**Genesis 23:12-16**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/gen/gen-23/genesis-2312-16/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/gen/gen-23/genesis-2312-16/)

*Abraham again offers to pay for the land and cave. Ephron says the land was worth 400 shekels of silver. So, Abraham purchases the land and cave for that amount.*

*Abraham* meets Ephron’s offer with a sign of respect—he *bowed before the people of the land.*However, Abraham wants to secure the cave then and there, so *he spoke to Ephron so that the people of the land heard*(so that all there were witness to the business deal)*, 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.”*He cuts to the chase, offering to pay the asked price to own the cave, as well as *the field* which Ephron added in the previous passage. The fact that Abraham does not begin with an offer price would put him in a poor negotiating position. But Abraham seems more intent on having undisputed ownership and continuing his positive relationship with the locals.

Ephron now prices the land. It seems likely all that has gone before has been a sort of dance to see who names the first price. Ephron states that the *plot of land*is *worth four hundred shekels of silver*. He downplays the importance of the property, saying*, what is it between me and you? So bury your dead.* This seems to be an opening ask, and would seem likely that what would be expected would be a protracted negotiation. However, Abraham simply agrees to pay the asking price.

It is difficult to evaluate this price relative to the current prevailing wages. But some estimate that a current equivalence would approach $100,000 for the field and cave. It is impossible to know whether this is a good or bad deal, but it would seem that Abraham’s primary goal here is to make a solid impression such that there is no grounds for any subsequent questioning of his ownership of the burial plot.

So *Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the presence of the sons of Heth.* Again this is a public meeting at the gate of *Ephron’s* city, with many witnesses gathered. This land purchase will be legal due to the manner in which the negotiation and purchase was conducted. Once the payment is given, *Ephron* cannot ask any more of *Abraham*, or claim the land is still his, because of this contractual conversation in front of the community. Everyone knows now that the cave and *field* in Machpelah will belong to Abraham henceforth. *Abraham* pays*Ephron four hundred shekels of silver,*which was*currency acceptable to a merchant*. Shekels in those days were units of weight, rather than minted coins. This is why the silver was *weighed out.*The appropriate weight was measured and delivered to Ephron, *four hundred shekels of silver*, which was *acceptable*for such a transaction.

**Biblical Text:**

**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.**