

THE Daf HaKASHRUS



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE OU RABBINIC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין

HAGAON HARAV CHAIM YISROEL BELSKY ZT"l

AN APPRECIATION

RABBI MENACHEM GENACK

CEO, Rabbinic Administrator, OU Kosher

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RAV BELSKY ZT"l

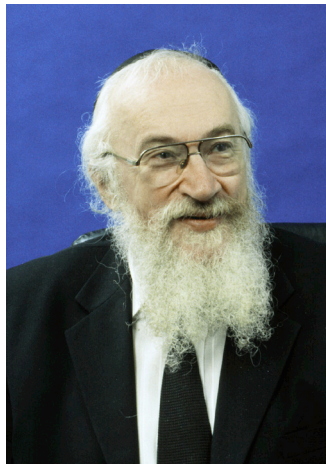
An Appreciation

RAV HERSHEL SCHACHTER

Senior Halachic Consultant, OU Kosher

THE RAMBAM writes about the *Ri Migash* that "his intellect in its knowledge of the entire Talmud was frightening." Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky zt"l, too, had a frightening intellect, which included not only knowledge of *kol haTorah kulah*, but the scientific and mathematical background necessary to understand the Torah and to apply halachah to reality. (For a while, he even taught mathematics at Yeshiva Torah Vodaas.) Rav Belsky was the nexus between theoretical, abstract knowledge and practical, applied knowledge. Not only did he know Shas, he was actually a mohel. Not only was he a master of the halachos as written, he also knew how to shecht and do *nikkur* on an animal.

Rav Belsky had a scientific inclination and a curious
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THE LAST mishnah in Maseches Uktzim states:

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להנחיל לכל צדיק וצדיק שלש מאות ועשרה עולמות, שנאמר, "להנחיל לאוהבי יש ואצרתיהם אמלא." (משלי ח:כא)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: In the future, the Holy One, Blessed is He, will cause every righteous person to inherit 310 worlds, as it says, "to cause my beloved ones to inherit, and their treasure houses shall I fill". (The word "יש" in the verse has the numerical value of 310.)

The *Netziv* in his introduction to *Ha'emek Shayla* explains that this statement of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi refers to the 310 areas of technical expertise which are necessary for a landmark חכם (Torah

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OU KOSHER HALACHA YOMIS

This column is dedicated in memory of Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky, zt"l

Senior OU Kosher Halachic Consultant (1987-2016)

אין עושין נפשות לצדיקים דבריהם הן הן זכרונן (ירושלמי שקלים דף ז.)

IT is with great excitement that we present to the general public, *OU Kosher Halacha Yomis*. We believe that this feature will be of great value and importance to Klal Yisroel.

At the same time, we launch this new endeavor during a week of *shiva*, as we mourn the passing of Moreinu Virabeinu, Harav Hagoan, Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky, zt"l. Our joy and pride is now intertwined with sadness and sorrow.

The original impetus for this project was a desire to disseminate short Halachic tidbits as a zechus for Rabbi Belsky, with the hope he would have a refuah sheleima from his illness. As halachic consultant for the OU for more than 28 years, the imprint of Rabbi Belsky is felt in all areas of OU halachic policy. Many of the selections of the Halacha Yomis are based on psokim of Rabbi Belsky. With the passing of Rabbi Belsky, we are now dedicating this column in his memory.

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A GIANT IN OUR MIDST

The Legacy of Rav Belsky zt"l at the OU

RABBI YAAKOV LUBAN

Executive Rabbinic Coordinator

LAST WEEK, the OU suffered an enormous loss with the passing of *Moreinu Virabeinu, Harav Hagaon*, Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky zt"l, who provided halachic and spiritual guidance to the OU Kashrus Department for more than 28 years.

The OU was not the only organization to experience an enormous loss. Rabbi Belsky had an amazing array of talents and skills, and he served in many different capacities. In each role that he played, his passing left a great void that cannot be filled.

Rabbi Belsky was an *adam gadol*, but even among gedolim, Rabbi Belsky was one of a kind. There are gedolim in *lomdus*, gedolim in *machshava* and *mussar*, gedolim in *psak* and gedolim in leadership. Rabbi Belsky was unique because he was a gadol in all of the above.

Rabbi Belsky was a brilliant, multifaceted and talented individual. He was first and foremost an extraordinary talmid chochom. He had mastery over every aspect of Torah, including esoteric and obscure areas that few others knew and understood. He was as much at home in *Keilim* and *Kinim* as he was in *Baba Metzia* and *Baba Basra*. He had tremendous intellectual curiosity and was self-taught in many different disciplines. He had a strong grasp of mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, anatomy, botany, zoology, musicology, food technology and history, all of which he used for the benefit of Torah study. The legendary story of Rabbi Belsky, gazing at the stars

together with his talmidim in Camp Agudah, is well known. He suddenly expressed surprise at seeing a star in the sky that he had not noticed before, and a call to NASA the next day revealed that it was a star that is only visible on rare occasions. I was once standing with him when classical music was playing in the background. Rabbi Belsky loved music and wanted to be a musician in his youth. Without batting an eyelash, he began humming the bars of the symphony and identified the composer and the exact name of the piece.

Rabbi Belsky was a *mohel*, *shochet*, *menaker*, *baal menagen*, *baal koreh* and *baal tefilah*. He was a *baal hashkofa* (he often invited his talmidim to ask him any question that troubled them), a *darshan* and a *baal mussar* (his talks were always relevant, compelling and down to earth, and he spoke to the heart with eloquent simplicity). Rabbi Belsky authored seforim in the areas of halacha and *agada*. He wrote eloquently in Loshon Kodesh and in English, and he could write in classical style or wax poetic. (He read Homer's Iliad at age five.)

To appreciate the breathtaking array of Rabbi Belsky's talents and strengths, consider the amazing diversity of positions that Rabbi Belsky held and the critical role that he played in each.

There was Rabbi Belsky, the maggid shiur in Torah Vodaath. Starting at the young age of 25, he was a Rebbi for over 50 years and delivered brilliant and masterful shiurim. As a Rebbi, Rabbi Belsky never wrote off any student and he believed in every talmid. He admonished



Rav Belsky zt"l at International Glatt for an HHB ASK OU Program

Rabbeim that if a student fails, it is often because the Rebbi was not proud of the talmid, or worse, because the Rebbi wrote him off. Rabbi Belsky's unlimited love and devotion for each and every talmid was legendary and beyond description.

Then there was Rabbi Belsky, the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath, for the last five years of his life. What a fitting culmination to the 72 years he spent in the yeshiva, from early childhood on.

There was also Rabbi Belsky, the Rav of Camp Agudah and the head of the masmidim program. More than simply delivering shiurim, Rabbi Belsky was a super-Rebbi, mashgiach and counselor rolled into one. He spent the entire day with his beloved talmidim as he bonded with them and taught lifelong lessons. He travelled with them to Niagara Falls and went on other camp trips, all the time inspiring his talmidim. Canoeing down the rapids, he would point out unusual animals and plant life, and at bonfires and barbecues he regaled the masmidim with inspirational stories and nigunim of old. He took spellbinding nature walks and gave amazing guided tours of the stars and constellations to his talmidim, so they would appreciate Hashem's magnificent world.

Rabbi Belsky, the dayan, tackled some of the most difficult and contentious dinai Torah.

Rabbi Belsky, the leader of the *Vaad Libatzalas Nidchai Yisrael* and the Nasi of the Russian Kehilla, devoted himself to helping Russians reclaim their religious heritage. In an amazing show of brilliance and sensitivity, Rabbi Belsky mastered Russian so that

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Rav Belsky zt"l explaining nikkur in HHB Ask OU program in Lakewood

RABBI BELSKY REMEMBERED

RABBI YOEL SCHONFELD

RC, Oil

I WAS NOT a talmid of Rabbi Belsky in Yeshiva Torah Vodaath or in Camp Agudah as I did not attend either. My association with Rabbi Belsky was in the OU where I had the great zechus of interacting with him on kashruth matters, so my recollections of him are mostly anecdotal.

Rabbi Yisroel Belsky was the Senior Halachic Consultant for the OU where he served in that capacity for twenty eight years along with ybl"ch Rabbi Herschel Schachter and Rabbi Menachem Genack. Rabbi Belsky was also the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath as well as the Rav and director of Torah programming in Camp Agudah for decades. He was 77 years old and received his *smicha* from both Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l.

Rabbi Belsky was renowned for his brilliant mind that mastered so many facets of Torah as it did a myriad of other pursuits. The common denominator is that he made sure it all related to Torah or simply put, his Torah driven mind brought him to be inquisitive about all of Hashem's Creation.

His solid grasp of mathematical equations allowed him to figure in his mind some of the complex formulas necessary in kashruth computations. As mentioned by Rabbi Genack at the levaya he was able to calculate whether an oil tanker that hauled non-kosher one day and then the next day, a kosher haul which followed a non kosherizing cleaning, held enough kosher liquid to outnumber by a ratio of 60:1 the metal cylindrical wall of the tanker.

His interests were vast. He was an accomplished mohel, a shochet and owing to his mastery of anatomy was an expert menaker, deviner of animals from non-permissible blood vessels; prohibited sinews (*gid hanashe*); and prohibited fats. He exhibited his surgical skills when he taught countless students in camp and in the Harry H. Beren Foundation of New Jersey sponsored ASK OU training programs how to dissect an animal properly.

He had an amazing knowledge of astronomy which he used to explain some of the most difficult and arcane issues in the celestial bodies as mandated by *Chazal* in their discussion of *Kiddush Hachodesh* and other related topics.



Rav Belsky zt"l explaining the Mesorah of Kosher Birds for HHB Ask OU Program in Torah Vodaath



Rav Belsky zt"l with his Rebbe Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l

Rabbi Elya Brudny of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Brooklyn offered an insightful comment during his hesped of Rav Belsky. "If not for the fact that Rav Belsky wore so many different hats, he would have been more renowned as a posek (halachic decisor)". He meant to say that since Rav Belsky was known in so many different fields, his mastery of Halacha may have gone underappreciated.

Rabbi Belsky brooked no tolerance for "*halacha by tumult*". He simply could not stand when people with insufficient knowledge of the facts or *halacha* made a tempest in a teapot about important halachic matters. "If not for Rav Belsky, none of us here would be eating fish!" proclaimed Rabbi Genack at the *levaya*. How true. There were those who were excited to promote the idea that perhaps most fish we eat are not kosher due to worm infestation. This tumult began to take a life of its own until Rabbi Belsky was able to disarm the agitators by exposing the real facts in the matter.

Rabbi Belsky also went against the stream, so to speak, when it came to the copepods in water crisis. The jury is still out on that.

Rabbi Belsky would come to the OU on a weekly basis. He very often looked exhausted due to the fact that he never had a moment's rest. The phone constantly rang in his home, or wherever people could figure out where he was as they sought his advice in Torah disputes, halacha and *shalom bayis*. A system had to be developed to hold all his outside calls when he came to the OU so that he could devote his time to kashruth matters exclusively.

I once went with him to visit a major jam and peanut producer in Fredonia, NY outside of Buffalo. The issues were very complex as

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REMEMBERED

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there was non-kosher production in the same plant. It took a lot to figure out how to kasher the cooking kettles, the pistons in the packer and the cooling tunnel. The company realized when speaking with Rabbi Belsky that they were not just talking to “some rabbi from Brooklyn” but to someone who likely understood the system of production as well as their engineers. It made gaining their complete cooperation that much easier.

Relating to other kashruth matters he once told me that although we must strictly adhere to every rule of kashruth *halacha*, we must also be sure that what we do conforms to common sense. This is a principle that he applied on a regular basis.

He was also a kind and caring person, despite his imposing presence. There is a woman in the OU named Elaine that works in the mail room. Elaine updates me regularly on what is happening in the OU office. When Rabbi Belsky was ill in the hospital, Elaine wrote to me that she visited him, twice, and he managed to lift his hand and wave

to her with a forced smile. I remarked to Elaine that I was not aware that she felt close enough with Rabbi Belsky that she visited him when almost no one outside the family did. She told me that she just had to, because whenever Rabbi Belsky would see her in the office he made sure to greet her warmly. He really was a special person.

On a lighter note, I used to have the honor of making copies of the NY Times crossword puzzle for Rabbi Belsky and hand it to him before he sat down to his lunch which usually consisted of a slice of rye bread and a can of sardines. Somehow between bites, in the space of a half hour he would complete the puzzle (on Thursdays when he came, the Times puzzle is super tough) and place it in my mail box. I asked him what was the secret to being able to do the puzzle, and so quickly, and he answered with a straightforward look “you have to train your mind to think as *krum* (crooked) as the puzzler!”

In a conversation with Rabbi Genack following Rabbi Belsky’s petira, he told me “Rabbi Belsky is truly irreplaceable”. Unfortunately, that is the sad truth. *Yehi zichron baruch*.

R. GENACK

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mind that led him on a constant search for truth. If we were dealing with a shailah regarding *bittul b’shishim*, he would effortlessly calculate the volume of room-sized containers. When the question of the shaitels made from hair from India arose, Rav Belsky wrote several letters to Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv regarding the situation. Just reading these letters – the depth of his understanding, the elegance of his language – is a powerful lesson.

We once were dealing with a complicated shailah regarding tankers of oil imported from Asia. He bravely climbed a tall, narrow ladder to peer into a tanker of oil and calculate its properties.

He had a deep understanding of technology, and, for example, he could immediately pasken on the “Shabbos switch” (to which he was adamantly opposed). When an issue with the kashrus of fish was raised, Rav Belsky had the confidence, which came from his knowledge together with the kabbolah he received from his rabbeim, to allow the continued eating of fish. He sought out experts on the issue from the Museum of Natural History, and, as always, he stood for the truth as he saw it in the face of opposition. Absent his courage and knowledge, we wouldn’t be eating fish today.

But in addition to his knowledge, what was unique about Rav Belsky was his concern for the most forlorn elements of society. In his combination of towering intellect with a great and capacious heart, Rav Belsky followed the model of Rav Chaim Brisker. Rav Chaim was the greatest mind of his era and singlehandedly revolutionized Torah study with his analytical method. Yet, as my rebbi, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, described, Rav Chaim was the paramount *ish hachessed*:

mind that led him on a constant search for truth. If we were dealing with a shailah regarding *bittul*

Rav Chaim’s home was open to those rejected by everyone else, the poor and the sick, those shunned by society.

Rav Meir Bar Illan asked a number of rabbonim to describe the essence of the job of a rov. The *Aruch Hashulchan* answered that the job of a rov is to pasken shailos. Rav Chaim responded that the job of a rov is to do chesed. When Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, Rav Chaim’s son, first entered the rabbinate, his father told him two things: one, to pasken that a *choleh* who must eat on Yom Kippur can eat a full shiur, and two, to remember that the job of a rov is to care for the widows and the orphans. On Rav Chaim’s epitaph, the words inscribed are “*rav hachessed*.”

This was Rav Belsky. He, too, fought heroically for the underdog, the lonely, the embattled, those for whom no one else would care. He put his reputation on the line, time and again, to stand up for what he felt was right. He was the advocate for Russian Jewry, for the homeless and impoverished, for those he felt were innocent. He always stood his ground in his pursuit of justice.

Once, standing in the OU office, whose windows overlook the Statue of Liberty, he wistfully remarked, “I can swim from here to the statue and back.” Rav Belsky was a powerful swimmer, who never hesitated to swim against the current. He was willing to take the unpopular position, to fight for what he felt was right, regardless of popular opinion.

Rav Belsky once related that when one of his younger children was born, the doctor asked, “Why do you have so many children?” To which Rav Belsky replied, on the spot, “We Jews are an endangered species!”

Rav Chaim Yisroel Belsky was truly an endangered species. He was a *yochid* in his generation, *sui generis* in his brilliance, his wisdom and his concern for every individual. He is indeed irreplaceable. *Mi yiten lanu temuraso?*



Rav Belsky zt”l greeted by (L-R) ybc”l Rabbi Genack and Dr. Katz at his return to the OU from a life threatening illness four years ago.

he could converse with Russian immigrants in their native tongue.

Then there was Rabbi Belsky, the friend of *umlohim*, unfortunates, who were overwhelmed by the tzo-ros and challenges of their existence. Somehow, people from all over America, with major problems, found their way to Rabbi Belsky's doorstep. Though he was a person of great stature, he was warm and embracing, easily approachable, with no airs or ego. In spite of his overwhelming responsibilities, he would not turn anyone away and would offer whatever assistance he could provide. I am a communal Rabbi, in addition to working in the OU Kashrus Department. Collectors of funds often showed me letters of approbation from Rabbi Belsky, attesting to the veracity of their claims. I was amazed that Rabbi Belsky wrote the letters as if he was a close family friend for many years. Recently, a woman came to my house, showed me a letter from Rabbi Belsky, and said, "Rabbi Belsky knows all my problems, loves my family and is like a father to us."

Finally, for the past 28 years, there was Rabbi Belsky, the Senior Posek for the OU. Although that was his official title, to describe Rabbi Belsky simply as a "posek for the OU," does not do justice to his pivotal role and major contributions to the OU.

When Rabbi Belsky came to the OU in 1987, the OU was in the midst of an unprecedented period of growth and expansion. In just a few years, the OU went from being a small agency to supervising over 1,000 companies. Because the growth was so rapid, the OU was at a critical point, where a solid halachic foundation was essential. To properly supervise the wide spectrum of food companies, (which has now grown to 9000 factories in over 80 countries around the world,) numerous halachic issues needed to be addressed and policies had to be formalized. The OU was fortunate to have two gedolai Yisrael, Rav Yisrael Belsky zt"l and *yibadel lichaim*, Rav Herschel Schachter, shlit"a, working in concert under the direction of Rabbi Menachem Genack, to formulate a halachic platform upon which the entire OU supervision operates.

This effort was a monumental task. To appreciate the scope of this endeavor, it should be noted that for the past 28 years Rabbi Belsky and Rabbi Schachter visited the OU office in Manhattan on a weekly basis (on separate days) to render halachic decisions for the Rabbinic Coordinators and Rabbinic Field Representatives. About 20 years ago, the OU recognized the importance of recording these piskai halacha, and established a position of *safra didayna* (court recorder) to document the decisions of the poskim. To date, there are thousands of teshuvos and psokim stored in the OU database. These documents cover the entire gamut of every aspect of industrial production and food service, and they serve as the basis for all OU certification.

Establishing this massive halachic platform was a great challenge. A prerequisite for a psak halacha is having a clear understanding of the metzius (the reality) under discussion. If one does not understand the modern techniques for growing microbes on mediums (which are often not kosher) to produce enzymes, one cannot competently discuss the relevant halachic considerations of *maamid*, *nishtaneh* and *zeh vizeh gorem*. Rabbi Belsky was uniquely suited to the task. There was no one like Rabbi Belsky, who combined a total mastery of the intricacies of halacha, and a profound understanding of the complexities of modern food production.

Furthermore, the classical poskim did not deal with the new realities. One will not find a teshuvah from the *Nodah Biyehudah* or the *Chasam Sofer* about genetically modified tomatoes (GMO) with

gene splices from a pig, and the process of finding precedents in classical halachic literature requires great skill.

Finally, it is not difficult to research a sheilah and find multiple positions among the poskim. The challenge is to decide which poskim to follow. This requires the *shikul hadaas* (balanced judgment) of a posek to decide when to be machmir, when to be maikil, which opinions to follow and which to reject. This process was all the more complex for the OU, the world's largest kashrus organization, because the OU poskim were establishing a standard of kashrus for all of Klal Yisroel. Virtually all supervisions rely on the OU for ingredients. Furthermore, the OU is a trailblazer and sets a standard for many hechsherim around the world. Rabbi Belsky understood this well, and in conjunction with Rabbi Hershel Schachter and Rabbi Menachem Genack, Rabbi Belsky formulated standards that he felt were appropriate for OU supervision and the entire Jewish community.

Rabbi Belsky's approach to halacha was balanced and measured. He



Rav Belsky zt"l at AKO (Association of Kosher Organizations) Conference this past year

was not swayed by public opinion. In addition, he refused to react to the latest "tumult" before he personally investigated the facts. Over the years, there were questions raised about the kosher status of cows and milk (because of puncturing the stomach to correct a problem called Displaced Abomasums), eggs (because of the toe structure of Leghorn chickens), fish (presence of worms), water (presence of crustaceans called copepods) and the like. I asked Rabbi

Belsky if we should take a stringent position while an investigation was underway. Rabbi Belsky said, "No, you don't prohibit things that were always assumed to be kosher, unless you are certain that the situation has changed."

In addition to charting a halachic path for the OU, Rabbi Belsky provided constant inspiration, encouragement and direction. Rabbi Belsky noted that *kedusha* requires persistent *shemira* (protection) because it is so easily corrupted. He referenced the requirements of *shmira* for *terumah* and the *mikdash* detailed in *Parshas Korach* (18:1-8). Rabbi Belsky explained that just as the Leviim were responsible for the *shmira* of the *mikdash* and *terumah*, so too the Rabbinic staff at the OU are *shomrim*, who guard and protect the sanctity of Klal Yisrael, by insuring the kosher integrity of food and preventing *timtum halev*. Rabbi Belsky often remarked that a Kashrus agency must constantly seek ways to improve and enhance its supervision, both in terms of implementing stronger controls as well as upgrading halachic standards. Rabbi Belsky encouraged the Rabbis at the OU to treat a supervised plant like a *sugya* of the *gemorah*; one must study and analyze it, in depth, repeatedly, until one has mastered all aspects of the operation, and all halachic elements of supervision have been identified and addressed. I recall Rabbi Belsky saying on many occasions that the word "bidieved" is *traif* in the hallways of a Kashrus organization, and *hashgacha* must be "*lichatchila*." Furthermore, he would say that a *hashgacha* should not be limited

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to satisfying the requirements of the Shulchan Aruch, but must go above and beyond the letter of the law.

Rabbi Belsky was a moral compass of the OU. He prodded the OU Rabbonim to oversee kashrus with yashrus and integrity. Not only were we privileged to ask Rabbi Belsky sheilos related to *Yoreh Dayah* (which details the laws of kashrus), but we had the opportunity to ask questions on *Choshen Mishpat* (monetary laws) as well.

Following are two beautiful stories about the moral clarity that Rabbi Belsky provided.

About 25 years ago, an OU mashgiach invited me to the wedding of one of his children in Detroit. I felt it was important that I attend, so that a member of the OU office staff would be present at the wedding. However, the flight to Detroit was a significant expense.

In the standard OU contract with companies, there is a clause that stipulates that the Rabbinic Coordinator for each certified company may visit the plant once a year at his discretion and the cost will be covered by the company. I was responsible for an OU plant in Detroit that manufactured frozen dough. I thought I would visit the plant and ask them to cover the cost of the trip, and then attend the wedding. However, I was concerned that perhaps it was not ethical to piggy-back my attendance at the wedding with an inspection of a plant that was paid for by the company, particularly since my visit to the plant was only a pretense to go to the wedding. There were only three simple ingredients in the frozen dough. Were it not for the wedding, I would never make such an unnecessary visit. (We had an on-site mashgiach who was visiting regularly.) I asked Rabbi Belsky if it was ethical, under these circumstances, to visit the plant and bill the company for the expense.

Rabbi Belsky responded that it was certainly appropriate. He said, “Each and every plant should be visited every now and then by the New York Rabbinic Coordinator because you never know what you will find. You must go, even if you have no wedding to attend. Since you should make the visit in any event, it is perfectly appropriate to schedule the visit when you have a wedding.”

Though I thought the visit was superfluous, I accepted Rabbi Belsky’s psak. Indeed, when I visited the plant there was very little to see, as the ingredients were only flour, water and yeast. As I was leaving the facility, a label caught my eye. All the other labels had the name of the manufacturer clearly displayed next to the OU, but this particular label was nameless. I asked the plant manager why the label was printed in that manner. He responded, “Oh, we plan to send these new labels to supermarkets. When they will bake-off the frozen dough in their ovens, they will apply these genetic labels with the OU.” I was stunned. This was a major kashrus concern, because the dough would be baked in non-kosher ovens. I immediately explained this to the plant manager, and I had him destroy the labels.

Afterwards, I thought that Rabbi Belsky’s words were prophetic. “You never know what you will find.” How very true.

Here is the second story which beautifully demonstrates Rabbi Belsky’s sensitivity to each individual.

A plant in the mid-west required full-time supervision. We had no one near the facility to provide supervision, and I arranged for a mashgiach to travel from the east coast. The mashgiach flew out every Sunday, and returned home erev Shabbos. This was a big hardship, but the mashgiach needed the income. My instructions to the mashgiach were that he stay at the plant daily from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. In addition, I asked him to occasionally visit the plant in the evening. All was fine and well until one year later when I received a bill for \$14,000 for night visits. I was shocked and asked the mashgiach what the bill was for. He replied that he spent four hours in the

plant every evening. I told him that I had only asked him to visit on occasion, and he said he thought I wanted him to spend hours there every night. This was clearly a case of a gross misunderstanding. I felt badly for the mashgiach and asked Rabbi Belsky what to do.

Rabbi Belsky said that technically the OU owed the mashgiach nothing for his night work. Nonetheless, the OU should pay the mashgiach \$5000 because one must act *lifnim mishuras hadin*, beyond the letter of the law. The mashgiach invested an enormous amount of time and energy, and would feel hurt and betrayed if he came away with no pay. I expressed surprise, and said I thought that *lifnim mishuras hadin* is optional. \$5000 seemed like a large sum to pay under such circumstances. Rabbi Belsky responded that *lifnim mishuras hadin* is not an option. It is a requirement, as is clear from an explicit source in Baba Metziah 83a.

The gemarah relates that Raba Bar Bar Chanan hired porters to carry barrels of wine. They apparently were not very competent. They dropped the barrels and broke them. The porters came to Raba and asked to be paid. They said they were very poor, had worked hard all day, and now they had nothing to show for their efforts. Raba felt that the porters owed him money for the damage and certainly he would not pay them for a job not properly done. The workers went to Rav with their complaint. Rav identified with the plight of the porters, who were indigent, and had tried their best. Rav instructed Raba Bar Bar Chanan to make the payment, because one must act *lifnim mishuras hadin*. Raba Bar Bar Chanan was surprised and said, “Dina hachi?” (Is this a din, a halachic imperative?) Rav responded, “Yes, it is a din”, and quoted a verse in Mishlei from which we derive the concept of *lifnim mishuras hadin* to support his ruling.

Rabbi Belsky turned to me and said, “You see, it is a requirement to act *lifnim mishuras hadin*, and the OU should pay the mashgiach at least part of his fee. He worked hard for an entire year and should not come away with nothing for his efforts.”

When Rabbi Genack heard Rabbi Belsky’s recommendation, he countered, “The OU is a communal organization and funds are *mommon hatzibur*. Perhaps *lifnim mishuras hadin* does not apply to *mommon hatzibur*.”

Rabbi Belsky had a tremendous repertoire of stories, and responded to Rabbi Genack’s comment with a terrific story.

Years ago, Rabbi Belsky met a 90 year old Rabbi in South Dakota who had studied in yeshivos in Europe before World War II. The Rabbi from South Dakota (I’ll refer to him as RSD) told Rabbi Belsky the following story:

When he was a young man studying in Europe, he heard that Rav Leib Vilkomir was visiting the city of Ponevezh. Rav Leib was a great talmid chochom, and RSD wanted to meet him and discuss Torah topics. RSD traveled to Ponevezh and met Rav Leib and had a pleasant conversation. After a while, Rav Leib told RSD, “Come with me, I must go visit the Rav of Ponevezh and appease him.”

What had transpired? The Jewish community of Ponevezh owned a bathhouse, and at some point, they sold it to a certain man (let us call him Chaim Yankel) to raise needed funds. Chaim Yankel operated the bathhouse for a year and lost money, at which point he asked the community to refund his payment and take back the bathhouse. Chaim Yankel claimed that, in spite of enormous effort on his part, he could not make a profit on the business because of inherent deficiencies in the business, which had not been revealed to him in advance. The community had a different viewpoint and believed that he lost money because he was a poor business man and they were not at fault. The community brought the matter to the Rav of Ponevezh, and he concurred that the community was not at fault. Nonetheless,

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INTERACTIONS WITH RAV BELSKY ZT"l

Redefining the Word "Irreplaceable"

RABBI AVROHOM GORDIMER

RC Dairy

EVER since my first encounter with Rav Belsky at OU Headquarters, where I had the *zechus* (privilege) to present shailos, halachic questions, about sensitive kashrus matters to Rav Belsky for almost two decades and to gain from his immense wisdom, I have been spoiled, as have been all of my colleagues at OU Kosher who came to Rav Belsky during his Thursday sessions at the OU to pose important shailos pertaining to the food manufacturers whose accounts they handle. We have been so spoiled.

We have been spoiled by having a first-class technical master who knew the processes, equipment, relevant science and issues far better than anyone. Rather than having to first explain to Rav Belsky the *metzius*, the facts on the ground about the issue for which we came for guidance, Rav Belsky would instead give us a lesson on it as we began each discussion. Usually, one needs to laboriously present a posek (halachic decisor) with the technical intricacies of each shailah, and perhaps repeat and break it all down several times so that it can be understood, before the posek is confident that he has the information clear. With Rav Belsky, this was not necessary. It was like a student asking a top-tier math professor a simple math question or an acclaimed physicist a basic physics question – there was no need to explain to Rav Belsky about the technology and science, for it was all on his fingertips. This uniquely elevated the halachic discourse to unparalleled levels of ease and sophistication, and gave us, the rabbinic coordinators, the luxury and comfort of interacting with someone who fit so naturally into our world of kashrus and technical processes. In fact, Rabbi Genack told me on several occasions that food company executives related to him that Rav Belsky, after visiting factories for kashrus purposes, understood the equipment and processing mechanisms better than they themselves did, and taught them things about their own operations of which they were unaware.

We have likewise been spoiled by having a top-notch rosh yeshiva and *lamdan*, an in-depth Torah scholar, serve as posek. Every time we asked a shailah, we received a mini-shiur (lecture) on the topic, a detailed explanation of the mechanics of the *metzius*, and an answer that was so compelling that we knew it was pure emes – pristine truth – and not something based on an "*ukimta*" (lim-

ited presumption) or an approach that we felt was subject to question. The answer reflected Rav Belsky's profound understanding of the *sugya* (topic), evincing sophisticated and developed *s'varos* (logic) that emanated from the depth and bedrock of the halacha as only a rosh yeshiva can grasp it. Answers were never superficial or based on a less masterful approach, such as deciding an issue based on the number of *mekoros* (sources) which rule a certain way versus those that rule otherwise. Rav Belsky

would read aloud from the relevant seforim, the sacred books, when replying to shailos, in order to show us the *mekoros* and the *leshonos*, the specific expressions and nuances, and make us feel part of the *masa u'matan* (halachic give-and-take). After rendering a decision, Rav Belsky would show us inside how the p'sak (ruling) was in truth what the *Gemara*, *Shulchan Aruch*, *Remo*, *Nosei Keilim* (Commentators) and relevant *ShuT* (question and answer) seforim meant. It always came forth so decisively clear that the p'sak was emes, as if Rav Belsky had read the minds of the *mechaber* (author of the *Shulchan Aruch*), *Remo*, etc. Totally compelling teshuvos (responsa) of dizzying depth, with pashtus, pure simplicity, that fit the words of the *mekoros* and we knew reflected their true intent, was what Rav Belsky always presented.

This *mizug*, this unique blend, of a posek who was both a halachic doyen and technical wizard, all with such depth and breadth, is irreplaceable.

Dr. Avraham Meyer, the OU's most senior overseas field representative, whose prowess in kashrus and science are unequalled, told me after Rav Belsky passed away that Rav Belsky was "the most amazing man I have ever met, and I have been around for a quite a while". Dr. Meyer explained: "One of the most remarkable memories of my life was having lunch at an OU conference with Rav Belsky, discussing kashrus and microbiology.



Rav Belsky in action at OU Headquarters for his weekly p'sak session, bedazzling captivated listeners with his Torah, wit and genius.

The intellectual speed (truly a supersonic thinker); the interest in and understanding of complex science and technology; the innovative thinking; the whole range of conceivable halachic approaches at his fingertips, was wonderful and excellent for my humility. Besides all that, he was a lovely, caring person. I can't even achieve that."

There are two more aspects of Rav Belsky I would like to present: his overpowering commitment to Torah and his low-key/high-caliber chesed (kindness).

Rav Belsky was intense about Torah, yet he sat at his office in the OU, explaining and answering all *shailos*, with a smile and usually a story about the issue at hand; he was never tense and always appeared relaxed. He certainly made everyone who posed *shailos* feel relaxed, as he dealt with them with chumminess, a very warm *sholom aleichem*, and laid out the halacha with clarity, background and seder מסיני מסיני, perfect order, as it was given originally at Sinai.

However, I once came to ask Rav Belsky about a new eruv that was erected on my block and beyond, which I knew that Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik and his brother Rav Aharon, my rebbeim and the local rabbonim (rabbis) would have/did oppose. I had read Rav Belsky's teshuva about the new Brooklyn eruv, and I asked him if it pertained to the new eruv in my neigh-

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GIANT

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as Rav of the city, he had a conflict of interests and could not rule on the matter. Rav Leib Vilkomir was visiting Ponevezh at the time and the Ponevezher Rav suggested that Rav Leib adjudicate the Din Torah between Chaim Yankel and the community of Ponevezh.

Rav Leib acquiesced and, to everyone's surprise, he ruled in favor of Chaim Yankel. The Ponevezher Rav was very upset at the ruling, and it was for that reason that Rav Leib went to appease the Ponevezher Rav, with RSD in accompaniment.

When Rav Leib and RSD entered the home of the Ponevezher Rav, they saw that the Rav was quite agitated as he paced back and forth in his study. "Rav Leib!" exclaimed the Ponevezher Rav. "How could you rule as you did? Show me one source to support your psak in the Din Torah." Rav Leib responded, "Why, there is a mitzvah to act *lifnim mishuras hadin*. Chaim Yankel worked very hard to run the business, and he believes it was not his fault that he did not see a profit. *Din* (justice) would dismiss Chaim Yankel's claim, but *lifnim mishuras hadin* obligates you to deal with him with compassion and concern."

The Ponevezher Rav questioned Rav Leib's logic. "What you are saying would be true if this was a private matter, but this is *kehillisha gelt* (communal funds) that would have been used to support widows and orphans. What right do you have to impose a judgement based on *lifnim mishuras hadin* at the expense of widows and orphans?" Rav Leib responded, "*Lifnim mishuras hadin* is a fundamental Jewish value. *Punkt azoi vi* (just as) a community must put aside money for widows and orphans, so too, they must set aside money for *lifnim mishuras hadin*".

Rav Belsky concluded that Rav Leib's comment reflects the fact that *lifnim mishuras hadin* would apply to the OU as well. Based on Rabbi Belsky's recommendation, the OU paid the mashgiach a substantial sum to satisfy the requirement of *lifnim mishura hadin*.

This story was vintage Rabbi Belsky; he cared and was concerned about each person's feelings and needs.

Finally, Rabbi Belsky taught us *Hilchos Derech Eretz* in word and by example. Rabbi Belsky was mechaved every person, no matter what his stature was. I often remember Rabbi Belsky joining meetings where there was enough tension to slice the atmosphere with a knife. As soon as he entered the room, everything changed. In part, it was because he commanded respect by his mere presence. But mostly it was because he treated everyone with great respect, and that put each person at ease, and immediately diffused much of the tension. Not infrequently, we dealt with some very difficult people, but Rabbi Belsky was able to win over everyone with his charm, smile, and authentic *kovod habriyos*.

Rabbi Belsky told me that all relationships in life are based on respect, be it a Rebbi-talmid, general friendship or husband and wife. This simple but elegant thought reflected Rabbi Belsky's world view, and it was by these principles that he lived his own life.

We, at the OU, had the enormous zechus of having Rabbi Belsky provide guidance to us for 28 years. His impact was immeasurable. 28 in Hebrew is כח, which means strength. In his moving hesped, Rabbi Genack spoke about Rabbi Belsky's amazing courage. He was an *ish bo'emes* (man of truth), who was not afraid to take controversial stands when he was convinced that it was the right thing to do. Rabbi Belsky was a man of כח, strength of character and conviction. By the same token, for 28 years, Rabbi Belsky infused כח, clarity, and strong moral conviction into the fiber of OU kosher supervision. We were so very fortunate to have had a giant in our midst.

Alas, Rav Belsky ז"ל is no longer with us. Just as Rav Belsky is irreplaceable in every other capacity where he served with distinction, so too at the OU. There is no one like him. מי יתן תמורתו (who can be his replacement)? יחי זכרו ברוך!

INTERACTIONS

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borhood as well. I was not going to use this eruv - my question was merely for limud, for the sake of understanding.

Rav Belsky closed the door, stood up, and became red and firm. He never otherwise acted in such a way. His jovial manner transformed to one of utter solemnity and intensity. He needed to stand, which he never did when answering *shailos*, as he was so worked up. He proceeded to explain why the eruv on my block was invalid, telling me the reasons in detail, and he said that his *p'sak* about the

new Brooklyn eruv applied to my neighborhood as well. Rav Belsky permitted me to copy his written teshuva on the matter from his new sefer and to disseminate it. He also explained with such emotion how wrong it was for an outside rov (rabbi) to have come in and set up this eruv - he was so forceful like I had never seen.

Such is a person who loves Torah and cares with every fiber of his being.

The lobby of the 11 Broadway has a barber shop (an excellent one, by the way!) which Rav Belsky used to frequent every month or so after finishing his session at the OU. Rav Belsky would have his hair cut there by Roshel, a very frum Bucharian barber from Queens.

Roshel told me a few months ago that he and his chavrusa had just made a *siyum* (completion



of a Talmud tractate) at their local shul, Ohr Natan, and that he had invited Rav Belsky to come, although he certainly did not expect the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas to schlep to Queens for a siyum, especially for someone who was not even his talmid (student). Roshel told me that when he got up to be *mesayem* the *masechta*, to formally com-

plete the tractate, he noticed that Rav Belsky and a talmid who drove him were sitting at the edge of the room, as guests. Roshel could not believe it, and he immediately went over to Rav Belsky and asked him to speak, giving great honor to the occasion by introducing the crowd there, many of whom were not used to hearing roshei yeshiva speak, to the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas.

Such is the humble conduct of a real godol, a genuinely great Torah authority. Rav Belsky always honored the Torah and his fellows, forever without fanfare and with true sincerity.



▶ We are certain that *OU Kosher Halacha Yomis* will bring an *aliyas neshama* (elevation of

the soul) of this great gadol, whose past contribution to OU kashrus will continue for years to come.

We have already received many good wishes and thanks globally for this new project. Here are a few samples: "First of all I would like to tell you how much I enjoy these short daily halachot". DZ, Hong Kong. "I have suggested this to numerous friends of ours and EVERYONE is very excited to have this in their email. YASHER KOACH TO ALL INVOLVED"! ZS, Passaic. "First, my deepest thanks for this daily email. I love starting my day with it". SK, Brooklyn. "This *Halacha Yomis* is such a great invention". MZB, Antwerp, Belgium.

Here are some of the first OU Kosher Halacha Yomis Q & A's.

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO MAKE SUSHI ON SHABBOS?

IS IT MUKTZA?

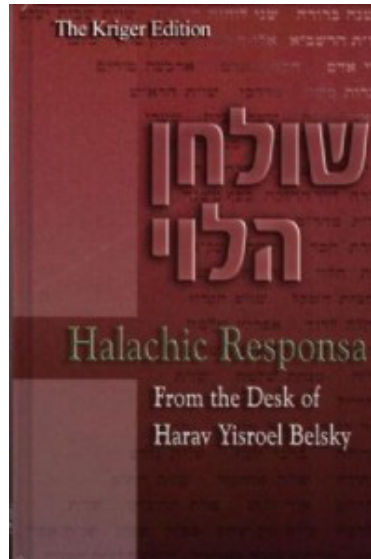
Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 308:32) writes that unsalted raw fish is muktza, because it serves no purpose on Shabbos. However in our days, if one has cuts of raw fish that are edible as sushi, then they are not muktza. However, Rav Belsky zt"l questioned whether one may make sushi on Shabbos. The *Chayei Adam* 39:1 writes that the melacha of *boneh* (building) applies to food as well, and that attaching foods together to produce a desired picture or shape, is included in this prohibition. Since shaping sushi might be included in this prohibition, Rav Belsky zt"l recommended that one should not make sushi on Shabbos with the intent of making a specific design or pattern.

I HAVE HEARD THAT SCRAMBLED EGGS, OMELETS, AND HARD BOILED EGGS CAN BE MADE IN A MICROWAVE BY A NON-JEW AS THIS PROCESS MITIGATES THE BISHUL AKUM PROBLEM. IS THAT CORRECT?

Although contemporary poskim differ on this question, the OU is not matir bishul akum through microwaves. Rabbi Genack once discussed this shailah with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, who told him that the OU should be machmir regarding cooking with microwaves.

MAY I DICE ONIONS AND PLACE THEM IN SEALED PACKAGING TO AVOID THE SAKANA (DANGER) OF EATING PEELED ONIONS THAT WERE LEFT OVERNIGHT?

The Gemara (*Nida* 17a) writes that there is a sakana to eat peeled onions that were left overnight, even if they were placed in sealed packaging. The only exception that the Gemara mentions is if part of



the roots or the peel is left on the onion. *Tosfos* (*Shabbos* 141a s.v. *Hani*) writes that the *sakana* applies to diced onions as well. However, if there are other ingredients mixed in to the onions, Rishonim already discuss that one can be lenient. *Igros Moshe* (Y.D. III: 20) writes that industrial produced products are not subject to this *sakana*. So one may purchase frozen packages of diced onions.

IF I DRINK ONLY CHOLOV YISROEL MILK, MAY I CONSUME POWDERED CHOLOV STAM MILK?

This is a point of *machlokes*. Rav Zvi Pesach Frank (the *Har Zvi*) maintained that milk in powdered form is not included in the gezeirah of Chazal on *cholov akum*, but the *Chazon Ish* (on *Yoreh Deah* 115:1) strongly disagreed and held that powdered milk is included in the *gezeirah*. An OU product that bears a *cholov Yisroel* statement on its packaging has onsite

hashgocho for the actual milking and does not rely on Rav Zvi Pesach Frank's position.

DOES VIDEO SUPERVISION OF MILK QUALIFY IT AS CHOLOV YISROEL?

This is a *machlokes* among contemporary poskim. Those who allow it maintain that since halacha merely requires a Yisroel to be able to view the milking (*Gem. Arudah Zarah* 39 A, *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 115:1) but does not require him to physically view it (in the case that he is stationed during the milking outside the gate of the milking barn and has verified the absence of any non-kosher animals), video supervision should likewise be acceptable, and even better, as even though a Yisroel is not physically on-site, he can view everything via video. Other poskim do not allow video supervision, as they maintain that a Yisroel must be physically present in order to comply with the *gezeirah* of chazal. (Please see *Mesorah Journal* vol. 27, p. 99.) OU products that are labeled as *cholov Yisroel* do not rely on video supervision.

To receive the OU Kosher *Halacha Yomis* each workday please visit oukasher.org/halacha-yomis-email/.

Subscribers can also email questions on kashrus issues to grossman@ou.org. These questions and their answers may be selected to appear on *OU Kosher Halacha Yomis*.

We take this opportunity to thank Rabbi Yaakov Luban, Rabbi Moshe Zywicki, Rabbi Yosef Grossman, Rabbi Eli Gersten, and the OU web department for their very hard work and dedicated efforts for the success of this program. ■

Dedicated in memory of
**RAV CHAIM
YISROEL BELSKY zt"l**

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scholar) to master in order to adjudicate the myriad areas of halacha. How is it possible for one to spend their days and nights engrossed in learning Torah and at the same time master all the sciences that are necessary to apply the rulings of the Torah to our physical world? The *Netziv* explains that the Holy One, Blessed is He will give these bodies of knowledge to the tzadik as an inheritance, i.e. without the necessity to toil; he will acquire them as a gift.

This statement of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi aptly describes Rav Belsky. Although Rav Belsky never went to college or had any formal technical training, he truly mastered all areas of technical expertise and was thus able to uniquely rule in fields that are closed to many others. Only the select few, including Rav Belsky, who have attained an exalted level of proficiency in the many technical and elusive disciplines, are qualified to lead the Jewish People in some of the most sensitive areas of halacha.

How did Rav Belsky do it? As a senior rosh yeshiva and posek, whose hundreds of talmidim and countless members of the tzibbur required his time and guidance at all hours, it could not have been humanly possible to master and keep current with the many advanced and intricate חכמות (disciplines) under the circumstances. However, הוא, הקדוש ברוך הוא, the Holy One, Blessed is He, endowed this knowledge upon Rav Belsky, for such is the way of Hashem, to gift his select few with talents and knowledge that by far exceed their limited human abilities to acquire them. Yes, Rav Belsky immersed himself in the pools of wisdom with an unquenchable thirst, but the mastery attained by Rav Belsky was nothing short of miraculous, as Hashem enabled him להטעמנו מן הטבע, in a supernatural manner, to acquire indescribably vast technical expertise far beyond that which any human can achieve on his own.

May his memory be a blessing - יהי זכרו ברוך!



Rav Belsky zt"l and ybc"l Rav Schachter shlita

The Legacy of Rav Belsky zt"l

For Rabbi Belsky zt"l articles, pictures
and shiurim visit OU Kosher's website
at oukosher.org/rav-belskys-legacy/



Rav Belsky zt"l and ybc"l Rabbi Elefant meet
with AJ Madison personnel



KASHRUS ALERT

The Orthodox Union does not certify fresh Jaffa mandarins that grow during shmita and are sold using a 'heter mechira'. Some **JAFFA - MEHADRIK GROWERS MANDARINS** produced by Jaffa - Mehadrik Growers, Israel which state 'heter mechira' on the box bears an unauthorized Ⓢ symbol. Corrective actions are being implemented.

The Orthodox Union does not certify **ELMAN'S READY TO USE DRESSING FOR STUFFING** produced by Elman's, Winnipeg Canada. Some products bear an unauthorized Ⓢ symbol. Corrective actions have been implemented.

The Orthodox Union certifies **BALCONI CUBI NOCCIOLA HAZELNUT WAFERS** produced by Balconi S.p.A. Nerviano Italy as an Ⓢ - Dairy product. This product contains dairy ingredients as indicated in the allergens and ingredients statements. Some boxes were printed with a plain Ⓢ, without the D - Dairy designation. Corrective actions have been implemented.

The Orthodox Union does not certify **ROUNDY'S BALSAMIC VINEGAR OF MODENA** produced by Roundy's Supermarkets, Milwaukee WI. Some labels were printed with an unauthorized Ⓢ symbol. Corrective actions have been implemented.

MAZEL TOV

to our devoted RFR in California **RABBI AMATZIA ARGENTAR AND HIS WIFE** on the birth of their first child, Bryna Rochel.

CONDOLENCES

to **RABBI YISHAI HOCHMAN** on the recent loss of his father Mr. Meir Ben Tzion Hochman formally of Toronto, ONT, Canada and recently living in Eretz Yisroel.

המקום ינתן אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים