

# The Doctrine of Hebron

- I. The name of the city Hebron:
- A. Hebron is transliterated from the word *Cheb<sup>r</sup>ôwn* (חֶבְרֹן) [pronounced *khe<sup>b</sup>v-ROHN*], which means *association, league, joined*. McGee suggests that it means *fellowship, communion*; as Hebron was a place of fellowship with God, as we will see when we examine its history. Strong's #2275 BDB #289. We find the name Hebron in [Gen. 13:18](#) [23:2](#), [19](#) [35:27](#) [37:14](#) [Num. 13:22](#) [Joshua 10:3](#), [5](#), [23](#), [36](#), [39](#) [11:21](#) [12:10](#) [14:13–15](#) [15:13](#), [54](#) [20:7](#) [21:11](#), [13](#) [Judges 1:10](#), [10](#), [20](#) [16:3](#) [I Sam. 30:31](#) [II Sam. 2:1](#), [3](#), [11](#), [32](#) [3:2](#), [5](#), [19](#), [20](#), [22](#), [27](#), [32](#) [4:1](#), [8](#), [12](#) [5:1](#), [3](#), [5](#), [13](#) [15:7](#), [9](#), [10](#) [I Kings 2:11](#) [I Chron. 3:1](#), [4](#) [6:55](#), [57](#) [11:1](#), [2](#), [3](#) [12:23](#), [38](#) [29:27](#) [II Chron. 11:10](#) (this bypasses the references to people named Hebron).
- B. Hebron was also called Kiriath-arba (Joshua 14:15). Kiriath is actually the word *qir<sup>e</sup>yath* (קִרְיָת) [pronounced *kir-YAHTH*], which comes from the Hebrew feminine substantive *qir<sup>e</sup>yâth* (קִרְיָת) [pronounced *kir-YAWTH*], which simply means *city, town*. Strong's #7151 BDB #900. This is followed by the word *`ar<sup>e</sup>bba<sup>c</sup>* (אַרְבָּע) [pronounced *ahr<sup>e</sup>b-BAH* or *ahr<sup>e</sup>b-BAHG*], which is related to the Hebrew word *to lie in wait, to ambush* (Strong's #693 BDB #70). Strong's #7153 BDB #900.<sup>1</sup> BDB suggests that it might mean *fourfold-city* with the suffix *arba*.
- C. It appears that there is the occasional name of this as *the oaks of Mamre* or simply *Mamre*. We find this in [Gen. 13:18](#) [14:13](#) [18:1](#) [23:17](#), [19](#) [25:9](#) [35:27](#) [49:30](#) [50:13](#). I have left out the references to people with that name.
- D. That the oaks of Mamre is in Hebron and that Mamre and Hebron are interchangeable we find in [Gen. 13:18](#) [23:19](#). That Hebron is called Kiriath-arba is found in [Gen. 23:2](#) [Joshua 14:15](#). That they are all interchangeable is found in [Gen. 35:27](#).
- E. What we should consider is whether the Hebrew of the old name (or of the new name) is actually an issue.
1. When coming upon a city, the Israelites (or any other Hebrew) might give it a name which is a transliteration of its name as given by the heathen who live there.
  2. The Israelites might name the city in such a way that it takes into consideration the original name of the city.
  3. The city might be re-named entirely.
- F. Since *kiriath* is the Hebrew name for a city, the second option seems to be the mostly likely. In the KJV, Hebron is called *the city of Arba* in [Joshua 14:15](#) [15:13](#) [21:11](#) and *the city of Arbah* in [Gen. 35:27](#). It is called *Kirjath-arba* in [Gen. 23:2](#) [35:27](#) [Joshua 14:15](#) [15:54](#) [20:7](#) [Judges 1:10](#) [Neh. 11:25](#).
1. Arba is called the great man of the Anakim (Joshua 14:15). He is also called the father of Anak in Joshua 21:11. This is an interesting situation. He fathered the namesake for a particular group of people and is also called the great man of this people.
  2. Therefore, we have Arbathites (or Arbites) and Anakim. This should not be a problem as Canaan was also the father of the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites and the Sinites ([Gen. 10:15–17](#)). When a son or grandson stands out, moves away, begins another city, etc., their identity also became historic.
- G. Arba. Arbathtite is found in [II Sam. 23:31](#) [I Chron. 11:32](#), Arbite in [II Sam. 23:35](#).
- H. One of the things which should be considered is, when was this city named what. We might become confused by the statement [Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; he was the greatest man among the Anakim](#) ([Joshua 14:15a](#)). This is a hard call.
1. Apparently all the Patriarchs lived for extended periods of time in Hebron. We will see that in the points below.
  2. It appears as though this city has had several names for a long time (see [Gen. 23:2](#) [35:27](#) [14:15](#)).
  3. This would indicate that the Anakim possessed Hebron prior to the time of Abraham; that the Hittites drove them out (as Abram purchased this plot of land from the Hittites); and that they re-infested the area (as per [Num. 13:22](#), [28](#) [Joshua 14:15](#)).

<sup>1</sup> ZPEB indicates that this is more coincidental than meaningful, and that Arna being an ancestor of Anak is a coincidence and not the origin of the name. See *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 108.

4. That the city was said to be built seven years before Zoan in Egypt might indicate a rebuilding of this city by the Anakim (Num. 13:22). ZPEB gives the approximate date 1728 B.C. during the time of the Hyksos.
  5. This first scenario would be borne out if the ly-<sup>c</sup>anaq people whose name appears on the 19<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Execration tests found in Egypt are the Anakim. Their three princes did have Semitic names.
  6. The second possibility is that an early Scribe who transcribed Genesis added the references to Kiriath-arba in Genesis, a city with which he was very familiar, his intent being to help identify this city. As you can see, such harmless intent would cause us great confusion in the future. This would mean that the city was called Mamre and Hebron for a long time and then, for a while, during the infestation of the Anakim while the Israelites were in Egypt, it was named Kiriath-arba by the Anakim (their name would have been different, but still meaning *the city of Arba*). This possibility is reasonable particularly because the Anakim are not mentioned in Scripture until Num. 13.
- II. The location of Hebron: Hebron is found about 20 miles west from the midpoint of the Dead Sea in the hill country of Judah, 25 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Mamre is traditionally located 2 miles north of Hebron, making them so close as to be interchangeable.
- III. A description of Hebron: It has an elevation of approximately 2800 ft. It is situated in a valley between two ridges. Hebron is an area which would certainly be populated. It has several natural springs and wells and there are two large pools with cut stone walls within the city limits today. There are apple, plum, fig, pomegranate, apricot and nut trees; and grapes, melons and other produce are grown in the rich soil of the valley and terrace.<sup>2</sup>
- IV. The history of Hebron
- A. Archeological:
    1. Excavations which were done in Hebron in 1964–1966 indicate that the Hebron area was occupied as early as 3300 B.C. and has been occupied almost continuously since then.
    2. There appears to be Chalcolithic occupation as early as c. 3000 B.C.
    3. There was evidence of Early Bronze I habitation outside the bronze wall mentioned below.
    4. The rebuilding of the city mentioned in Num. 13:22 probably corresponds to the 30 ft. wide Middle Bronze II wall which was discovered at the southwest corner of an ancient tell, now covered by grape and olive yard terraces. This wall either is or was at least 330 ft. long.
  - B. Biblical:
    1. Hebron is where most of the Patriarchs lived and where most of them were buried.
    2. We first hear about Hebron immediately after the separation of Abram and Lot somewhere in the early the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Lot settles in around Sodom, a particularly horrid city and God takes Abram up to a hill and has him look in all directions and tells him that this land would belong to his descendants forever. God tells Abram to walk through the land to get a feel for it (it is like you have just gotten your son this great Christmas gift and you want to show him how to play with it). [Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah](#) (Gen. 13:18). Abram and Sarai apparently lived there for awhile (Gen. 14:13).
    3. It was here that God appeared to Abram and promised him a son through Sarai (Gen. 18:1ff).
    4. Several decades after the birth of Isaac, Sarah dies at the age of 127 and is buried in Hebron, also called Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2). Abraham purchases a field to bury her in from the Hittites (also known as the sons of Heth) (Gen. 23:17–20).
    5. Abraham is also buried there by Isaac at age 175 (Gen. 25:7–10).
    6. You may recall the story of Jacob and his twin Esau. Jacob defrauded Esau several times and eventually had to leave. However, Isaac remained living in Hebron and Jacob returned to his father near to the time of his death. Isaac lived 180 years and Esau and Jacob buried him apparently in the same place (Gen. 35:27–29).
    7. Apparently Jacob also chose to live in Hebron. [Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan](#) (Gen. 37:1). Jacob sends Joseph, his favorite son, out to his

<sup>2</sup> This description was paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 107–108.

brothers tending their flocks in Shechem. [So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem](#) (Gen. 37:14b).

8. Jacob asked his sons to bury him with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah (Gen. 49:29–33 50:13).
9. We don't hear about Hebron for a long time, as Joseph and his family move to Egypt; after he dies, his family is enslaved by the Egyptians. Moses does not go anywhere near Hebron until the book of Numbers. When the spies viewed the land, one of the cities that they went through was Hebron. We are told that Hebron was built seven years before Zoan (Num. 13:22). This was circa 1445 B.C. This mention implies that it was within recent history that both Hebron and Zoan were built up. It is likely that Hebron was just a place, not built up at all, during the time of the Patriarchs. However, when the descendants of Anak moved into that area, they likely built up the city. This is all by implication and not by direct statement, all taken from Num. 13:22.
10. Again, we don't hear about the city of Hebron for a long time until we get to the book of Joshua and Joshua's invasion of the Land of Promise. If you will recall in Joshua 9, the Gibeonites use deceit in order to attain an alliance with Joshua and then five kings allied themselves and attacked the Gibeonites. These five kings were from the hill country, one of them being the king of Hebron (Joshua 10:3, 5, 23). Joshua destroyed the armies of those kings and executed the kings as well (Joshua 10:22–26).
11. Joshua went through a half dozen cities and destroyed the people in the cities. One of the last ones was Hebron and he left no survivors (Joshua 10:36–39). What this means is that Joshua and his men killed everyone that they found. They took no prisoners. This does not mean that some people did not escape. It is affirmed, however, in Joshua 11:21–22 that Joshua removed the Anakim from the hill country, including Hebron, and that some remained near the more western and coastal towns of Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. In terms of the kings killed by Joshua and his men, the king of Hebron is on that list (Joshua 12:10).
12. Caleb, who took his army in to remove the Anakim, requested Hebron and that area from Joshua in Joshua 14.
13. Hebron proper will actually go to the tribe of Aaron as a Levitical city and as a city of refuge. The surrounding area and villages will go to Caleb and his family (Joshua 21:11–13 I Chron. 5:55–56). In Joshua 14:12 and in great detail in Judges 1:10, we will discuss in more detail the chronological sequence involved. **We will cover the remainder of this doctrine at a later date.**

## The Doctrine of Hebron Summarized

1. Hebron is transliterated from the word *Cheb<sup>e</sup>rôwn* (חֶבְרֹן) [pronounced *khe<sup>b</sup>-ROHN*], which means *association, league, joined*. McGee suggests that it means *fellowship, communion*; as Hebron was a place of fellowship with God, as we will see when we examine its history. Strong's #2275 BDB #289.
2. We find the name Hebron in [Gen. 13:18 23:2, 19 35:27 37:14 Num. 13:22 Joshua 10:3, 5, 23, 36, 39 11:21 12:10 14:13–15 15:13, 54 20:7 21:11, 13 Judges 1:10, 10, 20 16:3 I Sam. 30:31 II Sam. 2:1, 3, 11, 32 3:2, 5, 19, 20, 22, 27, 32 4:1, 8, 12 5:1, 3, 5, 13 15:7, 9, 10 I Kings 2:11 I Chron. 3:1, 4 6:55, 57 11:1, 2, 3 12:23, 38 29:27 II Chron. 11:10](#) (this bypasses the references to people named Hebron).
3. It appears as though Hebron went by several names:
  - a. Hebron was also called Kiriath-arba (Joshua 14:15). Kiriath is actually the word *qir<sup>e</sup>yath* (קִרְיָת) [pronounced *kir-YAHTH*], which comes from the Hebrew feminine substantive *qir<sup>e</sup>yâth* (קִרְיָת) [pronounced *kir-YAWTH*], which simply means *city, town*. Strong's #7151 BDB #900. This is followed by the word *`ar<sup>e</sup>bba<sup>ˁ</sup>* (עַרְבָּא) [pronounced *ahr<sup>e</sup>b-BAH* or *ahr<sup>e</sup>b-BAHG*], which is related to the Hebrew word *to lie in wait, to ambush* (Strong's #693 BDB #70). Strong's #7153 BDB #900.<sup>3</sup> BDB suggests that it might mean *fourfold-city* with the suffix *arba*.

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- b. It appears that there is the occasional name of this as *the oaks of Mamre* or simply *Mamre*. We find this in Gen. 13:18 14:13 18:1 23:17, 19 25:9 35:27 49:30 50:13. I have left out the references to people with that name.
  - c. That the oaks of Mamre is in Hebron and that Mamre and Hebron are interchangeable we find in Gen. 13:18 23:19. That Hebron is called Kiriath-arba is found in Gen. 23:2 Joshua 14:15. That they are all interchangeable is found in Gen. 35:27.
  - d. Hebron is called *the city of Arba* in Joshua 14:15 15:13 21:11 and *the city of Arbah* in Gen. 35:27. It is called Kirjath-arba in Gen. 23:2 35:27 Joshua 14:15 15:54 20:7 Judges 1:10 Neh. 11:25.
  - e. When the city was called what, and why the name changed is all covered in the complete doctrine.
4. Hebron is found about 20 miles west from the midpoint of the Dead Sea in the hill country of Judah, 25 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Mamre is traditionally located 2 miles north of Hebron, making them so close as to be interchangeable.
  5. Hebron has an elevation of approximately 2800 ft. It is situated in a valley between two ridges. Hebron is an area which would certainly be populated. It has several natural springs and wells and there are two large pools with cut stone walls within the city limits today. There are apple, plum, fig, pomegranate, apricot and nut trees; and grapes, melons and other produce are grown in the rich soil of the valley and terrace.<sup>4</sup>
  6. The Biblical history of Hebron (in the complete doctrine, I cover the archeological history of Hebron; in this doctrine, I will only cover a few passages which are found in Scripture):
    - a. Hebron is where most of the Patriarchs lived and where most of them were buried.
    - b. We first hear about Hebron immediately after the separation of Abram and Lot somewhere in the early the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Lot settles in around Sodom, a particularly horrid city and God takes Abram up to a hill and has him look in all directions and tells him that this land would belong to his descendants forever. God tells Abram to walk through the land to get a feel for it (it is like you have just gotten your son this great Christmas gift and you want to show him how to play with it). *Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah* (Gen. 13:18). Abram and Sarai apparently lived there for awhile (Gen. 14:13).
      - c. It was here that God appeared to Abram and promised him a son through Sarai (Gen. 18:1ff).
      - d. Several decades after the birth of Isaac, Sarah dies at the age of 127 and is buried in Hebron, also called Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2).
      - e. Abraham is also buried there by Isaac at age 175 (Gen. 25:7–10).
      - f. You may recall the story of Jacob and his twin Esau. Jacob defrauded Esau several times and eventually had to leave. However, Isaac remained living in Hebron and Jacob returned to his father near to the time of his death. Isaac lived 180 years and Esau and Jacob buried him apparently in the same place (Gen. 35:27–29).
      - g. Apparently Jacob also chose to live in Hebron. *Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan* (Gen. 37:1). Jacob sends Joseph, his favorite son, out to his brothers tending their flocks in Shechem. *So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem* (Gen. 37:14b).
      - h. Jacob asked his sons to bury him with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah (Gen. 49:29–33 50:13), which would have been Hebron.
      - i. We don't hear about Hebron for a long time, as Joseph and his family move to Egypt; after he dies, his family is enslaved by the Egyptians. Moses does not go anywhere near Hebron until the book of Numbers. When the spies viewed the land, one of the cities that they went through was Hebron. We are told that Hebron was built seven years before Zoan (Num. 13:22). This was circa 1445 B.C. This mention implies that it was within recent history that both Hebron and Zoan were built up. It is likely that Hebron was just a place, not built up at all, during the time of the Patriarchs. However, when the descendants of Anak moved into that area, they likely built up the city. This is all by implication and not by direct statement, all taken from Num. 13:22.
      - j. Again, we don't hear about the city of Hebron for a long time until we get to the book of Joshua and Joshua's invasion of the Land of Promise. If you will recall in Joshua 9, the Gibeonites use deceit in order to attain an alliance with Joshua and then five kings allied themselves and attacked the Gibeonites.

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These five kings were from the hill country, one of them being the king of Hebron (Joshua 10:3, 5, 23). Joshua destroyed the armies of those kings and executed the kings as well (Joshua 10:22–26).

- k. Joshua went through a half dozen cities and destroyed the people in the cities. One of the last ones was Hebron and he left no survivors (Joshua 10:36–39). What this means is that Joshua and his men killed everyone that they found. They took no prisoners. This does not mean that some people did not escape. It is affirmed, however, in Joshua 11:21–22 that Joshua removed the Anakim from the hill country, including Hebron, and that some remained near the more western and coastal towns of Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. In terms of the kings killed by Joshua and his men, the king of Hebron is on that list (Joshua 12:10).
- l. Caleb, who took his army in to remove the Anakim, requested Hebron and that area from Joshua in Joshua 14.
- m. Hebron proper will actually go to the tribe of Aaron as a Levitical city and as a city of refuge. The surrounding area and villages will go the Caleb and his family (Joshua 21:11–13 I Chron. 5:55–56). In Joshua 14:12 and in great detail in Judges 1:10, we will discuss in more detail the chronological sequence involved.

Just in case you don't want to look up the doctrine, I have a brief summary of the **Doctrine of Hebron** below.

### A Brief Summary of the Doctrine of Hebron

Hebron means *association, league, joined*. McGee suggests that it means *fellowship, communion*; as Hebron was a place of fellowship with God.

Like many of the ancient cities which Israel captures, Hebron had a variety of names. It was previously known as Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2 35:27 Joshua 14:15 15:54 20:7 Judges 1:10 Neh. 11:25); *the oaks of Mamre* or simply *Mamre* (Gen. 13:18 14:13 18:1 23:17, 19 25:9 35:27 49:30 50:13); *the city of Arba* (Joshua 14:15 15:13 21:11) and *the city of Arbah* (Gen. 35:27).

Hebron is about 20 miles west from the midpoint of the Dead Sea in the hill country of Judah, 25 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Mamre is traditionally located 2 miles north of Hebron, making them so close as to be interchangeable.

Hebron has an elevation of approximately 2800 ft. It is situated in a valley between two ridges. Hebron is an area which would certainly be populated. It has several natural springs and wells and there are two large pools with cut stone walls within the city limits today. There are apple, plum, fig, pomegranate, apricot and nut trees; and grapes, melons and other produce are grown in the rich soil of the valley and terrace.<sup>5</sup>

Hebron is where most of the Patriarchs lived and where most of them were buried.

We first hear about Hebron immediately after the separation of Abram and Lot somewhere in the early the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Lot settles in around Sodom, a particularly horrid city and God takes Abram up to a hill and has him look in all directions and tells him that this land would belong to his descendants forever. God tells Abram to walk through the land to get a feel for it (it is like you have just gotten your son this great Christmas gift and you want to show him how to play with it). **Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah** (Gen. 13:18). Abram and Sarai apparently lived there for awhile (Gen. 14:13).

It was here that God appeared to Abram and promised him a son through Sarai (Gen. 18:1ff). Several decades after the birth of Isaac, Sarah dies at the age of 127 and is buried in Hebron, also called Kiriath-arba (Gen. 23:2). Abraham is also buried there by Isaac at age 175 (Gen. 25:7–10).

<sup>5</sup> This description was paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 107–108.

## A Brief Summary of the Doctrine of Hebron

Jacob also chose to live in Hebron (Gen. 37:1). Jacob later asked his sons to bury him with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah (Gen. 49:29–33 50:13), which would have been Hebron.

In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites use deceit in order to attain an alliance with Joshua and then five kings allied themselves and attacked the Gibeonites. These five kings were from the hill country, one of them being the king of Hebron (Joshua 10:3, 5, 23). Joshua destroyed the armies of those kings and executed the kings as well (Joshua 10:22–26).

Joshua went through a half dozen cities and destroyed the people in the cities. One of the last ones was Hebron and he left no survivors (Joshua 10:36–39). They took no prisoners.

Hebron proper will actually go to the tribe of Aaron as a Levitical city and as a city of refuge. The surrounding area and villages will go to Caleb and his family (Joshua 21:11–13 I Chron. 5:55–56). In Joshua 14:12 and in great detail in Judges 1:10, we will discuss in more detail the chronological sequence involved.

The actual doctrine goes into much greater detail than we find here. I will cover the history of Hebron after the time of Joshua at another time.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)