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(with assistance from Laura Michelle Kaplan)

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Wilmington, DE

ARIE BEN-BASSAT

*Arie ben Yitzhak u'Bruria*

December 29, 1944 – October 15, 2019

Arie Ben-Bassat passed away during what should have been a very joyous time for the Jewish people – the Festival of Sukkot. In fact, Sukkot is such a beloved time in the Jewish religion that rabbis are not officially supposed to deliver eulogies during this time. So please accept the words I am about to share as not as a “eulogy,” but rather an extended “teaching,” inspired by the extraordinary life of Arie Ben-Bassat. In Biblical times, the holy day of Sukkot focused on Eretz Yisrael – as this was one of our most beloved pilgrimage holy days. And truly, all throughout his life, Arie held a special love for the State of Israel – its people, its music, its history. So perhaps, if Arie had to leave us, it is only right that it was during Chag Sukkot – as we will always associate his life with the centrality of Israel in the life of the Jewish people.

Arie was born in Tiberius on December 29, 1944, before the State of Israel was established. His parents, Yitzhak and Bruria came, to Israel in 1939 from Turkey and Sofia, Bulgaria. They escaped Nazi persecution, although Bruria's brother Hari was killed by Nazis in a work camp in Bulgaria. It's worth noting that Hari lost his life when he tried to separate two strangers who were fighting. This was an act of true chesed, kindness, as he was trying to prevent violence, and to make peace. This quality of noble peace-making was something his parents wished to bequeath to Arie, so they took the Hay in Hari's name and put it at the end of Arie's name, and that's how Arie got his name.

The Ben-Bassat family lived in a moshav, Kfar Hittim, populated mainly by Bulgarian and Rumanian immigrants. They had four boys: David, Arie, and the twins: Shmuel and Ami. Of all the siblings, Ami is still alive and well, living in Tel-Aviv. He wanted to share that his brother, Arie, was a modest man, not at all talkative. Most important, his brothers both admired and respected Arie, especially for his intelligence. We wish Ami a long and healthy life.

The Ben-Bassat's lived in a small house on the moshav and life was hard. Arie grew up in the company of his friends and every story or dream that he recounted started out with "we were running around" near the Sea of Galilee or in the hills. At age 13 he was sent to the prestigious boys agricultural school Kadoorie, in the Lower Galilee. This was the same school was attended by such historic giants in Israeli history as Yizhak Rabin and Yigal Allon. It was a boys' boarding school and was so isolated the residents referred to it as "the monastery." The school was established to train students to pursue higher education in European schools. He graduated in 1962.

Upon graduation, Arie served in the IDF and was a paratrooper, a *tzanhanim*. He was honorably discharged from military service in 1964, due to medical reasons.

Starting in 1964, Arie pursued higher education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Arie completed his Master's and Ph.D. degrees at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Microbiology in 1973. He was the consummate scientist. Arie applied his scientific approach and trained mind to the analysis and understanding of things in everyday life, not just to his work.

His PhD research was conducted at the Hadassah Hospital scientific research facility in Ein Kerem, near Jerusalem.

In 1973, after the Yom Kippur War, Arie met Laura at the home of a mutual friend. Arie and Laura married in 1975. You will be hearing from Laura in just a few minutes. One of the best things to come from their marriage together was the birth of their children. Oren was born in 1976 in Jerusalem. You will be hearing from Oren in just a moment.

In 1978, Arie accepted a post-doctoral research position in the Department of Bacteriology at the University of Wisconsin. So the family of three called Madison, Wisconsin their new home.

From Madison, they moved to Berkeley, California for Arie's first job at Cetus Corporation, later Chiron, a biotech firm responsible for discovering PCR genetic decoding. One of the additional benefits of this move was the birth of their daughter, Daniella, in near-by Walnut Creek. She was born in 1985. You will be hearing from Daniella in just a few minutes.

In 1992, the family of four moved to Florida for another biotech venture. Arie traveled widely to Switzerland and Russia for yet another company. In 1996, Delaware became their home when Arie accepted a position as Microbiology Research Scientist at DuPont. Despite his many health setbacks, Arie continued to eat lots of fruits and vegetables and worked out, played tennis and kept himself in great shape. No doubt the fact that he lived to be 74 has to do with his great healthy living habits. Even though Laura and Arie eventually divorced, they remained life-long friends.

Jeannie Winnick entered Arie's life in April 2003, thanks to J-Date. She actually met him on J-Date and again on Jewish Café, using her Hebrew name, Rivka, thinking this might be more attractive to a man who had such strong connections to Israel. It obviously worked. They had a relationship which spanned 16 ½ year, which was recently strengthened by a proposal of marriage.

I mentioned earlier how central Israel was in Arie's life. So it should come of no surprise that their two favorite trips were to Israel. Jeannie said Arie was the best tour guide a person could have. During their first trip, adventurous Arie pulled Jeannie over some rocks, definitely off-roading, with Arie urging Jeannie on, until all of a sudden Arie came to a dead halt.

He had inadvertently led the couple to a restricted beach of male Orthodox sun-bathers. "Okay, let's go," Arie said, as the couple went into full retreat. On their second trip, Jeannie had a complete list of things they didn't get to do on the first trip, including a camel ride at Mount Scopus, which really isn't known for their camel rides. But Arie's going out of his way to make sure she got her camel ride was an example of his thoughtfulness.

Traveling the world was a feature of their years together. With their kids, they went to several Club Meds, and the couple were repeat visitors to the Turks and Caicos Islands. They even took an Alaskan cruise together.

But Jeannie said their happiest moments were sitting quietly together, and sipping wine on the deck of the Pine Creek townhouse they shared together. They also enjoyed their subscription to the Pennsylvania Ballet, and this Sunday they had planned to attend *Don Quixote* together.

Jeannie's three sons: Marcus, David and Jeffrey, and her daughter, Deena, all enjoyed Arie's company too. Marcus was fond of playing tennis with Arie, while David enjoyed a great game of golf. Jeffrey would have enjoyed these sports too, except he was out in California at the time.

Arie was also beloved by Jeannie's grandchildren: Vanessa, Janelle, Vance, Nathan and George. He had a special place in all of their hearts.

Arie also pursued special pleasures independent of Jeannie. For example, he took himself on a Costa Rica adventure, which included zip-lining. And he belonged to a chess club which was part of his Friday evening ritual.

I have just touched the surface of Jeanne and Arie's life together. Jeannie will share more with you in just a moment.

Arie's unexpected death coincides with the retelling of the death of Moses in the last part of Deuteronomy, which we read at this time of year, just before Simchat Torah, when we start the Torah reading all over again. Every time we reread the details of the last moments of Moses' life we are filled with a kind of sadness and longing for this legendary leader. Especially tragic is that he almost got to the Promised Land, but he didn't get to actually cross over the River Jordan and enter the land. At age 74, Arie lived and experienced more than many of us will ever do. Still, there are so many things Arie would have liked to do – and I know as Oren and Daniella grow older they will miss their father especially at poignant life cycle events, like the birth of a child. Like Moses, Arie ascended Mt. Nebo, Har Navo, but he didn't get to quite enter the Promised Land.

Arie had just begun the first chapter of new life at Maris Grove, but after only six months, he didn't get to take full advantage of all this marvelous place had to offer him. The Jewish community there was profoundly saddened by his death after only recently becoming their new neighbor.

However, I hope that when we think of Arie, we don't think of his illnesses, or his death, but rather of the extraordinary life he led, his love of adventure and travel and chess, and especially, all the people he touched and cared for throughout his life. If we think of Arie in these terms, then we can truly say *zikaron l'baruch*, may his memory be for a blessing, and we can all utter a collective *amen*.