



"This man cared about my feelings, not his." -- Anonymous

#### BS"D

It's been a month since Gershon Binyamin Burd, zt"l, the man Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Tagger has referred to as the "neshama of Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah," left us for the Olam HaEmes. The shock and pain, at first indescribable, for many just grew in the days following the petirah, as what seemed to be "simply" a devastating personal and communal loss revealed itself to be something of another magnitude altogether.

Amidst tears and confusion, at the shiva, by email, by phone, the stories were told. Some were stories of the "outer" Gershon, the one we knew -- stories about shidduchim and Shabbosim, generosity and kindness. Gershon was the smiling face of the yeshiva, everyone agreed, and many said that that face was crucial in their initial and extended relationship with Bircas HaTorah, and even with Torah itself.

And the stories kept coming, from all over the world. They came from those who knew and loved Gershon personally, those whose children loved him in school, those who loved him because of his and his Rebbetzin's Western Wall Prayers, those who met him and his wife on Shabbos and loved what they saw, those who asked him to stay over at the Burd's for one night and ended up staying for a year and a half, and loved the way their lives changed because of it.

Soon, the "outer" Gershon, the one we thought we knew, was competing with the full Gershon, whose tsnius, secret, acts of kindness, were, as one friend noted, as profound as those of the Holy Miser, the hero of a story Gershon admired as a budding baal teshuvah. Maybe Gershon outdid this hero. The Holy Miser acted in an outwardly cruel manner but then secretly helped the poor, while Gershon was an unstoppable force of good in private, but also a mentsch in public.

This booklet will touch on a few of the exquisite acts of chesed and mesiras nefesh that seem representative of the day-in, day-out public and secret lives of Gershon Burd, zt"l. Please don't be offended if your submission isn't here, or if it's been quoted only in part -- there will be another book to follow, and, bzr"H, that will be more comprehensive.

One goal of distributing this first collection on the occasion of Gershon's shloshim is to begin to capitalize on a wonderful promise in the Gemara in Baba Basra (117A), which implies that by integrating Gershon's personal spiritual achievements into our own lives, we can elevate his soul. It's fitting that the only chesed we can do for Gershon now is to learn how to do chesed from him.

But we have a problem. How can we possibly absorb the lessons of Gershon in their full glory? Should we just all adopt Gershon's tzidkus, along with his secret holy trickery? Could we pull it off, even if we wanted to?

Senior Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Shimon Green used to relate that when he would ask his Rebbe what the Rebbe would do in a particular instance, his Rebbe would reply, "Don't do what I would do. Do what I would do if I were you." Perhaps the same applies here. If we can follow Gershon's lead and begin to access our own unique, G-d-given abilities in the areas of helping others, and faithfully observing the Torah in a way that makes it beloved to all who encounter it, we will do what Gershon would do if he were us – serve Hashem beautifully.

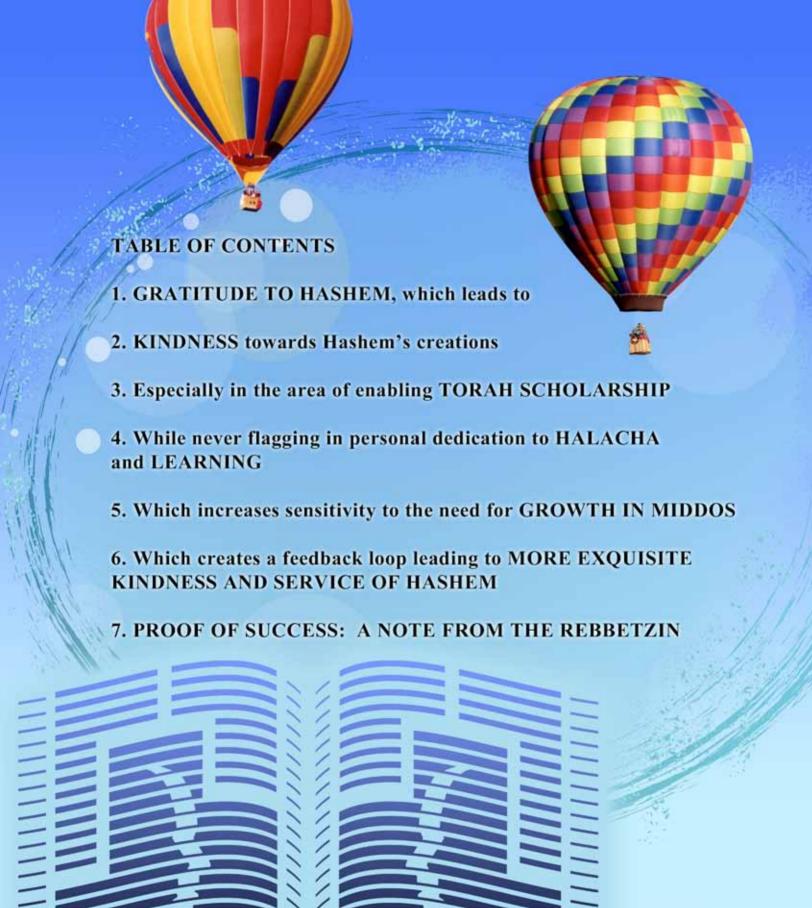
In Mesillas Yesharim, the Ramchal bases his treatise on a formula derived from a braisa by R' Pinchas ben Yair, which outlines several traits that, once mastered and integrated, will lead to true yiras Hashem. As we seek to make sense of Gershon Burd zt"l's enormous accomplishments, to organize and to break them down in a way that will help us emulate his process in our own lives, maybe we can reverse-engineer a structure of our own, l'havdil. We have no braisa on which to rely, but we can try to work with what we have.

For example, perhaps we can say that Gershon (1) started with hakaras hatov – he valued his life and G-d's gifts to him, in all of their many iterations. And maybe valuing every moment led him to (2) move the focus from himself and search out creative ways to do chesed for those people Hashem put in his life. And one of the most exquisite forms of chesed he could do would be to (3) help other Jews be involved in learning Torah, via, say, running Bircas HaTorah, keeping it populated and funded and keeping its Rabbaim free to do their job. And perhaps he felt that, similarly, he had to help himself keep the Torah, and (4) fulfill his obligation as a Jewish man, and spend his life learning and growing. And maybe this deep learning (5) kept him always mindful of his obligation to further refine his middos. And perhaps that middos work led him to (6) reexamine the chesed he was doing, and do it in an even more mehudar way. And so on.

There's no reason to think this is how Gershon consciously approached his avodas Hashem. But as a tool for us, maybe this is useful. Maybe to get in the mindframe of this holy "shyster" (as Rebbetzin Burd lovingly described her husband), who would do or say anything halachically permissible to help a Jew and serve Hashem, we need to make up a "shyster" formula. And if that doesn't work, let's look inside, dig deep, and do what Gershon would do if he were us -- whatever is necessary to elevate our genuine avodas Hashem. B'ezras Hashem, one way or another, we will grow, others will grow, and the memory of Gershon Binyamin Burd, zt"l, will be a blessing for us and all the Jewish people for all time.

#### Yosef Venokur

Friend and chavrusa of Gershon Binyamin zt"l Los Angeles, 2013









From the flood of emails describing Gershon's general outlook, one thing is clear: Gershon took no one and nothing for granted. He made it a priority for the people in his life to know how important they were to him.

"He valued my one day there more than his 15 years."

"He was so excited to have me learning there, I could see it in his eyes."

"Gershon made me feel like I was some celebrity, or from some wealthy background."

His eidel middos were manifest in every way.
- Michael & Meira Kirzner & Family

He was an exceptionally wonderful young man who always made me feel good when I communicated with him.

- Barry

He gave me the opportunity to get involved with the Yeshiva, not because I asked to get more involved, but because he loved when others loved the Yeshiva. - Yisroel Blumberg

He could see the pure Emes..he loved Torah..he loved the Yeshiva..he loved Eretz Yisroel...he loved all jews.

- Bruce and Cheryl leon

I have such positive memories of his radiant fun smile and his down to earth personality.

- Adina Rosen/Glassenberg

I was elated by his enthusiasm. Moshe Shaul Grossman

His hakaras ha Tov was both boundless and never-ending. Rabbi Deutsch, in whose class on the Aseres Hadibros Reb Gershon received his first taste of Torah, received a greeting from him every year the week of Parshas Yisro (and many more times throughout the year), thanking him again. Gershon was forever sending people presents, and sent the Deutsch family a photo collage of the Burd family with the inscription, "He who saves a soul in Israel is as if he saved the entire world."

- From Yonason Rosenblum's article in the English Yated

#### From R Gershon's zt"l's grandmother:

Hi My Dearest Friends and Family of Bircas HaTorah,

HIS seat is empty. Like my heart is all empty. I do not know why HASHEM did not take me instead. When I heard what happened I fell down. My whole body was black and blue like a eggplant. I was rushed to the emergency room. Why not me? You do not know how much love that kind of Grandson had for that old women. He was planning already my 85 birthday on Paysah time, he already let the family know everyone will come to Israel. My son had to bring me, and there would be a surprise for me. He planned the two weeks for all of us. No, he really was not a regular person. He was malach, sent for a mission of 40 years and he completed His mission on time. Hashem needs him next to HIM I have a feeling that this is what happened. For all this is a big tragedy but for the family the most, for HIS PARENTS IS A WOUND for the rest of their life.

# He WAS THE KING OF THE FAMILY! MY SON CALLED HIM, 'MY TZADDIK'!

Sorry, I was not in a condition to write until now. Who will write me every day, "Gramma take good care of yourself, you know how much I love you." Yes, but you know how much I love you too? I know your answer -- "you do not ask HASHEM questions." I WILL LOVE YOU THE REST OF MY LIFE!

Sorry Bircas HaTorah I started this letter to you and I turned to my—Gershonle. I love him so much.

Thank you, Mr. Reuvan, Rabbi Tagger and all Yeshiva staff.

With Love to the Yeshiva and all of you Mrs Burd

Though I have been estranged to a large degree from the Yeshiva these past years, there has been one connection that has held me close, and that is through Gershon. It wasn't the content of the emails nor the messages that he sent, it was the person who sent it. Whether it was an individualized personal message or a mass email, it really made no difference, because the person's name on the bottom was Gershon Binyamin Burd.

I saw his smile, his sincerity, his Kabbalas panim. I felt his handshake. I felt his warmth, sincerity and humility. In a strange way I sensed his mesiras nefesh and commitment to yiddishkite, Torah, family, friends, the Yeshiva, the Roshei Yeshiva, the hanahala and entire student body... past, present and future. Even more strange is that I felt his hakaras ha Tov that he felt for the gifts that Hashem bestowed upon him: becoming a Torah observant Jew, his intimate connection with the Yeshiva, living in Yerushalayim, the old city, his wife, children and friendships.

And even though I have not seen Gershon for many years, I experienced all of these things almost tangibly, each time I received an email and saw his name.

Gershon and I learned together for a short while -- we always shared warm greetings and 'small talk' at the coffee machine. I remember his commitment to growth and always wanting to do the right thing. I remember Gershon asking me advice about something during his engagement to his wife. I honestly do not remember the particulars, but over the years since then, he reminded me many times of how grateful he was for our conversation and how he has such hakaras hatov to me for my advice. Now this is not a story about me. I am no Rabbi Green or Rabbi Tagger. Whatever I could have said, wasn't coming from someone that he should have put so much weight into hearing from, let alone carry it with him with feelings of indebtedness and hakaras hatov for all these years. But that was Gershon. That was his humility and impeccable middos. I am sure there are many people who can share similar experiences and feelings.

As I said, I have been out of personal touch with the Yeshiva and with Gershon for many years, and what has happened, which was decreed by Shemayim, makes me feel so small, if not ashamed of not being a fraction of the person I am supposed to be. I believe that Gershon was 100% of all that he was supposed to be and accomplished 100% of what he needed to.

Not only in his own life and those closely associated with him, but even to all of those not in his inner circles, but nevertheless uncannily experiencing, learning and being inspired by his very being.

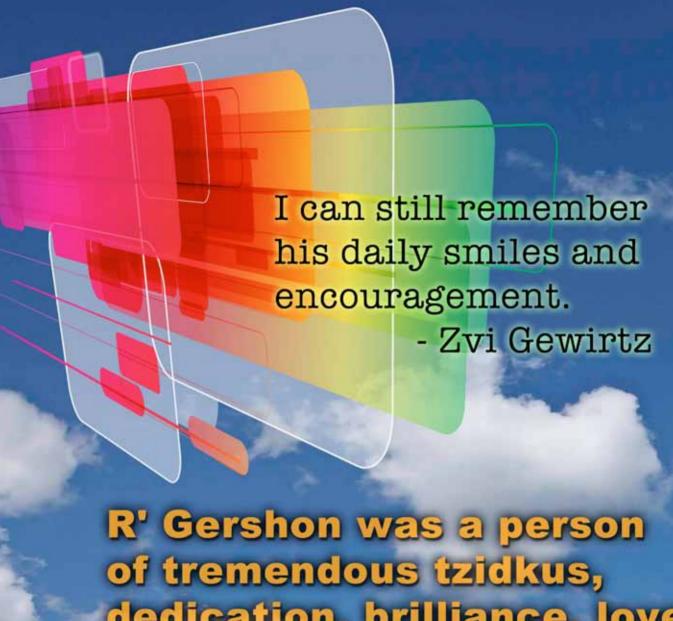
The Shemayim has decreed that Gershon has accomplished all that he needed to do here in this fragile world. The Shemayim has shaken me up from far away and has therefore caused an earthquake to those of you so close to him. May Gershon's life with us here, and now his sudden departure from our lives, be a constant reminder of who he was and who we can only aspire to emulate. Gershon was a true Eved Hashem and a Kiddush Hashem, outwardly and inwardly. I thank Hashem for his example, for all he was and will remain to be for me.

May Hashem console his immediate family and the Bircas HaTorah community among the other mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim.

Beryl Reuven Friedman

He did not wait for me to ask for help but initiated his help before I had a chance to ask and always with a warm, welcoming expression on his face.

Miriam-Moran Amit



dedication, brilliance, love of Hashem, His Torah and His people.

- Mendel Yosef & Chaya Kanner I felt his Hakaras ha Tov that he felt for the gifts that HaShem bestowed upon him that was Gershon. That was his humility and impeccable middos Beryl Reuven Friedman

There are not words which can describe what Gershon was when he was alive, and there are not words to describe the loss for us. Gershon was one of the most beautiful people I've ever met. Everyone felt that Gershon was their best friend, and it was true, Gershon was their best friend! He was cheerful, friendly, caring, loyal, dedicated and possessed all of the great middos that a Ben Torah should possess. I am very fortunate that we had Gershon in our yeshiva for 2 years, and he brought us blessing in every way. His life was a Kiddush Hashem in every way. I feel the loss like the loss of a son, and am grieving deeply. Hopefully we can all learn from his example and can follow in his footsteps.

Rabbi Shlomo Wiener

Menahel Ruchain Center Program Ohr Samayach

There was so much Reb Gershon burned to do. He told an old friend he met in the Old City over Chol HaMoed Sukkos how blessed he felt in his learning, to be living in Eretz Yisrael, in his beautiful family, and to have a job he loved.

- Making Every Moment Count

# "Why was this guy?" - Mordy Stein

"Everyone was so kind, but he felt the most genuine."

> After he left for Israel, he would "bug" me constantly to come to Bircas HaTorah for an executive 'jewne-up' - Bruce Leon

I really appreciate the fact that you would love to have me back in the beis midrash, just to be there and learn, not for any other reason than just to be there.

- Daniel Uretsky

Gershon's genuine friendliness and warmth and concern for one's Welfare made a huge impression on me.

- Ben Friedman

# Immediately we struck up a friendship...

His integrity and warmth made him such a beautiful person.

- Nitzan and Yehudis Bergman

He gave me the kind of kavod that I certainly did nothing to deserve and that I rarely, if ever, received from anyone else.



# ...which leads to **KINDNESS** towards Hashem's creations....

Gershon was fond of paraphrasing Senior Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Green's idea that there is a conspiracy in this world, but it's not what we think. It's a conspiracy of chesed. "The world is conspiring to make us happy," Rabbi Green has often said (with a nod to JD Salinger). Gershon lived his life believing this – knowing this – and then he got on board and joined the conspiracy.

Gershon tried to orient his life so that he was an optimal chesed machine. He trained himself to eat, drink, sleep and spend money with just enough attention to himself to serve the needs of others. Meanwhile, he sought out people and situations to whom and to which he could bring benefit at all times.

### Dear Family,

Your father/husband/son/brother-in-law was one of the most nicest and kindest people I ever met in the Jewish world in Israel since I became Baalat-Teshuva. I came back to Israel after living in Chicago for a while and Rabbi Deutsch recommended that I contact the Burds right away. That was his first idea. I first met Gershon when he carried two-year-old Yaakov Yeushua at the end of the Arab market on Yaffo gate. I did not know my way in the Old City and he came to help...full of will to help and guide with a blond child on his hands that looked like a little angel/prince....Since then I always had a welcome, warm address by the Burds. I knew I could turn to them whenever I needed help with shidduchim, looking for a job, or asking questions about Judaism. I never heard "no" from him when I wanted to come for Shabbat, and he always introduced me to other families so I would extend my social circle. Many people are nice and helpful, but Gershon went out of his way to help. He did not wait for me to ask for help, but initiated his help before I had a chance to ask and always with a warm, welcoming expression on his face. He offered me a guy from his Yeshiva once [as a prospective shidduch], and said that if I needed to feel safe during the date, I was welcome to meet the guy by his house. I was just a stranger, but he treated me really nicely, and I felt that he really cared, I wish that you won't experience any loss and sorrow ever again, and that Gershon's special inspiration of chesed will walk with you forever.

Miriam-Moran Amit

He literally closed both ears as soon as he heard people speaking Loshon Hara (evil speech), ShlomiP

# Dear Burd Family,

I want to express my profound sadness upon the loss of R. Gershon, zt'l. I met him during a weeklong stay in Yerushalayim several years ago and I had the opportunity to do some learning at the Yeshivah. R.Gershon and his family made me feel very welcome and invited me for meals. I still cherish the memory of that week. Over the years we would email back and forth and he would ask about my wife, who is living with cancer. He always included her in his prayers and for that, too, I am always grateful. I do not have to tell you what a sweet man R. Gershon was, but you should know that his acts of chesed still have a big impact to this day, even very far away. May his memory be for a blessing.

Howard Shuman

Like Avraham Avinu, he was pained not having a guest to host and share divreid Torah with.

- David Frankel

He was a true angel in our midst and we all knew it.

- Esfira esther much



My dear cousin Gershon was my oldest cousin, a big brother I never had. Our degree of closeness has ebbed and flowed over the years but his presence in my life was always a source of deep comfort. No words can describe him or what he meant to our family, but I can say that he w as our anchor of goodness and light. Never a birthday, holiday, event would go by without an email from Gershon across the seas wishing me well – a symbol of his ever-present warmth, altruism, and goodwill. There are so many stories I could share. One is that when I studied abroad in Prague in college, Gershon and Batya came for a visit. It was truly extraordinary that they made that kind of effort for their young cousin. That meant more to me than I can articulate. Everything Gershon did was like that trip – above and beyond, conscientious, selfless, devoted, considerate and benevolent. His magnanimity will stay with me always, and we will all miss him so very much.

- Zelana

I have been wanting to marry for many years. My biggest complaint is that people very rarely help by making suggestions or putting in a little effort. We all know it's tough terrain but everyone can be involved and more matches will most likely be made.

I was staying by friends in the Old City and went outside Friday night before the meal. I walked to The Square and met new friends, well known in the Old City, who were blessing me to find a fantastic husband. People bless people to marry but in most cases, the older the "single" is, the more others do not make any suggestions or efforts. Through these women, I was introduced to Batya Burd who walked up to share something that happened that afternoon. I gave her my opinion about the matter, and then she became very sensitive to my plight. She told me she would discuss it with her husband. I didn't expect anything to come out of it. I had no idea who this young woman was, except that she said that her husband was executive director at Bircas HaTorah (and I was very impressed that such a young man is in such a position).

I liked her a lot and also wanted to follow up, so I went looking for her address the next day and was directed by a "local" how to weave through 40 Chabad to get to her building. It was mid-afternoon, I didn't knock too loud, maybe they were asleep. (When shiva was there, unfortunately and tragically, I clearly had their home in my mind while I was here in the States, unable to make a shiva call.)

A couple days later, I received a warm email from her husband, Gershon, asking me to describe myself and what I'm looking for in a husband. This in itself was astounding (sadly). WHY ARE PEOPLE NOT SUGGESTING MATCHES FOR THE OLDER SINGLES THEY KNOW AND BEING COMMITTED TO ASSIST IN THE NISAYON UNTIL THEY GET MARRIED (LIKE GERSHON DID)?

I was busy with my trip, and Gershon kept writing me and asking me to get him my info. He pursued this with more than one email. When I did, he wrote back very upbeat and made me feel hopeful and good, as if he was going to really be involved. He had a way of communicating which removed the pain from the process. He clearly had done this chesed immediately, because he had already checked into a guy who wasn't available. This all requires time and effort. Time is not much of an effort, though, when you have Gershon's type of chesed attitude and focus.

He didn't just give up after one try, as almost all people do with older singles. He immediately suggested someone else and he had a way of sharing this while maintaining my dignity and being totally upbeat.

I just started to get to know him and his wife. I left Israel and was planning to contact them soon after the Yamim Tovim from the States.

Then I got the shocking email from people I know in Chicago. I began to realize that we had everyone in common from Chicago, where I grew up and visit often. I went on the internet to get updates and realized these Burds were doing huge acts of chesed with their Kotel prayers and providing parnassah for the people who daven. And yesterday, (October 24) I found his mother's name in my phone contacts. I had met her in a shul in the suburbs of Chicago a few years ago! I didn't know I had any connection to this man when I was interacting with the Burds this summer.

I cannot explain, but the way he cared is something unique. I actually believe that he would have kept up his efforts without stopping until I get married. His energy was clear and focused on the end result. I felt it was going to happen soon, the way it was going.

This all happened just weeks before he was niftar.

I have never met this man in person. I never even spoke to him.

The chesed he did and tried to do for me was quick and easy and done through email. His chesed seemed to extend to anyone everywhere, even if he's never seen the person. I felt cared for and truly supported. I talked about this to people even before this tragic event that took his life.

No one does that.

#### EVERYONE NEEDS TO DO THIS.

He was my getting-married angel. I am really at a loss.

May G-d comfort dear Batya, the children and everyone, Roxan ReizlMalka Hupert

# ३६ ३६ ३६ ३६ ३६ ३६

A couple thoughts:

I went out with my wife after a few years of being in Yeshiva. Gershon introduced us. He said that she was looking for someone more Israeli. I was also looking for someone more Israeli than the girls I was going out with. We started dating. Things were going well, but for some reason, after a few weeks of serious dating, my wife decided to stop dating me. I was very sad and stopped dating for almost 2 years. Gershon, being Gershon, noticed that I wasn't dating any more and that I was pretty sad. He asked me, if possible, would I go out with my wife again if she agreed? I said, of course. My wife was not into the idea. Gershon was very persistent and harassed my wife for weeks until she finally caved in to his artillery of emails. We went out again and now I am married with two beautiful children in his zchut.

I was very suspicious of Gershon up until about a year ago. I even spoke to Rabbi Tagger once about my "issues with Gershon." I realized what my issue with Gershon was about a year ago -- he just cared too much about everything -- me, the cleanliness of the Yeshiva, work -- everything. I have probably hundreds of emails and voicemails from Gershon asking me to take care of tiny details that I usually intentionally overlooked. I started accepting that Gershon genuinely cared about me, every detail about me, only after years of working with him. Maybe I just had a jaded childhood, I don't know, but Gershon pashut cared about me like he was my father. Even recently, I asked Gershon about many important steps I have planned to take in life -- financial, marital, learning -- and he almost always had very precious advice, and many of the times he would pashut help me hands-on. As a very small example, I asked him if he could recommend US credit cards I should apply for. He said, "You know I am a bit of an expert on these things -- send me your details and I will fill out applications for you and update you when I hear back from them" -- as if he had tons of free time on his hands (:

The above stories are really the smallest things that Gershon helped me with.

The major things I am choosing not to share due to tznius, as they're very personal, and if I write them down, they might lose value, because the words couldn't capture the chesed he did with me and my family.

- Avinoam Steiglitz



From beginning to end, Gershon did nothing but acts of kindness towards me...

I owe my whole foundation of Torah to him.

Thank you, Gershon, for so many gifts that you've given me. I will never forget you.

Your friend always, Adam Litwin

He was a truly caring human being who really loved his fellow Jews, Hashem and Eretz Yisrael.

- Ben Friedman

He was our anchor of goodness and light. – Zelana Montminy

Gershon had Yiras Shamayim.
- Nitzan and Yehudis Bergman

He was almost too positive and nice, if that's possible.

- David Schwartz

A true tzaddik who to me epitomised the definition of a mensch.

Gary (Gershon) Setzer

I met Gershon and Batya many years ago when I was learning at Jewel, an Aish HaTorah program. We had spent an amazing Shabbat at a kibbutz in the North, and that Sunday, I had plans to return to the states. Gershon and Batya recognized that I was emotional and that it was a difficult thing for me to leave our holy Israel. So Gershon got up right there on the bus, took the microphone and sent me off with such beautiful, inspiring words that I'll never forget.... - Natalie Sara

Words fail me, I am too small to offer meaningful words of comfort. Gershon was amazing in so many ways, few of which I can truly know or appreciate. Still, I remember our most recent interaction, which speaks volumes about Gershon and highlights everyone's pain at his passing from this world. It was on Sukkot and I had come to the old city to bench Lulav, after mincha, I went up to say hi to Gershon and find out how things were going, and he almost begged me to come have a Lechaim, in the Sukkah, with him. Like Avraham Avinu, he was pained not having a guest to host, and share divrei Torah with. How could I say no? And now I realize how precious my yes was! We had a Lechaim and then must have spent an hour discussing Divrei Torah and Hashkafa. As always, he was concerned with what was going on in my life and how he could help me. I can only pray I can that I can

somehow incorporate some of Gershon's sterling middos into my life.

May he be a Malitz Yoshor for all of Klal Yisrael, David Frankel

I remember what it felt like to be around Gershon. I remember davening with him in the mornings at Bircas HaTorah. I certainly remember the times he and his wife Batya so graciously hosted my family and friends for Shabbos. I even remember sitting with him at many of Rabbi Green's pre-Shabbos onegs (Gershon usually brought the schnapps). The most powerful of my memories of Gershon was watching him always doing the heavy lifting. No matter what day of the week, he was involved in some arduous chore, a task that was never easy. He was always doing the things no one wanted to do. The feeling of being around him was unique, if a Yeshiva had an anchor just like a big ship has an anchor, Gershon would be that anchor. You felt like you were standing with one of the foundation stones of the Yeshiva, you were in the presence of a heavy-lifter. When he would ask us (the bochurim at the time) to do him a favor, we always knew it wasn't going to be something easy - it would involve time, discomfort and muscle. At first, I got nervous every time he looked at me, he would smile and say, "Hey, Jason, can you do me a chesed?" I thought to myself, "Oh no, what's it going to be this time? Moving a car with our bare hands and feet? Taking a box that weighs 100 lbs to the post office? Uphill, downhill, sprinting, walking, rain, cold, who knew..." After a while, Gershon became somewhat of a chesed broker to me, I got to run with the big guys (Gershon) for a while, doing things for other people that were never fun, and always inconvenient. I got my first real taste of what it means to give by helping Gershon with his "chesed." I didn't do too much giving until I met Gershon. I'm a better husband, father, and Jew because of the time I spent in his classroom of chesed.

We will remember him and miss him always.

With great love, Jason Daniels and Family



# **SECTION THREE:**

...especially in the area of enabling TORAH SCHOLARSHIP...



Gershon did any and everything he could to involve Jewish people in the mitzvos of learning and supporting Torah.

Reb Gershon's commitment to Bircas HaTorah was total. A recent email to the Rosh Yeshiva about a possible fundraising trip to Toronto began, "I'm more than happy to do whatever the Rosh Yeshiva wants. Period." He wanted anyone walking into the yeshiva to feel immediately that Bircas HaTorah would be the ideal place to learn. Not a burned out light bulb escaped his attention. And despite his devotion to seder, he somehow always managed to be the first to greet anyone walking in for the first time.

- Making Every Moment Count

Dear Burd family,

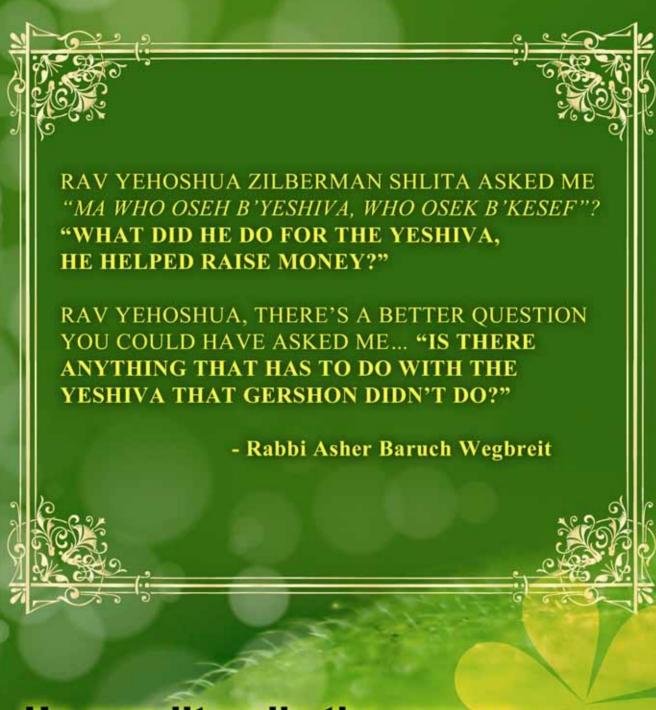
I remember my first day at Bircas HaTorah, it was also my first day living in the Old City and my first day ever learning in a yeshiva. It was of course a scary transition, and even though it has been 8 years since that first day, I still remember that there was one person who made me feel welcome and comfortable... Gershon. When I left Bircas HaTorah, Gershon was the really the only person I kept in touch with from the yeshiva. He had a true love for people, for Am Yisrael and for learning Torah. I can't express the deep sadness I felt when learning of Gershon's death. His memory will live on in every student who ever entered the doors of Bircas HaTorah.

Yonah Amster

I had the great privilege to work and learn with Gershon for several years. He was always positive, always enthusiastic, always optimistic about the future. When we started the shana aleph program a few years back, he made sure that we had every resource available to us because he knew that it would enable the yeshiva to grow. He did anything and everything to facilitate the growth of the Yeshiva and I always felt so fortunate to work alongside someone with such a deep sense of commitment and vision. He was a true "mevakeish", always wanting to push harder and go deeper. I can still remember his daily smiles and encouragement when I updated him on the latest news of the shana aleph program. I miss him very much. May his life serve as an example to all

Yehi zichro baruch, Zvi Gewirtz

who knew him,



He was literally the reason I came to this yeshiva

I'm simply speechless.

His smile that welcomed everyone who walked in Yeshiva encompasses my feelings and reasons for attending Bircas a number of years ago.

I recall telling my Father and Rebbi at the time, "the second I walked in there for the first time I knew it was the place for me." The image in my mind as I said those words was Gershon and his warm smile.

His always calm voice is something that is constantly with me when interacting with others. He inspired me on a minor level that has impacted me on a major level to this day.

I mourn his loss here, with his own family and the Yeshiva Family.

Hamakom Yonachem eschem Bsoch Avlei Tziyon B'Yerushalayim.

Avi Gordon

His always calm voice is something that is constantly with me when interacting with others. - Avi Gordon

He loved when others loved the Yeshiva. - Yisroel Blumberg

#### Batya,

Gershon means a great deal to me. He was my chavrusa and friend.

He begged me to come back to the Yeshiva on a daily-basis

He emailed me every shuir I missed and every shuir Clali from the Rosh Yeshiva.

He cared more about my learning than I did at times.

I came to Bircas in 2005 for one week. I returned 4 months later for a vacation.

He spotted me at the Kotel. Took my hand and brought me right to Bircas.

Gershon davened in front of me. When I first tried to Daven as the schleach z'bor, he was concerned about my pronunciation of the prayers.

He sat me down every day before minchah and listened to me recite the Shemoneh Esrei until it sounded right. He paid attention to my posture in davening. He always backed up everything he taught me with a Rabbi Green vort.

He showed me how to be a talmid of a Rebbe.

He taught me how to use the gemora's loshon to express my pshat..

He rode his bike from the Old City up the hills of Talbieh to my first siyum.

One time when he thought that the mezuzahs in your courtyard might be a problem, he came over in the middle of a rainy night to borrow replacement mezuzot.

This after consulting the Rabbis about borrowing mezuzot, leaving a courtyard without mezuzot, etc. He was so meticulous about doing the right thing He was so consistently concerned and involved with the whole Bircas Family. I know the only thing he loved more was his family. Batya, I hope Hashem comforts you and your family, and I thank you for sharing Gershon with me.

Jeffrey Banker MD FACC

He was operating in a way that reminds me of what man could be.

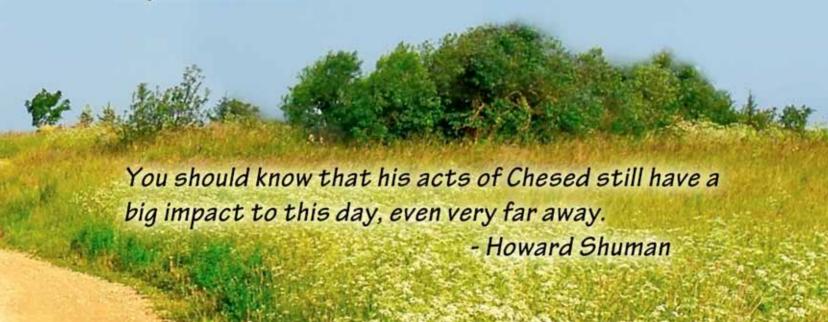
Daniel Kaufman

Two incidents which immediately come to mind regarding Reb Gershon: First, on one of my business trips to Israel I arrived unannounced at the Yeshiva. Reb Gershon greeted me with his usual warm embracing smile and a huge bear hug. After establishing that I had not arranged to learn with anyone else at the Yeshiva, he gave of his precious time to sit with me, an am haaretz, and painstakingly teach me a piece of Gemora from Pesachim. To this day, I believe that I understand this piece of Gemora far better than many other pieces which I have spent many more hours learning.

On another trip, I happened to be in Yerushalayim for the Rosh Yeshiva's son's Bar Mitzvah. The Yeshiva was obviously packed almost to capacity, yet when Reb Gershon saw me, he refused to sit in his regular seat until he had fetched a chair for me to sit right next tohim.

Our family's thoughts and prayers are with his wife, his parents and his dear children, and the rest of his family and everyone at the Yeshiva. May Hashem comfort them among the other mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim,

Gary (Gershon) Setzer



# Your father/husband/son/brother-in-law was one of the nicest and kindest people I ever met. Miriam-Moran Amit

#### Dear Rabbi Wegbreit,

I have been crying on and off throughout the day. I called Rabbi Green and left a message on his voicemail expressing my sympathy and condolences. I can only imagine how Rabbi Green and you feel. My heart breaks for his family, and I reiterate my offer of support.

Your words captured Gershon's essence beautifully and paid powerful tribute to him and his love of Hashem and Torah.

Gershon, Alav HaShalom, was my first Chavrusa at Bircas, as he would lovingly remind me now and then. Always, he was positive, humble, encouraging and grateful. His skill, patience and warmth as a teacher were instrumental in my introduction to learning Gemara as an adult.

I want to share with you one story about Gershon that you may not know. At about 4 pm on the Shabbos of Yehoshua Leib's Bar Mitzvah, after a day filled with beautiful and deep Divrei Torah, Gershon invited me to his home so we could learn together.

He opened Masechet Brachos, had me read inside, and through gentle and insightful questions, taught me the sugya about why Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai was weeping when he took ill and contemplated being brought before the Almighty for judgement. He taught me about the blessing that Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai gave his talmidim: that it be HaShem's will that the fear of heaven be upon them like the fear of flesh and blood.

That sugya has stayed with me, B"H. What also has stayed with me was the joy, awe and love with which Gershon taught me that sugya. I recall vividly the excitement and palpable sense of Yiras Shamayim in his voice as he explained the meaning of this Gemara. In a Shabbos of many inspiring and transformative moments, Gershon, sweet, caring, humble Gershon, blessed me with yet another.

Gershon embodied so much of what Bircas HaTorah represents, as you described so beautifully.

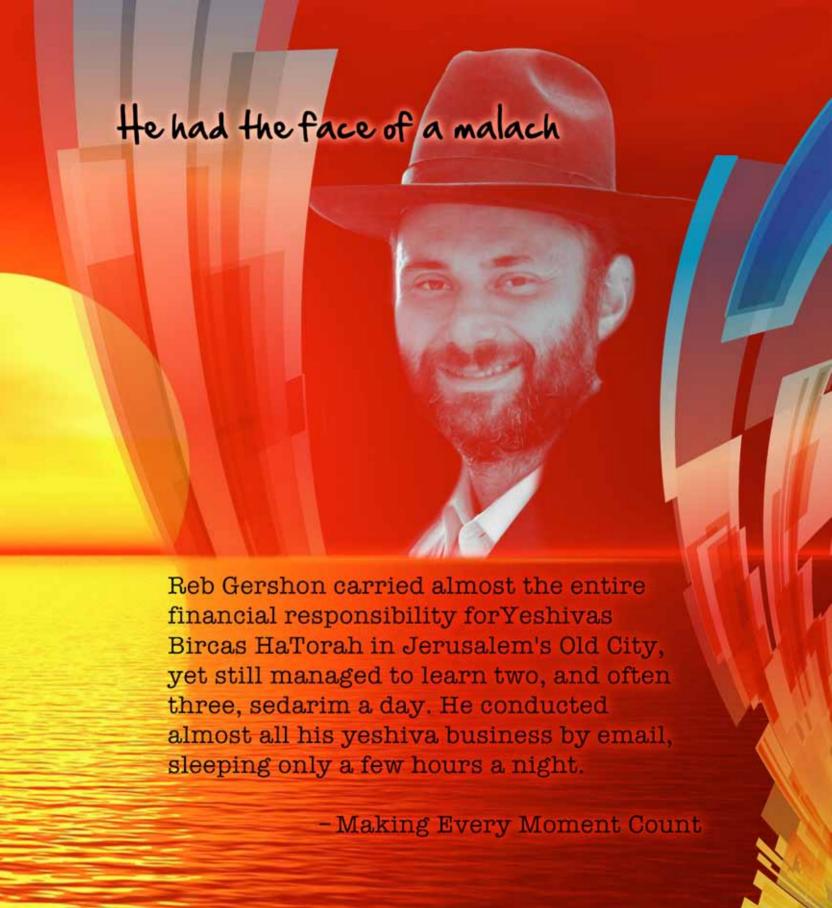
For now, please know that I am with you and the Yeshiva and all who loved Gershon. He has left an indelible impression upon me, and I am saddened beyond words at his passing.

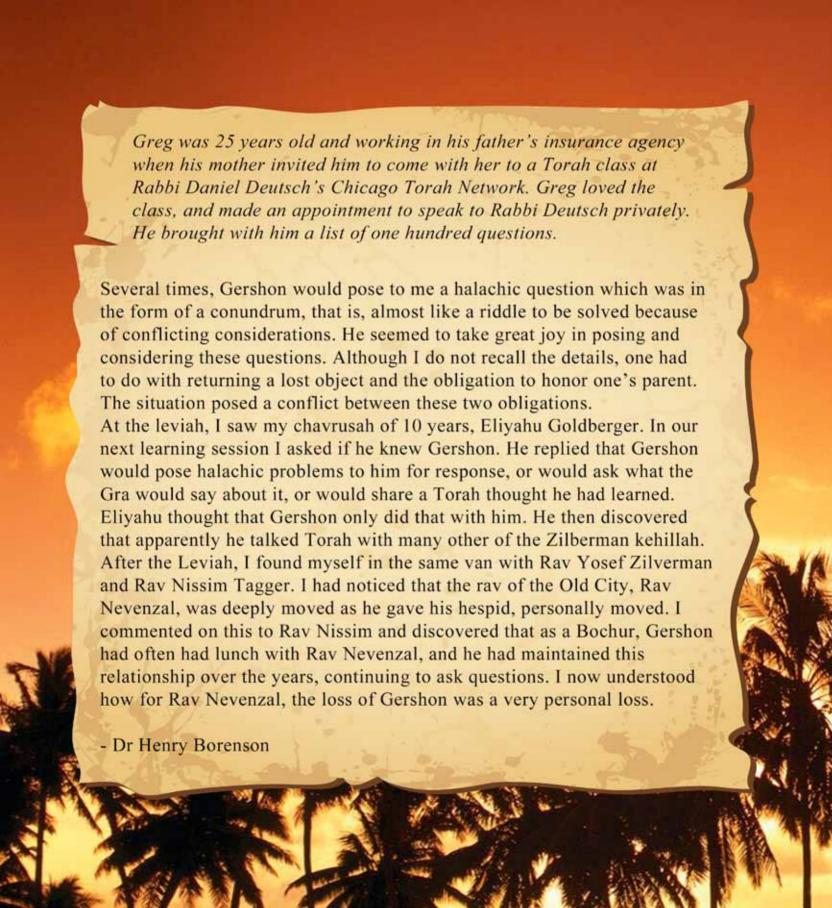
With love, Shaul Arenson

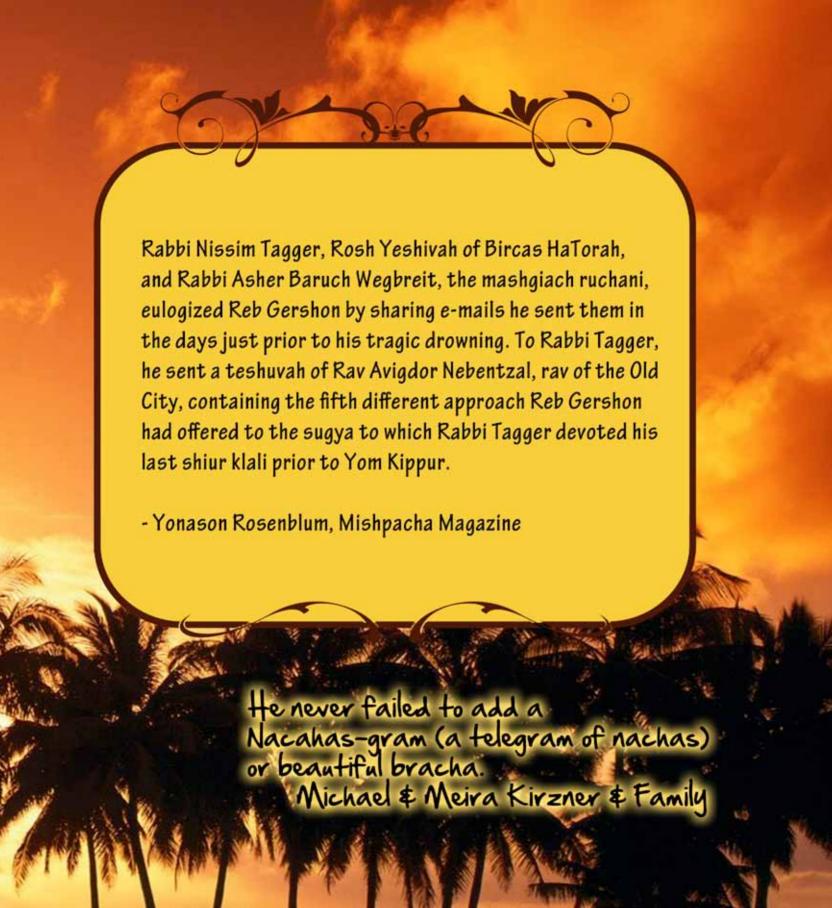
# **SECTION FOUR:**

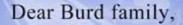
...while never flagging in persona dedication to HALACHA and advanced gemara LEARNING...

After Gershon zt"l's petirah, Rav after Rav revealed how Gershon was a regular fixture in their lives – introducing and searching out solutions to halachic issues that he encountered or invented. He did this in the same manner he did chesed, with true humility and no regard for his own standing or honor. And he did it for the same reason he did chesed – he had yiras Shemayim. Gershon desired at all times to know the truth, as revealed in the Torah, by the Author of Creation. And he loved the process of searching it out.









It's with tears in our eyes that we write these words.

Gershon was the first person I taught at the Center Program in 2001. We used to learn one-on-one for an hour in the afternoons. Gershon had Yiras Shemayim. He really took the Ribbono Shel Olam seriously. HKB"H and his Torah were his reality. Not many people achieve this level. His integrity and warmth made him such a beautiful person.

I had a fake Rolex watch. It bothered Gershon so much - he never told me, but I could feel that he thought, how could someone put a "shtik sheker" on his wrist? He even asked his Rabbi from Chicago if it was muter. He told me, in the nicest of possible ways, that his Rabbi said it was muter but not for a ben Torah. (Shortly afterward, I stopped wearing it). Gershon was always such a mentch and so helpful. We wish the world could be filled with people like him. Mamash, Chaval to our entire world the loss of such a Tzaddik.

- Nitzan and Yehudis Bergman

I learned from you to talk to your rabbein and ask for their guidance. You always talked to your spiritual advisors, whether at Ohr Somayach or Bircas HaTorah. It was awe-inspiring to stand next to you when you asked about even the smallest things. You learned and absorbed a lot of proper hashkafos (philosophies) through those questions.

- Danik (Yakov) Gutkin:

## BS"D

One memory that stands out for me was our Messilas Yasharim chavrusa. I was a bit reluctant, but he talked me into learning it with him for ten minutes everyday after maariv. After about nine months, on the night we completed the book, I was happy with our accomplishment and ready to go back to my regular schedule of going home after maariv, but he immediately insisted, "Let's do it again," just like the Ramchal says you should in the Sefer. That's how I remember him in all things -- an iron will when it came to moving forward with doing the right thing.

Best Regards, Rabbi Barry Munic We are broken over the loss of our close friend, R' Gershon Burd. No words can ever come close to capturing what was R' Gershon. I'm personally embarrassed in front of him and his true accomplishments. R' Gershon was a person of tremendous tzidkus, dedication, brilliance, love of Hashem, His Torah and His people. As we hear the Sr. Rosh Yeshiva say all the time: when the person is stripped away of everything, the only thing that remains is one's Yiras Hashem.

That's the ONLY thing that R' Gershon had.

In all of my interactions with R' Gershon, and there were many, he was focused solely on doing Hashem's ratzon, whether it was to his personal momentary desire or not. R'Gershon made his ratzon Hashem's ratzon...always, and with complete simcha and bitachon; I saw it.

Almost every encounter I had with R'Gershon, including a simple walk to gan, or rushing to the yeshiva to daven, he always took time to enlighten me with a fascinating dvar halacha. I remember many of those halachos to this day because of the clarity and gentleness with which he taught them. When R' Gershon wasn't talking halacha, he was complimenting and encouraging me.

He was not only constantly caring about the yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, R' Gershon, with all of his responsibilities, consistently sent me e-mails checking in on Rav Green, our progress in Phoenix, and was a constant source of encouragement and support. Several times in the past couple years, R' Gershon sent me emails with gift ideas for Rav Green...including a non-slip talis! Who's caring for every detail of the Sr. Rosh Yeshiva's welfare from thousands of miles away!?

R' Gershon means so much to so many people. He means so much to me and my family. He continues to be an inspiration for us to better our avodas Hashem in his merit. The only comfort we have is that we know the tremendous strength and tzidkus of Rebbitzen Batya and what she and R' Gershon together implanted into their beautiful children.

With honor, respect and great love, Mendel Yosef & Chaya Kanner

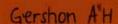
Phoenix, AZ



He was my lifeline to the Yeshiva, the place I so dearly missed. Mordy Stein

- Anonymous

I was privileged to learn with Gershon on several occasions, once for a relatively long period (several weeks). I was just becoming observant, and not particularly interested in plumbing the depths of halachot that would further obligate me. Gershon, on the other hand, would routinely approach R Nevensahl, shlita, and ask him every shaila he could. Then, he would share some of the questions and answers with me, his chavruta. I would grimace and say, "Stop telling me these chumras!" He would just look at me with this incredible smile and say something like, "They're not chumras. This is the halacha. Don't you want to know if what you're doing is muttar or usser?" It was a compelling point. This seemed to happen several times a week.



I have such special memories about Gershon A'H. I recall how when I was studying in yeshiva, I spent a Shabbos by Gershon A'H and Batya in the Old City. At every meal, he asked me to sit at the head of the table, make Kiddush for everyone, share divrei Torah, sing the zemiros, and lead the meal. He insisted I was a Rebbe and he wanted to honor me! I was unmarried, 15 years his junior, and paled in comparison to his great achievements -- but this did not occur to him at all. He was such a humble man. He showed everyone respect, making them feel so good about themselves. He had so much to boast about himself, but instead he focused on making sure everyone around him felt proud. He embodied the words of our sages, "Who is honored? He who honors other people."

May all the lessons and uplifting memories be a zechus for his neshama.

-Yehuda Deutsch

You paid attention to every detail, remembered all the B'Days, and important dates - how did you do it? Danik (Yakov) Gutkin

When I was a bachur at Bircas, Gershon was working hard and decided that he needed to stop or at least minimize his sleeping. At the time, I was going through a bit of an insomnia period. I was waking up at 2 or 3 am. Somehow, Gershon found out about my sleepless nights and asked me, "Since I was up anyway, would you want to learn with me?" -- since he was into the whole minimizing sleep thing. I agreed, even though I was a bit suspicious of why this married guy with kids would want to wake up in the middle of night and learn with me. I knew that he was a dedicated learner, but it was a shtikel ridiculous. I would come to Gershon's house at 3am, softly knock on his glass front door, and wait for him to open up. He would always greet me with a nice hot cup of black coffee, just boiled. We would sit and learn in his small office from 3am till I went to netz to daven for many months. We finished many sfarim by Rabbi Pinkus. We would have to whisper in order to not disturb his family's sleep. I still remember the buzz in the room from all of his electronic equipment, his phones, computers, fax machines, etc. It was a very special time for me, he always made me feel like I was teaching him and like I was a real talmid chacham, even though I was only starting to learn. I remember him hearing certain points that we learned and trying to narrow down exactly what was being said and how to bring things into practicality-le'ma'ase. He pressed me every time something came up that he didn't understand because he knew there was a nugget of applicable mussar hidden inside.

- Avinoam Steiglitz

R' Gershon, although I only knew him through our email correspondence and not personally, shone through in every single email correspondence we had, as a true Mevakesh Hashem, someone searching for the truth at all costs.

Every halacha he didn't understand, he would ask again and again until he had it clear. His emails, with the BS"D on top of each one and the :) at the end of each one, personified who he was: a man who relied on the BS"D (Siyata Dishmaya) from above to always bring:) (smiles) to himself and to all the people whose lives he touched.

He lived a short amount of years, but accomplished in those years the tasks that take other men 80, 90, years, if ever, to accomplish.

It was a zechus for me to count R' Gershon among my family of readers. Although B"H I have over 7,000 readers, Kein Yirbu, he stood out. And now he stands higher than all of us, smiling down and rooting for his wife, children, friends and Klal Yisroel to strive, as he has, to be the best we can be.

Yehi Zichro Baruch.

Ben Olam Haba www.HalachaForToday.com

# lenjoyed learning with him. - Michael Sandorfy



From beginning to end, Gershon did nothing but acts of kindness towards me.
- Adam Litwin

He was a constant source of encouragement and support. Mendel Yosef & Chaya Kanner

His presence in my life was always a source of deep comfort.

- Zelana Montminy

To hear him was to learn how one should always treat other human beings. Chana Sperber

## In 12 years, I never saw him angry, I never saw him depressed. - Adam Litwin

I recall vividly the excitement and palpable sense of Yiras Shamayim in his voice as he explained the meaning of this Gemara. - Shaul Arenson

He had enormous inner strength that radiated passion and connection. - ShlomiP

He was so involved, so real, so dedicated. - Mordy Stein

Reb Gershon greeted me with his usual warm embracing smile and a huge bear hug. - Gary (Gershon) Setzer

He was so meticulous about doing the right thing.

- Jeffrey Banker MD FACC

He always had a smile on his face and warm words of encouragement on his lips. - Michael Sandorfy

He inspired me on a minor level that has impacted me on a major level. - Avi Gordon



## **SECTION FIVE:**

## ...which increases sensitivity to the need for GROWTH IN MIDDOS...

Gershon knew that the true goal and task of a person in this world is to change himself and fix his own character. Acts of kindness and Torah study sensitized Gershon to aspects of his own character which he felt needed work. So he did that work. And the results were astounding.

During ten years of marriage, Batya never saw her husband angry, never heard him raise his voice, except one time when someone was trying to squeeze money from the yeshiva.

(from Sara Yoheved Rigler's widely circulated Aish.com article)

## Dear Batya,

There are no words to express the enormity of this tragedy. I cannot imagine how you must feel. I, just a neighbor, so miss hearing your husband's voice in the courtyard each day. And it is about this that I wish to write. I have never met anyone who spoke with such calm and respect to other people as Gershon. Sometimes it was clear that the conversation was not easy—and yet, he would continue calmly listening and commenting politely and wisely. To hear him was to learn how one should always treat other human beings-all created in G-d's image. I witnessed how he showed kindness and respect in all his words and in all his dealings with the neighbors here in the Chosh. With selfless generosity, he fulfilled the commandment to "love they neighbor as thyself". How tragic and unbelievable that he is no longer here with us. My heart weeps for you and your beautiful children and I pray that Hashem will give you the strength to continue the amazing project that you and Gershon have built together—a remarkable family committed to mitzvoth, learning, tsedekah, kiruv and hachnasat orchim. My father-in-law, Rabbi Shmuel Sperber, once asked, "Who is the heroine in the Book of Ruth?" His reply was "Naomi, of course. For it is written in just two words ותקם נעמי ". Naomi "rose up" after the tragic loss of her husband and two sons. She rose up and continued in the task of building Am Yisrael. בע"ה this you will do also. You, too, will be a heroine.

Sincerely, Chana Sperber

More lessons I learned from you: Smile at everyone. Love every Yid. Count your blessings, there are so many of them on a daily basis. You always had a smile on your face. Lori Ann asked last night at the shiva whether anyone saw you angry or upset. No one responded, because they did not remember you being visibly upset.

Don't complain when things are tough. Just say, "I am managing". Shmuel Z. said last night a story that when he picked you up at the airport before Jessica's chasuna, and you had the kids with you and all those huge bags. When he asked you, "How did you carry them?", you answered simply "I managed".

- Danik (Yakov) Gutkin

## He was a tzadik gadol

He allowed them to feel mechubad and not like a charity-case.

### Dearest Burd Family

It was about 8 years ago that I found myself on my winter break of my senior year in college. I took the first flight from my high-powered university in Washington, DC, to Israel, and I found myself on the Jewel program. The most impactful experience was spending Shabbos in a small little hostel outside the old city, with Rabbi and Mrs. Burd as the "hosts". Hearing their stories, anecdotes, and details of their own personal journey to Torah was so inspiring. I won't forget the beautiful way I saw Rabbi Burd speaking to his wife, and interacting with his children. While so subtle, it made a profound impact on me. Here I am, not even a decade later, a fully committed member of the Jewish people. My husband and I have, BH, three kids and we are committed to Jewish outreach with everything we do. Whenever we host a Shabbos table, I always, always think back to that beautiful Shabbos table hosted by the Burds. May we merit to impact K'lal Yisroel in such a deep way. And, may the beautiful light of your deeply missed husband and father keep shining through the merit of the thousands of neshamos he influenced during his short time in Olam HaZeh.

Dana Sicherman



Rabbi Webgreit read an email Reb Gershon wrote him less than an hour prior to the drowning, in which he expressed his eagerness for the new mussar vaad starting Sunday, on the first day of winter zeman. In it, Reb Gershon described his intention of using Rabbeinu Yonah's advice to break old habits by going to the opposite extreme. But he also noted that everything is so complicated: Doing more chesed doesn't mean just inviting more Shabbos guests; sometimes it means having fewer Shabbos guests. Then Reb Gershon quoted the famous statement of the Vilna Gaon that a human being lives only to repair his faulty middos. And if he doesn't do so, why is he alive?

From Yonason Rosenblum's article in the English Yated

He had a true love for people, for Am Yisrael and for learning Torah.

- Yonah Amster Even in his leaving this world, Gershon taught me the most important Torah lesson of my life.

When I heard of his passing, I cried and then started apologizing to him as if I did something wrong. At first I did not know why, but now I know that it was because I was blind and stubborn to a simple truth until after he was gone.

"We are NOT here to achieve our goals. We are here to achieve G-d's goals!"

Thank you Gershon for everything!



When I first arrived in yeshiva, I resided in private flats/apartments just outside the perimeters of the yeshiva. I shared an "apartflat" with 7 other young guys from my programme. Our programme was a two-year programme, and it so happened that one of the guys in the 2nd year (slightly more advanced) took control of the domestic issues that can arise when 8 yeshiva boys stay in one place.

Having lived in 4 countries all for more than 3 years, I have met hundreds, if not thousands, of people -- and many of them true giants of character development, having worked continuously on refining their character traits and mannerisms. I can safely say that my friend Gershon was one of the top 3 people in terms of all the people that I have ever observed as working and developing one's character and self!

I never heard him raise his voice, never saw him say a word of anger, he literally closed both ears as soon as he heard people speaking Loshon Hara (evil speech), he never criticized anyone; always gentle words, always doing an action to help.

I once saw him settle a dispute about someone's clothes which left a deep impression on me. One guy decided that all his clothes definitely looked better on the floor strewn all over the place rather than in his cupboard. In true Gersh style, he strolled into the room, discussed the matter with the culprit calmly, and began helping to pick up and fold his clothes, deciding what needed a wash and what was not recoverable. He once told me that he had had trouble with a certain guy who constantly aggravated him. He had gone to see our head rabbi and they'd come up with a plan for him to overcome this irritating person. He told me that every time he saw this guy, he thought 2 positive things about this person. He repeated it to himself while still in the guy's presence. He told me that eventually they became good friends, as he felt a strong care and love for this guy! I am absolutely finished to think that his journey is complete in this present life. Hashem knows best, and even though I cannot begin to think of the reasons, one day it will all be completely clear! The world is darker for losing one its special hidden lights! I dedicate my efforts to help the Jewish people this year, to his Holy Soul.

Good Shabbos,

Shlomi P

the was always positive, always enthusiastic, always optimistic.

- Zvi GeWiRtz



- Marisa

I never met you, or even spoke to you. We only emailed. But I felt a pure, caring, Yiddishe heart.

- Chaim Zusha Margolin

No two ways about it, he was the sweetest, most humble and genuine man there could be.

- Rabbi Justin Goldstein

He was a man whose heart and mind flowed in the heavens.

- Daniel Kaufman

You helped me deal with the emotional pain and encouraged me to go on. I can still feel that hug 15 years later, my dearest

- Danik (Yakov) Gutkin and Chana

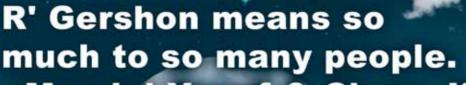
He used that strength wherever he went, to always have a positive impact on anyone he met. — Adina Rosen/Glassenberg

HKB"H and his Torah were his reality. Not many people achieve this level. - Nitzan and Yehudis Bergman

Everything Gershon was above and beyond, conscientious, selfless, devoted, considerate and benevolent.

- Zelana Montminy

I knew then that you were serious about Yiddishkeit and about your suits.
- Danik (Yakov) Gutkin



- Mendel Yosef & Chaya Kanner

Gershon has been truly an inspiration to others. - Lena

You were a Malach, an Angel. You were sooo zis, that smile of yours could make anyone's day. - Danik (Yakov) Gutkin



...which creates a feedback loop leading to

# MORE EXQUISITE KINDNESS AND SERVICE OF HASHEM.

In the days after the shiva, stories of Gershon's secret acts of chesed came out. He could run away from honor, but honor catches up with tzadikkim, as Rav Zilberman, shlita, mentioned in his hesped, when that righteous person's hidden acts are revealed in the world. Many are asking — how did Gershon do these things? Literally, in some cases — for example, how could someone with limited funds take care of so many people? And as a person — how did he become this malach? We can only speculate that Gershon, like the excellent businessman he was reputed to be, reinvested the profits of his Torah and character development back into his chesedim. The results read like the biography of a tzaddik, and for good reason.



#### Hello Dearest Batya,

I just got off the phone with somebody from the Bircas community who shared a beautiful story about Gershon and gave me permission to share it with you. She said that when she and her husband were first married, they were struggling very desperately to keep him in Torah, while making ends meet. She said that somehow, it came to Gershon's attention that they were in dire financial straits, and he offered her a very simple, easy job to do for the yeshiva, for which she was remunerated handsomely — more so than the job should have paid. She said that it allowed them to feel mechubad and not like a charity-case.

As Pesach approached and she was calculating whether or not they could afford yellow cheese on their matza, she ran into your husband who, in a tznius way, handed her an envelope and said kindly that the Yeshiva wanted them to have this to help with Pesach. She was very touched by the gesture itself but also by the way in which your husband made them feel valued and respected. She said that she never figured out how he knew, nor where the money had originated. And she said that she always remembered the menchlech way in which Gershon was Gomeil Chesed that first year, when they were struggling -- and that now that she and her family are in a more stable matzav, they have tried to emulate his midos in their own mitzva of giving tzedaka.

May his midos tovos be an inspiration to us all. And may our emulating his kindness, generosity and sensitivity be an aliyas neshama for him. HaMakom Yenachem Eschem Bsoch Shaar Aveilei Tzion V'liyerushalayim. All my love, Rochelle

He really took the Ribbono Shel Olam seriously.
- Nitzan and Yehudis Bergman

After the shiva, someone approached me and said that she wanted to know who the fake tzedaka front lady was that Gershon had. (Note: A woman had revealed to Rbtzn Burd at the shive that the tzedaka organization she had been running was all a front for Gershon - he had been taking care of all of these people). I said I couldn't tell her, but why did she want to know? She said because one time she had just had a baby, she was down and out and they had very little money, and the only person who knew about the situation was Gershon (because she had actually screamed at him for several different reasons), and anyway, she told him all about her financial situation and the next thing you know, a woman came to her door with a huge bag containing all these baby things: bottles, diapers and wipes and formula, along with 3,000 NIS cash, and told her that her entire 17,000 NIS bill with the government had just been paid. She begged her that she should disclose who had given her the money, and the woman refused. Then every chaq, she came back with a few more thousand shekels. She refused to disclose who was giving her the money. I think it's clear to us now.

- Rbtzn Batya Burd

What a mensch
Reb Gershon was.
- Gary (Gershon) Setzer

He was able to influence you and many others to become frum without being critical or negative.

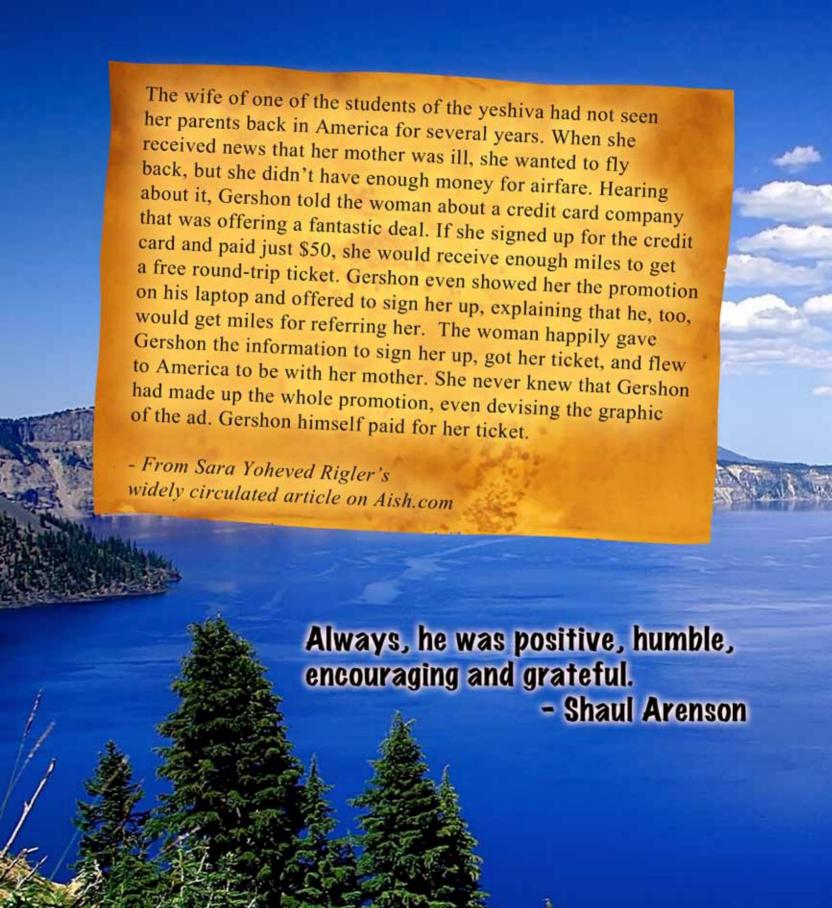
- Sarah Chapman

My husband had found what we thought was a good investment in America, and he wanted to do a favor for his family, so he told both his sisters and my parents to invest in it and he would be in charge because he thought they would get a much better return then what they were already doing. This morning, which is 2- weeks after his petirah, my sister-in-law had emailed the investment manager saying that they get checks every month from their investment and she wanted to ask him what would be happening with that because her brother was in charge and now obviously her brother was not here. The investment manager emailed back and said I can't believe it, this is another sign of Gershon's giving, because the investment is in debt and hasn't made a single penny yet. Gershon had been giving them their checks out of his own pocket.

- Rbtzn Batya Burd



I went to the Western Wall tonight, and there was a woman at the top of the stairs on a bench with a blond sheitel. She asked me for tzedaka, so I gave her tzedaka. She started blessing me with money, and for some reason, I felt like I wanted to start talking to her, so I asked her where she's from, and she asked me if I was married, so I said unfortunately, my husband died a couple weeks ago. She said WHAT? I said, yes, he drowned. She started crying and crying and crying. She said, "You're the one? That was you? I can't believe it your husband was a huge tzaddik -- he had the face of a malach. You know how much kavod he had for me? Every time he came down to the kotel, he would give me money, and the way that he would do it was, he wouldn't look left or right, he would just from his side put money down on the bench beside me so he wouldn't have to see, he wouldn't have to look. He was a tzaddik and a malach. I have been crying for you and crying for you and davening for you. I said, "how did you found out?" She said, "I went to go buy something in the Shuk Arabi and on the way, I saw in someone's window there was a picture of him that he was niftar, and a candle was lit, and I just stood in shock and I just started crying. I could not believe it, of course I know him." She said, "He was a tzaddik gadol. Of course, Hashem takes all of the best flowers to that world." She said, "He should have taken my husband, he was a rasha. And she sat with me and cried and cried and cried until I consoled her." That made me feel a lot better, I thought it was just beautiful. - Rbtzn Batya Burd



A fine gentleman and a Bircas alumnus was just at my house. He was very saddened by Gershon's passing. He told me that Gershon had been somewhat of a mentor for him for some time. He told me that he was in touch with Gershon quite a bit even after leaving Bircas. This gentleman lost his wife and mother in a short time. He asked Gershon what he should do. He was having a very hard time getting through things and dealing with the losses. Gershon told him that "...he should do chesed for others..." The gentleman did as Gershon said and mentioned that the chesed he started doing for others had an immense positive impact on him. In the spirit of our dear friend Gershon and the "infinite regress" of Rabbi Green, I thought this would be appreciated by some, if not all, of the Bircas community.

## - Anonymous

Everyone in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City knew that a certain stationery store gives a free helium balloon to every child on his or her birthday. Since most of the children here come from large, low-income families, a helium balloon is a real glee-producer. On Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, every child receives two free helium balloons. The Burd children were among those who relished this delightful prize. No one knew who was sponsoring the free balloons. Paying a shiva call, the proprietor revealed to Batya that Gershon had been paying for the helium balloons. At the end of every month, he would slip into the store and surreptitiously pay for that month's balloons.

From Sara Yoheved Rigler's widely circulated article on Aish.com

Gershon was the brother I never had. I felt tremendous pride in saying I was his sister-in-law. It's difficult to enumerate all that I learned from him and received from him. His actions taught me to say little and do a lot, to be tzenua, and to follow emes. He said real chesed doesn't mean doing what feels good for you, but helping the person in the way that they need it. He gave me yiras shamayim and made me excited about halacha. He taught me to connect to rabbis at every moment possible, I called him "the rabbi chaser".He loved every Jew. Much, if not most, of my middos, habits, parnossoh, and avodas Hashem is thanks to what he taught me in the last 10 yrs.How will I remember Gershon? As a serious eved Hashem, kind, warm, humble, and stubborn about doing what's right, period.

- Sara Fefer





#### PROOF OF SUCCESS: A NOTE FROM THE REBBETZIN

Gershon's yiras Shemayim left me constantly humbled. I was married to someone who, on the inside, if he was allowed to fully express himself hashgafically, would have probably sounded a lot like Rav Ovadia Yosef Zt"l, ironically.

He was a hareef Gadol who masked himself constantly as the fun, all-loving, understanding and accepting friend and husband, because most of the world was just not playing in the same ballpark as him and couldn't handle the level of emes that he was emanating. It cut like a knife when looking up from a lower angle.

His gadlus was being able to so clearly see the Emes and do it, yet hold himself back from expressing his views to others who were not in his league and so would be hurt by his makpid-ness.

He lived in a duplicitous world for the sake of shalom (ultimately Hashem's will). He revealed himself when it was avodas Hashem and masked himself when it was avodas Hashem. He attained true self-mastery. When something had to be done, he just did it. He never asked himself how he felt about it, physically or emotionally. If it had to be done, he did it - period. He thought of himself and his body last, unless the mitzvah dictated otherwise.

He was a loving and giving father, a kind and sensitive husband.

A constantly growing and expanding person. Outside, he was fearful to ever make a move that would give religious people, and therefore G-d, a bad name.

He never cut himself any slack when it came to Torah and mitzvos and middos. But, he was always able to go into the perspective of another person, and not judge them according to his own standards. When it came to disagreements, everything was irrelevant except for what was the right thing for him to do in this situation. Life was a lesson tailored for him to grow and not to teach others how to behave towards him.

He always seems to know everything, to have all the answers and to be silent most of the time, unless he was sure that his words would be heard. He never spoke unless it was relevant to the person. His pursuit of Halacha and the exacting emes felt unprecedented. He didn't stop until he got to the end. He used every minute, and his ambitions for Torah and personal growth grew each day. I lived in fear of him taking on another peula or learning seder - we were running out of minutes. Somehow he learned to stretch his day and accommodate his ambitions, without taking away what I needed. He was always there to help when I called. He always tried to make me priority number one.

If his personality was not conducive to avodas Hashem, he changed it. He thought long and hard about everything he did. He took no shortcuts. He didn't care about what other people thought unless it was a mitzvah to do so. He calculated every step he took. He sought Rabbinical council constantly, and followed it. He trusted his own Torah knowledge to lead. He gave his heart and his resources to his family. He gave his soul and his body to G-d.

He was a true eved Hashem. He had no agenda other than what was right -- even if the entire frum world would have thought the opposite. His inspiration and foundation for Judaism came initially from Rabbi Deutsch and Ohr Somayach respectively, and his true actualization came from receiving a mesorah and becoming a talmid of Rabbi Green, and Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah, to which he dedicated his life.

"He didn't care about what people thought, he cared about people."



To make a donation in Gershon Binyamin Burd zt"I's honor, please visit: www.Bircas.org