

Genesis 23 Commentary

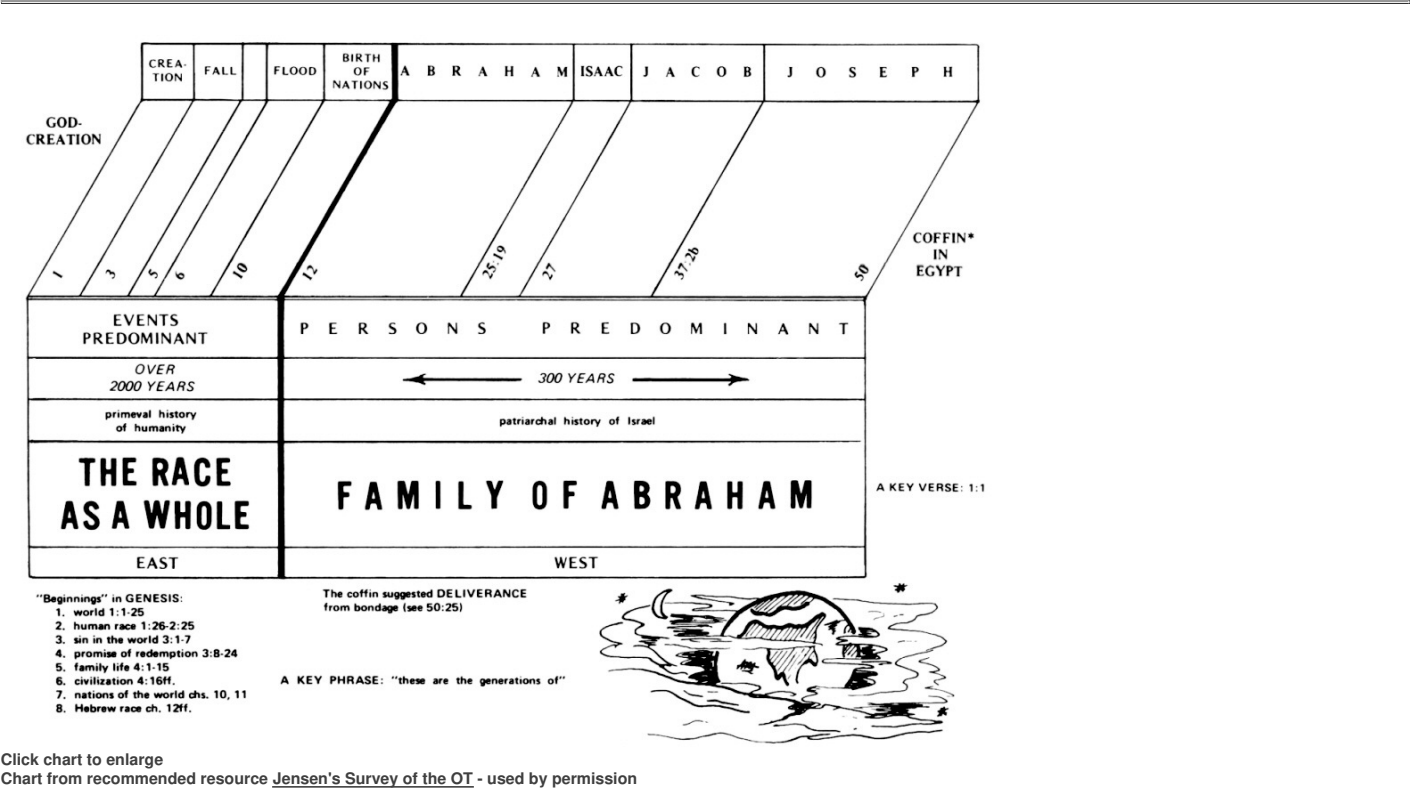
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Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis		
Focus	Foundation Events (Four Events) (Events Predominant)	Foundation People (Four People) (People Predominant)

Divisions	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)
Topics	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)				Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)			
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)				Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)			
	Historical				Biographical			
Place	Eastward From Eden to Ur				Westward From Canaan to Egypt			
Time	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)				About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)			
	Primeval History of Humanity				Patriarchal History of Israel			
Author	Moses							

BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews

Genesis 23:1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

- **one hundred and twenty-seven years:** Ge 17:17

Related Passages:

Hebrews 11:11-12 (THERE IS CONSIDERABLE VARIATION ON WHETHER THIS VERSE REFERS PRIMARILY TO SARAH OR TO ABRAHAM - SEE COMMENTS) **By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.** 12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

Isaiah 51:1-2 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn And to the quarry from which you were dug. 2 "Look to Abraham your father **And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;** When he was but one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him."

THE DEATH OF SARAH

Paul Apple asks "Do we really live like we believe the promises of God? God's promises primarily impact our future reality. At present we live in hope, not having received the fulfillment of many of God's promises. The very nature of faith is described as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb 11:1) 1 Thess. 4:13+ instructs believers not to **"grieve as the rest who have no hope."** The context in that passage is the certain promise of the Lord's return providing hope for believers as they deal with the loss of a loved one. Here in our passage today, we see that lesson played out in the life of Abraham as his wife of 60

years has just died. Abraham can hardly remember life before Sarah. They have certainly had a roller coaster ride in their spiritual journey of faith, but now Abraham finds himself bereft of the companionship of Sarah. **He serves as our example of what it looks like to grieve as one who lives for eternity; as one who knows that death is only the passageway to the other side; as one who looks forward to God fulfilling all of His glorious future promises.** Certainly, Abraham does not “grieve as the rest who have no hope.” To understand why Moses spends so much time writing here about the purchase of this burial plot in the land of Canaan, you must understand the unique challenges that the people of Israel faced under Moses’ leadership as they prepared to invade the Promised Land. Moses was writing to a people grappling with fear of the reported giants of the land. They knew that 10 of the 12 spies sent to inspect the land of Canaan had come back with disturbing reports advising against the invasion. Only Joshua and Caleb understood that the great blessings of the land would truly be theirs through faith in the promise of God. How could Moses instruct the people of God to take ownership of the promises of God?

What motivation this story must have provided for the armies of Israel as they marched into Canaan to possess it!

Deffinbaugh: None other than Caleb was given the privilege of taking the land which Abraham had purchased as an “earnest of his inheritance” (cf. Joshua 14:13). What motivation this story must have provided for the armies of Israel as they marched into Canaan to possess it! Ownership of this promised land was so critical to the people of Israel. And in our passage today we see Abraham lawfully acquiring that small portion – a simple field with one burial cave – a purchase that would speak volumes about the Lord ultimately fulfilling His promise to give His people the entire land.

Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. Literally - “And the years of Sarah were one hundred years and twenty years and seven years, the years of the life of Sarah.” This seems like a long time but eternity puts one’s life in proper perspective. Abraham is about 137 and Isaac is about 37 years old. The record of Sarah’s death at one hundred and twenty-seven years marks a significant turning point in the narrative of faith. For the first time in Scripture, the precise age of a woman is recorded—an honor reserved for Sarah, the matriarch of faith. In other words, Sarah is the only woman whose **age, death, and burial** are distinctly noted in the Sacred writings. This singular honor testifies to the high esteem in which Sarah is held in the biblical record. Her long life testifies to God’s faithfulness in every season, from the tent of barrenness to the birth of promise. Though her years are now complete, her influence endures, for she lived and died in faith (Heb 11:11–12+). The story that follows is not one of sorrow alone, but of steadfast hope—a reminder that even in death, the promises of God remain unbroken.

David Guzik astutely observes “Nowhere in the Bible are we told to look to Mary the mother of Jesus as an example of a godly woman. Twice we are told to look to Sarah as such an example (Isaiah 51:1-2 and 1 Peter 3:3-6).”

Wayne Stiles - STARING DEATH IN THE FAITH

GENESIS 23:1-4; HEBREWS 11:8-16

Abraham lived for 62 years in the land God promised him before owning any of it. Even then, Abraham only purchased a plot of ground to bury his wife. The Cave of [Machpelah](#) in Hebron not only entombed Sarah’s body, but it also became the burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

So when Abraham purchased a plot to bury Sarah, he demonstrated great faith in God’s promise to give him all the land—even though he (and many descendants) would die before ever receiving it. “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises,” the book of Hebrews reminds us, “having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (11:13). Even though we suffer great loss in death, we do not lose God’s promises, because they continue beyond the grave.

We seem to be on an eternal quest for the good life in the here and now. Oh, we know about the hope of heaven and the bit about seeking first God’s kingdom. But in spite of all we believe as true, we still scurry to find satisfaction in this life. When we fail to find it (as we always will), we often abandon the boring job, the struggling marriage or the imperfect church, believing that we’ve simply been looking in the wrong place. And in a way, we have.

Death brings the startling reality that this world is not our home. Like Abraham, we should remember that the ultimate satisfaction we seek comes after our death and resurrection. Death then represents not the end of life but its beginning.

Lord, help me not to seek all satisfaction here and now. But, like Christ, may I lay down my life, believing in all faith that I will take it up again—just as He did.

Let your hope of heaven master your fear of death. Why should you be afraid to die, who hopes to live by dying? —William Gurnall

Oswald Chambers - 1. In the Place of Sorrow(Genesis 23:1-2) ([Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#)) from [Not Knowing Whither:](#)

[The Steps of Abraham's Faith](#)

The Old Testament relates the end of no other woman's life so particularly as it does the end of Sarah's life. Abraham's personal sorrow is recorded in the words—"to weep for her." It is a farce to make nothing of death; the natural expressions of the heart are not suppressed, but tempered and transfigured. It is no part of faith to affect insensibility to sorrow, that is stoical humbug. In certain stages of religious experience we have the idea that we must not show sorrow when we are sorrowful. That idea is an enemy to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, because it leads to heartlessness and hypocrisy. Not to sorrow is not even human, it is diabolical. The Spirit of God hallows sorrow.

In dealing with the life of Abraham as the Father of the Faithful† neither faith nor common sense must be our guide, but God Who unites both in the alchemy of personal experience. To be guided by common sense alone is fanatical; both common sense and faith have to be brought into relation to God. The life of faith does not consist of acts of worship or of great self-denial and heroic virtues, but of all the daily conscious acts of our lives.

John Butler - SARAH'S OBITUARY - [Sermon Starters](#)

Genesis 23:1 "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old; these were the years of the life of Sarah:" (Jeremiah 25:4).

This text is part of the obituary of Sarah, Abraham's wife who bore Isaac. The obituary is enlightening.

FIRST—THE MEASURING OF SARAH'S YEARS

"An hundred and seven and twenty years." The 127 years that Sarah lived were some of the most important years in the history of man. It was during those 127 years that Abraham moved to Canaan and that Isaac was born and the history of the Jewish nation began and the line of Christ was established. When Sarah died, Abraham was 137 and Isaac was 37. She was ten years younger than Abraham (Genesis 17:17). She lived some 72 years after the great move of faith to Canaan. In her 89th year Scripture said she was "old and well stricken in age" (Genesis 18:11), yet she was so rejuvenated by God in order to have Isaac that she was shortly taken into Abimelech's harem because of her beauty. She lived 38 more years because of the rejuvenation. This was a testimony of what great things can be done through the power of God.

SECOND—THE MENTION OF SARAH'S YEARS

"Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old." Sarah is the first of three women who had their age mentioned in the Bible. She is unique in that she is the only women who had her age mentioned in her death. The other women who had their ages mentioned are Jairus' daughter whose age was revealed at twelve. The third woman who had her age mentioned is Anna the aged saint who saw Jesus Christ in the temple. Scripture says she was "a widow of about fourscore and four years" (Luke 2:37). Some believe that this refers to the years she was a widow, not to her age which would make her older than people lived then. So Sarah is very distinct in the mention of her years in the Bible.

THIRD—THE MANNER OF SARAH'S YEARS

"These were the years of the life of Sarah." Sarah may have lived to be 127 but her record is not the best. Much of what the Bible records of Sarah is about her failures. She went along with the lying in Egypt about her relationship to Abraham (Genesis 12:12–20), and did the same in Gerar (Genesis 20). She proposed having a child via Hagar (Genesis 16:1–4), and then treated Hagar cruelly when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (Genesis 16:6). She laughed at the Divine promise of Isaac (Genesis 18:9–13) Then denied that she laughed Genesis 18:15). However, she is complimented for her faith in the birth of Isaac (Hebrews 11:11), and she sung a carol of faith after the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:6, 7). She is also used as an example of a wife respecting her husband (1 Peter 3:1, 6) So everything said in the Bible about Sarah is not bad, just most of what is said is bad. If God were to comment on our lives in the Scripture what sort of record would we have recorded?

Genesis 23:2 Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

- **Kiriath-arba:** Ge 23:19 13:18 Nu 13:22 Jos 10:39 14:14,15 20:7 Jud 1:10 1Sa 20:31 2Sa 2:11 5:3,5 1Ch 6:57
- **mourn:** Ge 27:41 50:10 Nu 20:29 De 34:8 1Sa 28:3 2Sa 1:12,17 2Ch 35:25 Jer 22:10,18 Eze 24:16-18 Joh 11:31,35 Ac 8:2

Related Passages:

Hebrews 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also

received him back as a type.

Hebrews 11:13 "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."

TEARS IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

The death of Sarah marks the close of a remarkable pilgrimage of faith. From **Ur's idolatrous plains** to **Hebron's holy hills**, she had walked beside Abraham through years of waiting, testing, and fulfillment. Now the one who once laughed in unbelief and later laughed in joy has finished her earthly race in the land of promise.

Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; Sarah's passing took place in **Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron**, the very land of promise where Abraham had sojourned as a pilgrim for decades. Her death, therefore, is not merely a family sorrow but a moment of profound covenant significance—Sarah's death is the first death recorded in the land God had sworn to give them. Though Abraham owned not even a foot of that land, he would soon purchase a burial site there by faith, declaring that even in death, God's promises stand.

Keith Krell - Note that Sarah died **"in the land of Canaan."** Abraham mourned and wept, meaning that in addition to the crying he went through the traditional mourning customs of his day: tearing clothes, cutting his beard, spreading dust on his head, and fasting.⁸ (Even though Abraham was a great man of faith this did not mean that his life was exempt from great difficulties. He still had to suffer hurt, loss, and pain at Sarah's death. We know from the book of Hebrews that Abraham was looking forward in faith to eternity, but this did not keep him from weeping at Sarah's death. It is normal for believers to be sorrowful over the death of a Christian loved one, even though they know and expect to be with them for eternity. Stoicism in the face of the loss of a loved one is not a Christian attitude.) This was all done in the presence of the body. The Jews had a very elaborate and intense process that they went through when someone died. Genesis 50 tells us about Jacob, Abraham's grandson. When he died there was a period of 40 days that his family was at hand. As he was being embalmed, the family had a time of grieving and then he was buried. After he was buried, for another seven days they continued to grieve.

It is significant that Sarah died in Hebron, which has been given several meanings (alliance, confederacy, friendship). Sarah's life ended in communion with God (we know she was a believer), and her death took place in the land God had promised. However death cannot annul God's covenant and one day she will experience that land promise, probably in the Millennium.

And Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her -The Hebrew text uses two distinct verbs, **to mourn** (*saphad*, to lament deeply) and **to weep** (*bakah*, to shed tears), revealing both the public and private dimensions of grief. This is the first record of a man's tears in the Bible. **Saphad** denotes lamentation expressed aloud, while **bakah** ('to weep') speaks of tears flowing from the heart. Both verbs together portray sincere sorrow, not stoic suppression. This man of faith was not unmoved by loss. To be sure, faith does not harden the heart and preclude grief. Abraham's tears were not the hopeless tears of despair, but the holy tears of love and faith in a God who raises the dead (Hebrews 11:19). He knew the promise of God stood beyond the grave. There is no contradiction between his faith in resurrection and his sorrow of separation.

NET Note - Mourn ... weep. The description here is of standard mourning rites (see [K. A. Kitchen, NBD3 149–50](#)). They would have been carried out in the presence of the corpse, probably in Sarah's tent. So Abraham came in to mourn; then he rose up to go and bury his dead (Ge 23:3).

Spurgeon: "Saints weep, for they are not stoics; but they do not despair, for they are not unbelievers. Their tears are the tribute of affection, not the tokens of rebellion against the divine will."

Keith Krell - We should not be shocked to find the death of Sarah recorded as a part of the biography of Abraham; however, of the twenty verses in this chapter, less than two of them refer to the emotional response of Abraham to his wife's death. No romanticist could tolerate this!...The first two verses record Sarah's death and the next eighteen verses have to do with the purchase of the plot where Sarah is buried.² Thus, many pastors preach sermons on how the Christian can cope with the death of a loved one or engage in business practices. I do not think either of these topics is the main message of this chapter. Rather, we must seek the greatest part of our instruction from the greater part of the passage; in this case, the purchase of the plot of ground in which Sarah is buried.³ The focus of this story is that Sarah was buried **"in Canaan"** (23:2, 19), and that Abraham went to great lengths and cost to make this a certainty. This demonstrates how Abraham's actions reflect a faith for the future. (Despite many heartaches) the only time the Scriptures reveal that he wept was when Sarah died. This reveals the depth of his grief and love for this woman.⁹ I would also add that a willingness to put Isaac to death enabled Abraham to accept the passing of his wife, Sarah. God used the offering of Isaac to prepare Abraham for the death of his wife.

[Krell](#) goes on to add that "The death of a loved one has always been a time to think about the eternal. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart." In light of this eventuality, two of the most profound and beneficial questions I think we can ask ourselves are: (1) How would you like to be remembered at your funeral? (2) What steps do you need to take for that to happen? I believe these verses remind God's people that, as we go through this life awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises in the future, we will undergo difficulties. We are told this in Acts 14:22 which says, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." We will endure difficulties but we can endure them in faith as Abraham did. Abraham did not just mourn but also reflected on God's promises concerning the future and this is what motivated him to make the effort to purchase a tomb in the land of Canaan. We are to do the same when we encounter difficulties—we are to have faith for the future. We are to keep our faith and our focus on eternity because *God's promises to us are primarily future realities*. Abraham recognized and believed that God's promises are still in the future.¹⁰ Sarah's death would have been a reminder to him of how little he had actually received of God's promises to this point. He would also have been reminded that his death could not be very far away. This could be a very trying moment for Abraham's faith. Yet this story demonstrates that he continued to believe faithfully for the future and act accordingly, despite many difficulties. He expected God to fulfill every one of His promises. In this way, Abraham serves as an example to Christians today who also have been given "precious and magnificent promises" that we must wait to inherit (2 Pet 1:4). In other words, most of the great things that God has promised His people will not be received in this life. This was true of Abraham and most of the other saints of God (Heb 11:9-10, 13-16, 39).¹¹ We must have a faith for the future; we must have a confidence in God that goes beyond even this life for the fulfillment of His promises. We need to remember Abraham's example and keep our faith by remembering that *God's promises are primarily future realities*.

BURIAL AND MOURNING In the Old Testament - The times of the Patriarchs -K A Kitchen - [Borrow New Bible Dictionary page 150](#)

Successive generations were buried in the family tomb (cave or rock-cut); thus Sarah (Gn. 23:19), Abraham (Gn. 25:9), Isaac and Rebekah, Leah (Gn. 49:31) and Jacob (Gn. 50:13). Death far from the family tomb required individual burial; so Deborah near Bethel (Gn. 35:8) and Rachel on the road to Ephrath (Gn. 35:19–20). Besides weeping, mourning already included rending one's garments and donning sackcloth (Gn. 37:34–35), for up to 7 days (Gn. 50:10). The embalming of Jacob and Joseph and the use of a coffin for Joseph in Egyptian fashion was exceptional (Gn. 50:2–3, 26). Mummification required removal of the viscera for separate preservation, and desiccation of the body by packing in salt (not brine); thereafter the body was packed with impregnated linen and entirely wrapped in linen. Embalming and mourning usually took 70 days, but the period for embalming could be shorter, as for Jacob....

(ii) Mourning. In Palestine in the 2nd and 1st millennia this included: (1) baldness of head and cutting the beard; (2) lacerating the body; (3) rending garments and wearing sackcloth; (4) scattering dust on the head and wallowing in ashes; and (5) weeping and lamentation. Not all of these were favoured by the law. (See section b, above.) For Hebrew mourning, see the action of David (2 Sa. 1:11–12; 13:31), the woman of Tekoah (2 Sa. 14:2), and note the allusions in the prophets (Is. 3:24; 22:12; Je. 7:29; Ezk. 7:18; Joel 1:8; Am. 8:10; Mi. 1:16). For Tyrian seafarers, Philistia and Moab. see Ezk. 27:30, 32; Je. 47:5; Is. 15:2–3 and Je. 48:37.

Martin Luther - COURAGE TO FACE DEATH

She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. . . . Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave . . . in the land of Canaan. Genesis 23:2, 19

The stories of people in the Bible should instruct and inspire us. These examples are better than using the Lord Christ as an example for reaching and comforting people who have weak faith. When such people hear the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah and how they all died, these devout and God-fearing people won't be so afraid of death.

It's not their own fragile condition that bothers people with weak faith as much as the gruesome appearance of dead bodies. They say to themselves, "If my body were like the body Christ had here on earth, and if it couldn't be destroyed by death and eaten by worms, then I would wait for my last day with greater courage." Because Christ came back to life in only three days, his death doesn't seem like a good example of dying to people who are weak in faith. So it's reasonable that they are drawn to the examples of other people in the Bible whose bodies decayed, just as ours will.

In contrast, those who have stronger faith laugh at death. They fearlessly defy it: "What is death? What is hell? Christ, the Son of God, placed himself under God's laws and died. But Christ's death defeated death and gave us life." We need the strength to believe and not doubt that Christ died for our sins and was brought back to life. If we believe that Christ did this so that we could have God's approval, then we don't have to fear death. Christ's death assures us that our own death means nothing. But other examples are helpful for those who are weak in faith. For them, knowing that Sarah died and was buried helps them accept the fact

that the same will one day happen to them.

QUESTION - [What is the significance of Hebron in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - The ancient city of Hebron, today called Al-Khalil in Arabic, was located approximately 20 miles south of present-day Jerusalem in the Judean valley. Hebron is significant in the Bible for a couple of reasons. Hebron is first mentioned in Genesis 13:18 as a place where [Abram](#) (later known as Abraham) traveled after parting company with his nephew [Lot](#). At Hebron the Lord first showed Abram the land that would belong to him and his offspring (Genesis 13:14–17). Later, after the death of King Saul, God told David to go to Hebron, and it became the city where David ruled over Judah for seven years because at that time the Jebusites controlled Jerusalem (2 Samuel 2:1–4, 5:3).

After his wife, Sarah, died, Abraham still lived in Hebron, which belonged to the Hittites (Genesis 23). He wanted to bury Sarah there, so he approached a man named Ephron and asked to buy a cave for a burial site. Abraham was so well-respected among the [Hittites](#) that they offered to give him any cave he desired. But Abraham insisted on paying full price, and he selected an area called [Machpelah](#), owned by a man named Ephron. Again, Ephron tried to give Abraham the cave, but Abraham insisted on paying full price.

“So Ephron’s field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site” (Genesis 23:17–20).

This cave in Hebron is also called Kiriath-Arba, and, later, Abraham was also buried there (Genesis 25:10); and Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob (Genesis 47:29–30), and Leah (Genesis 49:30–32). The cave of Machpelah in Hebron is considered by the Jews to be the second holiest site in all Israel. Today it is under Palestinian control and is known to Jewish inhabitants as the Cave (or Tomb) of the Patriarchs. Muslims refer to it as the Sanctuary of Abraham.

The land around Hebron was part of the allotment Joshua gave to [Caleb](#) when Israel took the Promised Land (Joshua 14:13). Hebron was a reward for Caleb’s faithful service and loyalty to the Lord. Caleb probably desired Hebron because it may have contained the “valley of Eschol” from which the spies had brought great clusters of grapes as proof of the land’s bounty (Numbers 13:23). Hebron was later designated as a [city of refuge](#) (Joshua 20:1–7).

Hebron became the capital of Judah, and from there [David](#) reigned for seven-and-a-half years. During David’s reign in Hebron, [Abner](#), the former commander of Saul’s army, took Saul’s son [Ish-Bosheth](#) across the Jordan River and set him up as king of Israel. Eventually, however, Abner defected to David’s side and vowed to bring all of Israel under David’s control (2 Samuel 3:8–12). When Joab, David’s commander learned of this, he was certain Abner was only spying for Ish-Bosheth (2 Samuel 3:24–25). He also hated Abner for killing his brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon, so he set out for revenge. Joab met Abner in Hebron and pulled him aside under the pretext of having a private conversation. When they were alone, Joab stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed him (2 Samuel 3:27). David was grieved at the news of Abner’s death and pronounced a curse on Joab (2 Samuel 3:28–29).

After Ish-Bosheth was assassinated, David meted out justice against the assassins in Hebron; in this way, David’s integrity became known throughout all Israel (2 Samuel 4). David was eventually declared Israel’s rightful king, and he moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:1–5).

David’s son [Absalom](#) made Hebron his headquarters while he plotted to steal his father’s kingdom (2 Samuel 15:7–9). Absalom had spent time cultivating loyalty from Israel’s people, then moved his nefarious plot out from under his father’s eye in Jerusalem. He appointed himself king in Hebron, striking fear in David’s heart (2 Samuel 15:10, 14). David fled as Absalom moved from Hebron to Jerusalem to take control of the capital. He may have wrongly thought that, since it had worked for David to begin his reign in Hebron, it would also work for him.

Absalom forgot an important truth: David had been anointed by God to rule Israel; Absalom had not. As significant as Hebron was to his ancestors, a cave full of ancestral bones could not replace that anointing. Absalom’s brief stint as a self-appointed king of Hebron did not lead to future success, and he died in disgrace (2 Samuel 18:9–14). Regardless of a city or nation’s great history, unless God’s presence and blessing are on it, it holds no power to bless its inhabitants.

The Death of a Saint By Rev. Todd M. Kinde

Scripture: Genesis 23:1–20, especially Ge 23:2 and Ge 23:19

And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.... And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife

in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

Introduction: We find in Genesis 23 the death of a saintly woman and the response of a saintly husband to her death. We will learn, then, how we as followers of Christ are to respond to death when we walk through the valley of its shadow.

1. We Grieve at the Time of Death (Ge 23:1–2). There is something sudden and final about the way this chapter begins. Yet, there is something of fulfillment and completion about it as well. Sarah's life was certainly one of struggle—being given to two other men while married to Abraham, tension with Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, battles with infertility, moving around the country and living in a tent. Yet, her life was also one of blessing—seeing her husband grow stronger in faith, giving birth to Isaac which brought her laughs of joy, living beside the oases and the groves of trees, experiencing the faithfulness of God's Word, living in anticipation of the land belonging to her son's sons. After all is said and done, Sarah had a good life. She ended it with joy and satisfaction in the Lord her God. But her life has ended, and for Abraham this brings a deep sense of loss. Abraham mourns and weeps for her (Ge 23:2).

Death is a time of loss and grief. We as Christians should be the first to acknowledge this truth. Death is a result of our fall into sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 3:23). We are created as human beings with bodies. It is not the way it is supposed to be when our spirit is removed from our body and we cease to live on this earth. It is a horrible thing that we experience physical death, lose our bodies, and lose physical contact with our loved ones.

Abraham weeps at this loss. So, too, does our Lord. The Bible says that at the funeral of Lazarus, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Jesus enters into our pain, into our loss, into our grief. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses ..." (Heb. 4:15).

2. We Resolve to Live Intentionally Reliant on God When Confronted with Death (Ge 23:3–16). Abraham needs a burial place for his bride. He owns no property. He is a stranger in the land. Yet, the Hittites appear to have great respect for Abraham calling him a "mighty prince" or a "Prince of God." Although the Hittites offer him a gift of land, He will accept no gift from the world. The Hittites by speaking well of Abraham and by offering him a borrowed place to bury his wife are attempting to keep Abraham landless. Though they respect him, at least in words of honor, they are threatened by his presence and seek to deter him from owning land and of losing their own hold on the land.

Abraham will not receive something for nothing from the pagan culture. He pays full price for the chosen place, the cave of Machpelah and the adjacent grove of trees. No human being can say they had a part in making Abraham the great man that he had become. All that Abraham has is a gift not from men but from God.

3. We Live with Bold Faith in Christ When Confronted with Death (Ge 23:17–20). The land transfer is finalized. We also see the final act of Sarah's burial in the cave. The text is clear to highlight the fact that Abraham now owns a piece of the land (vv. 18, 20). The importance of this detail is that it shows us faith, faith that God will fulfill His Word and promise to Abraham by giving the land. He buries Sarah in this first installment of land in anticipation of inheriting the entire land.

In chapter 22 when Abraham offered up Isaac we learned that Abraham believed God could raise the dead (cf. Heb. 11:17–19). Abraham purchases a burial plot in the Promised Land for his now dearly departed wife in anticipation that God will raise her and give her the promise fulfilled.

This burial site would become the burial place of Abraham himself and in future years also of Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob. We read in Hebrews 11:13 that "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them...." The spiritual heritage of one generation was passed on to the next. An intergenerational legacy that anticipates the fulfillment of God's promises. So we do mourn, but we do not mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:51–58).

Conclusion: We commemorate those who have died in the Lord and are with Him waiting for the resurrection of their bodies. We honor them and we honor the Lord by pressing on in the faith of Christ. We are confronted with the truth that we will all face death because of sin. Those who die outside of Christ will be lost in grief and torment for an eternity under God's wrath. But we are comforted by the truth that Christ has overcome sin and death and that those in Him will be in the blessed presence of God who made us and rules over us (Rev. 14:12–13).

James Hastings - THE DEATH OF SARAH

And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.—Gen. 23:2.

1. Into this home, so much happier in its fruitful age than in its hopeful youth, death entered, and "Sarah died in Kiriath-arba." The loss was more than the manhood of the old man could calmly bear, and he "came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." The oak

round which the ivy has grown for years may well feel naked and cold when the clasping fibres are torn from its limbs and bark, and untwisted from its far-spreading roots. The old house will seem bare and forlorn when the honeysuckle which has clustered and blossomed on its walls for generations is rooted up and cast away. So this old man in whose heart, while yet young, love of the beautiful Sarah had struck deep root, into whose large nature that love had grown till its soft presence filled and made fragrant every chamber, clasped and beautified every branch, might well feel, when she fell by his side, as if his own being had been cloven in twain, the fairer section perishing while only the sterner and barer remained. What death spared, or rather produced, was so strong and painful a contrast to the living and once beautiful form he had known and loved, that, fleeing as it were from its presence and touch, he stood before the sons of Heth and cried, "Give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

2. There is something within us which rebels against the ordinary ongoing of the world side by side with our great woe; we feel as if either the whole world must mourn with us, or we must go aside from the world and have our grief out in private. The bustle of life seems so meaningless and incongruous to one whom grief has emptied of all relish for it. We seem to wrong the dead by every return of interest we show in the things of life which no longer interest him. Yet he speaks truly who says:—

When sorrow all our heart would ask,
We need not shun our daily task,
And hide ourselves for calm;
The herbs we seek to heal our woe,
Familiar by our pathway grow,
Our common air is balm.

We must resume our duties, not as if nothing had happened, but proudly forgetting death and putting grief aside as if this life did not need the chastening influence of such realities as we have been engaged with, or as if its business could not be pursued in an affectionate and softened spirit, but acknowledging death as real and as humbling and sobering.

3. So "Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you" (23:3, 4). See how sorrow reveals the heart. When all is going well, we wrap up our secrets; but when sorrow rends the veil, the arcana of the inner temple are laid bare. To look at Abraham as the great and wealthy patriarch, the emir, the chieftain of a mighty clan, we cannot guess his secret thoughts. He had been in the land for sixty-two years; and surely by this time he must have lost his first feelings of loneliness. He is probably as settled and naturalized as any of the princes round. So you might think, until he is widowed of his beloved Sarah! Then, amid his grief, you hear the real man speaking his most sacred thought: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

These are very remarkable words; and they were never forgotten by his children. Speaking of the land of promise, God said, through Moses, to the people, "The land shall not be sold for ever; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." When David and his people made splendid preparations to build the Temple, as their spokesman he said, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee; and of thine own have we given thee; for we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." And, further, in one of his matchless Psalms, he pleads,; "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." So deeply had those words of Abraham sunk into the national mind that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes use of them in the great roll-call of Jewish faith: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13).

¶ They declare plainly that they are seeking their Fatherland. They declare it more plainly for every day of the search, for every night of the accomplished homeward march. It may be said of Christ's lovers, as is said in the song in Hamlet:

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.

"Be shod," said He, "with sandals!" Do you suppose He was only talking to the Seventy, or to the Twelve?... Not saying over all of us, "Are they not all pilgrim souls?" That little verse which I quote, describing the marks of the lover that is on pilgrimage, describes those marks progressively: they are not all gained at once. These sandal shoes were, indeed, put on at the very beginning; but this shell in the hat, that was picked up on the shore of a certain Red Sea which lay by the pilgrim's path: and this staff that he carries was cut on the banks of the Jordan when he descended to it. He steadied himself with it as he passed through. And so, brave soul that hast consented to be a Pilgrim of the Kingdom, know this, that thy definition becomes clearer as the years go by, and thou art more perfectly known as belonging to that heaven-born, heaven-bound company, of whom the most earnest speak like one who

once willed to make an earthly pilgrimage, and, being asked what he wanted, said, "I am nought, I desire nought, except to be at Jerusalem."¹

¶ What Francis desired was what Jesus of Nazareth desired—that men should own as little as possible, that they should work with their hands for their food, and ask others for help when work failed them, that they should not give themselves unnecessary troubles and lay up superfluous possessions, that they should keep themselves free as birds and not let themselves be caught in the snares of the world, that they should go through life with thanks to God for His gifts and with songs of praise for the beauty of His works. "Like strangers and like pilgrims"—these words of an Apostle return over and over again to the mouth of Francis, when he wants to express his ideal. "He wished," says one of his biographers, "that all things should sing pilgrimage and exile."¹

4. The first landed property, then, of the patriarchs is a grave. In this tomb were laid Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah; here, too, Jacob buried Leah, and here Jacob himself desired to be laid after his death, his last words being, "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite." This grave, therefore, becomes the centre of the land. Where the dust of our fathers is, there is our country; and as we may often hear aged persons who are content to die, and have little else to pray for, still express a wish that they may rest in the old well-remembered churchyard where their kindred lie, and may thus in the weakness of death find some comfort, and in its solitariness some companionship from the presence of those who tenderly sheltered the helplessness of their childhood; so does this place of the dead become henceforth the centre of attraction for all Abraham's seed, to which still from Egypt their longings and hopes turn, as to the one magnetic point which, having once been fixed there, binds them ever to the land. This laying of Sarah in the tomb is the real occupation of the land.

¶ My dear young wife and I were landed on Tanna on the 5th November 1858, in excellent health and full of all tender and holy hopes. On the 12th February 1859, she was confined of a son; for two days or so both mother and child seemed to prosper, and our island-exile thrilled with joy! But the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of that joy! My darling's strength showed no signs of rallying. In a moment, altogether unexpectedly, she died on the 3rd March. To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby boy was taken from me after one week's sickness, on the 20th March. Let those who have passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me; as for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows. Stunned by that dreadful loss, in entering upon this field of labour to which the Lord had Himself so evidently led me, my reason seemed for a time almost to give way. Ague and fever, too, laid a depressing and weakening hand upon me, continuously recurring, and reaching oftentimes the very height of its worst burning stages. But I was never altogether forsaken. The ever-merciful Lord sustained me, to lay the precious dust of my beloved ones in the same quiet grave, dug for them close by at the end of the house; in all of which last offices my own hands, despite breaking heart, had to take the principal share! I built the grave round and round with coral blocks and covered the top with beautiful white coral, broken small as gravel; and that spot became my sacred and much-frequented shrine, during all the following months and years when I laboured on for the salvation of these savage Islanders amidst difficulties, dangers, and deaths. Whensoever Tanna turns to the Lord, and is won for Christ, men in after days will find the memory of that spot still green,—where with ceaseless prayers and tears I claimed that land for God in which I had "buried my dead" with faith and hope. But for Jesus, and the fellowship He vouchsafed me there, I must have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave.

QUESTION - [Who was Sarah in the Bible?](https://www.gotquestions.org/Who-was-Sarah-in-the-Bible/) | [GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/)

ANSWER - Sarai began her life in the pagan world of Ur, in the land of the Chaldees, which was located in the area now known as Iraq. She was the half-sister, as well as the wife, of Abram, who would be called Abraham. Sarai and Abram had the same father but different mothers, according to Genesis 20:12. In those days, genetics were purer than they are today, and intermarriage was not detrimental to the offspring of unions between relatives. Also, since people tended to spend their lives clustered together in family units, it was the natural course to choose mates from within their own tribes and families.

When Abram encountered the living God for the first time, he believed Him (Genesis 12:1–4; 15:6) and followed after Him, obeying His command to leave his home to go to a place he had never heard about, much less seen. Sarai went with him.

Their journey brought them to the area called Harran (Genesis 11:31). Abram's father, Terah, passed away in this city, and Abram, Sarai, and their nephew Lot and their retinue continued their journey, allowing God to lead and guide them. With no housing and no modern conveniences, the journey must have been very difficult for all, especially for the women. During their journey, there was a famine in the land, prompting Abram and Sarai to go to Egypt (Genesis 12:10). When they did, Abram feared that the Egyptians would kill him because Sarai was beautiful and they would want her as a wife. So he asked Sarai to tell everyone that she was Abram's sister—which was technically true but also meant to deceive. Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house, and Abram was treated well because of her. But God afflicted Pharaoh's house, and the couple's lie was revealed. Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abram and sent them on their way (Genesis 12). Sarai and Abram came back to the land now known as Israel. They had acquired many possessions and a great deal of wealth in their travels, so Lot and Abram agreed to split up in order that the massive herds of cattle would have adequate ground for grazing (Genesis 13:9).

Sarai was barren, an issue of personal distress as well as cultural shame. Abram was worried that he would have no heir. But God gave Abram a vision in which He promised him a son and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15). God also promised Abraham's offspring the land of Canaan. The problem was that Sarai remained childless. Ten years after God had made His promise to Abram, Sarai, following cultural norms, suggested that Abram have a child with her servant, Hagar. The child born of that union would be counted as Sarai's. Abram agreed, and Hagar conceived a son—Ishmael. But Hagar began to look at Sarai with contempt, and Sarai began to treat Hagar harshly, so much so that Hagar ran away. God met Hagar in the desert and encouraged her to return to Abram and Sarai, which she did (Genesis 16).

Thirteen years after Ishmael was born, God reaffirmed His covenant with Abram, this time giving him the sign of circumcision as well as changing his name. Abram, meaning "high father," became Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude." God also changed Sarai's name, meaning "my princess," to Sarah, meaning "mother of nations." God told Abraham that He would give him a son through Sarah. This son—Isaac—would be the one with whom God would establish His covenant. God would bless Ishmael as well, but Isaac was the son of promise through whom the nations would be blessed (Genesis 17). Isaac means "he laughs." Abraham laughed that, at 100 years old, he could have a son with Sarah, who was 90 years old and had been barren her entire life. Sarah, too, laughed at the prospect (Genesis 18:9–15).

Shortly after God promised Abraham and Sarah a son, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but He rescued Abraham's nephew Lot (Genesis 19). Abraham and Sarah journeyed toward the Negeb and sojourned in Gerar (Genesis 20:1). Abraham again asked Sarah to lie about her identity, and the king of Gerar took Sarah to be his wife. But God protected Sarah, through whom Isaac would be born. King Abimelech had no relations with her. God warned Abimelech in a dream, and the king not only sacrificed to God in repentance, but he gave gifts to Abraham and Sarah and allowed them to dwell in the land (Genesis 20).

God remained faithful to His promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son. They named him Isaac, and "Sarah said, 'God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.' And she added, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age'" (Genesis 21:6–7). Though she may have previously laughed in disbelief and secrecy, now Sarah laughed with joy and wanted her situation to be known. God had been faithful to His promise and blessed her.

Unfortunately, the tension between Sarah and Hagar remained. When Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a feast. But Ishmael, Hagar's son, was mocking Isaac. Sarah told Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael and that Ishmael should never share the inheritance with Isaac. Abraham was distressed at this, but God told him to do what Sarah said and that his descendants would be numbered through Isaac. Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, and God provided for their needs (Genesis 21:8–21). It was after this that God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was willing to give up his son, trusting that God would somehow still remain true to His promise (Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:17–19).

Sarah was a simple, beautiful (Genesis 12:11), and very human woman; she made mistakes, just like we all do. She stepped ahead of God and tried to handle His business on her own by foolishly sending her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham to bring forth the child God had promised. In so doing, she ignited a feud that has lasted for 4,000 years (Genesis 16:3). She laughed in unbelief when, at 90 years old, she heard an angel tell Abraham that she would become pregnant (Genesis 18:12), but she gave birth to the promised child and lived another 30 years, dying at the age of 127 (Genesis 23:1).

Hebrews 11:11 uses Sarah as an example of faith: "And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise."

First Peter 3:5–6 uses Sarah as an example of a holy woman who hoped in God and who adorned herself by submitting to her husband. Sarah willingly left her home and stepped out into the unknown to follow Abraham, as he followed the directions of a God with whom she was unfamiliar at the time. She endured much to try to provide an heir for her husband and to keep her husband safe in dangerous lands. In the end, she had faith enough to believe that she and her husband, at the ages of 90 and 100, would produce the promised heir, Isaac. Although she lived in a world of danger and confusion, Sarah stood firm in her commitment to her husband and to God, and her commitment was rewarded with blessing.

Spurgeon - Into the holiest and happiest households death will come, but faith learns how to make him welcome.

J J Knapp - From Before His Dead Gen. 23:2

It appears as if Sarah died while Abraham was absent, and it must have been a rude homecoming to find the faithful companion of his life as a dead one. At least we read that he came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. However, no remorse had to be part of his sorrow like for so many who have embittered each other's life and who stand with despair at the coffin. It is good to mark this sorrow in the father of all faithful. It shows us that the abundance of tears are not only part of the world, but are also the share of the

children of God. Grace does not make the heart without any feeling and the fear of the Lord does not suppress pure humanity, but rather hones it by sanctifying it, owning it and crowning it.

Does it not sound tenderly from the mouth of this hero of faith when he speaks so childlike-deep of his dead one twice? How does this language go directly to the heart, because, is it not true that they are ours, twice ours, the dead that we bear off to lay them to rest in the dust.

Nevertheless, there is restraint in Abraham's sorrow, now that he had to lose the royal wife, with whom he had walked through the years side by side. It says it so plainly: "And Abraham stood up from before his dead," to personally bring everything in order for the last journey and to buy a burial estate for her from the sons of Heth, in whose midst the lonely one felt himself more than ever to be a stranger and a sojourner,—this was the main duty that called him.

This arising from before his dead instructs us that we may not bury ourselves in the house of the dead in a passionate sorrow, that makes us to forget the care for the internment of our beloved dead, to leave everything to the help of strangers. It rather be a privilege to follow the drive of the heart, and to give the last duty of love not out of our hands more than absolutely necessary. To stand up from our crushing sorrow. To personally prepare everything for the funeral with a soul full of tears. And, if it is half possible, to buy our own grave, in which soon the whole family shall rest, like they used to live together. After all, it is a painful thought that rented graves must be emptied after some time and that the bones are then placed in a common grave. If it is not possible we have to accept this, but a personal grave is preferable. And if we know that Christ has gone before us in the grave, it becomes a place of rest to us, in which we await together the morning of the resurrection.

Genesis 23:3 Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,

CSB Then Abraham got up from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites:

ESV And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites,

NIV Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said,

NLT Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders,

- **Heth:** Ge 23:5,7 10:15 25:10 27:46 49:30 1Sa 26:6 2Sa 23:39

FROM MOURNING TO MOVEMENT

Then Abraham rose from before his dead - Literally "And Abraham arose from upon the face of his dead." Abraham arose **from before the dead** because he believed in the resurrection of the dead.

And spoke to the sons of Heth, saying - **Heth** was a the second son of Canaan, and the ancestor of the Hittites (Ge. 10:15, 18; Dt. 7:1), who dwelt in the vicinity of Hebron (Ge. 23:3, 7). Abraham was preparing to initiate one of the most significant transactions in Scripture, the first legal purchase of land in the promised inheritance. It is notable that Abraham had received divine promises, yet he did not presume upon them.

NET Note - Some translate the Hebrew term "Heth" as "**Hittites**" here (also in Ge 23:5, 7, 10, 16, 18, 20), but this gives the impression that these people were the classical Hittites of Anatolia. However, there is no known connection between these sons of Heth, apparently a Canaanite group (see Gen 10:15), and the Hittites of Asia Minor. **BORROW** [H. A. Hoffner, Jr., "Hittites," Peoples of the Old Testament World, 152–53.](#)

It is interesting that Heth is a **Canaanite**, the very people God had promised to dispossess before Abraham's descendants.

Genesis 15:18-21+ (ABRAHAM KNEW GOD HAD PROMISED THE LAND OF THE CANAANITES TO HIS DESCENDANTS) On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the **Canaanite** and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

THOUGHT - What does it look like to live by faith in the midst of unfulfilled promises? Abraham owned **none** of the land. He must **buy** a burial plot from the very people God said would be removed. What does this teach us? God's Promises Are Sure, Even When Not Immediate. Abraham believed God's promise,

but he did not yet see its fulfillment. He lived in the land as a sojourner, not a possessor. This is a powerful reminder to every believer for we too live as aliens and strangers and we need faith like Abraham to wait on the promises that will be consummated at the return of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham's faith was not in what he could see, but in the God Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Hebrews 6:12 encourages us to be "imitators of those (LIKE ABRAHAM) who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

QUESTION - [Who were the Hittites?](#) | [GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Though rather obscure in the scope of world history, the Hittite nation played an important role in the history of the Old Testament, and has since helped verify the accuracy of the Bible. For many years, archaeologists and historians knew nothing of the Hittites, and critics of the Bible treated the Hittites as proof of the "[mythology](#)" contained in the Bible. The critics reasoned that, since they had no archaeological evidence of a Hittite civilization, it must never have existed, and the Bible must perforce be wrong. However, many archaeological discoveries, beginning in 1876, have since proved that the Hittites were a powerful people in the 15th and 16th centuries B.C.

*Abraham was well acquainted with the Hittites,
and he bought the burial cave for Sarah from them in Genesis 23.*

The Hittites are mentioned more than 50 times in the Bible. They were descended from Heth, the son of Canaan (and great-grandson of Noah, Genesis 10:15). They ruled the area of Syria and eastern Turkey and battled with Egypt and Babylon for territory. Babylonian and Assyrian records refer to Syria and Israel as "Hatti-land," and Joshua 1:4 includes their territory as a great part of the Promised Land for Israel. Abraham was well acquainted with the Hittites, and he bought the burial cave for Sarah from them in Genesis 23. Esau took wives from among the Hittites (Genesis 26:34), and Uriah the Hittite was one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 11:3). The Hittites are mentioned throughout the kingdom years and even after the Jews' return from captivity (Ezra 9:1). It is assumed that the Hittites were eventually absorbed into the surrounding cultures and lost their distinctive identity.

The religion of the Hittites was a pluralistic worship of nature. They believed in various gods over the elements of earth, sky, weather, etc., and these gods were often listed as witnesses on treaties and oaths. As in most other pagan societies, this nature worship led to despicable practices which brought the wrath of the true God on them. When God delivered Canaan to the Israelites, one of the given reasons for destroying the inhabitants was to eliminate the pagan practices which would ensnare God's people (Exodus 23:28-33). God didn't want His people following the idolatry of the Hittites.

The descriptions of land transactions and personal covenants recorded in Genesis bear a strong resemblance to Hittite records discovered by archaeologists. King Telepinus was the greatest Hittite legislator, and his law codes bear a striking resemblance to the order and arrangement of the Law of Moses, although the subject matter is different. The discoveries concerning the Hittite kingdom have been a great support to the details recorded in the Bible.

Norman Geisler - GENESIS 23—How could the sons of Heth have been in Hebron in 2050 B.C. when their kingdom was in what is now modern Turkey? [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: Heth was the progenitor of the Hittites, whose kingdom was located in what is now modern Turkey. But, according to some archaeological evidence, the Hittites did not become a prominent force in the Middle East until the reign of Mursilis I, which began about 1620 B.C., and who captured the city of Babylon in 1600 B.C. However, several times in Genesis 23 reference is made to Abraham's encounter with the sons of Heth, who controlled Hebron about 2050 B.C. How could the Bible claim the presence of Hittites in control of Hebron so many years before they became a significant force in the area?

SOLUTION: More recent archaeological evidence from cuneiform tablets describes conflicts in Anatolia (modern Turkey), among the various Hittite principalities from about 1950 to 1850 B.C. Even before this conflict, however, there was a race of non-Indo-Europeans called Hattians. These people were subdued by invaders about 2300 to 2000 B.C. These Indo-European invaders adopted the name Hatti. In Semitic languages, like Hebrew, Hatti and Hitti would be written with the same letters, because only the consonants were written, not the vowels.

In the days of Ramses II of Egypt, the military strength of the Hittites was sufficient to precipitate a non-aggression pact between Egypt and the Hittite empire which set a boundary between them. At this time, the Hittite empire reached as far south as Kadesh on the Orontes river (modern Asi). However, additional evidence indicates that the Hittites actually penetrated further south into Syria and Palestine. Although the Hittite kingdom did not reach its zenith until the second half of the 14th century, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate a Hittite presence in Hebron at the time of Abraham, which was significant enough to control the area

The phrase Abraham uses, “a stranger and sojourner,” is the inner meaning of the term “Hebrew.” Abraham could never say that he was at home in Canaan, he left his home never to find another on earth. The thought of pilgrimage sank deep into the Hebrew mind, and the note of the sojourner is, essentially the note of the Christian. Instead of being pilgrims and strangers on the earth, we become citizens of this order of things and entrench ourselves here, and the statements of Jesus have no meaning. The genius of the Spirit of God is to make us pilgrims, consequently there is the continual un-at-home-ness in this world (cf. Philippians 3:20). It is a matter of indifference to the Spirit of God where we are, and it ought to be equally indifferent to us. As saints, we are cursed, not blessed, by patriotism. The idea of nations is man’s, not God’s. When Our Lord establishes His Kingdom there will be no nations, only the great Kingdom of God. That is why His Kingdom is not built up on civilised life.

John Butler - Genesis 23—Sepulcher for Sarah. Abraham bought a grave for Sarah which became a very famous grave. •Need for the sepulcher: Sarah’s death (she died at 127 years of age). •Negotiations for the sepulcher: this included the confession of Abraham that he was a stranger; the concern of Abraham to give a respectful burial to Sarah; the compliments for Abraham by the people selling the grave to Abraham—they recognized Abraham’s excellent character; the courtesies of Abraham in the way he conducted himself during the purchasing of the sepulcher; and the compensation from Abraham which involved his prompt payment of the negotiated price for the sepulcher.

Genesis 23:4 “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

NET "I am a temporary settler among you. Grant me ownership of a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead."

BGT π ροικος κα παρεπ δημος γ ε μι μεθ μ ν δ τε ο ν μοι κτ σιν τ φου μεθ μ ν κα θ ψω τ ν νεκρ ν μου π μο

LXE I am a sojourner and a stranger among you, give me therefore possession of a burying-place among you, and I will bury my dead away from me.

CSB "I am a foreign resident among you. Give me a burial site among you so that I can bury my dead."

ESV "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

NIV "I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

NLT "Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial."

- **stranger:** Ge 17:8 47:9 Lev 25:23 1Ch 29:15 Ps 39:12 105:12,13 119:19 Heb 11:9,13-16 1Pe 2:11
- **burial site:** Ge 3:19 49:30 50:13 Job 30:23 Ec 6:3 12:5,7 Ac 7:5
- **bury:** Ge 23:19

Related Passages:

Leviticus 25:23 'The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but **aliens and sojourners** with Me.

1 Chronicles 29:14-15 "But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You. 15 "For we are **sojourners** before You, and **tenants**, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.

Psalms 39:12 "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a **stranger** with You, A **sojourner** like all my fathers.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Hebrews 11:13-16+ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having

welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

I am a stranger (Lxx - [paroikos](#)) **and a sojourner** (Lxx - [parepidemos](#)) **among you** - Abraham has been in Canaan about 62 years and still does not own even a piece of the land, even though God had promised his descendants would possess the land. Abraham's self-description shows his recognition that earth was not his home, for he was looking for something else as noted by the writer of Hebrews...

"By faith he (ABRAHAM) lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:9-10+)

Abraham's first recorded words after Sarah's death are not of despair but of faith in motion, emphasizing he knew the promised land was a promise that awaited future fulfillment. His speech also reveals his humility, patience, and trust in God's timing and so although he was a mighty man, he did not seize the land claiming it was his by divine right but makes a request as a "*foreigner and a stranger*."

Abraham was the heir of all this land according to God's promise and yet acknowledged he was a stranger before the sons of Heth. Such is the posture of faith in every age, content to wait for God's hour, yet walking with quiet confidence amid the sons of earth.

*Faith does not demand the promise now;
it speaks patiently, knowing the promise is sure.*

Ricky Skaggs sang Abraham's theme song - [This World is not my home](#).

This world is not my home
I'm just a-passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me
From heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home
In this world anymore

Steven Curtis Chapman's song [Not Home Yet](#) would have also be apropos for Abraham (and Sarah).

THOUGHT -Would you say those two preceding songs are the theme songs of your life, beloved of God? What are you living for, for time or for eternity? Do you live as if your final home is here on earth? Are you so caught up with your life here and now that you are forgetting to live for the eternal? God wants us to live for tomorrow. He wants us to have Vertical Vision. Therefore, we need to imitate Abraham and live our life as pilgrims on the way to our true home—the heavenly Jerusalem. Life rushes by at such a fast rate. It is therefore essential that we make intentional choices to live not for this world, but for the world which is to come. As John reminds "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." (1Jn 2:17+)

Give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight - If we stopped here we might think Abraham was pulling a power grab telling Heth to **give** him the land, for after all it was the land God had promised him in covenant. But in the context, we see he actually purchases the land rather than seizing it. Thus some versions like NIV render it "Sell me some property...." Though Abraham had every right to claim the land by divine promise, he did not act presumptuously but was willing to wait patiently. And so he approached the Canaanites with respect and humility, asking to purchase land rather than seizing it. Abraham trusted that God would fulfill His word in His perfect time.

*The patriarchs understood that their death was not the end of life. ...
God had a future kingdom prepared, one where the Lord God will reign as King.*

Gotquestions - One reason the burial place was so important to the patriarchs has to do with God's promise of the land. God had

promised that Abraham's descendants would possess the land where he had been buried (Genesis 12:1-3). Jacob knew that, if he was buried in Canaan, his tomb would forever remain within the Promised Land. ([See below for 4 reasons burial in the Promised Land was important](#))

Allen Ross on The purchase of the Cave of Machpelah in the land - This incident includes many similarities with Canaanite and Hittite laws. (See James B. Pritchard, ed., [Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament](#), Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 188-96, par. 46 on feudal obligations for the whole field, par. 47 for gifts that nullify feudal obligations, as well as pars. 48 and 169.) Other laws from Ugarit (in Syria) are also relevant to this event. The owners of the field were Hittites (Ge 23:3, 5, 7, 10, 16, 18, 20). Even though the great Hittite Empire (Josh. 1:4) never extended down this far, pockets of Hittites could have settled here and kept their customs even though speaking a Semitic language. Also even though the written Hittite laws were dated later than these events, those laws could have been oral traditions before they were put in writing.

Spurgeon - Dear as our beloved ones maybe in life, we cannot endure to look upon their dead bodies, but affection itself demands that we hide them in the dust. What an instructive expression is that,—“the possession of a burial place;” it is often the only landed estate the godly possess.

F B Meyer - Genesis 23:4 I am a Stranger and a Sojourner.

The minute details of this purchase are recorded to emphasize the fact that, though the whole land was Abraham's by the Divine gift, he would not enter on its possession until God's time was come. We may be sure of certain blessings — ours in God's safe keeping — though they are withheld until the moment that his wisdom sees best. It was a touching confession. The aged patriarch had for long years owned no settled dwelling-place. After years in the land of promise he was still without land enough for a grave.

Faith cannot be satisfied with the things of this world. — The sons of Heth had goods and lands, but Abraham did not envy them; he had caught a glimpse of the city which hath foundations, and this so satisfied and attracted him that he had no desire for aught that Palestine could yield.

Faith detaches us from the present. — We are content to dwell in tents, because here we have no abiding place. The shows and vanities of the world, in comparison with the vision of eternal realities, are as the glare of the streets compared with the steady glory of the constellations of the night.

Faith prompts to confession. — It bewrayeth itself. We should be careful and orderly in our business arrangements; but, in our dealings with our fellows, in our justice, fairness, honor, the lightness of our hold on the present world, we should make it manifest that we are seeking a country not our own.

Faith cannot be ashamed. — The God who prompted it must satisfy it, else He would have reason to be ashamed of having failed the souls that trusted Him. But now He is not ashamed to be called our God, because He has prepared for us a city.

QUESTION - [Why was a burial place so important in the Bible?](#) | [GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - In Genesis 49:29-32, we read Jacob's instructions about his burial place: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at [Machpelah](#), to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah—the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.” Obviously, Jacob was very concerned with his burial place, and he knew the exact history of the spot he had chosen. When Joseph was approaching death, he also gave instructions concerning his remains (Genesis 50:25).

(1) **One reason the burial place was so important to the patriarchs has to do with God's promise of the land.** God had promised that Abraham's descendants would possess the land where he had been buried (Genesis 12:1-3). Jacob knew that, if he was buried in Canaan, his tomb would forever remain within the Promised Land. The fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would all be buried there—three generations—emphasized their belief in God's promise to give this land to their family.

(2) **A second important reason was that Jacob wanted to be buried with his family.** Still today, many people prefer to be laid to rest alongside family members as a sign of love and solidarity. In ancient times, it was considered an honor to be buried in a family plot. Many a king's death is recorded as he “rested with his ancestors” (e.g., 2 Kings 14:16; 2 Chronicles 21:1). Jacob's desire to be buried with his wife, father, and grandfather naturally displayed his deep love for them.

(3) **A third reason Jacob desired to be buried in the cave of Machpelah was that it was land he and his family owned.** Jacob's grandfather (Abraham) had purchased it from the Hittites. Though Jacob had been given land in Egypt to live in, he did not consider it his own. His home was in Canaan, the land where he had been born and raised and where he wished to be buried.

(4) **A fourth reason for the patriarchs' insistence on their burial place in Canaan was that they held on to the hope of a future kingdom.** Hebrews 11:9-10 says, "By faith [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." Verse 16 adds, "But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."

The patriarchs understood that their death was not the end of life. Instead, God had a future kingdom prepared, one where the Lord God will reign as King.

Genesis 23:5 The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,

The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,

Genesis 23:6 "Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead."

BGT μ κ ρ ι ε κ ο υ σ ο ν δ μ ν β α σ ι λ ε ς πα ρ θε ο ε σ ν μ ν ν τ ο ς κ λ ε κ τ ο ς μ ν η μ ε ο ι ς μ ν θ ψ ο ν τ ν νε κ ρ ν σου ο δε ς γ ρ μ ν τ μ ν η μ ε ο ν α τ ο κ ω λ σ ε ι π σ ο τ ο θ ψ α ι τ ν νε κ ρ ν σου κε

LXE but hear us; thou art in the midst of us a **king from God**; bury thy dead in our choice sepulchres, for not one of us will by any means withhold his sepulchre from thee, so that thou shouldest not bury thy dead there.

CSB "Listen to us, lord. You are God's chosen one among us. Bury your dead in our finest burial place. None of us will withhold from you his burial place for burying your dead."

ESV "Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead."

NIV "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

NLT "Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way."

YLT 'Hear us, my lord; a prince of God art thou in our midst; in the choice of our burying-places bury thy dead: none of us his burying-place doth withhold from thee, from burying thy dead.'

- **my lord:** Ge 18:12 24:18,35 31:35 32:4,5,18 42:10 44:5,8 Ex 32:22 Ru 2:13
- **a mighty prince:** Heb. a prince of God, Ge 21:22 Isa 45:14 1Jn 3:1,2
- **prince:** Ge 13:2 14:14 24:35

THE WITNESS OF A GOD-FEARING LIFE

Hear (imperative) **us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us** - Note other versions - **CSB** = "You are *God's chosen one* among us" **ESV** = you are a *prince of God* among us." The Hittites acknowledge Abraham's integrity and divine favor, even though he was a foreigner and pilgrim, calling him "*a mighty prince among us*" (literally, "*a prince of God*" — נָשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים, *nasi Elohim*). This verse reveals the respect Abraham commanded among the nations because of his godly character and consistent faith.

THOUGHT - Abraham is an illustration of one of my favorite proverbs (one I have experienced first hand) Pr 16:7 which says "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Though he lived as an alien in Canaan, his faith, integrity, and peaceable dealings commanded honor among pagan Hittites and Canaanites. Indeed, Abraham's testimony among the godless pagans fulfilled the purpose God intended for His covenant people, to be a light to the nations (Isa 49:6). That is still His purpose for us beloved, Jesus calling (commanding) us to "**Let your light shine** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mt 5:16+) Similarly Paul writes "prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom

you appear as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:15+) Someone has said that people will drive from all over to see a fire burn. The same could be true of our churches and our personal lives. If God's Spirit was moving mightily in our lives, people would want to know what is going on!

NO BORROWED BURIAL SITE FOR SARAH

Bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead- (See [MacDonald's analysis](#) of their bargaining back and forth) The idea is that "You are welcome to use any of our family tombs you choose." Free burial sites! This would have saved Abraham money! In ancient Hittite and Canaanite societies, burial sites were family property, often considered sacred and rarely sold. To offer someone a place in your family tomb was an extraordinary gesture of honor and respect. This was polite Near Eastern hyperbole — a formal way of showing great honor and generosity. The Hittites were not literally offering to open every tomb, but expressing that Abraham's request was fully acceptable and he was held in high esteem. Abraham, however, was not willing to accept a borrowed tomb. Out of faith in God's promise of the land, he insisted on purchasing a tomb (cave) outright (Ge 23:9, 16–20). He reminds me of the words of David "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver." (2Sa 24:24+) In Abraham's case, the field and cave at Machpelah would stand as a legal witness that Abraham believed God's promise of the land.

*The man who lives for eternity
cannot be content with borrowed graves.*

Oswald Chambers - 5. In the Place of Sublimity (Genesis 23:6)

The Hittites had no word for "gentleman," so they called Abraham "a prince of God." Abraham kept company with God until he became a partaker of the Divine nature. It is impossible for a saint, no matter what his experience, to keep right with God if he will not take the trouble to spend time with God. In order to keep the mind and heart awake to God's high ideals you have to keep coming back again and again to the primal source. If you do not, you will be crushed into degeneracy. Just as a poet or an artist must keep his soul brooding on the right lines, so a Christian must keep the sense of God's call always awake. Spend plenty of time with God; let other things go, but don't neglect Him. And beware of practical work. We are not here to do work for God, we are here to be workers with Him, those through whom He can do His work.

Genesis 23:7 So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

- Ge 18:2 19:1 Pr 18:24 Ro 12:17,18 Heb 12:14 1Pe 3:8

A PILGRIM'S GRACE AMONG THE PAGANS

So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of HethIn Near Eastern culture, standing often marked a transition from private grief to public business — a sign of readiness, respect, and formality. The Hebrew verb [shachah](#) (שָׁחָה) (Lxx - [proskuneo](#)) means "to bow down, to prostrate oneself." It would express reverence or respect toward another person. In the context of God, it was used to express worship, although that is not the sense in this context. This gesture was a courteous, public acknowledgment of the Hittites' kindness and willingness to listen to him. It was Abraham's way of saying, "I honor you; I recognize your generosity."

Spurgeon - Courtesy is due even to the ungodly. A believer should not be any the less gentle in manners because gracious in heart

In the Hittite legal tradition, land transactions occurred at the city gate, before witnesses. Bowing was part of the protocol of diplomacy — demonstrating humility and goodwill before formal negotiation. Even though Abraham was the covenant heir of God's promise to possess the land (Gen 17:8), he does not act presumptuously. Instead, he submits to local law and custom, securing the property in a way that is peaceful, transparent, and honorable. Abraham knew the land was his by divine promise, but he was willing to wait for God's future timing. Abraham's actions display what it means to live as a pilgrim — firm in faith, yet gracious in conduct. He honors others while trusting the unseen God.

*Faith never behaves arrogantly.
True faith walks humbly with His God.*
--Read Micah 6:8+

Genesis 23:8 And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me,

- entreat (KJV): 1Ki 2:17 Lu 7:3,4 Heb 7:26 1Jn 2:1,2

ABRAHAM'S FAITH ACTING WITH COURTESY AND CONVICTION

And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish for me Literally, “if it is with your soul” — an idiom meaning, if it pleases you, or if you are willing from the heart. It reflects Abraham's deference to local custom, respect of and submission to the local authority, not presumption, even though they are pagans.

To bury my dead out of my sight - Literally “from before my face,” indicating that he wishes to remove Sarah's body from view.

Hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me - Abraham knows Ephron owns the cave of Machpelah and requests the Hittites to act as intermediaries, following the customary legal procedure of their culture. He does not demand or circumvent; he appeals respectfully through proper channels, honoring the social order of the land.

In Hittite culture, land transfers required public negotiation before witnesses, typically at the city gate. Abraham's words show integrity as he avoids any private or manipulative deal. It also speaks of his faith, as he seeks to invest in the promised land, even though he doesn't yet possess it (cf. Heb 11:9, 13). And finally by involving the elders, Abraham ensures the purchase will be legally binding and publicly recognized, a permanent testimony of his faith in God's promise. Faith acts honorably, even among unbelievers, trusting God to accomplish His promises through proper means. Faith not only believes God's promises, but it also behaves in ways that reflect the God Who made them.

Keith Krell - Abraham, in faith, wishes to “stake his claim” in the Promised Land by buying a cave which was used traditionally as a tomb. The sons of Heth are currently in control of this area of Canaan so Abraham proceeds to make the request of them. Again, this is a reminder of how little of the promises of God that Abraham had actually received to this point. He did not own even enough land to bury his wife, but rather he had to buy it from a people who were cursed by God (see Ge 9:24; 10:15).

Oswald Chambers - 3. In the Place of Sentiment (Genesis 23:8-9)

Sentiment is thought occasioned by feeling; sentimentality is feeling occasioned by thought. Sentiment plays an important part in human affairs. and no sentiment is more sacred than that connected with our dead. Sentimentality is produced by watching things we are not in. Go through a disaster or bereavement, and the emotions produced are the bedrock of feeling which makes human life worthy. As Christians we should conduct our lives on the high sentiment which is the outcome of a transaction with the Lord Jesus Christ. If our testimony is hard, it is because we have gone through no crisis with God, there is no heartbroken emotion behind it. If we have been through a crisis in which human feeling has been ploughed to its inner centre by the Lord, our testimony will convey all the weight of the greatness of God along with human greatness. It is essential to go through a crisis with God which costs you something, otherwise your devotional life is not worth anything. You cannot be profoundly moved by nothing, or by doctrine; you can only be profoundly moved by devotion.

Verses 8-9. The story of Abraham's palaver with the Hittites conveys the idea that they had respect for the true greatness of Abraham.

Bending before men is a recognition that there does dwell in that presence of our brother something divine.
Carlyle*

We all recognise human trappings; only one in a thousand recognises human greatness. We bow not to greatness, but to the trappings of money and of birth. If I bow because I must, I am a conventional fraud; if I bow because I recognise true greatness, it is a sign that I am being emancipated. The greatest humiliation for a Christian is to recognise that he has ignored true greatness because it was without trappings. If the Pharisees had been reverent towards true greatness, they would not have treated the Nazarene Carpenter as they did.

Genesis 23:9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.”

NET if he will **sell** me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him; it is at the end of his field. Let him sell it to

me publicly for the full price, so that I may own it as a burial site." ([NET Note](#) on **sell** - Heb "give." This is used here (also a second time later in this verse) as an idiom for "sell"; see the note on the word "grant" in v. 4.)

- **much money:** Heb. full money, Ro 12:17 13:8

FAITH PURCHASES POSSESSION IN THE PROMISED LAND

That he may give me the cave of [Machpelah](#) which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give (sell) it to me in your presence for a burial site. Beneath his courtesy lies quiet conviction. Abraham is not asking for charity ("give" is better understood as "sell") but is acting in faith, preparing to secure a permanent possession in the very land God had promised him. By asking them to approach Ephron, the rightful owner of the cave of Machpelah, he follows due process, ensuring the transaction is transparent, honorable, and legally binding.

[Ryrie Study Bible](#) - Abraham wanted to buy only the cave of Machpelah, but Ephron wished also to sell him the field in which it was located. Hittite law required Ephron to be responsible for dues on the entire property if he sold Abraham only the cave, but not if he sold him the entire parcel.

Genesis 23:10 Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying,

NET (Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth.) Ephron the Hethite replied to Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth— before all who entered the gate of his city—

- **all** : Ge 23:18 34:20,24 Ru 4:1-4 Job 29:7 Isa 28:6
- **his**: Ge 24:10 Mt 9:1 Lu 2:3,4

Related Passages

Ruth 4:1-4+ Now Boaz **went up to the gate and sat down there**, and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. 2 He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it."

NEGOTIATION AT THE CITY GATE

Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth- sitting among the children of Heth, at the gate of the city, where all public business was transacted. Ephron, though a chief man, might have been personally unknown to Abraham; but now he answers for himself, making a free tender of the field and cave to Abraham, in the presence of all the people, which amounted to a legal conveyance to the Patriarch.

and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing (lit - ears) **of the sons of Heth** (witnesses making this legally binding); **even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying** - The "gate of his city" was not merely a door, but the public forum of the town, the place where elders gathered, legal cases were heard, deals were struck, and citizens passing "in and out" were witnesses. The phrase underscores that the negotiation between Abraham and Ephron was public, formal, and witnessed by the community. In other words: transparent, lawful, and binding.

By using this precise legal language, Genesis underscores that Abraham's transaction with Ephron was conducted with full transparency and integrity. He did not rely on casual negotiation or favor but followed the established Hittite legal customs before witnesses at the city gate. In doing so, Abraham secured not only the land itself but also public recognition of his rightful ownership. His actions demonstrate faith expressed through prudence—trusting God's promise while acting responsibly within the world's structures.

NET Note on **hearing** - Literally - Heb "ears." By metonymy the "ears" stand for the presence or proximity (i.e., within earshot) of the persons named.

Genesis 23:11 “No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.”

NET "No, my lord! Hear me out. I sell you both the field and the cave that is in it. In the presence of my people I sell it to you. Bury your dead."

ESV "No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead."

NIV "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

NLT "No, my lord," he said to Abraham, "please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead."

- **my lord:** Ge 23:6 2Sa 24:20-24 1Ch 21:22-24 Isa 32:8
- **in the:** Ge 23:18 Nu 35:30 De 17:6 19:15 Ru 4:1,4,9,11 Jer 32:7-12 Lu 19:24

No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.” At first glance, Ephron seems to be offering the land as a gift. But in the ancient Hittite (and wider Near-Eastern) world, this was a customary polite formula in public negotiations: “I give it to you” was a courtesy expression of generosity, spoken before witnesses at the city gate. Everyone present knew it was the opening round of bargaining, not an unconditional donation. If Abraham had accepted the “gift,” it would have meant Ephron retained legal rights to the property and could later reclaim it. Therefore, the “offer” was honor-language, not a legal transfer. In this culture, **public generosity enhanced one’s honor**, but so did ensuring a **proper price** was paid. Ephron is positioning himself as a generous man before the elders while expecting Abraham to insist on payment.

David Guzik explains "I give" as the "way of negotiating the price was typical of ancient and modern practices in that culture. As a gesture of kindness, the selling party may offer to give the property in question to the buyer, until the buyer insists on paying a price. Ephron the Hittite followed the cultural customs of bargaining. First, the seller offered to give the item. Then, when that was refused, the seller suggested a price, which he claimed was modest but was really very high. This was understood to be the starting point, and from there the bargaining began.

NET Note - Heb "give." The perfect tense has here a present nuance; this is a formal, legally binding declaration. Abraham asked only for a burial site/cave within the field; Ephron agrees to sell him the entire field.

Genesis 23:12 And Abraham bowed before the people of the land.

- Ge 23:7 18:2 19:1

And Abraham bowed before the people of the land- This is the second time Abraham bowed ([shachah](#) (שָׁחָה; Lxx - [proskuneo](#)) (Ge 23:7). Here, the gesture follows Ephron’s offer to “give” the land (Ge 23:11), and it comes immediately before Abraham insists on paying the full price (Ge 23:13). So this bow expresses Abraham’s respect and gratitude for Ephron’s apparent generosity, his acknowledgment of the witnesses and local custom, and his graceful courtesy, even while holding firm to his convictions to make a purchase. In ancient Near Eastern culture bowing during a transaction was a formal courtesy gesture that conveyed goodwill and mutual respect. It also functioned as a social “lubricant” in negotiation, serving to soften any tensions while affirming one’s sincerity. To bow before insisting on payment was Abraham’s way of saying, “I honor your kindness, but my conscience compels me to do this rightly.”

*He bowed before men,
because he had already bowed before God.*

Genesis 23:13 He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.”

- I will: Ge 14:22,23 2Sa 24:24 Ac 20:35 Ro 13:8 Php 4:5-8 Col 4:5 Heb 13:5

ABRAHAM'S OFFER TO BUY THE FIELD

He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there.” Abraham lived for 62 years in the land God promised him before owning any of it. He does not just want to “borrow” it but wants to buy it for full price. This would give him a “toehold” in the Promised Land! Abraham knew that a gift could later be contested, while a purchase witnessed at the gate would be permanent and legally binding.

Genesis 23:14 Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

Genesis 23:15 “My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.”

Genesis 23:15 "Hear me, my lord. The land is worth 400 pieces of silver, but what is that between me and you? So bury your dead." (The word "worth" has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.)

- **shekels:** Ex 30:15 Eze 45:12

AN EXORBITANT PRICE FOR ABRAHAM

My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.” - This is a high price for those days. Ephron's words follow Abraham's insistence on paying full price (v. 13). He finally names the amount—“four hundred shekels of silver.” However, his wording is still cloaked in polite diplomacy: “What is that between me and you?” This is not a casual remark of friendship; it is a formal Near Eastern bargaining idiom meaning, “You and I are friends, so the amount is of no consequence—but this is the price.” In other words he is saying something like “We are honorable men; you understand what it's worth—four hundred shekels.” This was the expected next step in the negotiation ritual: first the “I give it to you” courtesy (Ge 23:11), then the “but if you insist, here's the price” response (Ge 23:15).

Many centuries later Jeremiah buys a field for only seventeen shekels of silver (Jer 32:9). David paid only one-eighth that amount—50 shekels of silver—for the purchase of the temple site from Araunah (2Sa 24:24). Nevertheless Abraham bought the field according to those extremely unfair terms and price.

NET Note - Four hundred pieces of silver. The standards for weighing money varied considerably in the ancient Near East, but the generally accepted weight for the shekel is 11.5 grams (0.4 ounce). This makes the weight of silver here 4.6 kilograms, or 160 ounces (about 10 pounds).

David O'Brien - [Today's Handbook for Solving Bible Difficulties - Page 249](#)

Question 67 If the Hittites thought so highly of Abraham, why did they take money for the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 23:1–20)?

This question comes up every time I teach Old Testament History, and the answer is all wrapped up in our way of doing business. Here in the west, business is strictly a financial transaction. In the Ancient Near East, however, and in most of the Third World today, business was and is a social transaction as well.

A nineteenth century traveller to the Holy Land once recorded his exasperation at trying to buy something from an Arab merchant.

His greetings, the traveler recorded, were obsequious and fawning, wasting almost forty-five minutes of the traveler's valuable time before beginning to discuss the price. Then the crafty fellow quoted a price that was so obviously excessive that the Victorian gentleman almost broke off the transaction in anger.

Anyone familiar with eastern merchants and the delight they take in the process of the sale has to laugh at the naivete of the western visitor. The Arab merchant, on the other hand, probably shook his head at the man's rudeness.

The transaction between Abraham and Ephron, read in its eastern setting, is a perfect example of the kind of business transaction still common throughout the world.

The speeches of Ephron the Hittite indicate that his dearest desire was to make a gift of the land to his old friend Abraham. Abraham had to find a burial site for Sarah. He knew it, Ephron knew it, and the elders of the Hittites knew it.

Abraham, however, was a resident alien, a class of people who had no legal rights and were usually excluded from the purchase of land. When Abraham approached the Hittite elders for permission to buy land he was asking for something their law and custom didn't ordinarily allow. The reason he did not go first to the owner of the land he wanted (v. 4) was probably because the owner would not have been able to sell to him without the permission of the elders.

Negotiations with Abraham got under way at the city gate (v. 10), which means this was an official meeting of the Kiriath-Arba/Hebron planning commission. The city gate was the equivalent of the later town square. Business, both private and civic, was conducted there for all to see.

Part and parcel of the oriental business transaction is to treat the buyer with great respect and flatter him shamelessly. Abraham's wealth must have weighed in his favor, but their description of him as a "mighty prince" was probably flattery. By their standards he was still a foreigner without land and without standing in their culture. Instead of giving him permission to buy the land, the elders offered him a burial site on property that belonged to any one of them. If they could induce Abraham to accept the simple gift of a burial place for Sarah, he would remain a person without standing, still a landless foreigner under obligation to his hosts.

Abraham had a different idea, though. He saw this land as a foothold into the Land of Promise, and he would not be deterred from purchasing it. He turned his attention to the owner of the field, who apparently had overheard the discussion.

Ephron, like the Hittite leaders, offered Abraham a place to bury Sarah free of charge, but Abraham insisted on paying for the property.

Here the transaction became a little different. Ephron, perhaps thinking that he was beginning a long and spirited session of haggling over price, named a price that may have been more than exorbitant: 400 silver shekels. We don't know the exact size or desirability of the field, but since Abraham wanted a tomb, not acreage, it might not have been anything to shout about.

Not too many years later, Jacob paid 100 pieces of silver for his land (Genesis 33:19), which probably wasn't a hobby farm of a few acres; shepherds take up a lot of space. In a later day, Jeremiah bought a farm field for seventeen shekels (Jeremiah 32:9). In comparison, Ephron's 400 silver shekel price tag seems steep.

The rule of thumb I was given when I visited Africa for the first time was to pay one-half to two-thirds of the asking price for anything I bought from a peddler. I'm sure Abraham had some similar rule of thumb. But he did what was unheard of; he agreed to pay the asking price. The contract was drawn up and the technical language of the bill of sale is recorded in Genesis 23:16–18.

According to tradition the cave and the graves are still there. And the site is still venerated by pilgrims, Christian and Jewish alike, as the first piece of property owned by Abraham in the land God had promised to his descendants. Four hundred shekels of silver as a down payment on the land God would give seems a small enough price to pay.

Genesis 23:16 Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.

CSB Abraham agreed with Ephron, and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver that he had agreed to in the presence of the Hittites: 400 shekels of silver at the current commercial rate.

ESV Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

NIV Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

NLT So Abraham agreed to Ephron's price and paid the amount he had suggested-- 400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

- **weighed:** Ge 43:21 Ezr 8:25-30 Job 28:15 Jer 32:9 Zec 11:12 Mt 7:12 Ro 13:8 Php 4:8 1Th 4:6
- **four:** Ge 23:15 Ex 30:13 Eze 45:12

CAVE PURCHASE CLOSED

Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard - NLT - "weighed according to the market standard." What we need to understand is that "Four hundred shekels of silver" was a substantial sum—the equivalent of many years' wages for a laborer. It likely far exceeded the normal market value for a burial cave and small field. Yet Abraham makes no counteroffer. He immediately accepts. Abraham is not haggling but acting in faith, demonstrating integrity and trust in God's promise rather than concern for material cost. His aim is not a discount but a testimony—a permanent, legal claim to land in the Promised Land. He wanted no dispute, no loopholes, no debt to pagans, and no possibility that anyone could later say, "You owe me this land." His faith looks beyond silver to the covenant promise; beyond a burial plot to resurrection hope.

*Faith does not seek bargains;
it seeks integrity before God.*

William MacDonald has an interesting analysis regarding the purchase of what would be the "Family Burial Plot" - The passage gives a priceless description of the bargaining that is so typical in Eastern lands. At first, the Hittites suggested that Abraham choose any one of their burial places. With overflowing courtesy, Abraham refused and insisted on paying full price for a cave owned by Ephron. At first Ephron offered not just the cave but the entire field as an outright gift, but Abraham understood that this was just a polite gesture. The owner really had no intention of giving it away. When Abraham countered by insisting on his desire to purchase it, Ephron suggested a price of four hundred shekels of silver, pretending that this was a great bargain. Actually it was an extortionate price, and ordinarily the buyer would have continued to haggle. So it was a surprise to everyone when Abraham agreed to Ephron's first asking price. Abraham didn't want to be indebted to an unbeliever, and neither should we. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary Page 60](#))

Genesis 23:17 So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over

- the field (KJV): Ge 23:20 25:9 49:30-32 50:13 Ac 7:16
- made sure (KJV): Ge 23:20 Ru 4:7-10 Ps 112:5 Jer 32:7-14 Mt 10:16 Eph 5:15 Col 4:5

Related Passage:

Acts 7:16 "From there they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

THE TITLE DEED TRANSFERRED

So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over - The extensive wording mirrors the language of ancient Hittite deeds. The repeated details (field, cave, trees, borders) are deliberate and legal in tone, establishing a comprehensive description of the land's boundaries. The cave was the main object of Abraham's desire, but the entire field was included in the sale—ensuring full ownership and avoiding future dispute. Including the trees was a standard legal detail in ancient land deeds. It meant that everything above and within the ground's borders belonged to the new owner—no partial rights or claims remained with the seller. This is the Bible's first recorded real estate transaction, fully witnessed, public, and binding.

Henry Morris - Machpelah. There is a seeming discrepancy between this passage and the statement of Stephen (Acts 7:16) that Abraham's purchased sepulcher was in Shechem. A possible explanation is that he bought the latter for his later family born of Keturah (Genesis 23:1; 25:1). These children then eventually lost it to the Hivites, from whom Jacob repurchased it for an altar

eighty-five years after Abraham's death (Genesis 33:20). It later was given to Joseph, and he and probably his brothers were eventually buried in it (Joshua 24:32; Acts 7:15,16).

QUESTION - [What is the significance of the cave of Machpelah? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - The cave of Machpelah, also called the Cave of the Patriarchs, is located near the ancient city of Hebron in Israel. The cave of Machpelah is the burial place of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah. While in Canaan, Abraham purchased a [burial place](#) for his wife, Sarah, after her death. The field he bought had belonged to a Hittite named Ephron. "So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded to Abraham as his property" (Genesis 23:17–18). Later, Abraham's sons buried him in the same spot (Genesis 25:9–10), and Jacob and Esau buried Isaac in the cave of Machpelah, per his instructions. And, in Egypt, Jacob gave his sons a solemn command to bury him in Canaan on the family property: "Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites" (Genesis 49:29–32).

Today, the cave of Machpelah is inaccessible, but the area over the cave is the site of a large mosque called the Ibrahimi Mosque or, alternately, the Sanctuary of Abraham. The place is sacred to Muslims and Jews, and both groups have separate, limited access to the building.

For Christians today, there is no major significance to the cave of Machpelah other than historical interest. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and their wives are not at Machpelah but in heaven in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah to whom they looked forward with faith and anticipation. God is "not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12:27). The fact that all the patriarchs of Israel desired to be buried in Canaan shows their faith in God's [promise to give the land](#) of Canaan to their family. Their faith, rather than their tomb, is the most fitting monument for Christians.

Oswald Chambers - 4. In the Place of Scrupulosity (Genesis 23:17-18)

The details of this palaver must not be passed over. We are apt to say that religion is religion, and business is business; but there is no cleavage in the life of faith. Slovenliness is an insult to the Holy Ghost. Our Lord is scrupulous in His saving of us, surely we can be scrupulous in the conduct of His temple, our bodies†† and our bodily connections. That will mean God's greatness coming down into our human setting, and we see to it that we do everything in keeping with the greatness of God.

Genesis 23:18 to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

- all (KJV): Ge 34:20 Ru 4:1 Jer 32:12

**THE TRANSACTION WAS
PUBLIC, LEGAL, PERMANENT**

to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city- This verse finalizes the transaction begun in verses 3–17. It shows that the purchase was: Publicly Witnessed "In the presence of the sons of Heth" which means the agreement was made before the elders and people of the city—the legal witnesses required for any land transfer. It was legally binding "Before all who went in at the gate of his city" describes the place of civil authority and judgment. The city gate served as a combination of courthouse, town hall, and witness stand. Any business done there was recognized as official and permanent. Finally, it was Personally Owned: "To Abraham for a possession" marking the moment when the property legally became Abraham's. His legal ownership of a burial site in the Promised Land was faith's down payment on God's everlasting covenant.

NET Note - See G. M. Tucker, "[The Legal Background of Genesis 23](#)," JBL 85 (1966):77–84; and M. R. Lehmann, "[Abraham's Purchase of Machpelah and Hittite Law](#)," BASOR 129 (1953): 15–18.

Genesis 23:19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

- Ge 3:19 25:9,10 35:27-29 47:30 49:29-32 50:13,25 Job 30:23 Ec 6:3 Ec 12:5,7

ABRAHAM BURIES HIS BELOVED SARAH

After this- Marks the conclusion of the purchase transaction (vv. 16–18). Abraham's faith has acted; now his obedience follows.

Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan- The patriarch tenderly carries out his duty. He buries Sarah personally — not servants, not others — emphasizing both his love and his faith in God's promise. Sarah was the first of the patriarchs to be buried here but more would follow -- Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham (Genesis 25:9). Isaac and Rebekah were buried here (Genesis 49:31). Jacob buried Leah here (Genesis 49:31). Joseph buried Jacob here (Genesis 50:13). The patriarch's tomb became a testimony of hope — that the God who promised the land would one day raise the dead to inherit it."

Genesis 23:20 So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

KJV And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.

NKJ So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

NET So Abraham secured the field and the cave that was in it as a burial site from the sons of Heth.

BGT καὶ κυρθη γρς κατσπλαιον ὑναττ Αβρααμ ες κτισιν του παρτυυ Χετ

LXE So the field and the cave which was in it were made sure to Abraam for possession of a burying place, by the sons of Chet.

CSB The field with its cave passed from the Hittites to Abraham as a burial place.

ESV The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

NIV So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

NLT So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

YLT and established are the field, and the cave which is in it, to Abraham for a possession of a burying-place ("possession of a grave"), from the sons of Heth.

- **were:** Ru 4:7-10 2Sa 24:24 Jer 32:10,11
- **for a:** Ge 25:9 49:31,32 50:5,13,24,25 2Ki 21:18

FAITH'S PURCHASE COMPLETED

So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth KJV = "were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace" Abraham's purchase of the field and cave meant that his descendants would own this land in perpetuity.

G Campbell Morgan - This field and its cave as a burying-place constituted the only holding which this man Abraham ever had, in the land which was given to him as a possession by a covenant with God. How insecure this making sure to him by the children of Heth was, is revealed by the fact that eighty years later his grandson Jacob re-gamed possession of it by re-purchase (see Gen. 33. 19 and Acts 7. 16). How constantly faith possesses in a covenant with God what cannot be secured by a covenant with man. Never, even yet, has the seed of Abraham finally and perfectly possessed that land; but it is equally true that no other race has possessed it. It is reserved in the purpose and power of God for His ancient people, and they will possess it. Faith knows this, and thus persistently possesses what it does not seem to hold. This is the perpetual victory of the man of faith. He receives the promises as promises, and dies, not having received the promises as realizations. He dies triumphantly, knowing that the promise will be fulfilled.

Thus, all the realizations of the high things of human life are held in the consciousness of faith; and are made sure, by its activity in fellowship with God. Faith is the power to do without what God has promised, until the time comes when He in His in-finite wisdom provides the thing promised. Yet all the while faith possesses, and enters into all the joys of the gift. God's gaining earth and our gaining heaven are assured by Divine covenant.

W H Griffith Thomas - Genesis 23 Death in the Home

After the great crisis (Gen. 22) Abraham had twenty-five years of apparent uneventful life. Three scenes illustrative of home and personal experiences are successively brought before us: (a) the news of relatives from afar (Ge 22:20-24); (b) the death of the wife and mother (Ge 23); (c) the marriage of the son (Ge 24) We are now to consider the second of these, the death of Sarah.

I. Death (Ge 23:1, 2).—At the age of one hundred and twenty-seven, forty years after the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18:12), Sarah died. She is the only woman whose age is recorded in the Bible. The following points with reference to her death are worthy of consideration and meditation.

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It was the death of a believer. Certain hints in the story suggest that Sarah's spiritual life and experience were not quite on the high level of her husband's, but at the same time it is equally evident that her spiritual life was real, and her faith in the promises of God strong. The New Testament also adds its witness to the fact of Sarah's spiritual oneness with Abraham (Heb. 11:11-13; 1 Pet. 3:5, 6).

It was the death of a life-long companion. For sixty years Sarah had lived in Canaan with Abraham, and with the exception of the incident about Hagar, which was itself prompted by Sarah, nothing marred the fellowship of these two as husband and wife. They afford to us a picture of true married life, a husband and wife united in the Lord and in each other in Him.

It was the death of a mother. To Isaac the death of Sarah was a very great loss. Although he was now nearly forty years of age, he had always lived at home and was the recipient of his mother's love and devotion and the subject of her constant hope and prayer. We are distinctly told of his sorrow on her death (Ge 24:67).

It was a death in the home. The removal of one member of a household, especially if that member is a beloved wife and mother, causes a blank which nothing else can fill. The quiet influence of such a life in the home is of untold value, and the loss at death is proportionately great.

II. Sorrow (Ge 23:2).—Sarah's life came to its end at Hebron, and it would almost seem from²⁷⁰ the words 'Abraham came to mourn' that he was away at the time of her death. It is possible, if not probable, that Abraham had two establishments with separate flocks and herds, one at Beer-sheba (Ge 22:19), and the other at Hebron, where Sarah then was.

This is the first occasion in Scripture of the record of tears, and they were neither idle, nor unmanly, nor morbid, but the genuine and rightful expression of Abraham's deep sorrow on the death of his wife.

III. Duty (Ge 23:3).—There is danger lest sorrow overwhelm us and we should give way beyond measure. The great safeguard against this danger is work. So Abraham rose up and applied to the children of Heth with reference to a burial-place.

Abraham's desire for a resting-place for the body of his wife is a simple but striking testimony to the innate feelings about the care of the body. The possessive pronouns, 'his dead' (Ge 23:3), 'my dead' (Ge 23:4), 'thy dead' (Ge 23:6), are very noteworthy in this connection. The body of his beloved wife was precious to him and was regarded by him and by others as his own property, of which he was about to take special and loving care.

IV. Faith (Ge 23:4-18).—The dialogue between Abraham and the sons of Heth is full of touching and deep interest, and is especially noteworthy as a revelation of Abraham's inner life.

Abraham confesses that he is a 'stranger and sojourner,' and yet by his request for a burial-place²⁷¹ he clearly indicates that he intends to stay in the land of Canaan, and not to return to Mesopotamia. When Eastern sentiment as to burial with ancestors is remembered, this request for a piece of ground in Canaan is a striking testimony to Abraham's faith. He was fully assured that Canaan was the place for him and his descendants, and on this account Sarah is to be buried there.

We notice the perfect courtesy of Abraham in reply to the offers of the people of the land. Whether, as some writers think, all this was mere parleying with a view to a bargain, or whether, as others urge, it was a genuine and sincere offer on the part of the children of Heth, Abraham's attitude stands out in a very beautiful way. Religion is not intended to decrease, but to increase natural politeness, gentlemanliness, and courtesy. Indeed, courtesy is one of the truest marks of a genuine believer.

Abraham persisted in declining the offer (if it was really intended as an offer) of a burying-place. He was determined that Sarah should not be buried in any land but his own. It must not be hired; it must not be given. Till God's time came Abraham would not be a debtor to those who were to be dispossessed. 'By faith' he refused.

Payment was consequently made, and everything was done in due form in the presence of witnesses. Thus, the first foothold in the land of Canaan that Abraham ever had was bought. Notwithstanding all God's promises of that land to him and to his seed, Abraham would not deal²⁷² unjustly, even in appearance, with those then in possession of Canaan.

V. Love (Ge 23:19, 20).—The funeral brings us to the first grave of which we have any record in Holy Writ. The last offices of respect were paid, and the lonely old man went back to his home.

The possession of the property was guaranteed to Abraham and 'made sure' for a perpetual possession. Visitors to Hebron to-day

are still shown what is called Abraham's Tomb, and, although no Christian is allowed to enter and explore for himself, there does not seem much doubt as to the genuineness of the tradition which associates the present place with the cave of Machpelah. What an inspiring thought to realise that very likely the bodies of the patriarchs are still there, and that some day they will be exposed to view! From this simple and touching story of death in the home we may learn how we should behave in times of bereavement. The true attitude at such times is threefold:—

1. Sorrowing Love.—The expression of love in sorrow is as natural as it is inevitable and beautiful. A consciousness of loss cannot fail to produce sorrow, and no one is to be blamed for feeling and expressing a sense of bereavement. It would be utterly unnatural if death were to come without eliciting sorrow.

2. Faithful Service.—At the same time, in order that the soul may not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, there comes to us all at such occasions the call to and opportunity for definite service. The memory of a loved one is best treasured by doing what that loved one would wish were she here. Service always prevents sorrow from becoming dissipated in idle regrets and mere remembrance.

3. Blessed Hope.—Abraham laid Sarah's body to rest 'in sure and certain hope' of a joyful resurrection (Heb. 11:14). It was this above all things that upheld and strengthened him as he bade farewell to the wife who had shared his joys and sorrows for so many years. The expectation and anticipation of reunion in Christ on the Day of Resurrection is still the real hope, the blessed comfort, and the strong inspiration of the people of God. It enables us to look upon death without fear, and to look forward without dread. 'In the midst of death we are in life' through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.