

Genesis 23:1-20

Abraham's wife Sarah passes away in this chapter. Abraham needs a place to bury her, and he had to ask the people in the land of Canaan for a place to bury her. He was travelling through there land when the Lord took Sarah.

Sideline: If you want to know the timeline of God's prophecy, pay attention to what is happening to Israel.

- 1 ¶ **And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old (127 years old): these were the years of the life of Sarah.** Sarah lived to be 127 years old; Abraham was 10 years older, about 137. Sarah is the only woman in the bible whose age is given at her death. She is the only woman in the bible who is given as an example as of what a woman should be, how a woman should behave. She is a great lady even with all her faults.
- 2 **And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.** This is still there today.
- 3 ¶ **And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,**
- 4 **I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.** Remember this is not Abraham's land yet. God said this land was going to be owned by his descendants. He is living among these people, his wife dies, and now he needs a place to bury her.
- 5 **And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,**
- 6 **Hear us, my lord: you are a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchers bury your dead; none of us shall withhold from you his sepulcher, but that you may bury your dead.** These Canaanites were very religious and believed and feared the gods and goddesses in the spirit world. They knew Abraham had close relationships with the gods, or actually the one and only God. So they respected Abraham. Their custom was to put their dead on a shelf in a cave and leave it for a year. Then they'd go get the bones after that year and put them in a box and put it in a mortuary or somewhere. They reused the cave for those who died in their community.
- 7 **And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.** Abraham shows respect the Canaanites even though they have different beliefs than him.
- 8 **And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,**
- 9 **That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a burying place among you.** Abraham already knew where these caves were, and this is where he wanted to bury Sarah.
- 10 **And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,** This discussion is going on at the entrance gate to the city. This is where all business was handled in those times. Everybody listened.
- 11 **Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I you, and the cave that is there, I give it you; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it you: bury your dead.** Here he makes a gesture, a custom then, he gives Abraham a place to bury Sarah. They usually buried their dead within 24 hours in those times, and they gave you the spot for your dead for free. It was the custom.
- 12 **And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.** Notice how courteous and respectful Abraham is to these people. This behaviour brings goodness to the Lord.
- 13 **And he spoke to Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if you will give it, I pray you, hear me: I will give you money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.**

Abraham appreciates their offer, but he offers to pay for the spot. They are bargaining. The spot was offered for free, but Abraham said, no, I'll pay for it.

- 14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,**
- 15 My lord, listen to me: the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver; what *is* that betwixt me and you? Bury therefore your dead.** Ephron says the land is worth only 400 shekels, which is not much. Ephron says it's no big deal, go take the land and bury your wife. You need to deal with your issues, Abraham. Go and take it.
- 16 ¶ And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current *money* with the merchant.** Abraham paid Ephron, now he owns that piece of land.
- 17 And the field of Ephron, which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field, and the cave which *was* there, and all the trees that *were* in the field, that *were* in all the borders round about, were made sure** As far as we know, in the Abraham's lifetime, this is the only land Abraham owned and had a deed to: a little cave off a field with a few trees.
- 18 To Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.**
- 19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan.** If you go to the city of Hebron today, you can go see this cave to this day, if the current Mideast people will let you. They guard is pretty fiercely. There is an enormous building like a castle, the Arabs control it today since Abraham was their father, and they only let the Jews in about 4 times a year to see the 4 crypts in there. There are many interesting and strange stories that come out of these places about these caves. One man bribed a guard to stay in there overnight and weird things happened. You can look it up on the internet if you want.
- 20 And the field, and the cave that *is* there, were made sure to Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth.** These Canaanites made sure this place was kept as a graveyard, a burying site, for Abraham and his family forever after. They were true to their word because Abraham was so respectful and courteous to them.