

COASTAL NOTES | GENESIS 50 | OCTOBER 4, 2026

You Meant It For Evil

BIG IDEA: Trust God - He keeps His promises.

INTRODUCTION

Last week involved the death of Jacob, the pillar patriarch. Today, we will read about some details about Jacob's funeral procession that eventually concluded at the cave of Machpelah, the burial plot Jacob's grandfather, Abraham purchased. Eventually Joseph will join his father too, and like his father, he wants to be buried at Machpelah.

And this whole story, from beginning to end, has been about God keeping his promises even though it has been messy and complicated because of human decisions. This chapter will be the bridge that will pave the way to eventually lead to Moses.

SCENE 1 — THE WEEPING (Genesis 50:1–3)

- 1 Then **Joseph** fell on his father's face,
and wept over him and kissed him.
- 2 **Joseph** commanded his servants the physicians to **embalm his father**.
So the **physicians** embalmed **Israel**.
- 3 Now **forty days** were required for it,
for such is the period required for embalming.
And the Egyptians wept for him **seventy** days

1. Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and _____ over him and kissed him.

2. And the Egyptians wept for him _____ days.

- **The most powerful man in Egypt falls apart in public.** Joseph could have grieved privately - he had every reason to keep composure in front of his own household. Instead he collapses on his father's body and weeps. Power doesn't make grief optional. It never has. **Even rulers bury their fathers.**
- **Embalming was not a compromise of the promise - it was the road to keeping it.** This is fully Egyptian ritual, done by Egyptian court physicians, on the body of the man God chose to carry His covenant. Jacob's body has to survive the journey to Canaan, and Egyptian embalming is what makes that journey possible. Israel is using Egypt's tools without becoming Egypt's people. **That distinction is about to matter for four hundred years.**
- **Seventy days of mourning is not sentiment - it's a signal.** That is the length of mourning Egypt reserved for its own royalty. The Egyptians are not humoring Joseph. They are mourning Jacob like a king. The nation that enslaves Israel in Exodus first

honors Israel's patriarch like Pharaoh himself. **Watch how that changes by the next book.**

SCENE 2 — THE JOURNEY HOME (Genesis 50:4–9)

- 4 When the days of mourning for him were past,
Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying,
"If now I have found favor in your sight,
please speak to Pharaoh, saying,
- 5 'My father made me swear, saying,
"Behold, I am about to die;
in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan,
there you shall bury me." Now therefore,
please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'"
- 6 Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."
- 7 So Joseph went up to bury his father,
and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh,
the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt,
- 9 There also went up with him both **chariots** and horsemen;
and it was a very great company.

3. There also went up with him both _____ and horsemen; and it was a very great company.
- **Joseph, second-in-command of the most powerful nation on earth, still has to ask permission.** He can't approach Pharaoh directly - court protocol during mourning means he goes through intermediaries, still unshaven, still in the visible signs of grief.
 - Even Joseph's power has a ceiling. **That's worth remembering the next time you feel like your own influence has limits.**
 - **"Go up" is the phrase to underline here - you'll see it again at the very end of this book.** Egyptian officials, chariots, and horsemen escort a Hebrew shepherd's body out of Egypt and up into Canaan. It is a massive, state-sponsored procession for a foreign patriarch's burial. **Egypt and Israel are completely intertwined in this scene - and that intertwining is exactly what will need to be undone in Exodus.**

SCENE 3 — ATAD AND MACHPELAH (Genesis 50:10–14)

- 10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father.
- 11 Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians."
- 12 Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.
- 13 for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.
- 14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.

4. They said, "This is a _____ mourning for the Egyptians."

5. They buried him in the cave of the field of _____ before Mamre.

- **The Canaanites watching this procession don't say, "this is a grievous mourning for Israel."** They say "for the Egyptians." The mourning is so massive, so clearly state-sponsored, that outsiders read it as an Egyptian event happening to pass through their land. Even the naming of the place - Abel-mizraim, "mourning of Egypt" - gets attached to Egypt, not to Jacob's own family. **Israel is still, at this point, invisible next to Egypt's shadow.**
- **And then, quietly, the promise closes the loop.** Machpelah is the same cave Abraham bought by faith generations earlier, with no land of his own, believing God for a country he would never live to see settled (Genesis 23). Jacob is the third generation buried there - after Abraham and Sarah, after Isaac and Rebekah, after Leah. Every burial in that cave is a small act of defiance against Egypt: this land is still the promise, even when we're not standing on it. **Jacob's dying request wasn't sentiment. It was faith - refusing to let his bones settle anywhere but the land God swore to give his family.**
- **"Carried him up" out of Egypt and "went up" to bury him - notice that language again.** It's the exact phrase Genesis will use one more time before this book ends, and the phrase the book of Exodus opens with in reverse. Jacob's body goes up out

of Egypt once. Joseph's bones will wait four hundred years to make that same trip. **Keep that word in your mind. It's not decoration - it's the seam this whole book is sewn shut with.**

SCENE 4 — YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL (Genesis 50:15–21)

- 15 When **Joseph's** brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if **Joseph** bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"
- 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying,
Your father charged before he died, saying, 17 'Thus you shall say to **Joseph**, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the **God** of your father."
And **Joseph** wept when they spoke to him.
- 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But **Joseph** said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"
- 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but **God** meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.
- 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."
So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

6. You meant evil against me, but God meant it for _____.

7. So he comforted them and spoke _____ to them.

- **With Jacob gone, the brothers assume the only thing that was ever holding Joseph back was their father.** That tells you something honest about how little they actually trusted the forgiveness he'd already extended in chapter 45. They didn't believe it was real - they believed it was managed, for Jacob's sake. Now that Jacob's dead, they brace for the bill to come due. **Grace that was genuinely given can still be genuinely doubted.**
- **"Do not be afraid" is not a new line in this story - it's an echo, and you're meant to hear it.** God says it to Jacob on the way down to Egypt back in chapter 46: "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt." Now Joseph says it to the very brothers who sold him there.

The same reassurance that got the family into Egypt is the reassurance that holds the family together once they're there. **Fear shows up at both ends of this story - and both times, it's answered the same way.**

- **"Am I in God's place?" is the whole theology of this book in one question.** Joseph refuses the one role that would actually be dangerous for him to take - judge, avenger, the one who settles the score. He's not saying the wrong didn't happen. He's saying it's not his to punish. **That's not weakness. That's a man who has finally stopped trying to be God over his own story.**
- **Verse 20 is the theological center of the entire Joseph story, and it holds two intentions in the same event without collapsing either one.** Christians have argued for centuries over exactly how God's sovereignty and human choice work together, and this verse is usually where the conversation starts.
- The Arminian tradition emphasizes that the brothers freely, culpably chose evil, and God worked redemptively within and around that choice.
- The Calvinist tradition holds that God sovereignly ordained the outcome from eternity, without removing the brothers' real guilt - both true at once, held in tension rather than fully explained.
- A third view, Molinism, says God knew exactly what the brothers would freely choose in every possible scenario and built His plan around that knowledge, so their freedom and His purpose line up without either one canceling the other out. **Genesis 50:20 doesn't hand us a philosophy. It hands us a testimony: the same act, two authors, two intentions - and God's intention is the one that gets the last word. Whatever theory sits best with you, that much is not in dispute.**
- **A.W. Tozer pictured it as a ship.** A passenger liner sails from Liverpool to New York on a fixed course - the ship itself is God's sovereignty, carrying everyone toward a destination that was set before they ever boarded. The passengers are free to walk the deck, eat, argue, sulk in their cabins - real freedom, real choices, real consequences for how the voyage feels. But none of it changes where the ship is going. The brothers were free men making a free, evil choice. And the ship still made it to New York. **That's verse 20 in one picture.**

SCENE 5 — THE DEATH OF JOSEPH (Genesis 50:22–26)

- 22 Now **Joseph** stayed in Egypt, **he** and **his father's household**,
and **Joseph** lived one hundred and ten years.
- 24 **Joseph** said to his brothers, "I am about to die,
but **God** will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land
to the land which He promised on oath to **Abraham**, to **Isaac** and to **Jacob**."
- 25 Then **Joseph** made the sons of Israel swear, saying,
"God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."
- 26 So **Joseph** died at the age of one hundred and ten years;
and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

8. You shall carry my _____ up from here.

- **One hundred and ten years - Egyptian tradition considered that the ideal, full lifespan.** Joseph doesn't just survive Egypt. He flourishes in it, by its own standard of a good life, without ever trading away his identity for it. **He lives inside Egypt's story his whole life without ever becoming an Egyptian.**
- **Third generation. Great-grandchildren born on his own knees.** That's the ancient picture of a full, blessed life - not just long, but surrounded. Joseph gets to see the family multiply into exactly what God promised Abraham it would become. **The dreamer who was hated for his dreams lives to watch the family tree he was hated for get planted.**
- **Twice in two verses, Joseph says the same thing his father said: God will surely take care of you.** He doesn't ask to be buried immediately, the way Jacob did. He makes them swear an oath to carry his bones up later - whenever "later" turns out to be. That's a statement of faith bigger than his father's: Jacob asked for a funeral he'd get to see. Joseph is trusting a promise he knows he won't. **"Carry my bones up from here" is the last sentence in Genesis - and it's a sentence that isn't finished yet.**
- **This is the same phrase - "go up," "carry up" - that's been running underneath this whole chapter, and now it's an open door instead of a closed one.** Jacob's bones went up once, already fulfilled, in chapter 50. Joseph's bones stay in that Egyptian coffin, unfulfilled, for four hundred years - until Exodus 13:19 tells us Moses personally carried them out on the night of the Exodus itself. Genesis doesn't end with a period. It ends with a promise still hanging in the air, waiting for the next book to answer it. **The whole Torah is stitched together by one coffin nobody was allowed to forget.**

- **Here's what makes that promise almost unbelievable: nobody in Egypt was left to keep it for him.** Exodus opens with a new king "who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8) - the very dynasty that owed him everything turns around and enslaves his descendants for four hundred years. Joseph's name, his rescue of the nation, his rank - all of it is forgotten. The one thing that survives untouched is the embalmed body itself, sealed in a coffin, waiting.
- **The same Egyptian practice that let Joseph live and flourish inside a foreign empire** is the very thing that preserved him long enough for God to keep a promise Egypt no longer remembered making. **God didn't need Egypt to remember Joseph. He only needed to keep His own word - the word He first gave Abraham in Genesis 15, that his descendants would be enslaved four hundred years and then come out with great possessions. Every detail landed exactly as promised.**

PERSONAL REFLECTION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Joseph didn't hide his grief, even as the most powerful man in Egypt. Where in your life have you felt pressure to "hold it together" instead of letting yourself grieve honestly?

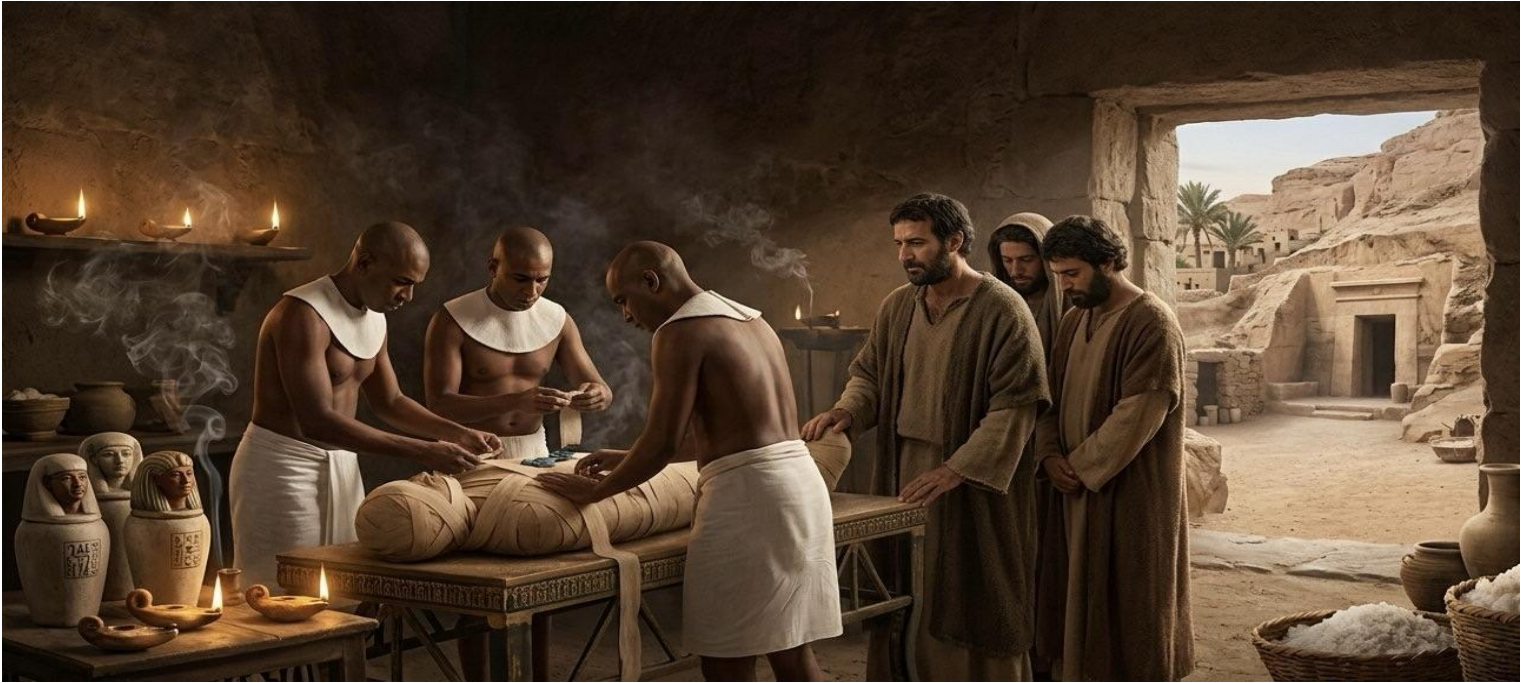
Even Joseph had to ask permission and work through the proper channels - his power had a ceiling. Where do you need to trust God's process instead of forcing your own way forward?

Jacob's burial at Machpelah was an act of faith in a promise he'd never see fully settled. What promise from God are you still holding onto, even though you can't see it finished yet?

Joseph refused to "play God" over his brothers - he forgave instead of settling the score himself. Is there someone you're still trying to judge or punish instead of releasing to God?

BIBLE NERDS ONLY

Two Funerals, Two Theologies: Egyptian Embalming and the Israelite View of Death



Genesis 50 is bookended by two embalmings - Jacob's and Joseph's. It's the only time in the Bible that Israelites are embalmed, and both times it happens because they died inside Egypt's borders, not because Israel adopted Egypt's beliefs. Egypt and Israel used the very same technology for almost opposite reasons.

The Egyptian Purpose



Biblical Reference: Genesis 50:2-3, 26

Context: In Egyptian religion, the afterlife depended on the body: a person had a ba (soul/personality, pictured as a bird with a human head) that left the body and had to return to it each night, and a ka (life-force) that needed the body as a permanent home. Without

an intact body, neither could function, and the person's existence in the afterlife was at risk. Embalming wasn't hygiene. It was theology: no body, no eternity.

Result: Jacob and Joseph are embalmed with real Egyptian ritual, by real Egyptian physicians - but for a reason neither man actually believed.

What Israel Never Practiced

Biblical Reference: Genesis 3:19; Genesis 37:35

Context: No other patriarch in Scripture is embalmed - not Abraham, not Isaac, not Jacob's own wives. Genesis 3:19 ties death to simply returning to dust, and Jacob himself expects to go down to Sheol, the shadowy realm of the dead, not to a chemically preserved body.

Result: Israelite burial was plain and fast - wrapped, buried, done. The body's condition was never the point.

Same Technique, Different Reason

Biblical Reference: Genesis 50:5, 13, 25

Context: Jacob's embalmed body still had to survive a real journey to real dirt in Canaan. Joseph's embalmed body still had to wait for real descendants to carry it to real ground centuries later. Egypt's technology got borrowed - Israel's theology never did.

Result: Egypt embalmed to help a soul live forever inside a preserved body. Israel let Egypt embalm these two bodies for one purpose only: to get them to the land God promised.

Where Israel's Real Hope Was

Biblical Reference: Job 19:25-26; Daniel 12:2

Context: What Egypt tried to secure with resin, linen, and ritual, Israel's own Scriptures eventually say out loud is secured by God alone - not a preserved body, but a resurrected one. The hope was never chemical. It was always resurrection.

Result: Two coffins sat in Egypt for centuries not because Israel believed in embalming, but because Israel believed in a God who doesn't need a preserved body to raise the dead.

The insight in one line: Egypt preserved the body because it doubted anything could raise it. Israel let Egypt preserve the body because it never doubted Who could.

ANSWER KEY

SCENE 1 — THE WEEPING

1. **WEPT**
2. **SEVENTY**

SCENE 2 — THE JOURNEY HOME

3. **CHARIOTS**

SCENE 3 — ATAD AND MACHPELAH

4. **GRIEVOUS**
5. **MACHPELAH**

SCENE 4 — YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL

6. **GOOD**
7. **KINDLY**

SCENE 5 — THE DEATH OF JOSEPH

8. **BONES**