

From the Rabbi's Desk  
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## Stories with a Twist

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### Allow Him: There is More Honor by Royalty than by Common People!

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Sota 9b & 13a



#### Background to Our Story

##### Jacob



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob>

Jacob (later given the name [Israel](#)) is regarded as a [Patriarch](#) of the [Israelites](#). According to the [Book of Genesis](#), Jacob was the third Hebrew progenitor with whom God made a [covenant](#). He is the son of [Isaac](#) and [Rebecca](#), the grandson of [Abraham](#), [Sarah](#) and of [Bethuel](#), and the younger twin brother of [Esau](#). Jacob had twelve sons and at least one daughter, by his two wives, [Leah](#) and [Rachel](#), and by their [handmaidens](#) [Bilhah](#) and [Zilpah](#).

Jacob's twelve sons, named in Genesis, were [Reuben](#), [Simeon](#), [Levi](#), [Judah](#), [Dan](#), [Naphtali](#), [Gad](#), [Asher](#), [Issachar](#), [Zebulun](#), [Joseph](#), and [Benjamin](#). His only daughter mentioned in Genesis is [Dinah](#). The twelve sons became the progenitors of the "[Tribes of Israel](#)".

As a result of a severe drought in [Canaan](#), Jacob and his sons moved to [Egypt](#) at the time when his son Joseph was viceroy. After 17 years in Egypt, Jacob died and Joseph carried Jacob's remains to the land of Canaan, and gave him a stately burial in the same [Cave of Machpelah](#) as were buried Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob's first wife, Leah.

##### Joseph



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_\(patriarch\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_(patriarch))

Joseph is an important person in the [Bible](#): his life connects the narrative of [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#) and [Jacob](#) in [Canaan](#) to the subsequent narrative of the [liberation of the Israelites](#) from [slavery](#) in [Egypt](#).

The [Book of Genesis](#) tells that Joseph was the 11th of [Jacob](#)'s 12 sons and [Rachel](#)'s firstborn, and tells how Joseph came to be sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, and rose to become [vizier](#): the second most powerful man in Egypt next to [Pharaoh](#). When famine struck Canaan, Jacob (Joseph's father) and Joseph's brothers came to the [Land of Goshen](#) in Egypt.

### **Genesis 49:29-50:14**

<sup>29</sup> Then he [Jacob] instructed them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my kin. Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> the cave which is in the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre, in the land of Canaan, the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site — <sup>31</sup> There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah — <sup>32</sup> the field and the cave in it, bought from the Hittites." <sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and, breathing his last, he was gathered to his people.

### Chapter 50

<sup>1</sup> Joseph flung himself upon his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. <sup>2</sup> Then Joseph ordered the physicians in his service to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel. <sup>3</sup> It required forty days, for such is the full period of embalming. The Egyptians bewailed him seventy days; <sup>4</sup> and when the wailing period was over, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh's court, saying, "Do me this favor, and lay this appeal before Pharaoh: <sup>5</sup> 'My father made me swear, saying, "I am about to die. Be sure to bury me in the grave which I made ready for myself in the land of Canaan." Now, therefore, let me go up and bury my father; then I shall return.'" <sup>6</sup> And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you promise on oath."

<sup>7</sup> So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the officials of Pharaoh, the senior members of his court, and all of Egypt's dignitaries, <sup>8</sup> together with all of Joseph's household, his brothers, and his father's household; only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the region of Goshen. <sup>9</sup> Chariots, too, and horsemen went up with him; it was a very large troop.

<sup>10</sup> When they came to Goren ha-Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and solemn lamentation; and he observed a mourning period of seven days for his father. <sup>11</sup> And when the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning at Goren ha-Atad, they said, "This is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians." That is why it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. <sup>13</sup> His sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham had bought for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. <sup>14</sup> After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

### **The Text: Babylonian Talmud Sota 9b and 13a**

Joseph, merited to bury his father, and there was none among his brothers greater than he, as it stated (Genesis 50:7-9): "And 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, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house; only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was very great company."*

....


And if Joseph would not have dealt with the burial of Jacob, would his brothers not have dealt with it? But isn't it written (Genesis 50:13): "*For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah*"? Since it is evident that the brothers were involved in the burial, why did they not deal with Jacob's burial needs from the outset?

They said: Allow him [Joseph] to take care of it, because there is more honor for our father to be prepared for burial by royalty than by common people.




**Explaining the Structure of the Story** (What is the sequence of events in the story?)

### **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**Bonus**  Why did Joseph merit to bury his father according to the biblical narrative?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus**  What do Joseph and his brothers want to accomplish with Jacob's funeral?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus**  Why did Joseph merit to bury his father according to the talmudic narrative?

### **"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text**



The task(s) should go to the most suitable person!