

**08.16 Sarah's Death (Genesis 23:1-20)** This lesson might be combined with 08.17 “A Bride for Isaac.”

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

**Visuals and Tools:**

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- Two realistic male puppets or older students or another adult besides the teacher prepared to do the dialogue between Abraham and the Hittites found in the story

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Flashcard words are enlarged at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Hittites/Hethites*: a group of people mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. "Children of Heth" . . . are mentioned several times as living in or near Canaan since the time of Abraham (estimated to be between 2000 BC and 1500 BC) to the time of Ezra after the return from the Babylonian exile (around 450 BC). Their ancestor Heth . . . is said in Genesis to be a son of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical\\_Hittites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hittites)).
- *burial*: “[T]he tomb most typical of the Israelite period is a natural cave or a chamber cut into soft rock, near the city. Bodies would be laid on rock shelves provided on three sides of the chamber, or on the floor, and as generations of the same family used the tomb, skeletons and grave goods might be heaped up along the sides or put into a side chamber to make room for new burials. This practice of family burial . . . was common enough to give rise to the Hebrew expressions ‘to sleep with one's fathers’ (e.g., I Kings 11:23) and ‘to be gathered to one's kin’ (Gen. 25:8; et al.) as synonyms for ‘to die’” (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ancient-burial-practices>).
- *mourning/grieving*: “Traditionally, a person is buried the same day as his or her death [not the case with Sarah], followed by seven days of mourning. . . . Mourners remain in the house of mourning with friends and family throughout the week.” A 30-day period of mourning was practiced for notable people like Moses (<https://www.gotquestions.org/mourning-period.html>).

**Scripture: (ESV)**

Genesis 23:1 Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. 3 And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, 4 “I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” 5 The Hittites answered Abraham, 6 “Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.” 7 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. 8 And he said to them, “If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place.

10 Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, 11 “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead.” 12 Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. 13 And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, “But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.” 14 Ephron answered Abraham, 15 “My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.” 16 Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of

silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

17 So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. 19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites.

### **Introduction/Review:**

**Story:** [Much of this narrative is directly quoted from the ESV.]

Thirty-seven years had passed since Isaac had been born. How old was Abraham? [One hundred plus thirty-seven equals 137.] How old was Sarah? [Ninety plus thirty-seven years equals 127 years.] The Lord had given Sarah thirty-seven years of special joy as she watched Isaac grow from a babe to a man. But now, as will happen to us all, Sarah died.

Abraham, who lived in a land [locate Hebron] that God had promised but who also had not purchased one square foot of that land, grieved for his beloved Sarah. But he also had to be practical: he needed a place to bury his wife.

Going to the Hittites, people who owned land nearby, and meeting with them at the gate to their city, Abraham requested a certain field with a cave in it for burial. One whole chapter of Genesis is given to the amusing business transaction. Let's sit in on the bargaining. [Teacher, the incident is presented here as a dialogue. Perhaps you and another colleague or two older students or even two realistic male puppets could interact with this script.]

**Abraham:** I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

**Hittites:** Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead.

**Abraham** (rising and bowing to the Hittites): If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and ask Ephron to give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. I will pay the full price.

**Hittites** (Ephron): No, my lord, hear me: I *give* you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it.

**Abraham** (bowing): Please listen to me. I will give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.

**Hittites** (Ephron): My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.

**Abraham:** Here. I will now weigh out for Ephron the silver he has named—four hundred shekels of silver (about \$44,650 at the price of silver in 2013). [The price of silver on January 18, 2013, was \$31.88/oz. If, as the ESV notes say, one shekel was 3.5 oz., the total weight would have been 1400 oz. That number times \$31.88 equals \$44,632.]

The deal was done. Abraham acquired his land for 400 shekels of silver. This is what he got: a field in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre [locate on the map below]; the cave in the field; and all the trees that were in the field. Then Abraham was able to bury Sarah his wife in this cave of his newly purchased field, the only land he owned in all the land God had promised to him.

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- Abraham was not chintzy; he paid the full price desired by the seller. It is not always wise to bargain.

- When Jesus died, He borrowed a tomb for only three days. His friend, Joseph of Arimathea, gave it to Jesus, not knowing Jesus would rise from the dead, not needing a tomb any longer.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: cave; coins
- Sing any stanzas you choose except stanza 13 of the song, “Abraham,” found at Lesson 08.01 or on the Songs page at [teachingthebibleto kids.org](http://teachingthebibleto kids.org).
- Review questions: (Game: A student will put 4, not 400, coins, like pennies, in a transparent container for each correct answer. If competing by teams, count the money in each container to determine winner.)
  1. Tell the name of the ancestor for whom the Hittites are named. [Heth.]
  2. Where did Bible people prefer to bury their dead? [In caves.]
  3. What was the usual length of time for the grieving period? [Seven days; 30 days for a notable person.]
  4. Why did Abraham to to talk to the Hittites? [He wanted to buy a burial place.]
  5. What were the Hittites willing to do regarding Abraham’s burial place? [Give one to Abraham or let them use their tombs.]
  6. On what did Abraham insist in making the deal with Ephron the Hittite? [To pay the full amount.]
  7. What was the full amount? [400 shekels of silver.]
  8. What was the name of the cave and field Abraham bought? [Machpelah.]
  9. Who needed a tomb for only three days? [Jesus.]
  10. Why? [Because He rose again on the third day; He was no longer dead and didn’t need the tomb.]

### **Memory Verse[s]:**

1 Corinthians 15:3, 4—“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, . . . he was buried, . . . he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

### **Handwork:**

- Have students draw a cave on plain paper. Next to it have them draw a cave/tomb with the rock door removed from the entry.

*Hittites*

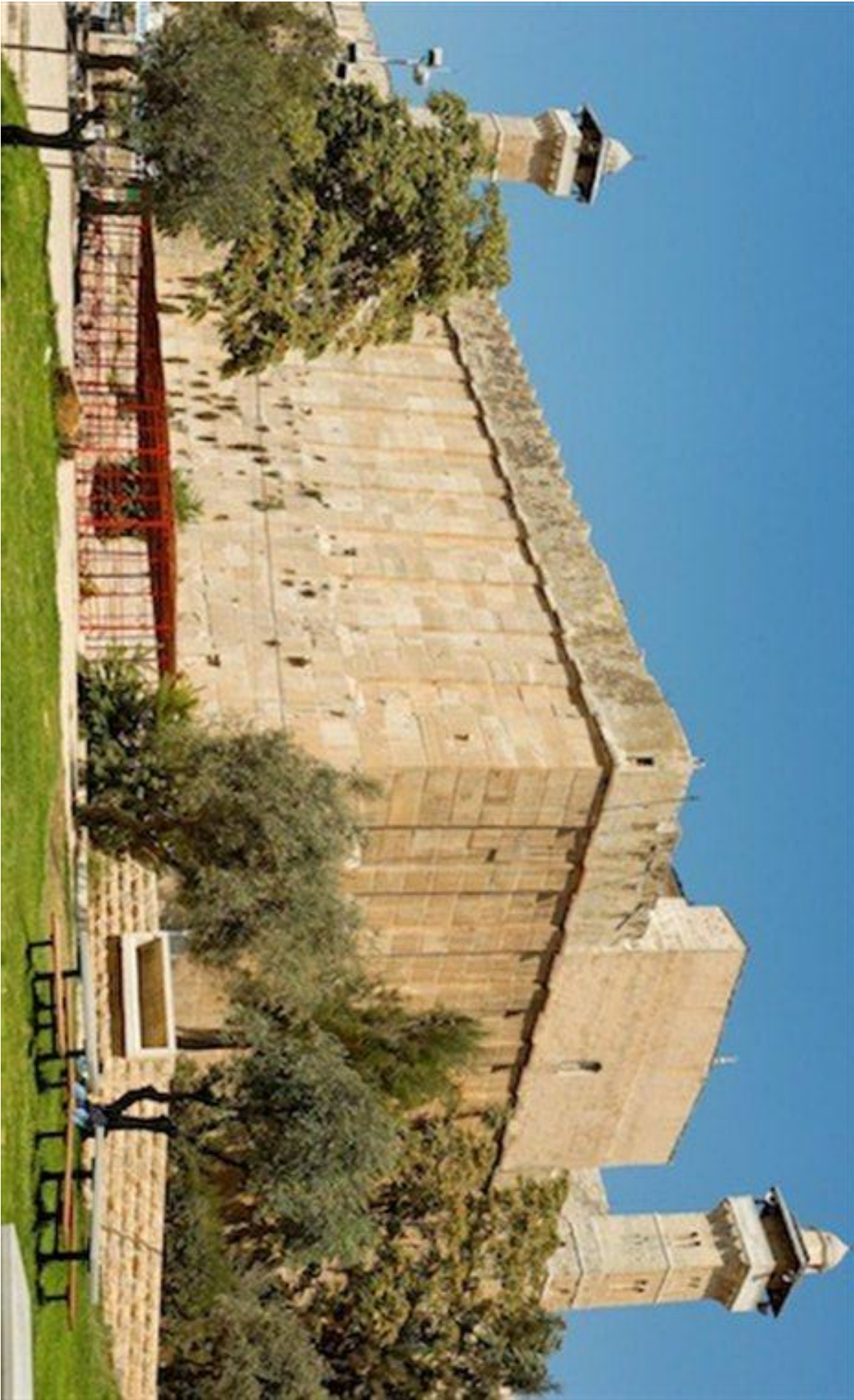
*burial*

*grieving/mourning*



[http://bibleontology.com/page/Cave\\_of\\_Machpelah](http://bibleontology.com/page/Cave_of_Machpelah)





<https://bible.org/seriespage/4-hebron-cave-machpelah-stands-testimony-faith> (Machpelah is now under a Muslim mosque in Hebron.)