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Abraham Buried His Wife Sarah in the Cave in the field of Machpelah 23: 19-20

Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah DIG: How might Sarah have been eulogized at her funeral? What did Abraham's purchase of a burial site in the Promised Land prove?

REFLECT: Do you have a family burial site like Abraham and his family? What are people going to say about you at your funeral? Where is your true home?

Sarah and Abraham never found a place to call home. In fact, the only piece of **land they** ever owned was the plot **Avraham** bought to bury **Sarah**.



After all the legal transactions were completed, **Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is Hebron) in the land of Canaan.** The city of **Hebron** is in the hill country of Judea, about half way between Jerusalem and Beersheba. **Mamre** is about two miles north of **Hebron**. Today there is a mosque built over this **cave**, and it is considered one of the most important mosques in Islam. **So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Avraham by the Hittites as a burial site (23:19-20).** The fact that **Abraham** purchased a burying place in strictly legal form as a hereditary possession in **the Promised Land**, was proof of **his** strong faith in the promises of

God and their eventual fulfillment.³⁷⁶

There *seems to be* a contradiction between this passage, **Stephen's** statement in **Acts** and a statement from **Joshua**. There were two different family plots about forty miles apart. One purchased by **Abraham near Mamre** and the other by **Jacob at Shechem**. **First, let's look at Stephen's statement. Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and his brothers died. Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money (Acts 7:15-16).** After **Sarah** died, **Abraham** lived another thirty-eight years. During that time **he** met and married a woman named Keturah and had six more sons! **The tomb that Abraham had bought** was for **his** second family, in the region near **Shechem**, where **he** had built **his** first altar **in the land of Canaan (12:6-7)**. When **Abraham** died, however, **he** was buried with **Sarah** in **Mamre**. Keturah and her sons may not have retained possession of the **Shechem** property, selling it or losing it somehow to the occupying people of **Hamor**. Then, about eighty-five years after **Avraham's** death, when **Jacob** came to the region of **Shechem**, knowing that the **land** had once belonged to **his** grandfather, **he** bought it back again. And because **Abraham** had once built **an altar** there, **Jacob** then did the same thing. **For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Isra'el (33:19-20).**

Secondly what did Joshua have to say about it? He said: **And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants (Joshua 24:32).** As mentioned above, **Jacob** had purchased **the land at Shechem** to build **an altar**. **He** retained possession of it, but **he** wasn't buried there. When **Jacob** died **he** was buried **in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre**. **Sarah** was the first to be buried there. But later **she** was followed by **Abraham (25:9)**, **Isaac (35:27-29)**, **Leah (49:30-31)**, and finally **Jacob (50:13)**. **Joseph** inherited **the land at Shechem** from **Jacob**. When **Joseph** died, **his descendants brought his bones back from Egypt and buried him at Shechem**. Eventually, **Joseph's** brothers were also buried there along with Keturah and her sons. Thus, there were two family plots, one **in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is Hebron)**, and the other **at Shechem.**³⁷⁷



Abraham knew **he** still had a family burial place back in Mesopotamia **(22:20-24)** and **he** could have had **Sarah's** body transferred there, but burying **Sarah in the land of Canaan** was saying that Mesopotamia was no longer their home. I am sure **Sarah** felt the same way, and no doubt **they** had discussed this many times together. **The Promised Land of Canaan** was now **their** future and the future of **their** family. There was no looking back.

In death, the patriarchs were victorious in a way that escaped them in life. Though their voices grew silent, their grave site could not prevent them from entering into the promises of **God**. In this way they are examples to us all.³⁷⁸ **Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that - *heaven country*. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them (Hebrews 11:13-16, The Message).**