to build the Beis HaMikdash, and Noson HaNavi was told that he better go as soon as possible to tell him that he was not allowed to build it. The question is why this had to be relayed to Dovid HaMelech so quickly? The answer is that Dovid HaMelech acted very quickly, and if he wanted to build the Beis HaMikdash he would do this right away without any laziness.

We live in a culture where we often hear that one is tired, has no strength, needs a break or vacation, etc. The lesson we learn from Rav Belsky is that we shouldn't fall prey to these excuses. No matter how busy or tired the Rosh Yeshiva was, he never used this as a rationalization to push off doing what had to be taken care of. {I saw a Maaseh Nora that took place not too many weeks before his petirah. A woman was an Agunah, and finally her husband was willing to speak with a Rav. Despite feeling very sick and ill, Rav Belsky spent hours negotiating the Get, and it was finally given minutes before Shkiah. Only then did Rav Belsky allow himself to take a rest.}

In conclusion, we must have Demus Deyukno of our rebbi in front of our eyes. We should learn from his "Can do" attitude and his Zerizus and Geshmak in solving problems.

Yehi Zichro Boruch.

HESPED BY RAV DOVID GOLDSTEIN

RABBI MOSHE BOYLAN

As someone that lived in Rav Belsky's house, I saw first hand the great involvement he had in so many people's lives. The phone in his house was ringing constantly. This included his "private number". The only problem with this number being private, was that Rav Belsky gave it out to so many people to help them, that it ceased to be so private.

There was nothing too big or small for the Rosh Yeshiva to deal with. The shailos could involve a complicated shailah in halacha or even a simple question from an ignoramus.

In addition to all the halacha shailos, Rav Belsky dealt with many in-

terpersonal issues like Shalom Bayis issues (for which he never took any money), Dinei Torah, Shiduchim, business questions, and on and on.

Someone asked him why he had to deal with all of these issues? Can't the Rosh Yeshiva let other people deal with these so he will not be so busy? He answered that so many of these individuals have made the rounds, and my house is the last hope for them. How can I crush their last hope?

The Rosh Yeshiva represented Gadlus in the three Amudim of the world: Torah, Avodah and Gemilus Chassadim. However, if we would have to give a special designation to praise him, it would be the Maalah

of Eved Hashem. This reminds us of the famous Hespel of the Chofetz Chaim זצ"ל given by his Talmid Muvhak Rav Elchonon Wasserman זצ"ל. Rav Elchonon said that we can teich up the Chofetz Chaim with a famous Midrash. The Midrash tells us of a wealthy man that was traveling with his Eved, slave. The master realized that he was about to die, and told the slave that he was giving him everything he owned, except one item that would go to his son. The slave went to the son and told him this. The son consulted with a Talmid Chochom, who explained that the father meant for him to take the Eved as the one thing. Once he would acquire the

Eved, then everything else would be his as well, as whatever an Eved owns is owned by his master.

Similarly, the Chofetz Chaim was an Eved Hashem who devoted his entire being to Hashem. We can say on the Rosh Yeshiva זצ"ל that the also was a great Eved Hashem who devoted himself totally to Hashem and His Mitzvos.

The Rosh Yeshiva was not someone who lived for Zich, for himself. Rather, everything was for Hashem.

As is well known, Rav Belsky was one of the Manhigei HaEidah, the leaders of our generation. Chazal tell us that the Manhigim of the genera-

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tion are called the Einei HaEidah, the eyes of the community. What is the significance of being the eyes of the community? We know that “HaShochad Yeaveir Ainai Pikchim”, the bribes cause the eyes of smart people to be blinded. When a Gadol is one of the Ainai HaEidah, he must avoid any Negios, so that he can see clearly, both for himself and the community that relies on him. The Rosh Yeshiva likewise lived with the clear vision of the Torah, not allowing himself to be misled by various Negios, interests that have blinded others.

The following Midrash shows us how Rav Belsky was *zoche* to become one of the Manhigim of the Dor, and how he led Klal Yisroel. Chazal tell us that Bechol Yom VaYom Mordechai Mishaleich Lifnei Chatzar Beis HaNashim Ladaas Es Shelom Esther U'Mah Yaiaseh Bah (Every day Mordechai walked in front of the courtyard of the women, to know the situation of Esther and what was done with her). Chazal tell us that Hashem said that Mordechai was Doresh (searched for) the Shalom of Nefesh Achas (one soul – Esther) and therefore he will eventually be Doresh the Shalom of an entire nation. We see this from what the Megilah writes (in its last Pasuk) “Doresh Tov Leamo VeDoveir Shalom Lechol Zaro”. This shows us that a true Manhig of Klal Yisroel doesn't only look to help the Klal (though this is certainly something he cares about as well). The true Manhig helps Yechidim, individuals, and through this merits to help the entire Klal Yisroel.

Let us look at some of the stages of the Pasuk the Midrash starts with. U'Bechol Yom VaYom: Mordechai didn't just involve himself a little bit and then stop. He continued for a number of times to deal with the problems and issues of his relative who was in a difficult time. This truly *teiched* (translated) Rav Belsky's *gevaldige mesirus nefesh* for so many people. One time he had a talmid in Camp Agudah from Baltimore that was diagnosed with the Machalah, r"l. Rav Belsky visited the talmid in Baltimore a number of times to be Mevakeir Choleh. He didn't suffice with calling him or visiting once, but rather visited a number of times.

Lifnei Chatzar Beis HaNashim represents the *middah* of being willing to do what is necessary even though it is not Lefi Chevodo, according to ones honor. {It was not respectful for Mordechai to have to go in front of the Chatzar Beis HaNashim, but he did this in order to help Esther.} Rav Belsky likewise didn't care if something was not Lefi Chevodo, if it was necessary to help someone else.

Once the Rosh Yeshiva was taking the Masmidim to Niagra Falls. A *talmid* was disabled, and could not go up the many steps all by himself. The management asked that someone stay with this *bochur*, while the other Masmidim would continue on. Suddenly Rav Belsky had a “Chop”, an idea. He asked the Park Ranger if he could hold the *bochur* on his shoulders. The Ranger discouraged this idea, as it was quite difficult to hold someone so heavy for hundreds of steps. Rav Belsky convinced him that it would be all right. Sure enough, the Rosh Yeshiva took the *bochur* on his shoulders, in order that he wouldn't feel bad that everyone else would participate without him. While this was definitely not “Lefi Chevodo”, he did it as he felt like the *bochur* was like his own child.

Ladaas Es Shelom Esther shows the *middah* of not merely asking how things are doing. This meant that one actually knows exactly the *matzav* the person is going through and taking a personal interest.

U'Mah Yaiaseh Bah. This showed the *middah* of actually following what would be done for Esther. This meant that Mordechai not only cared about Esther, and found out what was doing with her disregarding his own Kavod. He also wanted to know exactly what would be done to her, and cared that the situation would be resolved. A true Manhig, both of Yechidim and a Tzibur, cares about all of these aspects.

Some other stories that show us these Middos are the following: Once a person went to speak to Rav Belsky and he gave him advice. A number of months later, the person returned to the Rosh Yeshiva and again he gave him the same advice. This kept repeating itself. When someone asked him what was going on, the Rosh Yeshiva explained that he had given the person advice the first time and

he disregarded it. This has kept recurring, which is why the problem is not resolved. Rav Belsky was asked why he continues to speak with this person who anyway is not listening to his advice? He answered that I may not be able to resolve his problems, but at least he has someone to pour out his heart to. This also is a *chesed*.

During last summer, a person lost one of his relatives, and the Rosh Yeshiva couldn't be Menachem Aveil. When they met each other in the city after the summer, Rav Belsky called him over and was Menachem him, and started to cry. The Aveil said that the Rosh Yeshiva's tears were the greatest Nechama, even more than anyone else that had come during the Shiva.

One time a young husband was *niftar* without leaving over any children, r"l. In addition, the *niftar* had a brother, who was somewhat disabled. This left the family with a big dilemma. Should they have the brother do the Chalitzah or was this not acceptable as the brother was a Shoteh? {Without Chalitzah, the Almanah, widow, would not be allowed to get remarried.} The local *rav* called Rav Belsky with the *shailah*, and he said that he would come to the Beis Aveil himself (the house was a 45 minute drive). The Rosh Yeshiva spent a long time speaking to the relatives of the *niftar*, including especially the brother who was the cause of the *shailah*. After speaking to them for quite a while, he *paskened* that the brother did not have a Din of a Shoteh, and could do Chalitzah. He told the local *rav* that if anyone has Taanos on this, he could tell them that Rav Belsky had paskened that the brother was allowed to perform the Chalitzah. It should be emphasized that Rav Belsky did this for a family he never met before, and therefore was only intending to help a stranger who was a fellow Jew.

Not that long ago, the Rosh Yeshiva attended a *chasunah* and came back very upset. He explained that he met someone that looked at him like he had a big Taanah, argument, on him. Rav Belsky felt bad, and even cried that another Yid would have a Taainah on him.

In order to make him feel better, I told Rav Belsky the following *vort* from Maran Rav Schach zt"l: The Torah said that when Moshe Rabbe-

inu died all the men cried for him for 30 days. In contrast, when Aharon HaKohen died, the Torah tells us that all of Klal Yisroel cried for him, including even the women. Chazal tell us that since Aharon HaKohen was Ohev Shalom VeRodef Shalom, therefore all of Klal Yisroel cried for him, including even the women.

Rav Schach asked why the Torah had to add this detail which seems to take away from the Kavod of Moshe Rabbeinu? He answered that this was really a great Shevach, praise for Moshe Rabbeinu. Since Moshe Rabbeinu's role in Klal Yisroel was to give over the Din, he couldn't be Noheg with the Midah of Aharon HaKohen of being Ohev Shalom VeRodef Shalom. This was a great praise for Moshe Rabbeinu that he acted appropriately for his role, and therefore not everyone cried when he died. {Likewise, Rav Belsky's *tafkid* for Klal Yisroel was to give over the Din and Halacha, being in our generation in the *bechinah* of Moshe Rabbeinu. Therefore it was understood that this would lead to others having Taainos, which was actually understandable given his role.} Rav Belsky told me “Tanuach Datecha Shehinachta Es Daati” (your mind should be calmed, as you have calmed my mind).

Rav Belsky was a true Eved Hashem who lived up to the requirement of Lo Taguru Mipnei Ish. He wasn't concerned with what other people would say, rather only with what Hashem wanted.

One last point that should be mentioned is that from the time he was born until his *petirah*, he felt close and very Mekushar, attached, to Mesivta Torah VeDaas. His mind was on the Yeshiva in general, and also on every individual *Bochur*, Yungerman and his *talmidim* who were not even in the Yeshiva any more.

One of the greatest things we can do for Rav Belsky's Neshama is to be Mechazek the Yeshiva. This means being Mechazeik the Sidrei Yeshiva, including coming on time to *davening* and learning.

We will end with the Pasuk that Rav Belsky used to end with so many times: May we be *zoche* to the fulfillment of the Pasuk “Az Yimalei Sechok Pinu U'Leshonainu Rinah”, with the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu BiMehayra Beyameinu Amen.

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My Thoughts on The Rosh Hayeshiva, זצ"ל

RABBI YITZCHOK GOTTDIENER

It is almost impossible to gather our thoughts and put pen to paper after receiving such a devastating blow. The Rosh Hayeshiva loved every *talmid* in the Yeshiva. No one escaped notice.

Recently the Menahelim, Mechanchim and Roshei Yeshiva were *zoche* to spend a Shabbos away, together with our Rosh Hayeshiva. I believe that the Divrei Chizuk that the Rosh Hayeshiva delivered, speaks volumes about how Moreinu Horav Chaim Yisroel Belsky זצ"ל lived his life.

Below is a transcript of what the Rosh Hayeshiva said on Shabbos. I believe this *drosha* encapsulates the goals and ideal of our beloved Rosh Hayeshiva.

A Rebbe has to do more than love every Talmid [even the difficult ones]. He has to also believe in each and every one of his *talmidim*. Even if the *talmid* does not believe in himself, when he sees the Rebbe believing in him, it will give him a healthy self-esteem to begin believing in himself.

A Rebbe has to see potential *Kochos and Kishronos* in a child. Even if the student resists your efforts, don't give up on anyone.

It possibly may be that Talmidim who are not *matzliach* is because in the past a parent, *rebbe*, or friend was too cynical with him and told him that he wouldn't amount to anything. A *talmid* may not even realize what inner abilities he possesses and

never knew exists. As a Rebbe, you can bring that out of him, and your efforts never go to waste. Years later, you may be surprised and see him grow up IY"H into a *Talmid Chochom*.

If you believe in your *talmidim*, then they'll see themselves in a different light. A Rebbe should never be angry at a *talmid*, except outwardly he can show that he's upset with him but never in your inner heart. You can't be jealous of a *talmid*, in fact a *talmid* is supposed to "*shteig*" more than the Rebbe.

The Rosh Hayeshiva was very open when he told everyone that in all his 50 years of teaching he never hated a *talmid*; just the opposite - he loved each and every Talmid!

Moreinu Horav Belsky touched the lives of thousands of people. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and a person to whom thousands turned to for advice, direction and understanding. Klal Yisroel lost an exceptional Talmid Chacham who was filled with *Ahavas Yisroel*. Torah Vodaath lost our leader, whose drive to build the Yeshiva, which was founded by his Zaida, R' Binyomin Wilhelm זצ"ל, was an inspiration.

Hashem Yisborach should watch over his beautiful family, the *talmidim* and all of us who loved and respected this special individual.

NY STATE SENATOR SIMCHA FELDER

My father, HaRav Tzvi Mordechai Felder, זצ"ל, was a Rav for more than 60 years, and in that capacity he was called upon to officiate at numerous funerals. Over the years, our community said goodbye to many Jewish men and women who had been born in Europe, but when my father saw the passing of a *frum* and *eirliche* Yid who had been raised in America, his praise was even more effusive. Why? We all know why. Spiritually speaking, the challenges here in the Land of the Free are very strong.

If I may be so presumptuous, I dare say that my father would have seen the American roots of HaGaon HaRav Chaim Yisroel Belsky, זצ"ל, as particularly noteworthy. That a man who was born and raised here in America could have reached the heights usually associated only with previous generations who learned in Europe—educating and influencing so many—is, on its own, singularly praiseworthy.

I had the honor and privilege of being one of the HaRav Belsky's many *talmidim* in Yeshiva and Me-sivta Torah Vodaath for many years and I was delighted to take advantage of my proximity to the Rosh Yeshiva to ask him *sheilos*. On one

occasion, I began speaking and the Rav immediately said, "Don't talk! You have Laryngitis!" I smiled but continued. Rav Belsky stopped me again. "I'm serious," he said. "Don't talk or even whisper. Sleep near a hot water humidifier for a few days and you'll feel better IY"H!" I made an appointment with the well known ENT specialist Dr. Allen Goldstein, זצ"ל, who diagnosed my condition exactly the same way and advised me to do precisely the same thing that Rav Belsky recommended.

Of course, HaRav Belsky was well known and respected not only for his *b'kius* in all four *Chelkei Shulchan Aruch, Halachah* and *Hashkafah*, but also for his vast knowledge of science. At his frequent "Ask the Rav" sessions,

listeners were amazed at his wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge of many intricate and arcane subjects. Consequently, after being elected to serve on the NYC Council, Rav Belsky was frequently who I turned to when complicated communal *sheilos* arose. Not only was the Rosh Yeshiva able to understand the issues' complex technicalities and discern the impact on the *Klal*, but also he would authoritatively give a very clear and definitive *psak*.

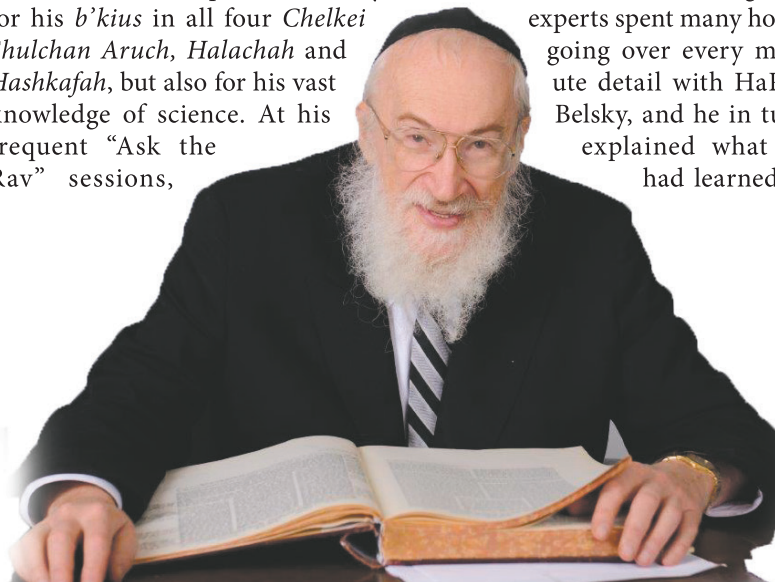
When Water Copepods became an issue, New York City's Environmental Protection Agency experts spent many hours going over every minute detail with HaRav Belsky, and he in turn explained what he had learned to

other *poskim*. Some ultimately had a different *psak* but HaRav Belsky was relied upon for his universally acknowledged expertise.

The mayor's issue with *Metzitzah B'peh* was another great challenge to our community. I was determined to do everything in my power to prevent the City from interfering with our religious observance. Once again, our community had a great champion in HaRav Belsky who had extended, arduous discussions with NYC Health Department officials. I recall my pride in witnessing such a public *Kidush Hashem*, listening to HaRav Belsky's learned, insightful and unhesitating back-and-forth with New York's health experts on abstruse medical issues. The New York City officials may have disagreed on how to proceed, but never once did they question the Rav's grasp of the issues involved.

Like those European giants who he learned from, HaRav Belsky was truly a wise, caring, dedicated soul whose tireless efforts on behalf of Klal Yisroel were voluminous. We have lost a great luminary, and I have lost a trusted, valued friend and Rebbe.

May his memory be a blessing.



TRIBUTE SECTION TO HORAV CHAIM YISROEL BELSKY זצ"ל



🌀 HESPEIDIM BY HORAV LEIBEL WULLIGER, HORAV YOSEF EISEN & HORAV ZEV SMITH

RABBI MOSHE BOYLAN

Introduction: On Wednesday night, Chuf Hay Shevat (Feb 3rd), an Asifas Hespel was held in Mesivta Torah Vodaas, a number of days after the petirah of their beloved Rosh Yeshiva, Maran Rav Yisroel Belsky זת"ל. The maspidim were Rav Leibel Wulliger Shlita (Rosh Kollel of Mesivta Torah Vedaas), Rav Yosef Eisen Shlita (Rav of Kehilas Bnei Torah in Flatbush) and Rav Yaakov Zev Smith Shlita (a well known Darshan, including a famous halacha shiur in Irgun Shiurai Torah). Brackets are additions from the author.

RAV LEIBEL WULLIGER:

While we may think that one should wait for the end of Shiva for *hespeidim*, we find from a number of *mekoros*, sources, that even during the Shiva there is an *inyan* of *Hespeidim*. The first *makor* is based upon a Gemara in Maseches Baba Kama (16B), which tells us that when Chizkiyah HaMelech died "Hoshivu Yeshiva Al Kivro", they put a Yeshiva on his grave. Rashi learns that they learned Torah in his honor. The Gemara continues to say that there were three opinions as to how long this lasted: 3 days, 7 days or 30 days. The Maharsha explains that this Gemara is referring to praising the *niftar* (which can literally be done near the Kever). The three opinions refer to three stages of *Aveilus* (3 days is for crying, 7 days is the initial stage of *Aveilus*, and 30 – or *Sheloshim* – is another stage of *Aveilus*). We see from the Maharsha that there is an *inyan* of praising the *niftar* even during the initial stage of *aveilus*.

Another proof to the above are the words of the *Shibolei HaLeket*. He writes that when a Chacham dies, ר"ל, we sit in his Yeshiva and speak about his actions, *Teikef Lemisaso* (immediately after his death) *Toch Shiva* (during the Shiva). {As an aside, I remember that when Rav Ruderman זת"ל was *niftar*, Yeshiva Ner Yisroel in Baltimore held a *hesped* on every night of the Shiva.}

What exactly is the point of *hespeidim*? In addition to the honor given to the Meis, they are also intend-

ed to be a source of us learning from the life of the *niftar*.

With this we can explain the following statement of Chazal: It said in a Pasuk that Aharon HaKohen died in Mosairah. The question is that he really died in Hor HaHar. They answer that Klal Yisroel didn't Maspid, eulogize, Aharon HaKohen properly, and therefore a number of tragedies happened afterwards. This lead Klal Yisroel to be Maspid Aharon HaKohen properly at Mosairah, and therefore it is as if he died there.

Rav Wulliger Shlita asked how Chazal can tell us that the Yidden weren't *maspid* Aharon HaKohen properly, when the Pasuk tells us that they cried for thirty days after his *petirah*? {Leaniyus Daati, I would answer that they may have cried for his *petirah*, but this is insufficient. They should have also verbally expressed his greatness, to give proper Kavod.} Rav Wulliger answered with the famous *vort* about Agra DeHespaida Deluyai. The *peshat* in this Chazal, Al Derech HaDerush, is that the reward for saying a *Hesped* is drawing lessons from the *hesped*. {Deluyai is like drawing water from a well.} Thus, even when Klal Yisroel were *maspid* Aharon HaKohen and cried after his death, they apparently didn't learn the proper lessons from his life, and it was as if they weren't *maspid* Aharon HaKohen.

As such, the purpose of the *hesped* tonight is not merely to recount the great *maasim* of the Rosh Yeshiva זת"ל, but more importantly to learn lessons for ourselves as to how we can improve, at least on our own level.

We can also understand another Maamar Chazal with this. Chazal tell us that Ki MiTzion Taitzai Torah is referring to how Yidden would gain such great Yiras Shamayim, fear of heaven, when they went to the Beis HaMikdash and would see the Kohanim in their Avodah. If Chazal tell us that Misas Tzadikim is like Seraifas Beis Elokainu (the burning of the Beis HaMikdash) then apparently we can gain Yiras Shamayim from the Tzadikim just like the Beis HaMikdash. When a Tzadik is Gait Avek, passes away, we

must relate to it like the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. We must do our best to learn from the Tzadik that was *niftar*, and thereby get the Hashpaah he gave to the world before it is lost totally. {Tzadikim say that this is something like a spiritual Yerusha. One can "inherit" the *maalos* of the *niftar* by learning from his greatness.}

Rav Belsky was known for the sense of freshness and enthusiasm he had in approaching every topic in Halacha. This included even difficult and lesser known topics such as the various Kailim in the times of Chazal, a Ben Pekuah and many others. {We can learn from this to try our best to gain Torah knowledge in all areas.}

In *davening* we say "Mimitzraim Gealtanu Hashem Elokainu U'MiBais Avadim Pedisanu", from Egypt you redeemed us Hashem our G-d and from the house of slaves you liberated us. The Brisker Hagadah explains that there were two different redemptions that took place at Yetzias Mitzraim, one physical and one spiritual. {Geulah refers to the freedom of the Guf, body, and Pidyon refers to the freedom of the Neshama, soul.}

In Europe, Klal Yisroel dealt with a Galus which related more to the Guf. We were physically oppressed in bitter manners. In the United States, we have been *zoche* to physical security and safety. However, our souls have been dealing with great *nisyonos*, tests. As a related point, the Rosh Kollel mentioned that dealing with *nisyonos* is an important part of living. In fact, Maran HaChazon Ish זת"ל said that without *nisyonos* we cannot live. If we want life, then this means we must deal with *nisyonos*.

When we *daven* every day "Al Teviyainu Liyedai Nisayon" this means that we don't want *nisyonos* that lead to a Bizayon, embarrassment. However, we understand that some form of *nisayon* is necessary for us to live and function.

{Rav Belsky זת"ל overcame many *nisyonos* throughout his life, and particularly as a *bachur*, when he devoted himself to Torah even though

he had so many other options he could have taken.}

In addition to his great Yedios in Torah, Rav Belsky was known for his *gevaldige* Leiv Tov. We can explain that this Leiv Tov is related to many of his other *maalos*. We see this from what Chazal tell us that Rav Elazar Ben Arach said that a Leiv Tov is the most essential Derech Yesharah, and he is also considered to be a Maayan HaMisgabair. It can be explained that through a Leiv Tov one can merit being a Maayan HaMisgabair, a wellspring that has strength. The Rosh Yeshiva certainly had both of these *maalos*, as he was well known for his Leiv Tov and as a Maayan HaMisgabair in Torah.

Rav Belsky was known for giving Tzedakah to so many people without being so careful to check that the person is fitting to get Tzedakah. He explained that Chazal tell us that if a person is not fitting, Hashem will give him people that are not Mehugan, fitting, to give Tzedakah to. Rav Belsky felt that he wanted to have the *zechus* that if he would give Tzedakah to inappropriate people he would be Nisorer to do Teshuva. {As opposed to being too careful that everyone be Mehugan, and then not having this impetus to do Teshuva.}

Rav Belsky's Leiv Tov can be seen from the following story: Towards the end of his life, Rav Belsky had to take some medicine to sedate him. The side effect of this medicine is that the person is not in control of themselves totally. In this state he started crying that it is important to give food to poor people. He continued that the food should not be inferior, but rather the best food. This showed that the *middos* of Chesed in Rav Belsky's heart were not outward, but rather part of his essence.

This reminds us of a *peshat* that Meforshim say about Eliezer. The Pasuk said "Vehaish Mishtaeh Lah..." Meforshim say that Eliezer was waiting to see if Rivkah Imenu would demand payment for the *chesed* she did. If she would do this it would show that her *chesed* was not genuine, but rather just a way to make money. Only after she did

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chesed gratis, without demand for payment, did Eliezer know she had the *middos* of *chesed* necessary to enter the house/family of Avrohom Avinu.

This was the *midah* of Rav Belsky ז"ל. He did *Chesed Leshaim Chesed*, not for payment or ulterior motives.

The Rosh Yeshiva had *gevaldige* Hergaishim, feelings of Yiddishkeit, which we can emulate. This reminds me of what is said about Rav Chaim Brisker ז"ל that he looked at the sky at Neilah time and saw *Mechilas Avonos*. Similarly, Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlovitz ז"ל said that he didn't know a fiddle had so much Hertz (heart). The Rosh Yeshiva was known for his great *Hergeish* when he would sing *Nigunim*. Sometimes he would even have tears when singing songs of *Devaiikus* in *Hashem*. When he would speak around *Pesach* time, he would cry and say that maybe this year we will be *zoche* to offer a *Korbon Pesach*. He would also sometimes cry after dealing with the *Tzaros* of *Yidden*.

We must realize that *Tereren*, tears, are very special and potent. Chazal even tell us that *Shaarei Demaos Lo Ninalu*, the gates of tears are not closed.

The Rosh Yeshiva had a great *Mitgefeil*, a feeling and desire to connect to other *Yidden*. He wanted to attend *simchos* and ר"ל sad occasions which would grant solace to people undergoing *Tzaros*.

Rav Belsky had great *Sheifos*, desires, for *Yedios HaTorah*. {It is said that 30 years ago his son asked him how many times he went through *Shas Bavli*. He answered 50 times. Once his son-in-law noticed how his *shveir* was a little late and mother-in-law (the *Rebbitzin Shtetichye*) asked why he was late. He answered "I made a *Siyum* in *Talmud Yerushalmi*". Her reaction implied that this was nothing out of the ordinary.}

We must learn from the Rosh Yeshiva to expand our horizons in *Torah* and do our best to grow in *Yedios* of *Torah*.

May the Rosh Yeshiva be a *Mailitz Yosher* for his *Mishpacha*, *talmidim*, *Yeshiva* and *gantze Klal Yisroel*. We should soon see the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkenu* speedily.

RAV YOSEF EISEN:

The Rosh Kollel mentioned that there is an *inyan* of *Lesapeir Bishevach*, to speak praises of the *niftar*. Rav Belsky was truly an *Ish HaEshkolos* (a praise that refers to someone that has numerous *maalos* contained in him). He not only towered over us physically, but more importantly in a spiritual sense.

The *Pasuk* tells us that when *Eliyahu HaNavi* went up to *Shamayim*, *Elisha* cried "Avi Avi *Rechev Yisroel U'Parashav*". Rav *Gedaliah Schorr* ז"ל said that *Tzedakah*, screaming, was even more intense than *Bechayah*, crying.

Now we can be *Tzoek* that our father (a *Rebbi* is like a father) Rav Belsky ז"ל was *Holeich LiMenuchos*, *Ve'osanu Azav Laanachos* (and left us for pain and anguish).

The *Pasuk* tells us that *Mayim Rabim Lo Yuchlu Lechabos Es Haahavah*. Similarly it said that *Im Yitein Ish Es Kol Hon Bais Beahavah Boz Yavuzu Lo*. {Chazal *darshen* this *Pasuk* referring to the *Ahavah* that Rav *Yochanan* had for *Torah*, that he displayed tremendous *mesirus nefesh* for *Torah*, in giving up so much for it.}

Rav Belsky displayed *gevaldige mesirus nefesh* and *Ahavah* for the *Torah* throughout his life. {One of the famous stories about him was how he gave up on a full scholarship to college, in order to continue learning *Torah* in the *Yeshiva*.}

He also spent years and decades learning and teaching *Torah* throughout the day and night.

One story took place involving his *chavrusa* on Sunday afternoons. He would always learn with a particular *chavrusa* from 4 to 6 P.M. every Sunday. One Sunday he arrived a half hour late. He explained that he was visiting his father in a *Rehab* with his wife *Shetichye*, and he was involved in a motor vehicle accident. Despite the shock and fright this caused, he asked his wife to go home by herself (she was *maskim*, agreed) and he went to learn with his *chavrusa*. The next hour and a half was spent learning a *Taz* in *Hilchos Lulav*. The next Sunday he learned this *Taz* again, and still didn't have a *Klarkeit*, clarity, in it. The next Sunday, after going through the *Taz*, the *Gemara*, and the *Meforshim* related

to the *Taz*, he still had a big *Kashya*, question. When he asked his *chavrusa* the question, he tried to immediately give an answer. Rav Belsky was upset that a question that came from such effort was dealt with so quickly. It deserved more effort and attempt to appreciate it and try to resolve it appropriately.

Chazal tell us that one that learns *Torah Lishmah* becomes a *Mayan HaMisgabair*. Through the Rosh Yeshiva's years and years of focus and effort in *Limud HaTorah* he became such a *Mayan HaMisgabair*, who became knowledgeable in so many different areas.

Once he was giving his *Daf Yomi Shiur* in *Camp Agudah*, which started at 10:45 P.M. city time. Towards the end of the *shiur*, someone asked him how butter was made. People started looking at each other, realizing that the *shiur* would not end so early tonight. Sure enough, Rav Belsky gave a whole intricate *Dersha* discussing the *Metzius*, reality, of milk, butter, and many related topics, and how the *Metzius* affected the *halacha*.

Rav Belsky's *Yoreh Deah shiur* brought *halacha* to life. He showed the *talmidim* *Traifos*, *Ben Pekuah*, *Shechitah* and so many other topics in real life. {In addition to often taking them to the O.U. office to learn how *Kashrus* is applied in real life.}

He would tell us various parts of the animal, in *Lashon Kodesh*, *English* and sometimes even tell us their *Latin* names. He also explained to us hands on the meaning of *Cheilev HaDakin* and *Cheilev HaKelayos*. Such *shiurim* could go on for hours, with Rav Belsky enthusiastically teaching *Torah* to *talmidim*.

The Rosh Yeshiva's *Leiv Tov* was such that he knew no rest and made himself accessible as much as possible. Not only was he available, but he always had his *Seiver Panim Yafos* together with his *Shmeichel*, smile, while often humming a *Nigun*.

In *Camp Agudah*, Rav Belsky taught people so many different things. On *Tisha B'Av*, he explained to the *olam* about the *Kinos*, including much historical and *halachic* background. He also would say *Tikun Chatzos* during the nine days, which unfortunately is not so prevalent as it used to be in *Doros*

HaKadmonim. {Hopefully it will not be *Nogeah* soon with the coming of *Moshiach*.}

He used to say that he would be willing to sleep on the floor in order to enable *Camp Agudah* to bring in one more *talmid* for the *Masmidim* program.

Once there was a *bachur* in *Camp Agudah* that needed some *chizuk*. A special tutor was hired, and he asked Rav Belsky what he should learn with his *talmid*. The Rosh Yeshiva told him to learn *Hilchos Basar BeChalav* and to tell his *talmid* that the Rosh Yeshiva would *farher* (test) him on the material. Sure enough, with this incentive, the *bachur* learned very well, and went through a *Bechinah* from Rav Belsky. Rav Belsky gave the *bachur* a "Semicha" on this material. He wrote that "Shmuel" (not his name) has learned the *Simanim* of *Basar Bechalav* and was tested from me and knew them very well. How happy he is that he put his heart into learning and *Yehi Ratzon* that he should grow *Maalah Maalah* in *Torah*. He even put his official stamp onto this "Semicha".

Another story of *chesed* was noticed by one of his *chavrusa's*. When it was time for the *chavrusa* to start, he noticed that a *bochur* was telling Rav Belsky a certain *Nigun* and the Rosh Yeshiva was telling him musical notes. Later on, the *bochur* discovered that this *bochur* was supposed to be a *Badchan* at a *Chasunah*, but the band would not play the *Badchanus* unless they had the musical notes. Rav Belsky agreed to listen to the whole *Nigun* and tell the *bochur* which musical notes to write down and give to the band.

One time a prospective *Mechutan* was asking about a *bochur* who was a *Yasom*, orphan. Rav Belsky told him that he would find out all the information about this *shidduch*. Then this person asked why he should even touch a *shidduch* like this with potential problems? Rav Belsky asked: Is the *Lav* of *Kol Almanah Veyasom Lo Seanaun* light in your eyes? Sure enough Rav Belsky gave him enough information to continue with the *shidduch*, and the couple built a *Bayis Neeman BeYisroel*.

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This story was typical, as the Rosh Yeshiva always stood up for people who were forlorn and had Tzaros.

The Rosh Yeshiva is known for his life long commitment to Limud and Yedias HaTorah. This included Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, Chuf Daled Sifrei Tanach and Daled Chelkei Shulchan Aruch.

We should be *zoche* to have Demus Deyukno Lefaneinu and to accept Hanhagos Tovos from him, including Ahavas HaTorah, Tzimaon (thirst) for Torah and Ahavas Chesed. May the Rosh Yeshiva be a Mailitz Yosher for us all.

RAV YAAKOV ZEV SMITH:

The Rosh Yeshiva was Mechayeiv every American *bochur*. Even as an American, growing up in a Tekufa that very few people dedicated themselves to Limud HaTorah, the Rosh Yeshiva was *omed* Benisayon in becoming a Gadol BeTorah even here in the United States. He was also Mechaye us, giving us life and hope for our future, while seeing how we could also grow despite the *nisyonos* of America.

One of the great Shevachim that was said on Moshe Rabbeinu was that he was an Eved Hashem. {In fact this was the praise said on him at the beginning of Sefer Yehoshua.} What is the greatness of being an Eved Hashem? An Eved is someone with no Zich, personal agenda and interests. He does what the master wants without thinking about himself. Even if the master said that you should work for me and I will not give you food, he still has to do this.

Thus, a true Eved Hashem gives his life up for Hashem, not due to personal interests, but rather due to a Bitul to Hashem's Ratzon.

Of course no body is like Moshe Rabbeinu, but Bizeir Anpin, on the level of our Dor, Rav Belsky had the Bechinah of Moshe Rabbeinu in this inyan. With all his brilliance, he showed a great Bitul to Hashem's Ratzon.

There is a *halacha* that sometimes a Taus Akum is Mutar. Nonetheless, the Be'air HaGolah said that he saw many people who used this loophole and lost all their money. Conversely, he saw many people who returned the money to the Akum in order to

create a Kiddush Hashem, and they got a lot of money, Vehinichu Yisram Leolaleihem, and they left extra money for their children.

Once a person with no children asked Rav Belsky a *shailah* about Taus Akum. The Rosh Yeshiva told him that Mailkar HaDin he could keep the money, but he advised that he should return it and it would be worth his while. Sure enough the person returned the money and not so much later had a child. The Rosh Yeshiva explained that he learned this from the language of the Be'air HaGolah. Since he writes that he saw that returning the Taus Akum gave them the *zechus* to have extra money to give to their children, this implied that they must have children. Therefore, he advised the person to return the money, and he did in fact merit having children.

Rav Belsky used to tell people that if there is a *shailah* in Choshen Mishpat, they should put on their sneakers and run away from the *shailah*. This showed his *middah* of Nasata Venasata Be'Emunah.

Four years ago the Rosh Yeshiva's life was in grave danger. In fact one of the doctors (who was not at all religious) said that he didn't believe that it was possible for the Rosh Yeshiva to survive, and this must be due to Divine intervention. When he was in a critical situation, one of the family members thought he should be moved to a better hospital. Rav Belsky refused, as he explained later on, because he didn't want to make the doctors who worked on him so hard to feel bad and also reflect badly on them. This decision seems to have saved his life, as he had a cardiac arrest shortly afterwards and may have died in the ambulance if he was being transferred. The hospital he was in "happened" (i.e. *basherte*) to have the exact things necessary to save his life, and he lived for another four years. This showed his *mesirus nefesh* for the feelings of others. {The Rosh Yeshiva may have learned this from what Chazal tell us that it is better to throw oneself in a Kivshan Haaish and not cause someone to be embarrassed. Ultimately this lead to good results, just as the *mesirus nefesh* of Tamar lead to her having children and ultimately being the Bubbe of Moshiach Tzidkenu.}

The story of Rav Belsky's *mesirus nefesh* as a *bachur* has recently become legendary. He got a perfect score on his SAT's and was offered a full scholarship to a University. {This was at a time that it was almost unheard of for a *bochur* to learn Torah full time without going to College.} He told the college people that he was willing to give up on the scholarship in order to learn Torah in Beis Medrash Elyon. {The usual policy was use it or lose it. If



someone didn't use the scholarship they lost it.} The administration of the College understood how great of a scholar Rav Belsky was, and they gave him a chance to reconsider after one year in the Yeshiva. After this year, he asked for another year to learn Torah, and the college refused to give him another deferral. Despite any pressure, he continued learning Torah and through this he ultimately became a Gadol BeTorah.

Im Yitein Ish Es Kol Hon Baiso BeAhavah. Rav Belsky displayed a *gevaldige* Ahavas HaTorah which enabled him to stay in learning despite such a Nisayon.

Rav Belsky used to give a "College Shmuz" to *talmidim* in the 12th grade, to encourage them to stay learning in Yeshiva and not go to College. The truth is that he didn't even have to say so much, as his very life and actions spoke eloquently as to the importance of staying in learning for as long as possible.

Rav Belsky lived the words of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh that if people felt the sweetness of Torah, then they would not care about

what the world offers, including much gold and silver, as the Torah includes all the Tovos, good things of the world.

The Rosh Yeshiva used to say that if he can't give away to Tzedakah what he wants, then the money is not really his. He gave so much money to Tzedakah that he had to post a sign that he didn't have any Tzedakah fund. Despite this he somehow managed to give untold sums of money to Tzedakah.

Even though the Rosh Yeshiva had great Anivus and Vitur on Kavod, he was Moche, protested with great Shtarkkeit, strength, if he felt someone was going against Halacha. {This was true both Lechumra and Lekula, as was mentioned in the *levayah* by his son-in-law, YB"l Rav Gross Shlita).

One of the highlights of Neilah here in Yeshiva was hearing Rav Belsky saying "VeAin Lanu Shiyur Rak HaTorah Hazos". He not only said this, but lived this as his mantra.

Rav Belsky was like Rav Shmuel Bar Sheilas, the famous Melamed Tinokos Shel Beis Rabban, who thought about his *talmidim* for years after he saw them. Similarly, he felt and was concerned for his Talmidim Shekruyim Banim for years after they were in his *shiur*.

We must internalize and eternalize the lessons we have learned from the great Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Belsky zt"l.

In his monumental Sefer, Shulchan HaLevi, Rav Belsky zt"l mentioned that the Demus Deyuknam of his Rebbeim was in front of him, as a Tochachas Megulah (the image of his Rebbeim was in front of him as a obvious rebuke to him). Similarly, we hope that we should be *zoche* that Rav Belsky's Demus Deyukno should be in front of us as a impetus to live up to the great lessons of life he taught us through his *shiurim* and through his very persona.

In the *zechus* of following in the path of the Rosh Yeshiva in Limud HaTorah, Hachazakas HaTorah, *middos tovos* and Ahavas Chesed we should be *zoche* that he should be Mailitz Yosher for us all, and may we soon see the coming of Moshiaich Tzidkenu Bimhayra Beyameinu Amen.

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From "Popsicles To Galaxies"

 **RABBI MOSHE SHOCHET**

Yaakov Binyomin, the youngest son of Rav Belsky zt"l, spoke at the airport, *Motzai* Shabbos before the *Aron* was taken to Eretz Yisroel for *Kevurah*, and said over how when someone asked his father how to make "Popsicles", he told his father; "Poppy; that was a stupid question", to which his father responded; "Yaakov; there is no such a thing as a stupid question. Everyone's question is very important to them"!

I remember asking Rav Belsky for a *heter* to listen to Jewish music CDs on Chol Hamoed during the year of my *Aveilus* for my father z"l. The Rosh Hayeshiva gave me permission, since it's *simchos* Yom Tov for me to listen. That Psak saved my Chol Hamoed! I told Avrohom that what he had said over in his *hesped* on Erev Shabbos in *yeshiva*, you can take with you for life.

He mentioned how his father never pushed them to learn, but by always seeing him with a *gemarra* even at an amusement park, that alone was a tremendous lesson & *limud* for them to try to emulate and to look up to.

The oldest son, Aryeh said how you can't be a genius like his father but he was able to learn lessons of *tzeddoka* & *chesed* from him. Aryeh would complain to his father that how can he give \$100 checks away to *nitzrachim*, and his father would answer him nicely to leave him be. A non *frum* lady even came barging into the house on Yom Kippur, but Rav Belsky would C"V not throw her out, and instead told his family to let her sleep on the couch.

Shlomo Yehuda said over at the *levaya* how he wrote a song to the holy words of *Raza D'Shabbos* that we say over at Kabbolas Shabbos right before Maariv. His *Shver* lived another 208 Shabbosim from the last incident when he was B"H saved miraculously. It was exactly 4 years later from the *Motzai Shabbos Yisro* that he was taken in emergency to the hospital last time. ***Raza equals B'Gematriah 208!***

Dovid Frischman, from Camp Aguda, said over at the airport, how there was a kid from camp who stut-

tered very badly, and Rav Belsky tried very much to help him all summer long with no success. Rav Belsky cried when the camper had to leave at the end of the summer. The next summer, Dovid came to tell Rav Belsky the good news that although he couldn't help him, but someone else helped him improve all throughout the year. Rav Belsky smiled, and Dovid knew that Rav Belsky would not mind that someone else had helped the child improve and helped him with his stuttering. Little did Dovid realize at the time until he found out much later that it was none other than the Rosh Hayeshiva himself who took off from his very hectic schedule during the entire year, and would find the time to go to the boy's house once a week to help him improve and not stutter BS"D. He would take out the time from his meals to answer the camper's *shaylos* even though they were the same questions over & over however, to each camper, he would again take out the *Mishnah B'rurah* to show the boy inside the *Psak Halacha*, even though he just did that a minute ago.

Rabbi Dovid Goldstein, a son in law and Rebbe in the Mesivta Torah Vodaath cried out in Eretz Yisroel how he would sometimes find his *Shver* with his plate of supper untouched 4 hrs later! He was so busy answering people's *Shaylos*, questions, helping the *Nitzrachim*... The Rosh Hayeshiva had a good sense of humor. Once, I tried to argue with him in learning [sorry that's my nature, & I'm sure he was *mochel* me] to which he told me; "I'm not deaf. I heard you the first time"!

Rabbi Genack from the OU Kashrus told over how Rav Belsky was once asked by someone from the secular world; "Why so many children? To which the Rosh Hayeshiva answered on the spot; "because, We JEWS are an **endangered species**"!

Zvi said over at the *Bais Avel* during the *Shiva* how someone from camp Aguda told them over how their father told him "I would even sleep on the floor if I was able to make room for even just one more



Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l with Rav Yisroel Belsky zt"l in 1969.

Masmid to be able to come and join the *Masmidim* program in Camp Aguda"!

Someone else told them over how one time the *Masmidim* went on a trip and hiked up a mountain during the summer. This *Masmid* did not prepare himself correctly for this trip, and therefore didn't drink enough beforehand. When he finally reached the top of the mountain, he was completely dehydrated. The Rosh Hayeshiva himself carried the boy all the way down the mountain on his "Broad Shoulders- "Breita Pleitzas"! [*Noseh B'ol Chavero v'Talmido.*]

It was told over by Zvi at the *hespeidim* how his father would make Mayo for the Seder, since there was a *ben bayis* who loved Mayo for Pesach [that was his Popsicle!] A *talmid* told me over how he was asked to give a *shiur* on the galaxies and the Stars of *Shomayim* with all the planets in the universe. The Rosh Hayeshiva put his head down for 4 minutes and gave a *shiur* for the next 2 hrs. I told

this close *talmid*; ["Could you imagine if he would have put his head down longer!"]

I told over to my brother Yechiel that I cried my eyes out saying *tehillim* on the night of the *petirah* seeing the tall Rosh Hayeshiva now lying on the floor of the Beis Medrash of Torah Vodaath wrapped up in a *tallis* with *Yartzeit* candles surrounding him all around. When I was *menachem avel* his brother Rav Mendel, I told him that we all cried along with him when he cried out by the *levaya*; "Achi My Brother.... {Acheinu Kol Beis Yisroel}. The son in law, Rav Presby said over by the airport how Rav Belsky, when he was saying good bye to the campers and *Masmidim* of Camp Aguda and the end of the summer, he said that next year he won't be here in camp, but instead he will be in Yerushalayim. Prophetic words that we will IY"H join him soon in *Yerushalayim! Naflah ateres rosheinu-Mi yitein lanu temuroso-Y'hei zichro baruch!*

Rabbi Moshe Shochet

TRIBUTE SECTION TO HORAV CHAIM YISROEL BELSKY זצ"ל



Rav Belsky's Daf Yomi

RABBI SHOLOM SMITH

One of the many *shiurim* that our *Rosh Yeshivah, Hagaon HaRav* Yisroel Belsky, זצ"ל, gave in Torah Vodaath was his daily *Daf Yomi shiur*, which took place during the lunch-time break from 1:15 PM till *Mincha* at 1:50 PM. He gave this *shiur* for close to half a century and it was very precious and important to him. I had the *zechus* to be a part of the *shiur* for the past thirty-three years and would like to share some memories of and insights into the greatness of Rav Belsky.

The eighth *Siyum HaShas* of the *Daf Yomi* took place in November, 1982. It was the last *Siyum* attended by *Hagaon Harav* Yaakov Kamenetzky, זצ"ל. In his keynote address, Reb Yaakov revealed that although he had completed *Shas* many times, this was the first time that he had done so with the cycle of the *Daf Yomi*. He even expressed the wish that, "If Hashem will grant me years I hope to complete the next cycle with *Tosafos*." (This was not to be as he passed away midway through the next cycle.)

Reb Yaakov added that he didn't see why *bnei Torah* and *kollel yungeleit* could not devote a half hour to an hour a day to learn the *Daf Yomi*. That would help them become familiar with the length and breadth of *Shas*, and not be limited to the *yeshiva mesechtos* commonly studied.

I remember thinking that this would be something worth considering, although I was amazed by the suggestion that the *Daf* could be covered in a half-hour a day! Nevertheless, two months into the next cycle, after the completion of *Mesechta Berachos*, I became a father for the first time. The *Kollel* had learned *Mesechta Shabbos* that previous year and so, to mark this great milestone in my life as well as to review what I had studied, I decided to join the *Daf Yomi* and began to attend Rav Belsky's daily lunchtime *shiur*.

Rav Belsky was then a young man in his mid 40's. His involvement in the myriad needs of *Klal Yisrael* that occupied so much of his time later in life had not yet begun. He had the time and *menuchas hanefesh* to prepare for this *shiur* and it was fascinating to see how much Torah knowledge could be compressed into those thirty minutes!

During the summer months, he served as Rav and *Manhig Ruchani* of Camp Agudah and the head of

its *Masmidim* program. The *Daf Yomi shiur* continued unabated every night at 10:00 P.M., camp time. There, in the rarefied atmosphere of the Catskill Mountains, and with no pressure to complete the *Daf* in thirty minutes, the *shiur* took on a broader and deeper format.

With the passing of the Torah giants of the previous generation, like Rav Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל, and Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, זצ"ל, Rav Belsky assumed more and more responsibilities for the *Klal*, in addition to his main position as a *Rosh Yeshiva* in the Torah Vodaath *Beis Medrash*. Although he "barely had a minute to breathe," as he often said, the lunch-time *Daf Yomi* was sacrosanct and it continued daily.

There was a small group of *talmidim*, myself included, who faithfully attended every day. Most of us spent either first or second *sefer* learning the *Daf* before or after Rav Belsky's *shiur*. It was truly amazing to observe how Rav Belsky skillfully navigated the great Sea of Talmud. It made no difference if it was the relatively familiar *mesechtos* of *Moed*, the more *lomdishe Yeshivishe mesechtos* of *Nashim* and *Nezikin*, or the difficult, intricate *mesechtos* of *Kodashim*. The Gemara was so fluent to Rav Belsky, as if he had just learned it.

He had the incomparable skill of being able to condense a lengthy *sugya* (which would normally entail a dozen *shiurim*) into one precise synopsis. The many *Gemaras* which required scientific knowledge of the cosmos and astronomy were clearly explained. When an unfamiliar Gemara word was reached, Rav Belsky often discussed the etymology of it. He showed us how many ancient Greek and Aramaic words were still in usage in the English language, albeit in slightly different format and pronunciation.

Dikduk was his specialty, and instead of quickly glossing over such *Gemaras*, he explained the rules in a simplified manner that made it understandable. He knew *Navi* verbatim – even the ones rarely studied, and if a *pasuk* from a *haftarah* was quoted, he sang the words with the *trop* (cantillations). He was an expert in history and brought to life the many stories told in *Shas* about the various *tana'im* and *amora'im* and explained the backdrop and the overall picture of that period.

There are many *Gemaras* that discuss ancient methods of agriculture, farm life and botany and we were thrilled to hear clear definitions of what tools were used, and how they worked. Rav Belsky constructed a number of models and drew detailed pictures on how these long-extinct tools functioned. It was remarkable to understand the evolution of crude hand utensils of fifteen centuries ago into the modern tools that we are all familiar with today.

Rav Belsky taught us that nothing in *Shas* was irrelevant. The techniques and methodology may have changed dramatically, but the *Chachmei HaTalmud* had not composed an antiquated Book. Everything *Shas* contained could be applied somehow to present-day living.

Rav Belsky was a master in understanding the many facets of the *Mishkan*, *Beis Hamidkash* and the various *korbanos* offered there. The *halachos* were on his fingertips, down to the smallest details. How could a Jew believe that the arrival of *Moshiach* was imminent and not be prepared to supervise, teach (and, if he was a *Kohen*, perform) the Temple service?

He was a renowned expert in another sorely neglected part of Torah – *Seder Taharos*. The rules and guidelines of purity and impurity were on the tip of his tongue, although most are not in effect in our time. The complicated rules, as well as the many exceptions to the rules, were made much more understandable and easier to remember due to his crystal-clear explanations.

When the *Daf* reached the parts of *Mesechta Chullin* and elsewhere which discuss the anatomy of livestock and the various illnesses and fatal defects which would make an animal a *treifah* and unfit for consumption, he did not only explain the science of the topic. He would bring in his little black medical pouch containing his collection of razor-sharp scalpels and scissors and perform a dissection of a *ben pekua* (full-term fetus) baby calf on his classroom desk. He would remove his rabbinic frock, roll up his sleeves, don a plastic apron and disposable gloves and give us a "tour" of the anatomy of a kosher animal. He also showed us which parts

of the *chelev* (forbidden fats) had to be *traibered* (removed) and how to *traiber* properly. These "shows" would take place once or twice a year, usually in coordination with his *Yoreh Deah Semicha shiur*. They would attract dozens of *talmidim* who stood by for an hour or longer in amazement at the incomparable, vast knowledge of Rav Belsky.

The many stories recorded in *Shas* presented fertile ground for Rav Belsky's skills as a *darshan* (master orator). With a constant eye on the clock, he would relate snippets of some of his famous *drashos* and insights derived from the wisdom of the Sages. He spiced these insights with stories from his own life, and incidents about his own great *rabbeim* and the *rabbanim* he was close to. Counted among them were Rav Moshe, Rav Yaakov, Rav Reuven Grozovsky, Rav Gedalya Schorr, Rav Eliezer Silver, Rav Yaakov Teitelbaum (his predecessor as *Manhig Ruchani* at Camp Agudah), Rav Yisroel Chaim Kaplan (the *Mashgiach* of *Beis Medrash Elyon*) and, of course, his *Zaidah*, Reb Binyamin Wilhelm, the founder of Torah Vodaath.

When the Gemara discussed topics of food production and the like, he would share anecdotes of his decades-long experience in *kashrus* supervision, including his positions at the *Chof-K*, and for the past three decades at the OU.

He related how he had supervised the building of one of the first machine *matzah* bakeries in post-Communist Russia. When the Gemara dealt with wine production he would explain the intricacies of present-day wine-making and the problems and solutions to making it kosher.

The many *Gemaras* discussing the guidelines of *dinei Torah* and the court system brought out remarks on how to properly establish a *Beis Din* and how to avoid some of the major issues that plague this institution today.

For just about a third of a century I had the *zechus* to be part of Rav Belsky's *Daf Yomi shiur*. The memories abound and the sense of loss is so great. Who can replace such a person who knew so much, loved to teach, and will always serve as an inspiration of the heights a Jew can attain in the endless pursuit of Torah knowledge.

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In Rav Belsky's Own Words

Shabbos of "Chinuch & Chizuk"
Tarry Town Hilton, 2015

“ The Rebbe has to not only love every Talmid [even the difficult ones], but he has to also believe in each and every one of his *talmidim*. Even if he does not believe in himself, but when he sees you believing in him, that will give him a healthy self-esteem to begin believing in himself. A Rebbe has to see potential *Kochos* and *Kishronos* in a child, even if the student resists your efforts, don't give up on anyone. A *rebbe* who is cynical and comes down on a *talmid* does not belong in teaching. Talmidim who are not *matzliach* may be because in the past a parent, *rebbe*, or friend was too cynical with him and told him that he wouldn't amount to anything. A *talmid* may not even realize that he has inner abilities that he never knew exist. As a *rebbe* you can bring that out in him, and your efforts never go to waste. Years later, you may be surprised and see him grow up IY"Y into a *Talmid Chochom*. If you believe in your *talmidim*, then they'll see themselves in a different light. A *rebbe* can never be angry at a student, except outwardly he can show that he's upset with him but never in your inner heart. You can't be jealous of a *talmid*, in fact a *talmid* is supposed to "*shteig*" more than the *rebbe*. The Rosh Hayeshiva was very open when he told everyone that in all his 50 years of teaching he never hated a *talmid* and the opposite, he loved each and every Talmid! [based on the speech that the Rosh Hayeshiva gave over Shabbos to the Menahelim & Rebbeim, and on a personal interview with the Rosh Hayeshiva זצ"ל!]

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RAPHAEL BERDUGO

I just finished reading your excellent piece on Rav Belsky זצ"ל. I just wanted to let you know that as a military chaplain who has deployed he was the one I turned to when I had *shailos* and he never let me down. And indeed his secular knowledge was evident in his rulings. One example that comes to mind was when I arrived in Qatar in 2008 I was looking for milk to put in my cereal thinking that I might find some American milk with an OU, however the only milk available said product of the KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and said 100 percent pure cow's milk. I sent an email to someone who had access to Rav Belsky with a *shaila* if I could use this milk. His response was absolutely not! He said that Saudi Arabia is the number two producer of camel milk in the world after Somalia (when I tell this story I always ask the audience if they know who the number one producer of camel milk is in the world and I have never had anyone know the answer even in secular circles, but Rav Belsky knew that) and there is a good chance that it's camel milk. A few weeks later a Sgt. invited me for a cup of coffee at one of the Green bean coffee booths on base, I told the TCN (third world country national) behind the counter that I wanted a black coffee. He pretended to understand my request and brought

me back a hot mocha of some sort. I told him it's not what I want and repeated my request. He right away starts frothing the milk! But this time I paid attention to what he was doing and stopped him and reiterated that I wanted no milk just a double shot of espresso. He finally understood and brewed me a quadruple espresso which kept me up all night! The next day I was sharing the story at the smoke pit (where I would regularly visit with the troops) and how the brew kept me up all night. A little later that day a female airman came over to me and told me that she had overheard my story and wanted to know why I refused to drink the milk? I jokingly responded because it's camel milk. To my utter surprise she told me "yes I know it is". I asked how she knew that? She said because in the US she is lactose intolerant and here she has no problem with the milk. Apparently the enzyme in cow's milk that causes lactose intolerance is not found in camel's milk. I was amazed at how Hashem showed me the veracity of Rav Belsky's *psak!*

Yihye zichro baruch! Kol tuv!

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RABBI MOSHE TRAVITSKY

A friend of mine, Rav Menachem Savitz, was a member of a group of *bochurim* who participated in the Masmidim program at Camp Agudah in Ferndale, NY, during its first years. He recalled one particular incident from 30 years ago that reflects the manner in which Rav Belsky displayed his deep humility while demonstrating his love and sensitivity for every Yid.

The *bochurim* in the Masmidim program asked Rav Belsky if they could go on a trip. Rav Belsky suggested that they visit Niagara Falls. Before they departed on the lengthy drive, Rav Belsky indicated that they should take along a handicapped camper who was wheelchair-bound. Despite the great challenges involved, Rav Belsky gave his assurance that he would take care of this camper's needs. The members of the group were perhaps less than excited to be encumbered by the presence of this camper, but they saw the love and care that the *rosh yeshiva* expressed and they understood that it was the right thing to do.

Upon arriving in Niagara, one of the outings the boys went on was the Cave of the Winds, a thrilling experience that begins with an elevator ride 175 feet down into the Niagara Gorge, where, in ponchos and specially-designed sandals, guests stand a few breathtaking feet from the torrents of Niagara Falls.

Seeing the young camper in his wheelchair, one of the Cave of the Winds staff members regretfully informed Rav Belsky that the boy wouldn't be able to participate and someone would have to remain behind with him. Rav Belsky immediately encouraged the rest of the group to go ahead and said that he would remain with the camper. At that moment,

however, Rav Belsky noticed a father lifting his young son on to his shoulders and head to the attraction. Turning to the guide, Rav Belsky asked if it would be okay for him to carry his disabled camper on his shoulders.

Looking at the bearded rabbi with surprise, the staff member asked, "But he's dead weight. How in the world can you carry him?"

Rav Belsky told him not to worry. Once permission had been granted, Rav Belsky proceeded to lift his beloved camper on his shoulders and walk ahead, as he did his best to catch up to the Masmidim group. The giant of Torah made the beleaguered camper on his shoulders feel like a giant as well, enabling him to take part in the Cave of the Winds experience.

For Rav Belsky, nothing was unbecoming for his stature or beyond his reach if it could make a positive difference for a *yochid* or the *rabim*. That was precisely one aspect of his greatness. He allowed his various positions and roles, and his ability to bring himself down to the level of one and all, to sometimes divert our attention from the fact that he was one of the *gedolei hador*, a living Sefer Torah, who had every word of Hashem embedded in his mind and heart, the very heart that was open to Klal Yisroel.

And to a disabled camper.

A camper who sat on the shoulders that carried the burdens of Klal Yisroel.

Shoulders that were at times frail and weighed down by tremendous *yissurim*, but almost miraculously never ceased carrying the concerns, worries and responsibilities of a nation.

Who can replace him?