

WEEK 6

Some Questions to Reflect on Before Reading the Text

- Do you enjoy haggling over the price of something you wish to buy, or do you prefer dealing with a fixed price? Why?
- Do you enjoy shopping? What kind?
- What was the biggest business or property transaction you ever took part in?

Reading: Genesis 23:1-20

The Death

23 Sarah lived for one hundred & twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life.² & Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; & Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah & to weep for her.

The Negotiations

³Abraham rose up from beside his dead, & said to the Hittites,⁴ 'I am a stranger & an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying-place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight.'⁵ The Hittites answered Abraham,⁶ 'Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold from you any burial ground for burying your dead.'⁷ Abraham rose & bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land.⁸ He said to them, 'If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, & entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar,⁹ so 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 a possession for a burying-place.'¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites; & 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, & I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.'¹² Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.¹³ He said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, 'If you only will listen to me! I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, so 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 & me? Bury your dead.'¹⁶ Abraham agreed with Ephron; & 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.

The Contract

17 So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it & all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, passed¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, in the presence of all who went in at the gate of his city.

The Burial

¹⁹After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.²⁰The field & the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying-place.

After reading the text, you may wish to consider the following:

Choose questions according to your interest & time

- How much of their life did Abraham & Sarah spend wandering together? Cf. information in 12:4; 17:17; & 23:1.
- Is the city's governing council (23:6) ready to grant everything that Abraham is seeking (23:4)?
- What reason might Abraham have had for insisting on paying for the burial place (23:13)?
- What reason might Abraham have had for paying the first price asked by Ephron rather than trying to negotiate a lower price (23:16)?

After session 6, you may wish to consider the following

Questions for Application

- Abraham describes himself with a term – “an alien residing among you” (23:4). Two NT writers apply the term to Christians. Sometimes it is translated “strangers” or “exiles” (1 Pt 1:1; 2:11; Heb 11:13). In what ways are Christians “resident aliens” in the world? How might Abraham’s life provide an image or model of this aspect of Christian life? How might this concept contribute to your understanding of yourself as a Christian?
- Who are the resident aliens & immigrants where you live? How could you be a channel of God’s blessing for them?
- Abraham & Sarah lived with the expectation that their children would be the primary recipients of the promised blessings. How should you live today so that others after you may experience God’s blessings? In what ways might you re-orient your life to be of greater service to the next generation?
- Sarah’s tomb was a kind of down payment on the whole land of Canaan, which God promised would belong to the family of Abraham & Sarah. Ephesians calls the Holy Spirit the “*pledge*” of our inheritance as Christians (Eph 1:14). The term might more precisely be translated “*down payment*” or “*deposit*” – the first payment that assures the recipient that the balance will be paid according to the agreement. In what ways is the Holy Spirit a down payment on things to come?
- What is the most important insight you have gained from this short course & reading about Abraham & Sarah? What action will you take as a result of what you have gained from the course & reading about these ancestors in faith?