

Genesis 50 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

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Ch. 49 ends with the death of the great patriarch and grandson of Abraham, Jacob.

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h. 50:1-14 • Jacob's Sons Bury Him in Hebron

¹Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him. ²And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

Following the burial procedures for Egyptians, Joseph was *embalmed*.

This was a process that took 40 days.

The period of official state mourning over him was 70 days.

Since a deceased Pharaoh was only allotted 72 days, this meant

Jacob was accounted as a *great man*.

4Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, ⁵‘My father made me swear, saying, “Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.” Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.’”

6And Pharaoh said, “Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.”

Since Joseph was serving Pharaoh in the capacity of a servant, he had to get permission to set out on this journey to Canaan – he’d be gone for some time and as the administrative head of the kingdom, his absence would be sorely missed.

7So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, ⁸as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. ⁹And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering. ¹⁰Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father. ¹¹And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This *is* a deep mourning of the Egyptians.” Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, [Mourning of Egypt] which *is* beyond the Jordan.

As a high official of the Egyptians, Joseph commanded a lot of respect and when he secured permission to bury his father in

Canaan, many of the officials of the kingdom saw it as a *state event* and turned out to accompany the funeral procession back to Canaan.

This large number of Egyptian officials would need *protection*, so a sizeable military guard went with them.

But the presence of a military guard would also make the *shorter route* along the Gaza coast impossible since this was occupied by the Philistines who were hostile toward the Egyptians.

The procession had to take the *longer route* up the east side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan.

[Show Map]

Crossing the Jordan would be a challenge with so large a group so they paused for a week to prepare – and during this time, as Joseph knew this was the last leg of the trip and he would soon be putting his father into the tomb at Hebron, he gave himself to another period of intense mourning that was joined by the entire camp.

12 So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. **13** For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

14 And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

V. 12 implies that it was only the family of Jacob that actually crossed the Jordan to bury their father.

This makes sense when we realize that if the entire procession of Egyptians had crossed into Canaan, it might have been deemed an invasion.

After burying Jacob along with his father & grandfather in the cave of Machpelah, the family returned to the camp at Atad, and the entire procession returned to Egypt.

i. 50:15-21 • Joseph Reassures His Brothers

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

16 So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded, saying, **17** ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.’” Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18** Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, **we are your servants.**”

Since we covered these verses last Sunday I’ll summarize tonight. Joseph wept because of the lack of trust this shows on his brothers’ part toward him.

All the previous years and the good he’d done to them hadn’t been enough to make them see him for the kind of man he was.

No – they were seeing him through the lens of the kind of men *they were*; and if the shoe was on the other foot, they’d be making Joseph pay!

But Joseph wasn’t like them; never had been and never would be. His forgiveness of them was sincere and complete.

The fear of the brothers was fueled by their sense of *guilt* at what they’d done so many years before!

They’d not fully embraced the power of the forgiveness Joseph had bestowed on them.

So they concocted this little story about Jacob’s request of leniency. They knew they had no ground in asking for mercy, so they instead put their requests into the mouth of their dead father, knowing Joseph would be bound to it.

But it was a fiction because if Jacob had intended such a thing, he would have said it *himself* to Joseph.

Jacob knew he didn’t need to make such a request because he knew his son’s character and that he had indeed forgiven his brothers.

There’s an important lesson in all this – our *general posture* toward the issue of forgiveness will set the pace for the level of guilt we endure.

As Jesus taught, if we fully understand and receive the forgiveness God offers us, it brings us to the place where we readily forgive

others.

If we aren't forgiving of others, but instead store up hurts and offenses, it's a sign we've not fully understood how completely God forgives us.

Therefore, we'll be plagued with guilt, and this guilt will act like a spiritual poison that will infect every level of our lives and relationships.

We see this is Joseph's brothers – and it turns them into men who mock their dead father's honored memory by putting these lying words in his mouth.

Joseph knows what they're saying is made up – and is heart-broken over their distorted view of reality.

19 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?

Meaning, even if he *was* disposed to be unforgiving, exacting revenge was out of his hands – vengeance belongs to God.

This is another important lesson about forgiveness – even if and when a person IS *unforgiving*, this is no excuse for them to treat the one who hurt them wrongly or in any way less than with love!

Two wrongs do not make a right!

So even when we've been sinned against and hurt, we are still required to act toward them in righteousness.

Only God can judge and then exact punishment – that task is not committed to us!

**20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. ²¹Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.”
And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

Once again we see Joseph's spiritual maturity come shining through. His brothers have done nothing but sorely tried him all his life – it's been some 40 years now!

And yet he is still acting with grace and mercy toward them because it's what he's come to see God has shown him.

j. 50:22-26 • Joseph's Death

22 So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's

household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. ²³Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

Joseph lived to a ripe old age of 110 and had the opportunity to play with his grandchildren and even *great* grandchildren.

²⁴And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." ²⁶So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph was accorded the same kind of honor as one of their own officials in Egypt.

He was embalmed according to their traditions, placed in a coffin, then interred in one of the monumental tombs that were common for Egyptian dignitaries at that time.

But before he died, Joseph did what his father had done with him; he secured a promise from his relatives that when they left to return to the Lord of Promise, they would take his remains with them and bury them along with his father at the cave of Machpelah.

When the Children of Israel left in the Exodus, Exodus 13:19 tells us they carried Joseph's bones with them.