

Genesis 23 New American Standard Bible

Death and Burial of Sarah

Now Sarah lived 127 years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. ² 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. ³ Then Abraham arose from *mourning* before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,

⁴ “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.” ⁵ The sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ⁶ “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.” ⁷ So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

⁸ 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, ⁹ 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.”

¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ “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.” ¹² And Abraham bowed before the people of the land.

¹³ 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.” ¹⁴ Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ “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.”

¹⁶ 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 ¹⁷ 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

¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who entered the gate of his city. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ So the field and the cave that was in it were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God's character?

Pauls observations and insights

1. We get in this chapter personal insight into Abraham's and his family's pain – Sarah, his wife, has died.
2. Sarah lived until she was 127 years old, so Isaac was about 36 when he said goodbye to his mum. She died in Hebron in the land of Canaan, but we do not know what she died of.
3. Death is now part of humanity's reality but in the beginning this was not the case.
4. When it says Abraham went in, it means went into the tent to say goodbye to Sarah.
5. Abraham weeps for Sarah, says his goodbye. Dying well is very important if you want to move on well.
6. There comes a point to move on from death, so Abraham rose and took the initiative to fulfil his responsibility of burying Sarah.
7. He speaks to the sons of the land of Canaan and acknowledges himself as a stranger in the land to them.
8. He did this even though God had made promises to him that 'one day he would be master of the land'.
9. Is it ever right to take possession of the land by force?
10. Taking possession of what God has provided for is a very spiritual principle. What does it mean to you?
11. Abraham requests of the sons of the land of Canaan a parcel of land to bury Sarah's body.
12. It seems it is very important to Abraham to pay for the land to bury Sarah. Why?
13. But the sons of the land want to give the land to Abraham. Why doesn't he accept the gift from them?
14. Why does he say 'bury Sarah out of his sight'?
15. Abraham has got his eye on a very special piece of land, a field with a cave, it becomes the burial site for Abraham and his family.
16. In the negotiations with Heth, did Heth drop in the cost of the land deliberately or was it a mistake.
17. Why are they trying to do each other out of the spirit of generosity?

18. Abraham is persistent. If he can't pay for it he does not want it!
19. What does 400 shekels amount to?
20. I had a meal with my brother on Saturday and he refused to let me pay, so I had to surrender.
21. Notice it says 'Abraham listened to Hebron'. It means he had something to work with in his estimation of the value of the land. He had somewhere to go.
22. The two men could have backed each other up into a corner which could have caused a problem, like Putin is being backed into a corner at this very time.
23. Abraham paid 400 shekels of silver according to the commercial weight at that time.
24. He takes possession of the land and everything in it, lock, stock and barrel.
25. He completes the transaction and puts Sarah into the cave. Why is it important for people they love to have a place of rest?
26. Why is closure important?