THE BURIAL OF JACOB AND THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

GENESIS 50:1-26
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Text:

Genesis 50:1-26,

1. Then Joseph hugged his father’s face. He wept over him and kissed him.
2. Joseph instructed the physicians in his service to embalm his father, so the physicians embalmed Israel.
3. They took forty days, for that is the full time needed for embalming. The Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.
4. When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh’s royal court, “If I have found favor in your sight, please say to Pharaoh,
5. ‘My father made me swear an oath. He said, “I am about to die. Bury me in my tomb that I dug for myself there in the land of Canaan.” Now let me go and bury my father; then I will return.”
6. So Pharaoh said, “Go and bury your father, just as he made you swear to do.”
7. So Joseph went up to bury his father; all Pharaoh’s officials went with him—the senior courtiers of his household, all the senior officials of the land of Egypt,
8. all Joseph’s household, his brothers, and his father’s household. But they left their little children and their flocks and herds in the land of Goshen.
9. Chariots and horsemen also went up with him, so it was a very large entourage.
10. When they came to the threshing floor of Atad on the other side of the Jordan, they mourned there with very great and bitter sorrow. There Joseph observed a seven day period of mourning for his father.
11. When the Canaanites who lived in the land saw them mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This is a very sad occasion for the
Egyptians.” That is why its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

12. So the sons of Jacob did for him just as he had instructed them.
13. His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the field Abraham purchased as a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite.
14. After he buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, along with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to bury his father.
15. When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph bears a grudge and wants to repay us in full for all the harm we did to him?”
16. So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave these instructions before he died:
17. ‘Tell Joseph this: Please forgive the sin of your brothers and the wrong they did when they treated you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sin of the servants of the God of your father.” When this message was reported to him, Joseph wept.
18. Then his brothers also came and threw themselves down before him; they said, “Here we are; we are your slaves.”
20. As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day.
21. So now, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your little children.” Then he consoled them and spoke kindly to them.
22. Joseph lived in Egypt, along with his father’s family. Joseph lived 110 years.
23. Joseph saw the descendants of Ephraim to the third generation. He also saw the children of Makir the son of Manasseh; they were given special inheritance rights by Joseph.
24. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to you and lead you up from this land to the land he swore on oath to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

25. Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He said, “God will surely come to you. Then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

26. So Joseph died at the age of 110. After they embalmed him, his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt. (NET)

Commentary:

Joseph was deeply loved and respected by Pharaoh and by the people of Egypt. When Jacob, his father, died the Egyptians mourned for him for seventy days. It was a great and grievous mourning. Jacob had the physicians embalm his father. It was the custom to mourn 40 days for a person who had been embalmed. They mourned an addition 30 days for Jacob out of respect and appreciation for Joseph. Jacob had requested that he sons take him back to Canaan to bury him. He did not want to be buried in Egypt. He wanted to be buried with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre in the land of Canaan. Leah was the mother of Jacob’s first four sons. Joseph asked those of Pharaoh’s house to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf to ask permission for him to go to Canaan and bury his father. Pharaoh said, “Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.” Joseph, his family and many Egyptians went for the burial. When they reached the threshing floor of Atad they made a great lamentation for seven days. The Canaanites saw the mourning and said, “This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians.” This was the biggest funeral recorded in scripture. When Jacob died Joseph’s brothers feared that he would now take revenge on them. Joseph said to them, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” (Genesis 50:20-21) Joseph recognized, and so should we if we are faithful Christians, that God is at work through His
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providence in our life. Joseph was sent to Egypt to save many alive and to help build this great nation that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Genesis chapter fifty also records the death of Joseph at the age of 110. Joseph lived in Egypt but he knew that his people must get back to Canaan. He had them promise that they would not bury him in Egypt, but that they would take his bones back to Canaan for burial when God brought them out of Egypt. In Genesis 50:26 we read, “So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” (Genesis 50:26) This promise was fulfilled over 300 years later, when Israel left Egypt. “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.” (Exodus 13:19)

Joseph commanded that his father Jacob, be embalmed – Genesis 50:1-3: In the last words of Genesis 49 we read, “And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.” (Genesis 49:33) When he died Joseph felt deep and great grief. He fell upon his father’s face, wept over him and kissed him. Joseph’s actions fulfill the promise made in Genesis 46:4. God said, “I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.” Death is a time when we may not want to, but we must handle necessary things. In his speech before his death Jacob, “Charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.” (Genesis 49:29-32) In order to be able to fulfill his father’s desires Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians to embalm his father. A period of mourning lasted for 40 days for a person who had been embalmed. The
Egyptians mourned for Jacob for threescore and ten days or seventy days. Jacob and Joseph are the only people in the Bible said to have been embalmed.

**Grievous lamentation and mourning over Jacob – Genesis 50:4-14:** Joseph explained to the household of Pharaoh that his father had made him promise that he would bury him in Canaan. “My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have dugged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.” He asked them to intervene with Pharaoh for permission to go bury his father and then return. Pharaoh told Joseph to go up and bury his father. A large group of people went up to bury Jacob. The group included all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s household. The only ones left behind were the children of the Israelites and their flocks. This was Pharaoh’s guarantee that Joseph and the others would be returning. There went up with Joseph both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company When they reached the threshing floor of Atad they made a very great and grievous lamentation, and mourning for Jacob that lasted seven days. The Canaanites named the threshing floor of Atad Abelmizraim because of the great mourning that took place there. Abelmizraim means “mourning of Egypt.” Jacob’s sons did as he commanded them. They, “carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.” (Genesis 50:12) After the burial, Joseph kept his word to Pharaoh. He returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

**A tremendous lesson on forgiveness – Genesis 50:15-21:** When Joseph’s brothers finally faced the reality of their father’s death they again became fearful that Joseph would take revenge on them. Early on, the brothers hated Joseph and now they are still fearful that Joseph might hate them. They really hated Joseph, but they only imagined that he would hate them. The thoughts of
the brothers were motivated by their own guilt and not by any action on Joseph’s part. One positive thing concerning the brothers was that they took full responsibility for the evil things they had done to Joseph. (Genesis 50:15) Whether Jacob actually said this or if it is just a desperate lie we cannot tell. But they, “sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. They pleaded with Joseph for forgiveness. In a wonderful act of forgiveness Joseph said to them, “Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” (Genesis 50:19-21) Joseph has no interest in seeking revenge because the very idea offended his personal values.

**A coffin in Egypt for Joseph – Genesis 50:22-26:** Joseph lived to see Ephraim’s children of the third generation. The children of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph’s children. The name Machir means “one who is sold.” The name of this son of Manasseh is a description of the life of Joseph. “Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” This was not a statement to his physical brothers but to the tribes of Israel. Joseph did not live as long as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He died at the age of 110 years. Joseph made the people promise that they would not bury him in Egypt. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. This is the first and only time the word “coffin” is found in our King James Bible.

The death of Joseph and his desire to be returned to Canaan for burial instilled faith in the hearts of people of the nation. They remembered, even after more than 300 years, to take his bones back to Canaan for burial. Do you
have a living faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? If so it is time to become a Christian now! To become a Christian you must hear the gospel (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ as Lord (Acts 8:37), and be baptized to be saved. (1 Peter 3:21) After baptism follow Jesus in faithfulness as He leads you home to heaven. (Revelation 2:10)

By Charles Box, Walnut Street Church of Christ, P.O. Box 551, Greenville, Alabama 36037 USA