

## ISRAEL'S PILGRIMAGE

Genesis 46:1-50:14

A pilgrimage is a journey, but it is not just a vacation. It is a trip with a certain goal in mind. The Bible says that we who are followers of God are pilgrims or travelers in this world. This world is not our home, but just the place that we are passing through to get to our real home, which is heaven.

When Jacob, renamed Israel by God, reached Egypt, Joseph took him to meet Pharaoh. Pharaoh told Israel that he could choose anywhere in the land to live, then he asked Israel, "How old are you?" I guess that Israel must have looked very old to Pharaoh.

Jacob answered, "The days of my pilgrimage are a one hundred thirty years. I have not lived as long as my ancestors." We might think that Jacob gave Pharaoh an odd answer, but he was telling Pharaoh that life here on earth is only the beginning. He was saying that we are traveling through this life, and that our final destination is to live with God.

It is important for all of us to remember that we are pilgrims, so that we will make the right choices about what is important for us to do during our lifetime. We do not want to use our lives for things that do not really count for eternity. From time to time each of us will make wrong choices, and in God's eyes waste time. But if we keep our eyes on Jesus, it won't be often, and our lives will be of great value in God's work. We want to be sure that we live the life that God gives is doing what pleases him and is important for eternity. People who do not know the Lord will live for the moment and what gives them pleasure, but we Christians ought not to be like that.

After his visit with Pharaoh, Jacob blessed Pharaoh, for he was a servant of God and had the ability to bring blessing to others.

Pharaoh told Joseph to choose the best of the land for his family. Joseph took all his family and settled them in the land of Goshen, which was the perfect place for them to care for their flocks and herds.

After some time it was told to Joseph that his father was sick, so he took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to his father to be blessed. When Joseph put the boys before Jacob so that Manasseh would receive the greatest blessing, Jacob crossed his hands and gave the greatest blessing instead to Ephraim. Once again God chose to change things around, and bless the younger above the older.

After blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob called all his sons together to give them his final blessing before he died. He had a special word for each son. The birthright was taken from Reuben the oldest, because of his weakness. Neither did God give that special blessing to either of the next two sons, Simeon or Levi, because they had allowed their anger to control them and had acted in a cruel way. Instead God gave the special blessing to Judah. Jacob gave his sons God's message that the Messiah would come through the lineage of Judah.



After blessing each of his sons, Jacob made the brothers promise that they would take him back to Canaan, the land of promise, to be buried. In doing this he made a statement to all his family, and to all those who would come after, that he believed God's promise to his fathers Abraham and Isaac. That promise was that the land of Canaan, which is now called the land of Israel, was God's promised land to them to their descendants. Jacob knew that one day, his family would possess that land just as God had promised.

Four hundred years after Jacob came into Egypt with his family, God kept that promise and brought the children of Israel back to the Promised Land. That land is theirs forever, because God always keeps his promises. God is not like a man who may change his mind or break his promises.

When Jacob died, Joseph fell on his face and cried. He commanded that his servants embalm his father, as was the custom of the Egyptians. The Egyptians thought so much of Joseph that they mourned for his father for seventy days. When the time of mourning was ended, Joseph went to Pharaoh and asked permission to take his father back to Canaan for burial. Pharaoh agreed and sent along chariots and horsemen to escort the family.

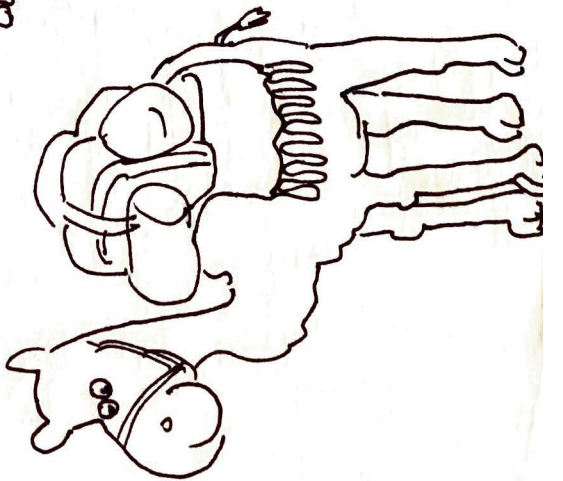
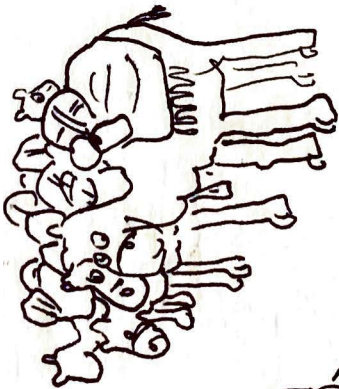
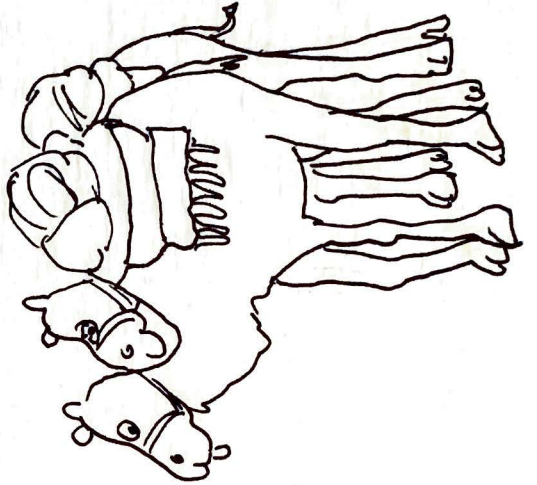
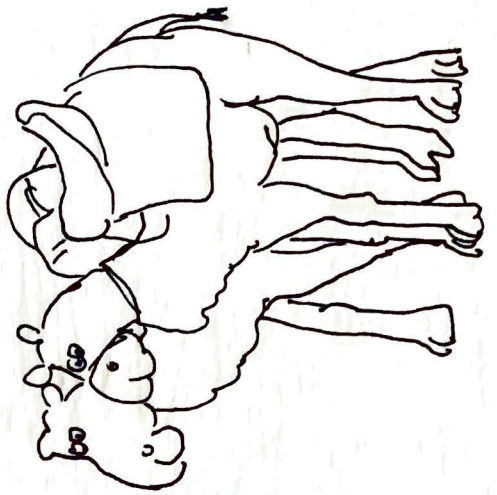
When they arrived at the cave of Machpelah where Abraham, Sarah, and Leah had been buried the whole company mourned for the loss of Jacob. All the inhabitants of the land were amazed, and said, "This must have been a very great man of the Egyptians who died."

Death is a terrible thing, and causes us great grief, but it is such a comfort when we know that the person who has died has gone to live with God. Joseph and his brothers knew that they were saying good-bye to their father for just a while. They too loved the Lord and knew that they would be going to join their father when they died.

For those who die without Jesus in their hearts there is no hope. Let's remember that we are pilgrims in this world and tell others about our future home in heaven. Then we can be a witness to the people around us of those things that really are important.

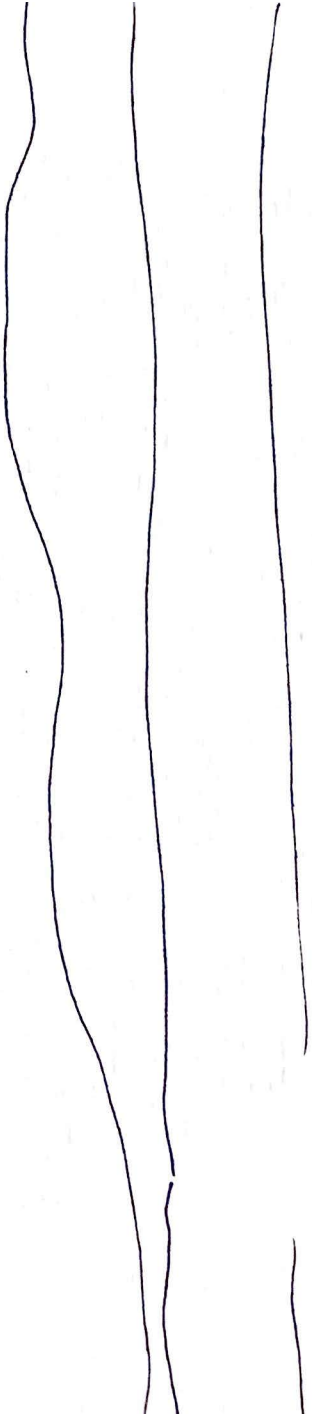
**LEARN:** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die? Believest thou this? *John 11:25, 26*









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