

Vayechi

Beresheet (Genesis) 47:28 - 50:26

Jacob lives in Egypt for 17 years and as the time of his death approaches, he asks that Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan. It is interesting to note that this oath is the same type of oath that Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, takes when asked to find a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:3). Prior to his death, Jacob formally adopts Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim, and blesses them. In the blessing, he elevates the younger Ephraim over Manasseh explaining to Joseph that Ephraim would father a larger people than Manasseh. Through this adoption, they achieve the same status and rank as Jacob's sons

On his deathbed, Jacob summons his sons. He describes the character and depicts the future of each one, and directs them to bury him in the Cave of Machpelah. It is interesting to note that Jacob is the only Patriarch who dies outside the land of Israel, which explains the extraordinary detail surrounding the death of Jacob relative to the description of the deaths of Abraham and Isaac.

Following his death, Jacob is embalmed. A great Egyptian procession accompanies Joseph and his brothers to the Cave of Machpelah. The brothers are concerned that Joseph will take revenge upon them now that Jacob is dead, but Joseph assures them they have no cause for concern.

The Book of Genesis closes with Joseph's death at 110 years of age, which, as opposed to 120, was regarded as the ideal lifespan in ancient Egypt. On his deathbed, Joseph requests that one day he be buried in the land of Israel. In the final verses of the book of Beresheet, we see the deterioration of the condition of the Jewish people in Egypt, which places the rapid deterioration chronicled in the first chapter of Shemot (Exodus) in greater perspective.



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
E. 304 Midland Ave., Paramus NJ 07652
Phone: (201) 262-7691 Fax: (201) 262-6516
© 2007 Jewish Community Center of Paramus