

## Genesis 23

Verses 1 - 2

Now Sarah lived 127 years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. <sup>2</sup> Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

The year of her death was 1859 BC

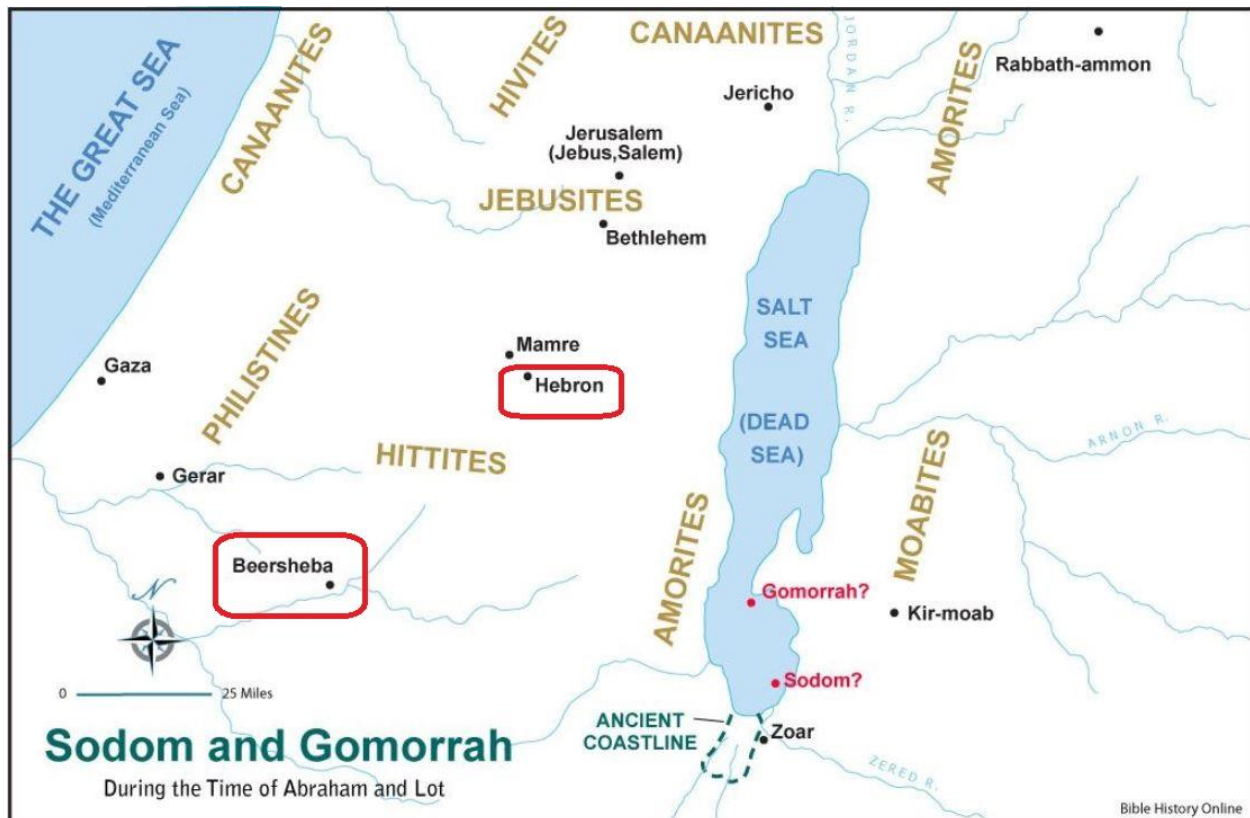
See chart 2305

| Ch    | Person  | Event                       | Age | Year |
|-------|---------|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| 11    | Terah   | Terah dies                  | 205 | 1921 |
| 12    | Abraham | Leaves Harran               | 75  | 1921 |
| 12    | Abraham | She is my sister (1st time) | 75  | 1921 |
| 13-14 |         | Abraham rescues Lot         |     |      |
| 16    | Abraham | Ismael born                 | 86  | 1910 |
| 17    | Abraham | Circumcision                | 99  | 1897 |
| 18-19 | Lot     | Sodom and Gomorrah          | 99  | 1897 |
| 20    | Abraham | She is my sister (2nd time) | 99  | 1897 |
| 21    | Abraham | Isaac born                  | 100 | 1896 |
| 22    | Abraham | Abraham Tested              | 120 | 1876 |
| 23    | Sarah   | Sarah dies                  | 127 | 1859 |
| 24    | Isaac   | Marries Rebekah             | 40  | 1856 |
| 25    | Isaac   | Esau and Jacob born         | 60  | 1836 |
| 25    | Abraham | Abraham dies                | 175 | 1821 |

This is the first time a woman's death and burial is recorded in the Bible. It is also the only time the age of a woman is given in the Bible. Age is just a number, but for women it is a number that is unlisted. ☺☺

Abraham and Sarah must have moved from Beersheba to Hebron because they were living in Beersheba in chapter 21.

See Map 2310      Hebron



Abraham loved Sarah and she became a great woman of faith.

See Hebrews 11:11

**<sup>11</sup> By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond *the* proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.**

When Sarah was told that she would have a baby she was 89 years old. At that time she laughed because she was past the age of giving birth and Abraham was as good as dead. But in a very short period of time she must have accepted God's word in an act of faith and God blessed her with a baby boy.

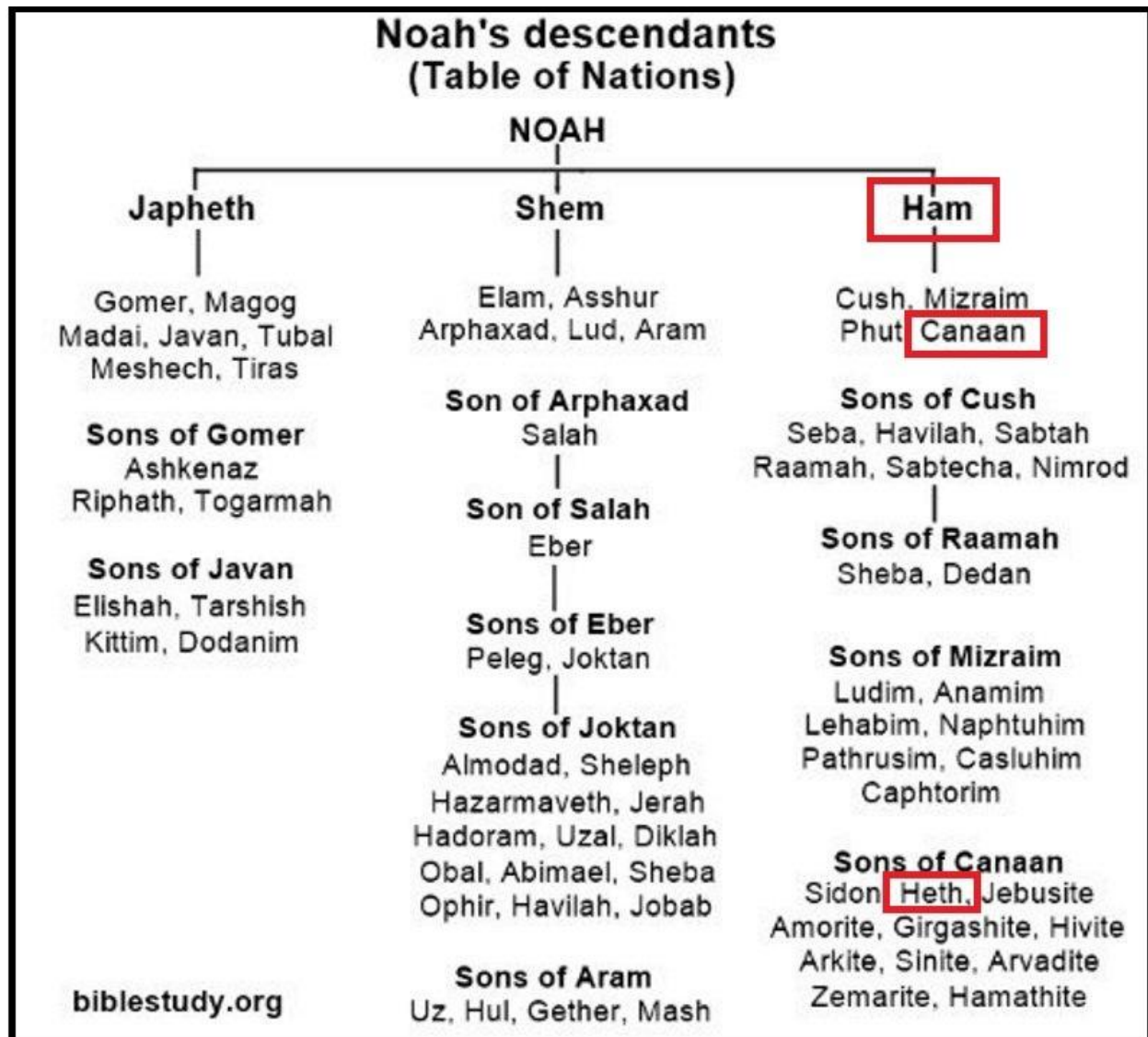
Verses 3 - 6

**<sup>3</sup> Then Abraham arose from *mourning* before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, <sup>4</sup> "I am a stranger and a foreign resident among you; give me a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead out of my sight." <sup>5</sup> The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, <sup>6</sup> "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."**

<sup>3</sup> Then Abraham arose from *mourning* before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth,

Heth was one of the sons of Canaan and a grandson of Ham.

See chart 2315



This group as a whole was known as the Hittites.

<sup>4</sup> “I am a stranger and a foreign resident among you; give me a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

This is the first mention of a burial-place in the Bible.

<sup>5</sup> The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, <sup>6</sup> “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.”

Abraham was a rich man with many hired hands and servants. He had 318 “trained men” in chapter 14 and that was 55 years ago. If their wives and children were counted it was probably around 1500. 55 years later this group may have numbered in the thousands.

The sons of Heth offered Abraham the best of their tombs.

Verses 7 - 9

<sup>7</sup> So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

<sup>8</sup> And he spoke with them, saying, “If you are willing to *let me* bury my dead out of my sight, listen to me, and plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, <sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>7</sup> So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

Abraham was proposing a legal transaction with the sons of Heth. This was taking place at the city gate where such matters were conducted.

<sup>8</sup> And he spoke with them, saying, “If you are willing to *let me* bury my dead out of my sight, listen to me, and plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me,

He was asking the sons of Heth (the elders of the town) to talk with Ephron about the cave of Machpelah.

<sup>9</sup> 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.”

Even though Abraham could have bought the cave at a bargain price because he was a “mighty prince” among them, he insisted on paying the full price.

Verses 10 - 13

<sup>10</sup> Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham so that the sons of Heth heard, that is, all who entered the gate of his city, saying, <sup>11</sup> “No, my lord, listen to 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.” <sup>12</sup> And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. <sup>13</sup> But he spoke to Ephron so that the people of the land heard, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept *it* from me so that I may bury my dead there.”

<sup>10</sup> Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham so that the sons of Heth heard, that is, all who entered the gate of his city, saying,

Ephron must have been one of the city elders since he was sitting with the sons of Heth at the city Gate.

<sup>11</sup> “No, my lord, listen to 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.”

Ephron insisted on selling the field also, not just the cave.

<sup>13</sup> But he spoke to Ephron so that the people of the land heard, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept *it* from me so that I may bury my dead there.”

Abraham agrees to buy the land, as Ephron insisted, even though he only needed the cave.

Verses 14 - 16

<sup>14</sup> Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, <sup>15</sup> “My lord, listen to me: *a plot of land worth four hundred shekels of silver*—what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.” <sup>16</sup> Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the presence of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, *currency* acceptable to a merchant.

<sup>14</sup> Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, <sup>15</sup> “My lord, listen to me: a plot of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.”

Ephron stated the selling price for the land and the cave, 400 shekels of silver, but he did it in a way that suggested this was a great deal for Abraham.

<sup>16</sup> Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the presence of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency acceptable to a merchant.

Abraham did not even try to negotiate a lower price and he paid in cash.

Verses 17 - 20

<sup>17</sup> So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and the 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 <sup>18</sup> to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who entered the gate of his city.

<sup>19</sup> After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron), in the land of Canaan. <sup>20</sup> So the field and the cave that was in it were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

<sup>17</sup> So Ephron’s field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre

The field with the cave was between Hebron and Mamre so it was a short distance from where Sarah had died.

<sup>19</sup> After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron), in the land of Canaan.

Mamre was on the outskirts of Hebron but it was considered to be part of the city.

The Cave of **Machpelah** is the world's most ancient Jewish site and it has changed hands many times thru history.

See pic 2320

Notes on the Cave of Machpelah



### The Cave of Machpelah

The Cave of Machpelah, known as the Cave of the Patriarchs, is located at Hebron. The cave and adjoining field were purchased by Abraham in 1859 BC as a burial plot.

In the first century BC, Herod the Great constructed a massive wall around the cave using construction techniques similar to those of the Temple Mount. The massive foundation stones inspire awe to all who see them.

Under Roman rule, a simple Christian church building was constructed at the southeastern end and the enclosure was roofed everywhere except at the center. During this period, Jews and Christians shared possession of the site.

In 614 AD, the Persians conquered the area and destroyed the castle, leaving only ruins but in 637 AD, the area came under the control of the Arab Muslims and the building was reconstructed as a roofed mosque.

In 1100 AD, after the area was captured by the Crusaders, the enclosure once again became a church and Muslims were no longer permitted to enter.

Then in 1188 AD Saladin (Muslims) conquered the area, reconverting the enclosure to a mosque but allowed Christians to worship there.

After Jordan occupied the West Bank in 1948, no Jews were allowed in the territory. Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in the Six-Day War, Hebron came under Jewish control. Israel took control of the site in 1967, dividing the structure into a synagogue and a mosque.

Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were also buried here.

All entrances to the cave have been sealed and a mosque has been constructed over the cave.

See Video 2325      Tomb of the prophets

<http://www.levickfamily.com/8.3.html>

Before we leave this chapter there is one issue that needs to be addressed.

Where was Jacob buried?

See Genesis 50:12-14

<sup>12</sup> And so his sons did for him as he had commanded them; <sup>13</sup> for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah opposite Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. <sup>14</sup> And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

However, Luke writes the following in the Book of Acts.

See Acts 7:16

And Jacob went down to Egypt and there he and our fathers died. <sup>16</sup> 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.

To summarize:

In Genesis 50 Jacob was buried in a cave near Mamre (Hebron) which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite.

In Acts 7 it sounds like Jacob was buried in Shechem which Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

A number of possible solutions have been put forth including those who believe that the text was not translated properly but the most reasonable explanation is the following:

When Luke said “they” (highlighted in yellow) he was referring to “their fathers”. Stephen didn’t need to exclude Jacob from this group when he was talking to the council because all of them were well aware of their history and they knew Jacob was buried in Hebron. If he had been speaking to a group of Gentiles it would have been important to make a distinction between Jacob and “their fathers”.

Luke tells us that Abraham purchased a tomb in Shechem from the sons of Hamor (this was not revealed in the Old Testament). This is where “their fathers” were buried. When Israel left Egypt they took their fathers (the sons of Jacob) with them and after they conquered Canaan the sons of Jacob (excluding Joseph) were buried in this tomb at Shechem.

Jacob also bought a plot of land from the sons of Hamor.

See Joshua 24:32

<sup>32</sup> Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the plot of land which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph’s sons.



So there were three burial places, two were bought by Abraham and one by Jacob.

#### The two bought by Abraham

1. Abraham bought a burial place in Hebron, a resting place for the bodies of Sarah & himself, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob & Leah.

See Genesis 50:12-14

2. Abraham bought a second burial place, in Shechem, which became the resting place for the bodies of Jacob's sons (excluding Joseph).

See Acts 7:16

#### The one bought by Jacob

3. Jacob bought a piece of land in Shechem and that became the burial place for Joseph.

See Joshua 24:32

When anyone sees a contradiction in the bible it is often the result of complexity. There are a number of things in the bible that are hard to explain and some of them take more time to solve than we can seem to find. However, we need to be patient and never give up because God has promised us all things.