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5-11-2021

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – LESSON 22

JOSEPH GIVES THE HIGHEST HONOR

After Jacob had given his twelve sons each a prophetic blessing, he now gave them instructions for his final disposition. (Genesis 49:29-33.) Egypt was not his home. He told them that they must take his body back home to Canaan to be buried with his fathers.

It was a very specific location, near Mamre (which was in Hebron) in the cave in the field of Machpelah. It was bought by Abraham from Ephron the Hittite to be a family burial ground. Buried there were Abraham and his wife Sarah, Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and Jacob's wife Leah. Only Rachel was not there for she was buried at Bethlehem. When Jacob finished giving his final wishes, he gathered himself into the bed and "yielded up the ghost (spirit)."

Opening Genesis chapter 50 we see Joseph falling upon his father's deceased body, kissing it and weeping. He then had the Egyptian physicians embalm Jacob's body in the same manner as Pharaoh or any important Egyptian. The embalmed body laid in state for forty days before being taken away. The mourning period continued for seventy days.

The forty days is interesting. We have seen throughout the Bible that forty is a very significant number. It marks a transition period from one era of life as preparation for a new era of life. Apparently even the pagan Egyptians understood that as well. They would keep the embalmed body 40 days before entombment. They would include artifacts and wealth with the body that may presumably be needed in the "next life," which did them no benefit. Many centuries later, the only benefactors were illicit "tomb raiders" who stole the artifacts.

We also see the number seventy in the Bible. Jesus sent out 70 disciples with power to do miracles, signs, and wonders. Daniel speaks of the 70 weeks for the history of man in this world, each week perhaps corresponding to a century, thus seven millenniums. Egyptians mourned death for 70 days.

Jacob's love for his father was made public to all of Egypt by the embalming which was reserved only for one of a very high standing. It was the highest of honors.

Just as Joseph had such great love for his earthly father, so should we have such great love for our Heavenly Father. Just as Joseph gave his father the highest honor, so should we both publicly and privately honor our Heavenly Father. Yes, publicly honor our Heavenly Father, who also is one with Jesus.