

Genesis 23:1-4

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Sarah dies at the age of 127 years. Abraham mourns for his wife Sarah and then begins to look for a burial site for her.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, lived 127 years. We are told that *these were the years of the life of Sarah*, when she *died*. Isaac would have been around 37 years old at the time of her death, since we know he was born when Abraham was 100, and Sarah was 90 or 91 ([Genesis 21:5](#), [Genesis 17:17](#)). Abraham would have been around 137 years old when his wife passed away. It had been 62 years since Abraham and Sarah had entered Canaan ([Genesis 12:4-5](#)). Abraham will live to an age of 175 years ([Genesis 25:7](#)). The life span of the patriarchs was in a steady decline from after the flood. Abraham descended from Shem, the son of Noah.

- Shem lived 600 years ([Genesis 11:10-11](#))
- His son Arphaxad lived 438 years ([Genesis 11:12-13](#))
- His son Shelah lived 433 years ([Genesis 11:14-15](#))
- His son Eber lived 464 years ([Genesis 11:16:17](#))
- His son Peleg lived 239 years ([Genesis 11:18-19](#))
- His son Reu lived 239 years ([Genesis 11:20-21](#))
- His son Serug lived 230 years ([Genesis 11:22-23](#))
- His son Nahor lived 148 years ([Genesis 11:24-25](#))
- His son Terah lived 205 years ([Genesis 11:32](#))
- His son Abraham lived 175 years ([Genesis 25:7](#))
- His son Isaac will live 180 years ([Genesis 35:27](#))
- By the time we get to King David, David only lives 70 years ([2 Samuel 5:4 – 5](#))

Life spans are decaying after the flood, and will level out at around seventy years. As [Psalm 90:10](#) states: "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years..."

We are also told where *Sarah died*: *in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan*. Abraham established a home in Hebron in [Genesis 13:18](#), though at that time it was known as "Kiriath-arba."

After Sarah's death, *Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her*. She was his wife, and the mother of the son of God's promise, Isaac, so

the loss was great. Mourning in ancient times was very public. The mourner would weep unashamedly, sit in ashes and wear uncomfortable clothing, and even cut their hair ([Job 1:20](#), [Genesis 37:34-35](#); [Amos 5:16](#)).

After expressing his grief, *Abraham arose from mourning from before his dead*. There was the pressing matter of burying Sarah. Although it would be 400 years before Moses would establish the Law, it would become custom in Jewish culture to bury bodies within 24 hours of their death. Even executed criminals were supposed to be buried the same day as their hanging, to prevent defilement of the land ([Deuteronomy 22:23](#)). Abraham possibly had a similar mindset, wanting to put his wife to rest underground, away from the elements.

Abraham, searching for a place to bury Sarah, went to speak with local inhabitants to find a suitable burial plot. Apparently he journeyed to a nearby city, for his conversation with the Hittites takes place at the gate of a city, and the city is said to belong to a man named Ephron ([Genesis 23:10](#)). *Abraham spoke to the sons of Heth there, saying, "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."*

Although *Abraham* had established a home in Hebron for 62 years, he still considered himself a *stranger*. He did not legally own any land, not even a burial plot for his wife. The word *stranger* is the Hebrew word "ger," the idea being that he is a non-native to the area, but someone who was known to his neighbors. He is a *foreign resident*, someone who lives in Hebron, but did not originate there.

The *sons of Heth* in this passage are also identified as Hittites (v. 10). The Hittites were first named in [Genesis 15:20](#) as a tribe dwelling in Canaan.

Abraham up until this point has never purchased any land in Canaan. This effort to buy a place to bury Sarah was the only land purchase he would make. Abraham wanted Sarah buried in the land of Promise, where God had led them, rather than take her to her homeland of Ur. It was customary to be buried where you were born in those days, but Abraham's choice to bury Sarah in Canaan was an act of dedication to God's promises, showing his faith that this land was his home, given to him by God, where he would also be buried eventually, where his descendants would one day live as a nation ([Genesis 12:7](#)).

Biblical Text:

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.”