

## 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.**

**Now Sarah lived 127 years**

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

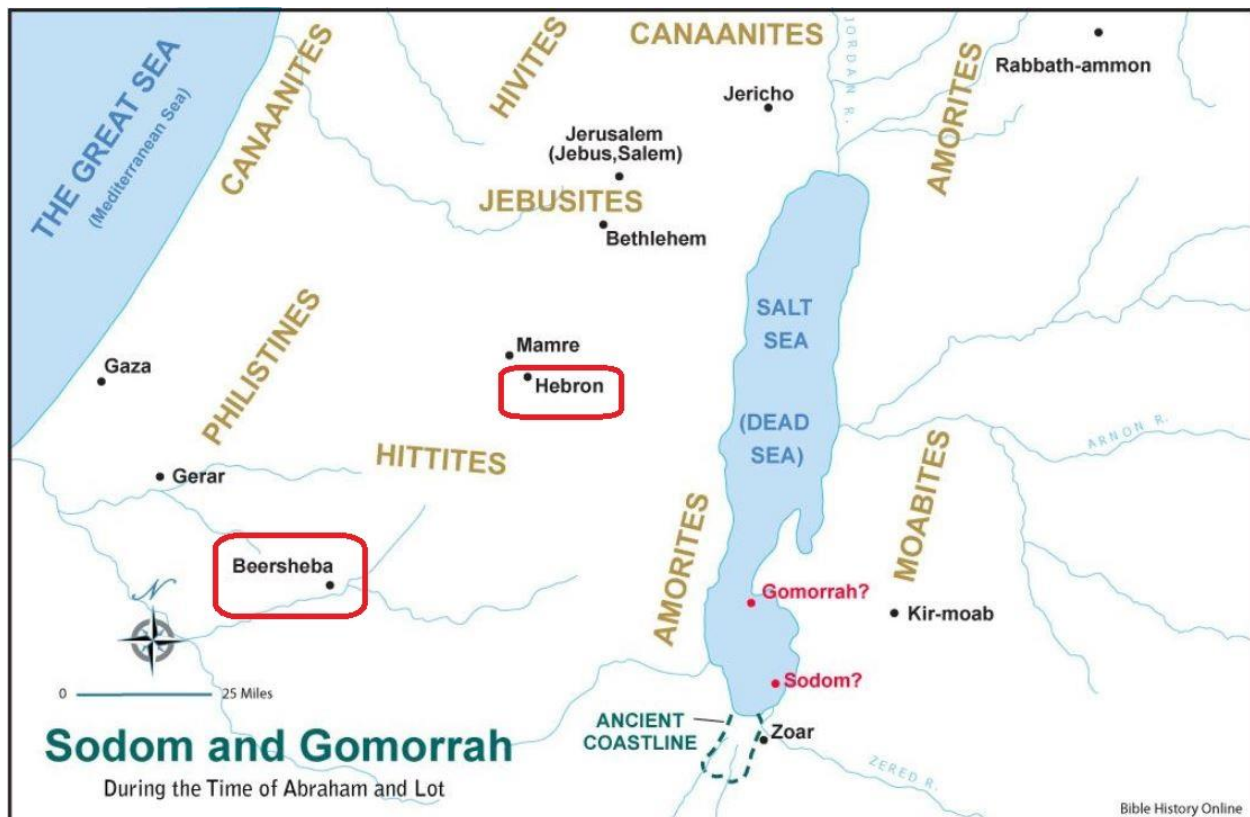
Age is just a number, but for women it is a number that is unlisted



## And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron)

They must have moved from Beersheba to Hebron because they were still living in Beersheba in chapter 21

See Map 2310 Hebron



Hebron was the original name of this city

It was later renamed and then later again restored its original name

## Abraham came in to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her

Abraham loved Sarah and she was a great woman of faith

The author of Hebrews mentions her faith along with the greatest of the patriarchs

See Hebrews 11:11

## 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.”

### Abraham spoke to the children of Heth

These children were descended from Heth, one of the sons of Canaan

That group as a whole was known as the Hittites

See Genesis 10:15

### I am a stranger and a foreign resident among you

His descendants would “own” this land but Abraham was a foreigner

### Give me a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead

This is the first mention of a burying-place in the Bible

### You are a mighty prince among us

Abraham was a rich man with many hired hands and servants

He had 318 “trained men” in chapter 14 which was 55 years ago

Add to that the other men, plus the women, and others that joined this group

The number could easily be in the thousands

### None of us will refuse you his grave

The children of Heth offered him the choice 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.”

### **Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land**

This was a legal transaction being proposed in the city gate where the rulers of the city customarily sat

### **Plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me**

He was asking the elders to talk to Ephron about the field

### **That he may give me the cave of Machpelah**

The give me, actually means sell me the cave

However, Abraham only wanted to buy the cave

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.”

### **Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth**

Ephron must have been one of the city fathers (rulers)

**I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it**

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

**I will give the price of the field**

Abraham agrees to buy the land, 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.***

**A plot of land worth 400 shekels of silver, what is that between me and you?**

Apparently Ephron was a man of great wealth

He makes it sound like this was pocket change

**And Abraham listened to Ephron**

Abraham does not even try to negotiate a lower price

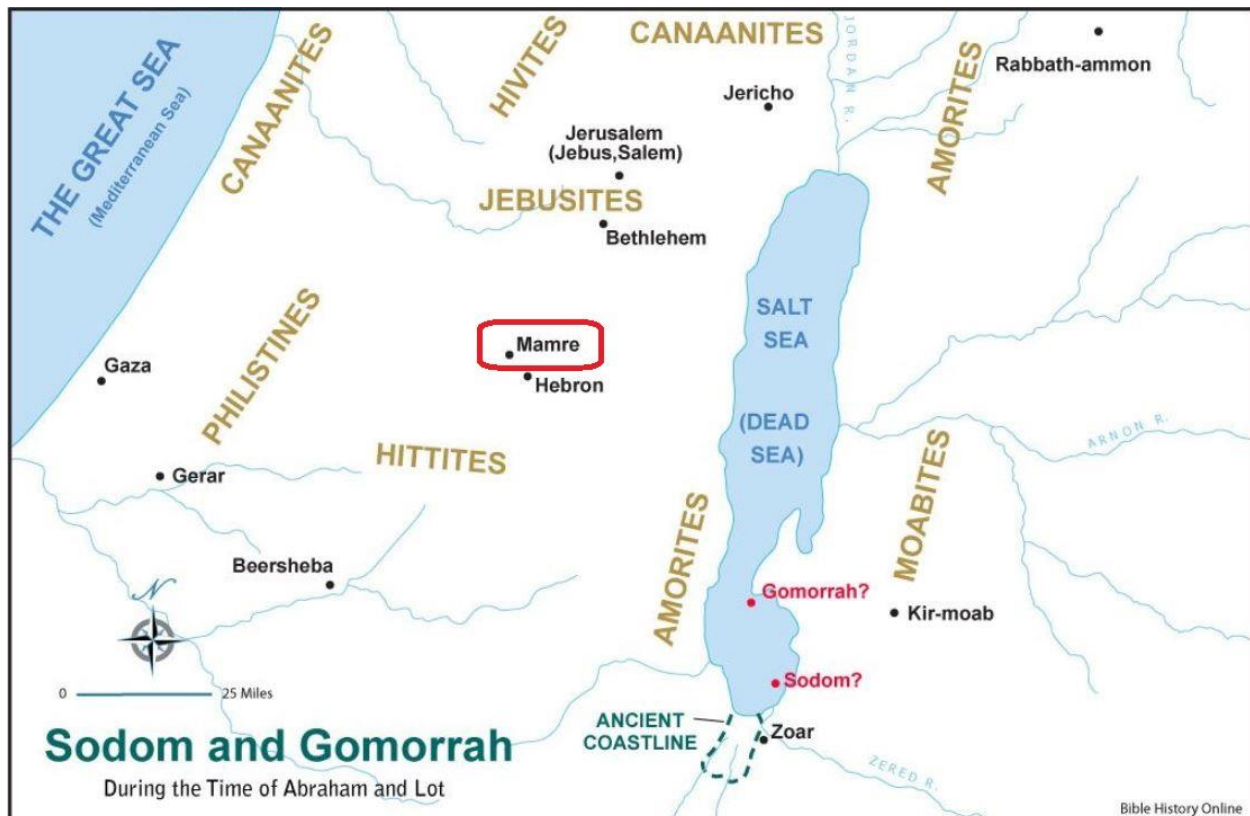
Verse 17 - 20

**<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.**

So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre

See Pic 2303 Mamre



The field with the cave was between Hebron and Mamre

So it was a short distance from where Sarah had died

**Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah**

This was the only land that Abraham owned in Canaan

The Cave of **Machpelah** is the world's most ancient Jewish site

And the second holiest place, after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem

This site has changed hands many times thru history

See pic 2330 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  
He used 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, the Persians conquered the area and destroyed the castle, leaving only ruins

But in 637, the area came under the control of the Arab Muslims and the building was reconstructed as a roofed mosque

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

In 1188 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 be buried here

All entrances to the actual cave have long been sealed

A great mosque has been constructed over the caves.

See Video 2310 Tomb of the prophets

<http://www.levickfamily.com/8.4.html>

### **One point of clarification**

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.

Jacob was buried in Hebron.

And Abraham bought the cave from the Hittites

Joseph was buried in Shechem,

Jacob bought that field from Hamor

See Gen. 33:18-20

### **Possible solution**

Stephen was summarizing a big chunk of history in a short period of time

So, the transaction of Abraham with the Hittites, and the transaction of Jacob with Hamor of Shechem are telescoped together

This is similar to earlier in this speech where the two calls of Abraham were summarized

Stephen simply telescoped them together to save time

Knowing his audience, the Sanhedrin, knew what he was saying

He was not there to teach a detailed history lesson to the Sanhedrin