

A thought about Rav Belsky Zt'l – by Mordechai Dornbush

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Rav Belsky Zt'l 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 shacris 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 nonstop 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 nigunnim 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 gmaras 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 I 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 Kul Hatorah Kulah 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 Gdolim 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 whos 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 like you.

Yehi Zichro Baruch,

One of "your boys ,

Mordechai Dornbush