

Mamre

Mamre (Hebrew *Elonei Mamre*, אֵלוֹנֵי מַמְרֵא — “the oaks” or “terebinths of Mamre”) is a grove and worship site just north of **Hebron** in the hill country of Judah, about 19 miles south of Jerusalem. It was Abraham’s principal dwelling place in Canaan and the setting for several of the most important episodes in his life. The site is named for **Mamre the Amorite**, a confederate of Abraham (Gen 14:13, 24). The traditional site is **Ramat el-Khalil** (Arabic *Khalil* = “the Friend,” a title for Abraham), where Herod the Great built a monumental enclosure and, later, Constantine erected a Byzantine basilica around the venerated oak.

Event	Reference
Abram settles at Mamre and builds an altar to the Lord	Gen 13:18
Abram’s Amorite allies Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner join him to rescue Lot	Gen 14:13, 24
The Lord appears to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre (three visitors); promise of Isaac	Gen 18:1–15
Abraham intercedes for Sodom	Gen 18:16–33
Sarah dies at nearby Kiriath-arba (Hebron); Abraham buys the Cave of Machpelah	Gen 23:1–20
Jacob returns to Isaac at Mamre, “the City of Four,” which is Hebron	Gen 35:27

Abraham at Mamre

After separating from Lot, “Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord” (Gen 13:18). Mamre became his home base — a place of covenant worship marked, like his other stops, by an altar (compare his altars at Shechem and Bethel, Gen 12:7–8). From here he armed his household to rescue Lot (Gen 14), and it was here that he met the three heavenly visitors.

The Three Visitors (Genesis 18)

The theophany at Mamre is a centerpiece of the Abraham narrative: “And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day” (Gen 18:1). Abraham’s eager hospitality toward the three strangers — running to greet them, washing their feet, preparing a meal — stands in deliberate contrast to the violent inhospitality of Sodom in the very next chapter. It was here that Sarah, listening at the tent door, laughed at the promise that she would bear a son within the year (Gen 18:10–15), and here that Abraham interceded for the righteous of Sodom (Gen 18:22–33).

Proximity to the Cave of Machpelah

Mamre lies beside Hebron and the **Cave of Machpelah** (the Cave of the Patriarchs), which Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site for Sarah (Gen 23). Machpelah became the tomb of

Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah — the “City of the Four Couples” of Jewish tradition (cf. Gen 35:27; 49:31).

The Site Today

The traditional location, **Ramat el-Khalil** (Khirbet es-Sibte), preserves the remains of a large Herodian enclosure wall, a well (“Abraham’s Well”), and a Byzantine basilica built under Constantine, whose mother Queen Helena and later pilgrims associated the spot with the oak of Abraham. The site sits in the West Bank near modern Hebron.

Related

- Abraham — the patriarch whose story centers on Mamre
- Sarah · Isaac — buried nearby at Machpelah
- Cave-of-the-patriarchs — the nearby burial cave at Hebron
- Genesis 18–23 — Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord? — study note covering the Genesis 18 theophany at Mamre
- Genesis 12–17 — To Be a Greater Follower of Righteousness — Abraham’s covenant and altars
- covenants