



# THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn  
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

## Parashat Chayei Sarah 27 MarCheshvan, 5767 November 17, 18 - 2006

The Haftorah, "Vehamelech David"

<u>Friday</u>	
Candle Lighting	4:18 PM
Mincha	4:20 PM
<u>Shabbat</u>	
Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:14 AM (Gra"h)
Mincha	4:15 PM
Maariv and Havdala	5:20 PM
Sunday Shacharit	8:00 AM

**From our Sages on the Parasha**  
**"And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years" (Genesis 23:1)**

'At the age of 20 she was like age seven in beauty, and at the age of 100 she was like age 20 in piety. '

(Rashi; Midrash Rabbah)

### Shabbat Mevarchim

This Shabbat is *Shabbat Mevarchim* of upcoming month of Kislev, which falls on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

Prior to the blessing, we announce the precise time of the *molad*. The Molad for Kislev will be on Monday, November 20, 5 minutes and 5 Chalakim after 9:00 PM

### Mazal Tov

Mazel Tov to Carol and Harvey Granoff on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Chayim Z'ev Senter. May they have much Nachas and joy from him for many years to come and may they celebrate IY"H many Semachot in the future.

### Torah Insights – Harav Shlomo Riskin

#### By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba which is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep upon her..." (Genesis 23:2)

What was Sarah doing in Hebron? Abraham, Sarah and Isaac had been living in Be'er Sheba, where the

patriarch had made a treaty with Avimelekh King of the Philistines: "And Abraham planted an eishel tree in Be'er Sheba and he called out there in the name of the Eternal G-d of the world. And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for a long period" (21:33,34). The very next verse opens the following chapter with the story of the akedah (binding of Isaac), after which the Bible logically reports, "And Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Be'er Sheba. And Abraham dwelt in Be'er Sheba" (22:19). So what was Sarah doing in Hebron, to where Abraham had to travel in order to eulogize and bury her?

I believe it necessary to revisit the difficult incident of "the binding" (akedah) in order to understand. Rav Yosef Ibn Kaspi, the famed philosopher of the 14th century, maintains that the real message of the story is that our G-d – unlike Moloch, the bloodthirsty idol of the ancient world – does not countenance human sacrifices. From Ibn Kaspi's perspective, it is quite possible that Abraham's real test came with the second command of the angel, "Do not cast your hand against the lad and do not do anything at all to him:" perhaps the continuation of that verse is to be

translated, “Now I know that you fear G-d because you did not remove (cause to be absent, to be taken away) your only son because of My (initial command – 22:12).”

Abraham was way ahead of his times, but he could not help but be influenced in some way by his times. Perhaps he even expected that his new-found G-d would also exact the heavy price of his beloved son’s life as a test of his faith and commitment!

It is even possible that the Sages of the Talmud are proposing just such an Abrahamic mind-set when they very boldly have G-d criticize Abraham’s would-be sacrifice as having resulted from the Patriarch’s misunderstanding (sic) of the initial Divine command. The Talmud (B.T. Taanit 4a) puts Abraham in the category of other misguided Biblical personalities who wrongly sacrificed their children: “(The prophet chides Israel for having acted in accordance with words which) ‘I (G-d) have not commanded, I have not spoken, and have not even entered My mind’ – ‘I have not commanded’ applies to Meisha the king of Moab; ‘I have not spoken’ applies to Jephtha; ‘have not even entered My mind’ applies to Isaac, son of Abraham.”

And is this not the interpretation of Rashi (ad loc) when he maintains that Abraham did not properly understand the Divine words: “I did not say ‘slaughter him; I merely said ‘bring him up and then bring him down...’?! The Hassidic Sfat Emet daringly suggests that the true meaning of the word Makom in the verse “It was on the third day (of their journey to Mt. Moriah for the binding) when Abraham lifted up his eyes and he saw the place

(ha’makon) from afar” (22:4) is to be taken as G-d, as in our comfort greeting to a mourner (HaMakom menahem etchem...), and not as place. Abraham saw G-d from afar if he did not realize that our G-d could not possibly have commanded child sacrifice! And indeed, after this incident there is not one single direct conversation between G-d and Abraham recorded in the Bible – despite the fact that Abraham continues to live in his full strength for 38 more years!

Given all of this, imagine Mother Sarah awakening during this fateful night to the rustling and bustling noises of her husband and son preparing for departure on a journey. She’s already suspicious, since Abraham had apparently neglected to inform her of what he understood to have been G-d’s command. When she finally extracts from him the purpose of their nocturnal preparations, she must have pleaded, argued, remonstrated against the proposed mission. “How can you begin to believe that G-d would demand such a heinous act? Would the G-d who created every human being in His Divine Image expect you to destroy your own beloved son?” And then she might have even taken the offensive position, charging Abraham with always having sacrificed his son for what he perceived to have been the Divine charge, spending days and nights bringing idolaters closer to the Divine Presence and His teachings while neglecting the questions and needs of his own flesh and blood, the fruit of his loins. But all to no avail. Abraham walks out the door with Isaac.

Sarah must feel desperate. So she too set out on an early morning journey

– but back to Hebron rather than Mt. Moriah. She must pray at the place where her ancestors Adam and Eve had been buried, in the Cave of the Couples; after all, they knew the pain of being left bereft of a beloved son in the bloom of his youth, Abel. Perhaps they would intercede with G-d for Isaac’s life.

And perhaps she felt she had to return to Hebron, the place where she and Abraham had settled after their disappointing separation from Lot, when G-d promised them seed as numerous as the dust of the earth and where Abraham had established a Hurin thanksgiving for that promise. (Gen. 13:17,18); perhaps she felt she had to pray for Isaac’s life in Hebron, where G-d entered into the Covenant between the Pieces with Abraham, which guarantees progeny which will forge a nation (Gen. 15); and perhaps she felt she had to pray for Isaac’s life in Hebron, where the three Divinely sent messengers had promised that in one year’s time a male child, heir and guarantor of the Divine covenant, would be born to Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18, with the oaks of Mamre being in Hebron, as we saw in 13:18). If Abraham hadn’t argued with G-d, Sarah felt she must do so, at this fateful time and at the auspicious place of the Divine promise. The anxiety is apparently too great for Sarah to bear, and she dies in Hebron perhaps in the midst of her remonstrations with G-d. But in this instance as well, Sarah emerges as having had arrived at a deeper understanding of G-d’s true will than had Abraham!

Shabbat Shalom

Shlomo Riskin

Chief Rabbi - Efrat Israel