

Genesis 23 – The Death of Sarah

Brown Community Group January 13, 2019

Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. ² 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.

Biblical accounts of Sarah (Sarai)

Married to Abram (Abraham)
Left Ur for Canaan and ended in
Harran
Went to Egypt
Mistress of Hagar

God changed name to Sarah
Laughed at the thought of children
Lied about laughing
Pretended to be sister for
Abimelek

Gave birth to Isaac
Sarah and Hagar again
Sarah dies

Genesis 17:15-17 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."
¹⁷ Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

Genesis 21:6-7 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ 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 21:12 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

³ Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, ⁴ "I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

⁵ The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶ "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."

⁷ Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸ He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf⁹ so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

¹⁰ Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. ¹¹ "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."

¹² Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³ and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵ "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels^[e] of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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 deeded¹⁸ to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

The tomb will be heard from again when Jacob gives his blessing to Joseph and his brothers at the end of Genesis:

Genesis 49:29-33 Then he gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ 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. ³¹ There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. ³² The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites." ³³ When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

Questions:

Why did Abraham say he was a "foreigner and stranger"?

Hebrews 11:8-11 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ 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.

Why was he called a prince?

Why would Abraham not take the free offer?

Genesis 21:22-31 At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. ²³ Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you." ²⁴ Abraham said, "I swear it." ²⁵ Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek's servants had seized. ²⁶ But Abimelek said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today." ²⁷ So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. ²⁸ Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, ²⁹ and Abimelek asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?" ³⁰ He replied, "Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well." ³¹ So that place was called Beersheba, because the two men swore an oath there.

Why would Ephron offer the entire field and not just the cave (tomb)?

Had Abraham taken only part of the land, the owner of the rest of the land would have been responsible for dues/taxes. However, since Abraham now owned all the land, he was responsible.

Why is the setting important?

The gate was similar to a court of law. All business was transacted there in front of the town who served as witnesses

Why did Abraham decide he needed the land?

Possibilities:

1. To show love and respect to Sarah
2. To jump-start the promises God has made
3. To anchor the Hebrew/Jew's attachment to Canaan

Genesis 15:12-16 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.