

~EMBALMING (217)

- **Embalming Of Jacob And Joseph**
- **Burial Of Hebrews And Christians**

- The **process of treating a dead body, human or animal, with substances such as aromatic oils in order to preserve it from decay**. If this art was not originated by the Egyptians, it was at least practiced by them in very early times.

- The dead body of a human or an animal that has been preserved through ancient Egyptian or other embalming methods is called a mummy. The embalming of human's was practiced not only by the Egyptians but also by such ancient peoples as the Assyrians, Persians, and Scythians.

• **Embalming Of Jacob And Joseph**

- There are only two cases specifically called **embalming** in the Bible and both of these took place in Egypt. It was there that Jacob died, and after relating Joseph's expression of sorrow over his father's demise, the inspired Record states.

- After that Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel, and they took fully forty days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the **embalming**, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days.

- After that Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to **embalm** his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. (**Genesis 50:2**)

- And they took fully forty days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the **embalming**, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days. (**Genesis 50:3**)

- Joseph died at the age of 110 years, and they had him **embalmed**, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

- After that Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten years, and they had him **embalmed**, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (**Genesis 50:26**)

- In Jacob's case the principal purpose apparently was preservation until his burial in the Promised Land. Joseph's prominence may have been the reason in his case.
- After that he commanded them and said to them; I am being gathered to my people. Bury me with my father's in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. ([Genesis 49:29](#))
- In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah that is in front of Mamre in the land of Canaan, the field that Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite for the possession of a burial place. ([Genesis 49:30](#))
- There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. ([Genesis 49:31](#))
- The field purchased and the cave that is in it were from the sons of Heth. ([Genesis 49:32](#))
- So his sons carried him into the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, the field that Abraham had purchased for the possession of a burial place from Ephron the Hittite in front of Mamre. ([Genesis 50:13](#))
- At length Joseph said to his brothers; I am dying, but God will without fail turn his attention to you, and he will certainly bring you up out of this land to the land about which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. ([Genesis 50:24](#))
- Hence Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying; God will without fail turn his attention to you. Accordingly you must take my bones up out of here. ([Genesis 50:25](#))
- Hence God made the people go round about by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. But it was in battle formation that the sons of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt. ([Exodus 13:18](#))
- And Moses was taking Joseph's bones with him, because he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying; God will without fail turn his attention to you, and you must take my bones up out of here with you. ([Exodus 13:19](#))

- And Joseph's bones, which the sons of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem in the tract of the field that Jacob had acquired from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money, and it came to belong to the sons of Joseph as an inheritance. ([Joshua 24:32](#))
- According to Herodotus, Egyptian **embalming** methods included soaking the corpse in natron for **seventy** days. Yet, when Jacob was embalmed by Egyptian physicians at a much earlier time, the Bible says they took fully **forty** days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the **embalming**, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days.
- And they took fully forty days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the **embalming**, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days. ([Genesis 50:3](#))
- Scholars have made various efforts to reconcile.
- And they took fully forty days for him, for this many days they customarily take for the **embalming**, and the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days. ([Genesis 50:3](#))
- With the words of Herodotus. For one thing, the 40 days may not have included the time of the body's immersion in natron. However, it is quite possible that Herodotus simply erred in saying the dead body was placed in natron for 70 days.
- The later Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, of the **First Century B.C.E**, said that the Egyptian **embalming** process lasted over 30 days. [[Diodorus of Sicily, I, 91,5,6](#)]
- Of course, there may have been Egyptian **embalming** procedures that neither of these historians discussed, and it is possible that different time periods were involved in the **embalming** processes at various points in history.

•• Burial Of Hebrews And Christians

- The poor condition of human remains found in Palestinian tombs indicates that it was not the general Hebrew custom to **embalm** the dead, at least for long preservation in the manner of the Egyptians, and that early followers of Christ **there did not embalm** their deceased ones in an effort to preserve their bodies indefinitely. Faithful Hebrews and

true Christians realized that the soul, whether that of a human or of an animal, dies and that the body returns to dust.

- **I, even I, have said in my heart with regard to the sons of mankind that the true God is going to select them, that they may see that they themselves are beasts. ([Ecclesiastes 3:18](#))**
- **For there is an eventuality as respects the sons of mankind and an eventuality as respects the beast, and they have the same eventuality. As the one dies, so the other dies, and they all have but one spirit, so that there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity. ([Ecclesiastes 3:19](#))**
- **All are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust. ([Ecclesiastes 3:20](#))**
- **Look! All the souls, to me they belong. As the soul of the father so likewise the soul of the son, to me they belong. The soul that is sinning, it itself will die. ([Ezekiel 18:4](#))**
- **The fact that the Scriptures make such limited reference to **embalming** seems to be added proof that it was not a general practice among Hebrews and early Christians.**
- **The Scriptures, in telling about the burial of King Asa, state; They laid him in the bed that had been filled with balsam oil and different sorts of ointment mixed in an ointment of special make. Further, they made an extraordinarily great funeral burning for him. This was not cremation of the king, but a burning of spices.**
- **Finally Asa lay down with his forefathers and died in the forty-first year of his reigning. ([2 Chronicles 16:13](#))**
- **So they buried him in his grand burial place that he had excavated for himself in the City of David, and they laid him in the bed that had been filled with balsam oil and different sorts of ointment mixed in an ointment of special make. Further, they made an extraordinarily great funeral burning for him. ([2 Chronicles 16:14](#))**
- **And, if this use of an ointment may be considered a form of **embalming** at all, it was not the type practiced by the Egyptians.**

- When Jesus Christ died, Nicodemus brought a roll of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds of it, and it is stated; So they took the body of Jesus **and bound it up with bandages with the spices**, just the way the Jews have the custom of preparing for burial.
- Nicodemus also, the man that came to him in the night the first time, **came bringing a roll of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds of it. (John 19:39)**
- So they took the body of Jesus and bound it up with bandages with the spices, just the way the Jews have the custom of preparing for burial. **(John 19:40)**
- However, this was not specifically called **embalming**, and it was not like **embalming** processes practiced by the Egyptians. It was the customary manner of preparing a body for burial, doubtless being similar to the way that Lazarus was prepared for interment.
- His case shows that the Jewish custom did not involve an elaborate **embalming** process designed to preserve the body for a long time, for when Jesus said; Take the stone away; Martha said; Lord, by now he must smell, for it is four days.
- She would not have expected that condition to exist if Lazarus had actually been **embalmed**. Lazarus feet and hands were bound with wrappings and his countenance was bound about with a cloth, but the intention evidently had not been that of preserving his body from putrefaction.
- Jesus said; Take the stone away. Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to him; Lord, by now he must smell, for it is four days. **(John 11:39)**
- The man that had been dead came out with his feet and hands bound with wrappings, and his countenance was bound about with a cloth. Jesus said to them; Loose him and let him go. **(John 11:44)**

See Also BURIAL, BURIAL PLACES