Mazel Tov to David Kahane upon today's celebration of his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to David's parents Levi & Risa Kahane, grandparents Jonathan & Doris Konovitch and Batyah & Arthur Hyman, great-grandmother Margie Berger, and to the entire family.

Mazel Tov to Benny Kanoff upon today's celebration of his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to Benny's parents Yossi & Rachelle Kanoff, grandparents Michael & Sylvia Kanoff and Salomon & Victoria Galimidi, and to the entire family.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 80 Hz) (p. 118 S) (p. 110 Hi) (p. 106 AS)
CHAYEI SARAH וְיָדֵו
Genesis 23:1
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),
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1. It would seem from the sequence of the narration that Sarah died suddenly. Rashi does mention that Avraham was the one who received the command to offer their son as a sacrifice. When Sarah heard about it she went toward Yerushalayim and came to Chevron, and died there. The problem is that Rashi also comments on this verse (23:2) that Avraham was coming from Beer Sheva to bury Sarah. The problem the Ramban raises is that if they were living in Beer Sheva, why is Sarah now at Chevron? It would seem it is not immediately after the Akeidah, because Avraham was coming from Beer Sheva, and the Akeidah was in Yerushalayim. This can become quite confusing. The Ramban raises a Midrash that says that Avraham came from Moriah, from the Akeidah. There is another interpretation that the Ramban also suggests: Avraham and Sarah were living in separate tents for females and males with their attendants, and Avraham came from his tent with a group of friends to bewail the loss of his wife in the separate tent. Grammatically Ramban suggests that when it says Avraham came, he meant that he came for the purpose of mourning and eulogizing his wife, and not meaning that he actually traveled any distance to do so.

2. At this point the narrative gives us a detailed description of the negotiations and purchase of the Double Cave (Me’arat HaMachpailah) at Chevron from Epheron the Hittite. The fee that he ended up paying is 400 shekels. Commentators mention that this is an exorbitant rate. The shekel was a unit of weight and was about .8 ounces. Therefore the shekel was a little smaller than a silver dollar. They even say that it was worth a dollar by current value, so it is $400 or much more if you are just dealing with the value of the silver. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan suggested a different method of calculating the value that Avraham paid here. He compares it to other prices that are mentioned in Tanach where land was purchased in the biblical period. King Omri paid 6,000 shekels for an entire territory of Samaria (I Kings 16:25) and Jeremiah paid only 17 shekel for a property that was at least as large as the Machpailah field (Jeremiah 32:9). For a comparison, according to the Hammurabi Code of that time, a year's wage for a working man was between 6 and 8 shekels. Therefore we must come to realize that he paid an enormous amount for the Machpailah Cave and field. He wanted to make sure that it was secured property that he and his descendants would end up possessing.

3. “And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything, BaKol....” (24:1). What “everything” really is is a subject of Midrash and biblical commentary, but in essence the expression “everything” would indicate that he was happy with his portion in life. The Tiferet Uziel mentions that recognizing the blessing that you have in life is also associated with the age that you are. When you are young whatever it is that you possess you are not secure that it will be enough. You do not know what the future will be for you and your family. Whatever it is that you have you might always feel that you need more. In the verse it says first that Avraham was older and advanced in years. At this point in his life he sees better that what he possesses is something that will carry him and his family into the future. Consequently it is an expression of a brachah to reach a certain age and realize that financially there is a feeling of security.

4. Avraham sends his trusted servant Eliezer to arrange for the shiduch of Yitzchak, his son. This trust that Avraham had for his servant is immense. No other task was greater. In the eyes of Avraham they had to make sure that the future matriarch of Israel would be suited to the character traits that Avraham and Sarah held dear in establishing their own household. This is an immense trust and confidence that Avraham had in Eliezer. Eliezer is true to the task. This is evidenced by the fact that his name is never mentioned in this parsha. He is referred to only as the “servant of Avraham.” He never lost sight of his mission. He did not do or say anything that did not support his mission; he never lost focus of the task and how important that task really was. Every shadchan should feel the responsibility that Eliezer felt at that moment. He would beseech Hashem to lead him in the right direction and to guide him to success. Chessed is at the top of the agenda for the proper character trait for the woman who would become the next matriarch of Israel. (RED)

5. When Rivkah returns with Eliezer and sees Yitzchak for the first time, the Torah states that Yitzchak had gone out to “converse in the field” (24:63). Rashi comments that he went out to pray. Our Rabbis mention that Yitzchak was the patriarch who established the Minchah prayer. The real question that should be asked is: Why doesn’t the Torah specifically say that Yitzchak went out to pray in the field? According to some commentators the Torah uses the expression it does in order to instruct us that when we pray we should do so quietly in a modest fashion, without fanfare or publicity, and not declare our reverence for Hashem in a loud voice. Yitzchak was a model for this (as would Channah declare reverence for Hashem in a loud voice. Yitzchak was a model for this (as would Channah be when she came to the Mishkan to pray for the blessing of a baby.) Somebody walking and seeing Yitzchak out in the field would surmise that he is taking in the pleasant air, or going for a walk enjoying the evening climate and the setting of the sun. The reality of the situation, according to the
Rabbis, is that Yitzchak was establishing a new prayer, the prayer of Minchah.

6. When Yitzchak and Rivkah marry he brings her to the tent; they were married and he loved her (24:16). In contrast to this type of situation, when Yaakov met Rachel it says that he loved her and it was not until later that they got married. It seems that there are two types of love depicted in these patriarchial stories. One is the love that develops at the outset, before one is married. The other is the type of love that develops after the couple is married. The two are different. Perhaps the love that exists prior to marriage is very romantic and exciting because it is a new development in one’s life and quite exhilarating. The love that develops and ensues after marriage is more deeply rooted and has a romantic sentimentality that can last for ages. In each case the romantic expressions of love have to be nurtured at each development. Perhaps the Torah is telling us that there are developmental stages of love that exist between a husband and wife. There is no relationship of closeness that develops with family members that is greater than the husband/wife relationship. The love that parents have for children, and children have for parents, is also deeply rooted and special, but the romantic type of love that should be developing in a husband/wife relationship is in a different category. It deserves the contrast that is made here by the Torah differentiating the love before the marriage and the love that exists after marriage. (RED)

7. At the end of the parsha Avraham remarries. He marries a woman named Keturah; and the Midrash would indicate that he is remarrying Hagar who now comes to be the anchor of his family life in his later years. The children that he had with Keturah are not the primary heirs of the house of Avraham, but he does give them gifts. The expression “gifts” is a strange one because it opens the door for a lot of commentary, Midrashic and otherwise. Rashi mentions he gave them a name of Tum’ah (Impurity) that Avraham had learned. Another interpretation, which is a little easier for us to comprehend, is that Avraham gave everything he himself had earned and had come to possess in his lifetime to Yitzchak, including the Abrahamic tradition of monotheism in religion. These other sons received the gifts that Avraham had received from Pharaoh and Avimelech. He felt free to give the gifts from outside sources to the other sons, gifts he looked at as being tainted because of the donors and how he had received them. Giving them to his other children was a way of establishing them financially and he felt that this was a proper way of treating what he considered to be the sons of his concubine.

8. What customs of a wedding do we derive and see here in the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah?

HAFTORAH
(p. 90 Hz) (p. 135 S) (p. 829 Hi) (p. 1136 AS)

In the Hirsch Chumash it mentions that the similarity of this section of the Prophets to the sidrah is in the fact that King David was old, similar to the verse that Avraham was old. This would suffice, but I think the student of Torah sees a great deal more than just the aging of two national leaders of the Jewish people. The real issue was succession. For Avraham the choice was already made that Yitzchak would succeed him and not Yishmael, but Avraham still had to make decisions and arrange so that the future of Yitzchak would be provided, in this case a shiduch. In King David’s case succession was of a different nature, but still in King David’s case the issue was much more complex. One son had already declared himself as the successor without the king’s knowledge. The king wanted Shlomo to become the successor, but still had to plan with his son in order to secure the future according to David’s understanding of what that future of Bnei Yisrael had to be. In King David’s situation he had the assistance of the Prophet Nathan who came frequently to the king’s door to offer advice and correction when needed. Between the two the future of Bnei Yisrael was placed on a proper course, just as the future for the offspring of Avraham would have divine success as well. (RED)

SHABBAT HALACHAH

The Shabbat Mode: The Shabbat mode that exists on ovens does not permit us to use the oven on Shabbat. It is really a misnomer but is applied properly to the initial Shabbat mode and why it was needed. If you went on vacation and left your oven on, it could prove to be quite costly in many ways. Therefore engineers created an automatic shutoff valve that if the oven were left on for 12 hours it would automatically cut off the electrical oven. This could prove detrimental to the Jewish person who is observing Shabbat and Yom Tov. Consequently the first Shabbat mode was merely an override to the security and safety provisions of the shutoff valve. In that original story naming it a Shabbat mode was proper. Now it is not the case. The sophistication of ovens today mandates that the internal guts of the oven is a computer in its own right, and Shabbat mode does mean a lot more than it was originally stated. When one purchases an oven and reads the manual, the description of the Shabbat mode in the manual is often misleading and halachically incorrect. One is advised to check the Star K website and see if that clears up the matter. You have to know the model number of your oven in order to look it up on the website because the sophistication of the system is not the same with each model. And if you are still confused then you should give a call to the Star K in Baltimore which has the information that you would need to guide you for the usage of a Shabbat mode oven for Shabbat, and even more importantly for Yom Tov usage.