



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GOTTESMAN FAMILY

*Yoni, my son, my buddy, my life. I can't tell you how much we miss you. You filled our family and our lives with so much joy, happiness, energy, and love of life and people. You gave us all so much love, affection, and joy. You cared about so many friends — boys, girls, and adults. You touched them and gave love to them. You taught us all to grasp the funny and happy side of every moment. You were always open-minded and eager to learn and know more and more, which you always did with patience, wisdom, and joy. You loved music, science, tradition, sports, books, movies, jokes, and so much more. You ate life with a full mouth, and you wanted even more. You had that magic inside you, which made so many people happy and love you. I am glad we gave you so much, but there was so much more we wanted to give you. Yoni, I am so proud to be your Dad; Mommy and Daniela are so proud of you, too. I know I told you that a million times, but I'll never stop telling you that all my life.*

*Love, Daddy, Mommy, and Daniela*

## IN MEMORIAM

# Yoni Gottesman

2000-2005 | by Brian, Tina, and Gavin Haimovitz

Six weeks have passed since the fatal incident, the drowning of our little Yoni Gottesman. Still we cannot believe he is gone forever. Why did G-d take him so early? For what purpose was his short, sweet life? If there is a G-d, why would this happen? There are so many questions we will never have the answers to. What we do know is this: On August 15, 2005, we dropped off our children for a week-long day camp at Cathedral Oaks Athletic Club in Goleta. They offered arts and crafts, tennis, free play, lunch, and, of course, swimming. Never did it cross any of our minds that one of our children would drown and die in their pool.

Our son, along with other mutual friends' kids, was at this camp with Yoni. They had all

attended the same preschool at one time. We all became friends and remained close even when our kids went on to different schools. We consider ourselves family. We schlep each others' kids to birthday parties, restaurants, parks, movies, festivals, camps, and school. We take vacations and celebrate holidays together. We even argue, debate, and disagree as most families do. Our children love one another, back one another up, disagree, and compete like siblings do. So when this happened to Yoni, it happened to one of our own. We as adults are left with tough questions from our sons and daughters. We as parents are outraged at how this could have happened. We are now hesitant to send our kids to camps with pools.

Yoni was one of a kind. He

was an exceptionally strong, outgoing boy, never afraid to ask questions or too shy to make himself heard. You always knew when Yoni entered a room. Always the leader of the group, he delighted in any challenge. Yoni was smart, affectionate, exuberant, inquisitive, beautiful, and a caring son, brother, and friend. By the age of three, he was proficient at speaking and understanding both English and Hebrew.

Yoni's precocious musical ability was always an amazement to those of us who knew him. At three, he already had his own drum kit and could actually play. The guitar was another instrument he enjoyed. He could frequently be seen playing in the temple band on Friday nights, standing behind his father. He

learned to appreciate music from his father, who plays in a jazz combo as well as the temple band.

Yoni was full speed ahead. At times it was a toss-up between who had more energy — our Gavin or Yoni. His boundless energy allowed him to swim for hours in our pool and then jump endlessly on our trampoline. He could dribble a soccer ball before any of the other boys his age. Sadly, he will never get to play AYSO soccer. He would have been a star. In the past months, Yoni introduced our son to Hapkido Karate, where they both were so proud of graduating belts at the same time. At the YMCA, Yoni and his friends took basketball and swimming classes. Yoni was a very good swimmer with a quiet

technique. While most children his age splash and can't get a rhythm going, Yoni's strokes were smooth. He could put it all together: arms, legs, and head.

We are left with blessed memories of preschool, karate, basketball, swimming, zoo trips, beach trips, birthday parties, and most recently Camp Haverim. We will miss Yoni at Passover asking the Four Questions, at Hanukkah playing driedel and tearing open presents, at Halloween going to Boo at the Zoo, and at all the other holidays we spent together. We are thankful for the short time we knew Yoni. Our hearts will always have Yoni memories. Yoni, we miss you so much. We are so sorry; this never should have happened to you. You were robbed of a beautiful life. Until we meet again. ■