

GENESIS 23

Genesis 23:1 – **Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.**

1. All we know between Sarah's 90-127 years
 - a. Isaac born at 90
 - b. Sarah dies at 127
2. Sarah is the only woman of the matriarch given her age at death
 - a. 120 is the years given to man in Gen 6:3
 - b. Plus 7, the sacred number of completions
 - c. 127 years for the mother of Israel

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

1. Note name of places is updated here from Kiriath-arba to Hebron (by Moses? By Ezra?)
 - a. Kiriath means "city"
 - b. Arba means "four"
 - i. "City of Four" or "City of Four (Giants)"
 - ii. Arba is the father of Anak who was the father of the inhabitants of Canaan called the Anakim
2. Hebron is likely "Hibrum" a city mentioned in Mari documents (a collection of cuneiform tablets discovered in the city of Mari, located in what is now Syria, and dating from the 1700's BC.)
3. "went" or "came" or "proceeded" is the Hebrew word that means Abraham traveled to where Sarah died.
4. Abraham had "settled" after Genesis 22 in Beersheba and was NOT living with Sarah

23:3 – **And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites,**

1. "rose from before" means Abraham had been sitting with his dead wife (custom for 7 days)
2. Hittites is literally "children of Heth" or "sons of Heth"
3. These Hittites could be the source of the great Hittite Empire between 2000-1000 BC in Asia Minor.
 - a. Scriptural lists (18 of them) that name the nations Israel was to drive out include the Hittites 18 times.
 - b. Gen 10:15 lists Heth as a son of Canaan
 - c. Joshua 1:4 calls Canaan "the land of the Hittites"
 - d. Two known Hittite Laws or codes that date to around 2200 BC explain Abraham and Ephron's transaction
 - e. Growing number of Hittite words are connected with the Hebrew vocabulary



- f. Hittite suzerain covenants are parallel to Sinaitic covenants both FORMATION and RENEWAL.
- g. Ezekiel 16:3, 45 written around 590 BC say about Israel, “your mother was a HITTITE and your father an AMORITE” could be recalling this time period
- h. Archaeologists have found a crater from 1200 BC cut by Hittites near Bethel
- i. Tell el-Amarna letter collection (a collection of cuneiform tablets found at the site of Tell el-Amarna, the capital of Egypt during the reign of Akhenaten, or Amenhotep IV, dating back to the 1200-1400 BC.) found in Egypt contain a letter from ABDU-HEBA (Abdiheba) king of Jerusalem asking Pharaoh for help against attackers around 1300-1400 BC
 - i. “Abdi” means “servant”
 - ii. “Heba” is a Hittite god

23:4 – “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.”

- 1. Abraham calls himself a “resident alien” (*ger wetosab*)
 - a. This means Abraham considered himself a tenant on Hittite land in Hebron
 - b. Lev. 25:23 – YHWH describes the Israelites as *gerim wetosabim* to him so they could not sell the land they had since they were God’s tenants on YHWH’s land.

23:5 – The Hittites answered Abraham,

- 1. The Hittites call Abram “*nesi Elohim*” meaning “prince of God” or “God’s elect One”
 - a. This is not just a polite greeting
 - b. Hittites know who Abraham is and God’s plan for him
 - c. The Hittites know YHWH
 - d. Abraham has contact with Pharaoh (ch. 12)
 - e. And Abimelech, king of Philistines (ch. 20), so Abraham is honored and considered royalty.
- 2. Hittite Laws:
 - a. Law One: Anyone who holds a field will render service (taxation). If he only has a small part of the field, he will not be the one responsible to render service.
 - b. Law Two: Anyone who holds a field as a gift from the king shall not render services. If anyone buys part of the field, he shall not render services.

23:6 – “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.”

23:7 – Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land.

23:8 – And he said to them, “If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar,

23:9 – that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place.”

7097 [e]	834 [e]		834 [e]	4375 [e]	4631 [e]	853 [e]			5414 [e]
biq·šêh	'ă·šer	lôw,	'ă·šer-	ham·mak·pê·lah	mə·'ā·rat	'et-	lî,		wə·yit·ten-
בִּקְשָׁה	אֲשֶׁר	לוֹ	אֲשֶׁר-	הַמַּכְפֶּלֶה	מְעָרַת	אֶת-	לִי		וַיִּתֵּן 9
at the end	which [is]	he has	which	of Machpelah	the cave	-	me		that he may give
Prep-b N-msc	Pro-r	Prep 3ms	Pro-r	Art N-proper-fs	N-fsc	DirObjM	Prep 1cs	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjImperf.Jus-3ms	

6913 [e]	272 [e]	8432 [e]	lî	5414 [e]	4392 [e]	3701 [e]	7704 [e]
qā·ber.	la·'ă·huz·zā-	bə·tō·wk·kem	lî	yit·tə·nen·nāh	mā·lē	bə·ke·sep	šā·dê·hū;
קָבֵר:	לְאַחֲזֹת	בְּתוֹכְכֶם	לִי	יִתְּנָה	מָלֵא	בְּכֶסֶף	שְׂדֵהוּ
a burial place	as property for	among you	to me	let him give it	full	At the price	of his field
N-ms	Prep-l N-fsc	Prep-b N-msc 2mp	Prep 1cs	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms 3fse	Adj-ms	Prep-b N-ms	N-msc 3ms

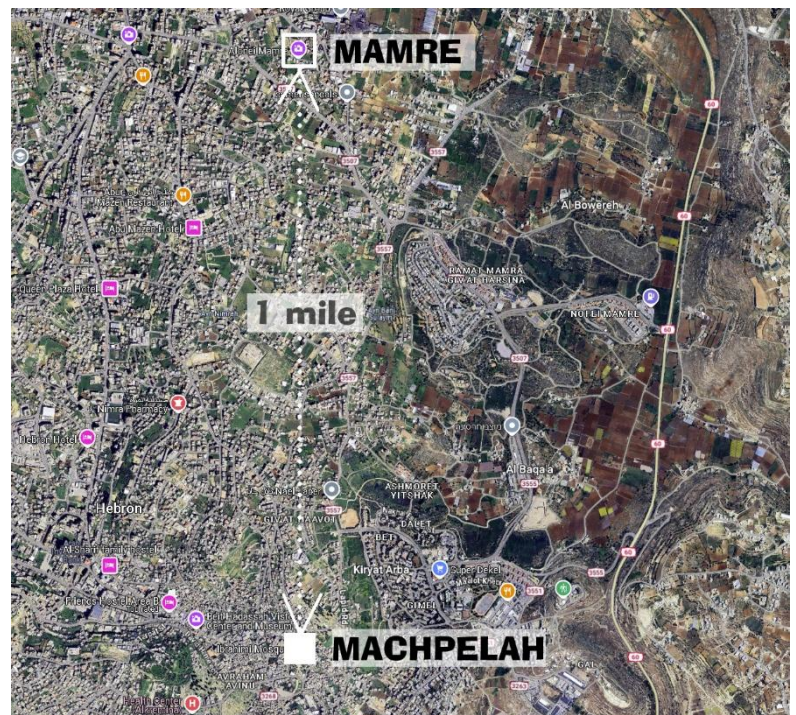
1. Cave (called Cave Machpelah) on Ephron's property
 - a. A Hittite transaction in the city gate takes place
2. Machpelah
 - a. Every time Machpelah is mentioned it occurs with definite article (23:9; 23:17; 25:9, etc)
 - i. This is NOT a personal name
 - ii. Machpelah maybe connected to Hebrew words:
 1. **Kpl** meaning “double”
 - a. a double cave
 - b. Double tombs in the cave
 - iii. Hammakpela
 1. A cave (Gen. 23:9, 25:9)
 2. A place (Gen 23:17)
 3. A field (Gen 49:30)
3. **et mearat hammakpela** = “give me the double cave”

23:10 – Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city,

1. transaction in the gate of the city 23:11 – “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.”

23:12 – Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.

1. Second time he bows



23:13 – And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, “But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.”

23:14 – Ephron answered Abraham,

23:15 – “My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels[c] of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.”

23:16 – 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.

1. 400 shekels
 - a. Not a bargain for Abraham
 - b. 400 shekels = 100 pounds of silver
 - c. Today worth \$32,000-\$47,950
2. David paid 50 shekels of silver for Mt. Moriah (2 Sm. 24:24)
3. Jeremiah paid 17 shekels for his cousin’s field in Anathoth (Jere. 32:9)
 - a. Jeremiah’s purchase of a field would be similar to size of Abrahams field. Compare 400 shekels in 2000 BC to Jeremiahs 17 shekels around 590 BC.
 - b. Omri paid 6,000 shekels for large hill of Samaria (1 Kg. 16:24)

23:17 – So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, was made over

23:18 – to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

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

1. Sarah’s name is not mentioned to Hittites
2. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah and Leah are buried here with Sarah. All the matriarchs but Rachel.

23:20 – The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

1. Summary of the transaction in the chapter, NOT the burial or death.