

JEWISH SACRED BURIAL - FROM MACHPELAH TO JOSEPH'S BONES, MEDIEVAL HEVRA KADDISHA TO CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

ABRAHAM BUYS A BURIAL PLOT FOR SARAH - Gen. 23:1-4

Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life—came to one hundred and twenty-seven years. Sarah died in Kiriath-arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites, saying, “I am a foreigner and stranger among you; sell me some property for a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead.”

ABRAHAM BUYS A BURIAL PLOT FOR SARAH - Gen. 23:17-19

... the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, before Mamre, and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field... were made over to Abraham for a possession [so that he was able to] bury Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre; in Hebron in the land of Canaan.

ISAAC & ISHMAEL BURY ABRAHAM AT MACHPELAH - Gen. 25:8-9

Then Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age and was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre;

JACOB PREPARES SHIVA FOOD FOR FATHER & UNCLE - Gen. 25:29-30; 34

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, famished. And Esau said to Jacob, “Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished...Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away.

ESAU AND JACOB BURY ISAAC AT MACHPELAH- Gen. 35:29

And Isaac died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him [at Machpelah].

JACOB REQUESTS TO BE BURIED AT MACHPELAH - Gen. 49:29-31

He said to them, I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah.

JOSEPH REQUESTS OF PHAROAH TO BURY JACOB AT MACHPELAH - GEN. 50:4-5

When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, 'My father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan." Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'

JACOB'S BURIAL IN CANAAN - MOURNING AT ATAD - GEN. 50:7-10

So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him—the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt— besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. Chariots and horsemen[a] also went up with him. It was a very large company. When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father.

JOSEPH IS MUMMIFIED IN EGYPT - Gen. 50:24-26

Joseph said to his brothers: "I am dying, but God will take account of you, and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Joseph had the Children of Israel swear, saying: "When God takes account of you, bring my bones up from here." **וַיִּשְׁבַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עַצְמֹתָיו מִזֶּה** And Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old. They mummified him, and put him in a coffin in Egypt.

MOSES BRINGS JOSEPH'S BONES OUT OF EGYPT - Ex.13:19

Now Moses had taken Joseph's bones with him; for he made the Children of Israel swear, saying, God will take account of you... and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.

HOW DOES MOSES FIND JOSEPH'S BONES? (MEKHILTA, BESHALACH, 2)

Moses went and stood by the Nile. He took a tablet of gold on which he engraved the Tetragrammaton, and throwing it into the Nile, he cried out and said: "Joseph son of Jacob! The oath to redeem his children, which God swore to our father Abraham, has reached its fulfillment. If you come up, well and good. But if not, we shall be guiltless of your oath." Immediately Joseph's coffin came up to the surface and Moses took it.

JOSEPH'S BONES ARE BURIED IN SHECHEM - Josh. 24:32

And in the days of the Elders who outlived Joshua, the bones of Joseph, which were brought out of Egypt, were buried in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

MEN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SACRED BURIAL - M. KET. 4:4

When she is married he[r husband] is liable for her maintenance and for her ransom and for her burial. R. Yehuda says : Even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman.

SACRED BURIAL PRACTICES- M. SAN. 6:5

Said Rabbi Meir...anyone who leaves a dead body hanging overnight transgresses a negative commandment. But if one leaves a body hanging overnight for the sake of its honor, to bring it a coffin or shroud, he does not transgress [a negative commandment]

RABBAN GAMLIEL ADVOCATES SIMPLICITY IN BURIAL - MOED KATAN 27B

In the past, the expense of taking the dead out for burial was more difficult for the relatives than the actual death, because it was customary to bury the dead in expensive shrouds, which the poor could not afford. The problem grew to the point where family members would sometimes abandon the corpse and run away. This continued until Rabbi Simeon ben Gamliel II [c. 2nd cent. CE] came forward and, disregarding his own dignity, left instructions that he be taken out for burial in linen garments. And the people followed his lead and adopted this practice, and had themselves taken out for burial in linen garments.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS CARING FOR BURIAL NEEDS - SEM. 12:5

This what the societies used to do in Jerusalem: some went to a mourners house, others to a wedding feast; some to a circumcision, others to an ossilegium, [collection of the bones of a deceased person, after decomposition of the soft tissue, for placement in an ossuary]