

# GENESIS 50: THE DEATHS OF JACOB AND JOSEPH

## I. CHAPTER OUTLINE

- A. Jacob's body is embalmed – v. 1-3
- B. Joseph asks Pharaoh for permission to bury Jacob in Canaan – v. 4-6
- C. Joseph buries his father in Canaan – v. 7-14
- D. Joseph's brothers ask him for forgiveness for their sin against him – v. 15-18
- E. Joseph forgives his brothers – v. 19-21
- F. Joseph grew old and died – v. 22-26

## II. INTRODUCTION

- A. Death is something we will all have to deal with someday
  - i. Whether our own or someone else's
  - ii. This forces us to reckon with our views about death and grief
- B. Genesis 50 details two deaths
  - i. This will reveal the biblical view of death
  - ii. It will reveal the cry of the human heart for rescue from death

## III. THEN – V. 1

- A. After Jacob laid down on his bed and died

## IV. WEPT OVER HIM – V. 1

- A. Sixth time we've seen Joseph weep
- B. He is mourning his father's death

## V. THE PHYSICIANS – V. 2

- A. Joseph had the physicians embalm Jacob instead of the embalmers
  - i. Probably to avoid the religious rituals of the embalmers<sup>1</sup>

## VI. EMBALM HIS FATHER – V. 2

- A. The Jews believe the Torah forbids embalming
  - i. Genesis 3:19 ***“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”***
  - ii. The body and spirit are united and interconnected

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

- a. Hebrew *nephesh* is translated “soul”<sup>2</sup>
  - i. Refers to the whole being, not just the inner being
- b. The body should be buried to wait for the resurrection<sup>3</sup>
- B. Joseph wanted Jacob’s body to not decay during the journey to Canaan<sup>4</sup>

#### **VII. FORTY DAYS – V. 3**

- A. Represents transition and the beginning of a new journey<sup>5</sup>

#### **VIII. SEVENTY DAYS – V. 3**

- A. Compared to seven days of mourning in verse 10
  - i. Multiplied by ten
  - ii. Intensification of mourning
- B. Only pharaohs were mourned for 72 days<sup>6</sup>
  - i. Highlights how well the Egyptians thought of Jacob

#### **IX. THE HOUSEHOLD OF PHARAOH – V. 4**

- A. Joseph didn’t speak to Pharaoh directly
  - i. Probably because he had let his beard and hair grow while mourning<sup>7</sup>
  - ii. Or because he was unable to leave his family at the time<sup>8</sup>

#### **X. MY FATHER MADE ME SWEAR – V. 5**

- A. Joseph is assuring Pharaoh he is merely trying to fulfill his father’s wishes

#### **XI. I AM ABOUT TO DIE – V. 5**

- A. Explains why Joseph didn’t ask permission earlier
  - i. He didn’t want to leave his father or he didn’t have time

#### **XII. THAT I HEWED OUT FOR MYSELF – V. 5**

- A. Abraham actually did this
  - i. But Jewish custom allowed the actions of the fathers to be claimed by the sons<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, Y. (2017, November 8). *Genesis 50: The Goal of the Beginning, Joseph The Comforter*. Bethmelekh.com. Retrieved April 2, 2024, from <https://www.bethmelekh.com/yaakovs-commentary/genesis-50-the-goal-of-the-beginning-joseph-the-comforter>

<sup>3</sup> Brown

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, S. (2013, July 21). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 50*. Verse By Verse Ministries. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from [https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis\\_2011\\_lesson\\_50](https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_50)

<sup>5</sup> Brown

<sup>6</sup> Armstrong

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, J. M. (n.d.). *Manners and Customs of the Bible*. BibleTruthPublishers.com. February 10, 2024, <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/manners-and-customs-of-the-bible/lrc23558-23559>

<sup>8</sup> Brown

<sup>9</sup> Brown

### **XIII. LET ME PLEASE GO UP – V. 5**

- A. Generations later, Moses would ask Pharaoh this same question
  - i. Exodus 5:1 ***Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”***

### **XIV. THEN I WILL RETURN – V. 5**

- A. Joseph was assuring Pharaoh he would not stay in Canaan
  - i. Pharaoh would not want his second in command gone for long
  - ii. He could also be concerned that Joseph would betray him
    - a. Joseph likely knew military and economic secrets
- B. This would have been a perfect opportunity to return his family to Canaan
  - i. It was not the appointed time yet
    - a. Genesis 15:13-16 ***Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”***
  - ii. Jesus was tempted to take his inheritance early
    - a. Matthew 4:8-10 ***Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.””***

### **XV. NINE GROUPS THAT WENT UP TO BURY JACOB – V. 7-9**

- A. Joseph – v. 7
  - i. He led and organized the procession
  - ii. Jacob had only given instructions to Joseph for his burial
- B. The servants of Pharaoh – v. 7
- C. The elders of Pharaoh’s household – v. 7
- D. The elders of the land of Egypt – v. 7

- i. Shows the respect the Egyptians had for Jacob
- ii. Three groups related to Egypt
  - a. Jacob was mourned by the totality of Egypt
- E. The household of Joseph – v. 8
- F. Joseph’s brothers – v. 8
- G. Joseph’s father’s household – v. 8
  - i. Three groups related to Joseph
    - a. His entire family mourned Jacob
    - b. This completed Joseph’s ascent as patriarch of the family
- H. Chariots – v. 9
- I. Horsemen – v. 9
  - i. Jewish tradition states there was a battle between Joseph and Esau
    - a. Several different accounts
      - i. Some say Esau started the fight and was killed
      - ii. Others say his grandson started the conflict<sup>10</sup>

#### **XVI. SEVEN DAYS – V. 10**

- A. Joseph mourned for only seven days
  - i. Compared to the seventy days of the Egyptians
  - ii. Joseph had the promise of the resurrection
    - a. He knew he would see his father again

#### **XVII. ABEL-MIZRAIM – V. 11**

- A. Means *mourning of Egypt* or *meadow of Egypt*
- B. The next time Canaan sees Israel it will be after another great mourning of Egypt
  - i. They will be mourning the loss of their firstborn sons
    - a. Exodus 12:29-30 ***At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.***

#### **XVIII. HIS SONS DID FOR HIM – V. 12**

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<sup>10</sup> Brown

- A. Jacob's sons didn't honor him very well in his life
  - i. But they honored him well in his death
  - ii. We don't want to wait until someone dies to honor them well

**XIX. HIS SONS CARRIED HIM – V. 13**

- A. Seemingly without the Egyptians or the rest of the funeral procession
- B. The memorial was very great
  - i. But the funeral was much more intimate

**XX. JOSEPH RETURNED TO EGYPT – V. 14**

- A. He kept his promise to Pharaoh

**XXI. THEIR FATHER WAS DEAD – V. 15**

- A. Jacob was the one holding the family together
  - i. Without him, Israel is at risk of splitting apart before they can even return to Canaan

**XXII. IT MAY BE – V. 15**

- A. Joseph hadn't done anything to indicate he would turn on them
  - i. His brothers didn't understand the nature of forgiveness<sup>11</sup>
- B. We can fall into the same trap
  - i. Romans 8:1 ***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***
  - ii. We have been forgiven for our sins if we have repented
  - iii. We don't need to continue to seek forgiveness

**XXIII. FOR ALL THE EVIL – V. 15**

- A. The brothers acknowledged they had done evil to Joseph
- B. They recognized they deserved justice rather than forgiveness

**XXIV. SENT A MESSAGE – V. 16**

- A. Same word as in verse 12
  - i. Joseph commanded them to carry Jacob's body to Canaan
- B. This is more forceful than just sending a letter

**XXV. YOUR FATHER - V. 16**

- A. As opposed to "our father"
- B. This is an appeal for Joseph to consider his father's wishes
  - i. Though if Joseph were to take revenge his father's wishes probably wouldn't matter

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<sup>11</sup> Brown

**XXVI. GAVE THIS COMMAND – V. 16**

- A. He most likely did not
  - i. No indication in scripture that Jacob did this

**XXVII. TRANSGRESSION – V. 17**

- A. Refers to rebellion
  - i. They didn't rebel against Joseph
    - a. He had no authority over them at the time
  - ii. They rebelled against God

**XXVIII. AND THEIR SIN – V. 17**

- A. They harmed and intended evil against Joseph
- B. Their sin was against both God and man
  - i. This is the nature of sin
  - ii. There is no victimless crime

**XXIX. JOSEPH WEPT – V. 17**

- A. Seventh and final time Joseph wept
- B. It comes at the final event in the saga of his brothers' forgiveness and restoration

**XXX. HIS BROTHERS ALSO CAME – V. 18**

- A. They sent messengers to win Joseph's favor first
  - i. Just like Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to win Esau's favor
    - a. Genesis 32:3-5 ***And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.'"***
  - ii. Just like with Esau, it turned out to be unnecessary
    - a. Genesis 33:1-4 ***And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.***

**XXXI. WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS – V. 18**

- A. This seems like humility
  - i. But it's driven by unnecessary fear

**XXXII. AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD – V. 19**

- A. Joseph understood it wasn't his job to repay his brothers for their sins
  - i. It's God's job to repay people when he sees fit
    - a. Romans 12:17-19 ***Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."***

**XXXIII. YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME – V. 20**

- A. Joseph didn't make excuses for their sin

**XXXIV. GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD – V. 20**

- A. God's purposes are higher than man's purposes
  - i. Romans 8:28 ***And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.***

**XXXV. I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU – V. 21**

- A. Joseph's love and forgiveness was shown through action
  - i. Not just words

**XXXVI. 110 YEARS – V. 22**

- A. Considered to be the ideal age to die by ancient Egyptians<sup>12</sup>
  - i. This is a way for the Lord to honor Joseph before the Egyptians<sup>13</sup>

**XXXVII. COUNTED AS JOSEPH'S OWN – V. 23**

- A. Literally, born on Joseph's knees
  - i. He adopted them just as Jacob adopted Joseph's sons

**XXXVIII. I AM ABOUT TO DIE – V. 24**

- A. Joseph knew he was about to die just like Jacob did
  - i. Implies his brothers outlived him

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<sup>12</sup> Kontopoulos, G. I. (2018, April). *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*. Verse By Verse Ministries. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from <https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2018/04/getting-old-in-ancient-egypt#:~:text=The%20ideal%20lifetime&text=Although%20the%20majority%20of%20texts,to%20be%20the%20ideal%20lifespan.>

<sup>13</sup> Armstrong

- B. He gave his brothers the same reminder of the future that Jacob did
  - i. Genesis 48:21 ***Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers.”***

#### **XXXIX. GOD WILL VISIT YOU – V. 24**

- A. In other words, God will pay attention to you to do you good
- B. Previously, the promise was that God would be with them
  - i. Genesis 46:2-4 ***And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.”***
  - ii. Genesis 48:21 ***Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers.”***
- C. This seems like a different promise
  - i. Like they would be without God’s presence for a while
- D. But God would eventually turn his attention to them at the right time
  - i. Exodus 2:23-25 ***During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.***
- E. Or, it is a reference to the Angel of the Lord who would bring them out of Egypt
  - i. Exodus 14:24-25 ***And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”***

#### **XL. CARRY UP MY BONES FROM HERE – V. 25**

- A. Joseph refused to be buried in Egypt
  - i. Same request as his father
- B. He expected his body to be fully decomposed by the time it was brought up
- C. His request would be honored



- i. Exodus 13:19 ***Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.”***
- D. This was an act of faith on Joseph’s part
  - i. Hebrews 11:22 ***By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.***
  - ii. He knew God would keep his promises
    - a. So he fashioned his dying wishes based on this truth
  - iii. Our faith must require the same thing
    - a. It is based on what God has actually promised
    - b. Then we act on it
    - c. Faith and works are the exact same thing
      - i. James 2:14-18 ***What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.***

#### **XLII. HE WAS PUT IN A COFFIN – V. 26**

- A. Rather than buried
- B. Generations of Israelites would be able to look at his coffin
  - i. It was a reminder of the promise to return to Canaan

#### **XLII. POINTS TO JESUS**

- A. Jesus was rejected by Israel after living with them for a time
  - i. They hated him and murdered him
  - ii. One day they will see him again, not knowing how he will repay their betrayal
    - a. Just like Joseph’s brothers saw him after Jacob died
    - b. Zechariah 12:10 ***“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”***

- iii. He will forgive their sin completely
  - a. Hosea 14:4-7 *I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.*
  - b. Daniel 9:24 *“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.”*
- B. The book of Genesis begins with life and ends with death
  - i. The message of Genesis is a promise and longing for life restored
  - ii. The doctrine of the resurrection is central to the book of Genesis
  - iii. Jesus was the first to be resurrected
    - a. Colossians 1:18-20 *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*
    - b. Revelation 1:4-6 *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
  - iv. We will be resurrected to eternal life with him
    - a. 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead*

*are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

- v. Heaven is not an extra-dimensional plane of existence where spirits float around
  - a. It is a future earthly kingdom with a Jewish man ruling from Jerusalem
- C. Genesis means “beginning”
  - i. It is not just a beginning of the world
  - ii. Or the beginning of Israel
  - iii. Or even the beginning of the Torah
  - iv. It is the beginning of the story of the Messiah
    - a. The one who would forgive our transgressions
    - b. Who would bring us comfort
    - c. Who would provide everything we need
    - d. And who will raise us up on the last day

#### **XLIII. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- A. What have you been taught about the relationship between the body and the spirit? Is that consistent with what the bible teaches?

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- B. Have you ever had to wait for something that seems to never come? Have you been tempted to force God’s hand in those times?

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- C. How does this relate to our state of exile as followers of Jesus and our ultimate deliverance? How do we avoid discouragement knowing we will likely not see our deliverance from exile in this lifetime?

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D. How long is an appropriate time to grieve someone?

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E. What is important to remember when grieving the death of a Jesus follower?

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F. What are some things you can do to honor your loved ones while they are still alive?

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G. Do you ever have a difficult time believing that God has forgiven you? What are some ways you can remind yourself of what Jesus has done for you?

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H. What have you been taught about the resurrection of the dead in the past? Is that consistent with what the bible teaches?

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- I. What can we learn from the picture of the resurrection that is portrayed in the book of Genesis? How does it relate to our lives here on earth as being just a beginning?

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- J. What do you imagine comes next after the resurrection? What does the bible actually say about it?

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**XLIV. FURTHER STUDY**

- A. How is this chapter consistent with the bible's portrayal of death? See also 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.

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- B. How does verse 21 foreshadow Israel's future? See Isaiah 39:5-40:2.

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- C. What does the bible imply about those who see their great-grandchildren? See Job 42:16-17 and Psalm 128.

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- D. What does it mean to be glorified with Christ (Romans 8:16-17)? See Psalm 73:24; Isaiah 26:19; Acts 3:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-14.

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E. What did Jesus say about those who grieve? See Matthew 5:4.

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F. What should bring us comfort when grieving the loss of a loved one who was a follower of Christ? See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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G. What is the confidence we should gain from 1 John 1:9?

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H. What should we make a habit of doing whenever we pray, according to Mark 11:25? What could happen if we don't do this?

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I. What will life look like after the resurrection? See Romans 6:3-9; Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 20:4-6.