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LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 29, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 49:29-50:14

29 Then he charged them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors - in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah 32 the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

1 Then Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. 2 Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel; 3 they spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.

4 When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph addressed the household of Pharaoh, "If now I have found favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as follows: 5 My father made me swear an oath; he said, 'I am about to die. In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, so that I may bury my father; then I will return." 6 Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear to do"

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. 9 Both chariots and charioteers went up with him. It was a very great company. 10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for his father seven days. 11 When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said,

"This is a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians." Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan. 12 Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. 13 They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

DEVOTIONAL

Lori Arnold, Continuing Education Coordinator

When Jacob died, Joseph's actions were a testament to their relationship. He wept out of love for his parent. He honored his father by observing rituals of mourning. Then, after seeking Pharaoh's permission to leave Egypt, Joseph respected Jacob's dying wish by taking his father's body to its burial site. Joseph obeyed Jacob's final wish to bury Jacob among his ancestors – an oath Joseph was able to fulfill by pledging that he would return to Egypt. Finally, Joseph lived his life in relationship with God, according to the model of father during Joseph's childhood. In doing so, Joseph continued weaving the threads of the bond with his father for the remainder of his life.

For many, the years 2020 and 2021 brought loss of loved ones: some from COVID-19 and some from other causes. Unlike Joseph, our means of honoring those loved ones probably differed from our usual traditions. New circumstances to which we had to adapt might have included not being able to be present at the death of loved ones, delayed memorial services, or no large gathering of family to mourn. What did not change was our desire to honor their lives because we loved them. COVID-19 may have influenced how we celebrated their lives, but it did not stop the celebration. While we prepare for the resurrection, may we remember to celebrate the lives of those we love as well as the blessings we have.

PRAYER

Holy Trinity, help us to find you even when surrounded by darkness and loss. Let us be living testimonies to those who took part in raising us. Remind us of your steadfast love and help us exemplify that love in the world. In your name we pray. Amen.

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