



Genesis – 23:1 -24:14
Sarah Dies and Abraham Seeks a Wife for Isaac
(Lesson #32)

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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."

Vs 1-2 As we come to chapter 23, we cannot be sure how much time has passed since chapter 22 and it depends on the age of Isaac when the events of chapter 22 occurred.

If Isaac was 15 or so, then Sarah would have been roughly 105, so approximately 22 years have passed. If he was 33 or so, then Sarah would have been 123 at that time, so four years have passed. In any case, at a minimum, 4 years have passed since chapter 22, and it could have been decades.

***** It is interesting to note that in the scriptures Sarah is the only woman whose, age, death, and burial are all recorded.** Equally, Sarah is the only woman specifically listed in the hall of faith (Heb 11)!

Notice, Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

Now the last place we were told Abraham was dwelling was Beersheba, in the Negeb. Now they are back in Hebron. Somewhere along the way they moved back to the region of Hebron to Kiriath-arba.

Vs 2b – Abraham went in and mourned for Sarah. Abraham deeply loved Sarah and mourned over her loss.

Sarah had been Abraham's right-hand girl through all of these adventures with God and Abraham deeply

I suspect Abraham fully understood that one day he would see Sarah again, but in this life she was gone and he missed her. He wept over her passing away.

Vs 3-4 - So Abraham arises from his mourning and goes to the Hittites, the people in the area where he is now dwelling.

Who are the Hittites? They are Hethites, they are sons of Ham, to be more specific they were a **Canaanite tribe**:

"15 ¶ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, 16 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 18 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed." (Ge 10:15-18 ESV)

They were **in the land** when Abraham arrived in the land:

"18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites." (Ge 15:18-21 ESV)

These Hittites were a clan that descended from Canaan, they were a subset of Canaanites who were in the land. **Abraham** tells these **Hittites**: I am a **sojourner** and a **foreigner** among you.

APPLICATION: You and I are citizens of the US, but we are also **citizens of heaven**. In that second sense, You and I (like Abraham) are pilgrims and strangers in a foreign land.

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” (1Pe 2:11 ESV)

So Abraham was promised the land, but it had not yet been given. You and I are in the same place. King Jesus will one day rule this entire world. **You and I are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.**

We are very much like Abraham. A sojourner today, a joint owner one day in the future.

Abraham’s request - Please give me a **piece of property**, as a **burying place**, that I may **bury my dead**.

5-9- 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."

Vs 5-6 - The Hittites, the leaders who sat in the gate of the city said to Abraham.

Hear us my Lord אדון (**‘adown**). You are a **prince, (captain)** of **אלהים** (**‘elohiym**), among us. These Canaanites, to some degree, understood who Abraham was.

This is exactly what God said He was going to do:

“I ¶ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”” (Ge 12:1-3 ESV)

APPLICATION: This is what God will do with us if we **will walk with Him**. God will elevate us in front of people who do not know Him, because we have made it our business to elevate Him in our lives.

They respond - You go, and bury your dead in the best of our tombs. You pick, none of us will withhold whichever tomb you pick.

What we see occurring here is a mixture a genuine respect for this mighty man of God along with current customs and traditions. Scholars tell us we should not imagine they are offering anything for free, but rather initiating the standard negotiating practices of their day.

But we recognize that the surrounding Hittites, like the Philistines had a great respect for Abraham.

Here they are saying, you pick the place where you would like to bury you wife, we will not withhold it from you!

Vs 7-9 - Abraham **arises**, and **bows down**, again a mixture **of respect** and **customs** that is hard for us to fully unwind today.

Vs 8-9 – He then says, if you are willing, please entreat **Ephron**, the son of **Zohar**. For I would like to bury my deceased wife in the **cave** of **Machpelah** which is owned by **Ephron the son of Zohar**.

It is at the end of a field he owns. I desire to bury my wife in that cave, and **I am willing to pay the full price for the cave.**

The cave of Machpelah: This word itself is only used **6 times** in the Hebrew Bible and **all are in reference to this event.**

This is a real place, that is described by real people. Abraham likely wrote this down and it ended up in the hands of Moses, who put together the book of Genesis.

Again, Scholars do not believe Abraham is asking for the cave for free, this is traditional Bedouin bargaining that is occurring, you will see this play out.

***** So that you know *****

- **Abraham** will later be **buried** in this cave.
 - **Isaac and Rebekah** will be **buried** in this cave.
 - **Jacob buried Leah** in this cave.
 - Then Jacob made his 12 sons promise, while they were sojourning in Egypt, that they would **bury him in this very cave** (Gen 49:28-32).
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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."

Vs 10-11 - As fate would have it, Ephron was sitting there among the Hittites present. We can imagine he answers out from the Hittites present as they sat in the **gate of the city.**

This is a contract that is being negotiated legally and publicly. Here in the gate, Ephron makes a counter-offer.

Vs 11 - Again, this is likely following the standard decorum of the day. Ephron says, in the presence of all these others: *"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."*

You see what he says: You desire the purchase of the cave at the end of the field I own. **I give you both the cave and the field, go and bury your dead!**

Vs 12-15 - 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."

Vs 12-13 - You can imagine, here in the **gate of the city this interaction going on**, and **Abraham now bows** before all the men (again likely following general **respect, decorum**, and the **customs of the day**).

Then, in the hearing of everyone he says to Ephron. If you will hear me, **I give you the price of the field** (name your price, I agree to pay it). **I offer the value price for the field.**

Please sell it to me at its value, that I may then go and bury my wife.

Vs 14-15 - Here in the gate, Ephron answers back to Abraham: *"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."*

He names the price and then frames it, as what is that much between me and you. Its value is **400 shekels**, but hey, **what is that between you and me**.

Scholars tell us this is a VERY inflated price. Scholars also tell us this was the standard negotiating practices.

According to Dr. Fruchtenbaum, the initial price was high and the person desiring to purchase would now normally make a counteroffer and this would start the negotiations.

Vs 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.

Vs 16 - So Abraham having heard the value declared, even though we believe that he knew it was way overpriced, **weighs out the money**, according to the weights that were current for merchants in those days and he purchased the field of Ephron and the cave that lies at the end of the field.

Vs 17-18 - 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.

Vs 17-18 - First, notice the attention to detail here in the description, field, cave, location, and trees. **This is clearly a real literal place.**

So the **field of Ephron**, the trees that were in the field, and throughout that immediate area, along with the cave of Machpelah, which we are now told were "east of Mamre, in the area of Hebron are deeded over to Abraham. This all occurred in the gate of the city and witnessed by all the leaders and elders that were present that day.

Abraham, who owned nothing but a well, and let's be honest he did not really own that, now owns a piece of property in the Promised Land. He owns the field of Ephron and the cave at the end of that field.

The land would all belong to his descendants, but he owned nothing, not a stitch until now. Now he owns the **cave of Machpelah** and the **associated field**.

Vs 19-20 - 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.

Vs 19 - After Abraham had purchased the first piece of property in the land of Canaan.

At this point, Abraham owns a field, with a cave and Abraham buried Sarah in the cave that was connected to the field that he had just purchased, in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave as we discussed were legally transferred over to Abraham.

24:1-3 - Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, 3 that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell,

24:1- So at last check Abraham was **137 years old** (when Sarah died). Here we are told he was **old and advanced in years**.

The best estimate for his age at this point is **approximately 139-140 years old**.

Here is what we know for sure: "19 These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife." (Ge 25:19-20 ESV)

Then we are told plainly that **Yahweh had blessed Abraham in all things**. We did not need to be told that, we have **watched it happen** for the last 10 chapters of Genesis, **we are certain that Yahweh blessed Abraham in all things!**

Equally, we are reminded that God has told Abraham (on multiple occasions) that He would do just that:

"1 ¶ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."" (Ge 12:1-3 ESV)

Now when we read the God blessed Abraham in all things that is easy for us to see. But I would remind you and I:

APPLICATION: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," (Eph 1:3 ESV)

Vs 2-3 - Then Abraham calls for the **oldest servant** in his **household**, who is in **charge of all that he had**.

This is likely **Eliezer of Damascus**, this name should seem a little familiar to you.

"1 ¶ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 ¶ But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."" (Ge 15:1-3 ESV)

Now think about this, if this was Eliezer of Damascus, he had every right to resent Isaac and to attempt to derail the plan for Isaac.

APPLICATION: Eliezer of Damascus is the picture of a **servant**. I hope you and I are like Eliezer, I hope we do what we do to execute the will of God on earth.

Paul said it like this to the church in Corinth:

"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1Co 4:2 ESV)

He then tells him: Put your **hand under my thigh** (this is an ancient middle eastern ceremony).

We will see this same practice of oath taking in Genesis 47:

“28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. 29 And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.” He answered, “I will do as you have said.”” (Ge 47:28-30 ESV)

That you may **swear to me**, by **Yahweh**, the **God of heaven and earth**, that you will **not take a wife for my son**, from the **daughters of the Canaanites**, among whom **I dwell**.

Here Abraham reminds his servant that the God **you are swearing to** is the God who **created the heavens and the earth!**

Point #1 – of the oath: *you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites*

If you remember the Canaanites were under a curse, because of the people they would become, we looked at who they became in **Lev 18**, there we saw all forms of heinous sins!

APPLICATION: *“14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?” (2Co 6:14-15 ESV)*

Vs 4-7 - but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” 5 The servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?” 6 Abraham said to him, “See to it that you do not take my son back there. 7 The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, ‘To your offspring I will give this land,’ he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

Vs 4 - Point #2 – **You will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.**

You are to go to Haran, remember what we read at the end of Gen 22:

“20 ¶ Now after these things it was told to Abraham, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” 23 (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.” (Ge 22:20-23 ESV)

Vs 5 - The servant asks **two questions**:

So his eldest servant says, **what, if after all of this, the woman is not willing to leave Haran and come here to Cannan?** Good question. He follows with a second question about what to do in that scenario: **At that point should I come back and get Isaac and take him to Haran?**

Vs 6-7 - First - Abraham answers the second question, with one **CLEAR point**: *See to it that you do not take my son back there.*

Then he explains to his servant **why** he is not to take Isaac back to Haran.

- 1) Notice how he refers to God. He is **Yahweh**, **“the God of Heaven”**
- 2) This God took me from my father’s house (Gen 12), when he left his dad behind in Haran, he took me from the land of my kindred.

“Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.” (Ge 11:31 ESV)

"1 ¶ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Ge 12:1-3 ESV)

- 3) When God did this he spoke to me and he swore to me: I will give you this land!
"6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD." (Ge 12:6-8 ESV)
- 4) Then we hear something that God told Abraham, somewhere along the way, that **we had no idea** about, until just now.

Of the many things that God promised Abraham, one appears to be and notice what Abraham tells his servant, **God said** he would give me the land and God also said: **he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.**

This is God's expressed plan to Abraham!

Vs 8-9 - But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter.

Vs 8 - Here Abraham circles back to answer the first question, namely what if the woman is not willing. Abraham says, if that should happen, **you are free and clear from the oath you just made.**

He then reiterates to make sure **Eliezer is clear**: *"only you must not take my son back there."*

God has given Abraham the land and neither he nor his son were going back to Haran!

APPLICATION: This is faith. Abraham burned the ship. Abraham was trusting that God was going to do what God said he was going to do. Abraham has grown in his faith; this is what I desire for my faith to look like. Getting stronger and stronger as I grow closer to God.

Vs 9 - The servant now follows through what was likely the custom of the day when you swore to another person to do something. He placed his hand under the thigh of his master (Abraham) and swears concerning this matter.

10-12 - Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor. 11 And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water. 12 And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

Vs 10 - Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the **city of Nahor**.

You can imagine he may have other servants with him, but he is loaded with gifts from Abraham.

Vs 11 - So he arrives outside the city and has the camels kneel down outside the city, by a well of water that is located there. It is evening time and he expects that women will be coming out to draw water that they will need for the evening.

Vs 12 - There Eliezer prays a prayer to Yahweh, the God of his master Abraham. Here is what he prays:

- 1) Grant me success.
That is success in finding a wife for Isaac, a wife from Abraham's kin folk.
- 2) In so doing, show your love for my master, Abraham. Grant this request for in so doing you are showing your great love for him.

13-14 - *Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' — let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."*

Vs 13-14 - Now he even **sets the conditions for success**.

First – He tells God what God already knows to be true: *Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.*

Second – I am asking you to supernaturally lead me to the **right woman**, in that the woman I ask: **'Please let down your jar that I may drink,'**

The woman will then respond: *'Drink, and I will water your camels'*

When this happens, I will say and then she will say... *let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac.*

That means, she will need to answer the question correctly and she will need to be from the family of Abraham, standing here at a well outside the city of Haran. **In all honesty** this is a **TALL and unlikely request**. I would say statistically this **borderlines on the impossible**.

Unless God is somehow moving people and they are not even aware of his guiding.

Eliezer has traveled 500 miles, as a crow flies. He now stands outside of a city of those days that likely had hundreds if not thousands of inhabitants. He is asking to be directed to a single woman.

He closes: *"By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."*

But, in this particular scenario God had told Abraham that: *He would send his angel before Eliezer, and that Eliezer would take a wife for Isaac from Haran.*

That brings us to the end of our time. Yes, I know I purposefully brought us to a cliff-hanger, but Lord willing, we will pick up next week and see the **Sovereign of the Universe** do exactly what he told Abraham He was going to do!