

## What is the significance of Hebron in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Hebron-in-the-Bible.html>

The ancient city of Hebron, today called Al-Khalil in Arabic, was located approximately 20 miles south of present-day Jerusalem in the Judean valley. Hebron is significant in the Bible for a couple of reasons. Hebron is first mentioned in Genesis 13:18 as a place where Abram (later known as Abraham) traveled after parting company with his nephew Lot. At Hebron the Lord first showed Abram the land that would belong to him and his offspring (Genesis 13:14-17). Later, after the death of King Saul, God told David to go to Hebron, and it became the city where David ruled over Judah for seven years because at that time the Jebusites controlled Jerusalem (2 Samuel 2:1-4, 5:3).

After his wife, Sarah, died, Abraham still lived in Hebron, which belonged to the Hittites (Genesis 23). He wanted to bury Sarah there, so he approached a man named Ephron and asked to buy a cave for a burial site. Abraham was so well-respected among the Hittites that they offered to give him any cave he desired. But Abraham insisted on paying full price, and he selected an area called Machpelah, owned by a man named Ephron. Again, Ephron tried to give Abraham the cave, but Abraham insisted on paying full price. "So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site" (Genesis 23:17-20).

This cave in Hebron is also called Kiriath-Arba, and, later, Abraham was also buried there (Genesis 25:10); and Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob (Genesis 47:29-30), and Leah (Genesis

49:30-32). The cave of Machpelah in Hebron is considered by the Jews to be the second holiest site in all Israel. Today it is under Palestinian control and is known to Jewish inhabitants as the Cave (or Tomb) of the Patriarchs. Muslims refer to it as the Sanctuary of Abraham.

The land around Hebron was part of the allotment Joshua gave to Caleb when Israel took the Promised Land (Joshua 14:13). Hebron was a reward for Caleb's faithful service and loyalty to the Lord. Caleb probably desired Hebron because it may have contained the "valley of Eschol" from which the spies had brought great clusters of grapes as proof of the land's bounty (Numbers 13:23). Hebron was later designated as a city of refuge (Joshua 20:1-7).

Hebron became the capital of Judah, and from there David reigned for seven-and-a-half years. During David's reign in Hebron, Abner, the former commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ish-Bosheth across the Jordan River and set him up as king of Israel. Eventually, however, Abner defected to David's side and vowed to bring all of Israel under David's control (2 Samuel 3:8-12). When Joab, David's commander learned of this, he was certain Abner was only spying for Ish-Bosheth (2 Samuel 3:24-25). He also hated Abner for killing his brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon, so he set out for revenge. Joab met Abner in Hebron and pulled him aside under the pretext of having a private conversation. When they were alone, Joab stabbed Abner in the stomach and killed him (2 Samuel 3:27). David was grieved at the news of Abner's death and pronounced a curse on Joab (2 Samuel 3:28-29).

After Ish-Bosheth was assassinated, David meted out justice against the assassins in Hebron; in this way, David's integrity became known throughout all Israel (2 Samuel 4).

David was eventually declared Israel's rightful king, and he moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:1-5).

David's son Absalom made Hebron his headquarters while he plotted to steal his father's kingdom (2 Samuel 15:7-9). Absalom had spent time cultivating loyalty from Israel's people, then moved his nefarious plot out from under his father's eye in Jerusalem. He appointed himself king in Hebron, striking fear in David's heart (2 Samuel 15:10, 14). David fled as Absalom moved from Hebron to Jerusalem to take control of the capital. He may have wrongly thought that, since it had worked for David to begin his reign in Hebron, it would also work for him.

Absalom forgot an important truth: David had been anointed by God to rule Israel; Absalom had not. As significant as Hebron was to his ancestors, a cave full of ancestral bones could not replace that anointing. Absalom's brief stint as a self-appointed king of Hebron did not lead to future success, and he died in disgrace (2 Samuel 18:9-14). Regardless of a city or nation's great history, unless God's presence and blessing are on it, it holds no power to bless its inhabitants.