

TRY IT ON

WHAT FITS MY GRIEF?

The Grieving of Jacob's Family

Some features to help you determine if you want to **TRY ON** the grief because the circumstances are similar to your own:

- Multiple Deaths
- Deaths of a parent, spouse, or caretaker
- New baby's arrival close to a death
- Unfamiliar location
- Difficult relationships

Some feelings to help you determine if you want to **TRY ON** the grief because the emotions are similar to your own:

- Sorrow
- Concern
- Uncertainty
- Protectiveness
- Responsibility
- Fear

A summary about what happened.

After spending time in the country of his father-in-law, Jacob was returning to someplace familiar. However it was new for the rest of the family. After Jacob built an altar in Bethel, Deborah, a surrogate mother of several of Jacob's children who nursed many in the family, died. The family buried her under an oak tree and renamed the place, "Weeping Tree." Jacob prayed about the changes in relationships this would cause. While continuing the journey, Rachel, Jacob's wife, struggled in childbirth and was afraid that she and the baby boy would die. The midwife told her not to fear once the baby boy had been born. Rachel and Jacob discussed the boy's name before she died. After she was buried, Jacob set up a pillar over her grave. Then Jacob continued the journey, and spent time with his father, Isaac, before he died. Jacob and his brother Esau buried Isaac together. After multiple deaths, Jacob tried to figure out what the deaths meant for his life and relationships.



Some of the actions of Jacob's family that you can *TRY ON* to see if any fit you well:

- **Try new names** - Sometimes places or groups feel different after someone dies. Renaming can honor that person while helping you and others engage in relationships differently as well as give language to new roles and relationships that develop.
- **Mark the graves** - Like Jacob, finding landmarks for each death can help you and others grieve in the present and find the graves in the future. Another way to mark tombs is to make pillars or other art forms to make it clear where the people are buried.
- **Travel to multiple sites** - When there are multiple losses, There's some difficulty in feeling like they all get shoved in together instead of mourning each relationship. Sometimes travelling to a particular place can help to honor and remember the person who died. Physical movement can also help you mark the difference between your life before the death and your life afterward.

Some of the phrases of Jacob's family that you can *TRY ON* to see if any feel right for you:

- We weep for you.
- We will name this place to honor you.
- Do not fear.
- See your child.
- Is this a child of my sorrow?
- Let us mark the graves.
- Let us bury them together.

Some ideas you can *TRY ON* with a child:

- **List some names** - Inviting your child to consider new names for a place or group can empower the child to express feelings through a name. Make a list of names together, narrow the list down, and let the child choose one. Find a way to express that new name artistically.
- **Make a pillar** - Pillars tell the stories of those who have died and mark what was important to remember. Use words or pictures to describe the person and place it near the person's grave or favorite location.
- **Plan a trip** - Invite others to join you on a trip in honor of the person who died. Work with your child to include:
 - A description of where you are going.
 - A list of the people who should join.
 - What activities you should do there.
 - How to honor the person who died.

A summary of what happens next:

Jacob's relationships shifted. Rachel had called the baby, Benoni, "Son of my sorrow." To honor both Rachel and the baby, Jacob changed the name to Benjamin, "Right hand son." Jacob's relationship with Benjamin would be close since his mother had died. Jacob became closer to Esau, his brother, and to his other children through the grief that he shared with them. Jacob himself embraced a new name, Israel, and invited his sons to take over more responsibilities that Deborah and Rachel had done. Being called Israel enabled Jacob to live into new relationships with greater responsibility himself. Israel remained in the land and showed great compassion for his children when they suffered and grieved as well.

Where to find the *Grieving of Jacob's Family*:

Genesis 35