

GENESIS Lesson 41 – 8/18/19

Judah marries a Canaanite woman

38:1: And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

38:2: And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

38:3: And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er.

38:4: And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan.

38:5: And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

38:6: And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.

38:7: And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.

38:8: And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

38:9: And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

38:10: And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

38:11: Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

38:12: And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

The spotlight has now been taken off of Joseph and turned on Judah. Judah was Jacob's 4th son and he was the one that suggested they sell Joseph instead of killing him.

Gen. 37:26: And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

Gen. 37:27: Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

In this story we are told the Judah went to visit his friend Hirah who was an Adullamite. Adullam was a city 10 miles northwest of Hebron. It was one of the royal cities of the Canaanites (Joshua 12:15) and there was a cave there where David hid when he fled from King Saul (1 Sam. 22:1).

And we are told that Judah took a wife from the Canaanites, the daughter of one named Shuah. What could go wrong?

Gen. 24:3: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

Gen. 27:46: And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

Gen. 28:6: When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

Gen. 28:8: And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

Every time someone married a woman who was a Canaanite, God pointed it out.

Deut. 7:1: When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

Deut. 7:2: And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Deut. 7:3: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

God was pretty clear on what thought of the Canaanites.

And what does Judah do? He married a daughter of the Canaanites.

So Judah has three boys from this woman: Er, Onan, and Shelah.

Er means “watcher”, Onan means “strength”, and Shelah means “prayer”.

When Er Judah’s firstborn is of age, Judah finds him a wife named Tamar. In all likelihood Tamar was also a Canaanite since she is mentioned in the lineage of Christ. In the lineage of David we given the names of the women who not Israelites (see Matthew 1); Rahab was an Amorite and Ruth was a Moabite. Though Naamah, an Ammonite, Rehoboam’s mother is not mentioned.

But are told the Er was wicked and the Lord slew him. We are never told what Er’s wickedness was, but obviously it was evil enough that God decided to bring immediate judgment upon him. What role models did he have? He grew up in a troubled family and with a mother who was a Canaanite; this did not help Er to live a godly life.

But regardless, God held him accountable for his own deeds; your upbringing is not an excuse you can use with God.

Judah then tells his next boy Onan to go and marry Tamar that he may raise up seed for his brother. This would be in accordance with Deuteronomy 25:5-6. Like most laws, they are written in the conscience

of man (see Rom. 2:14-15). It had become custom to do this before the Law had been given.

This is called the custom of levirate marriage and was later codified into law in Deuteronomy 25 by God. Levirate marriage is a type of marriage in which the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow. If a married man died before having any sons, it was the duty of his brothers to marry the widow and to give her sons. The child was then considered the son of the dead brother because the living brother acted in his place. The widow would then be the wife of the living brother.

Hence the Bible says, "Onan knew that the seed should not be his."

Onan refused to do what he was supposed to and thus the Lord killed him.

Because both Er and Onan are dead, it is now Shelah's turn. But Judah was afraid that the same fate would follow Shelah, instead of recognizing that his boys were wicked, he blamed Tamar. He lied to Tamar and said, "Shelah is still young, when he is older you can marry him." But Judah's thoughts are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit: "Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did."

Judah saw Tamar as a "widow maker." He did not see his boys for what they were: "wicked". Like father (Jacob) like son (Judah). It is never recorded that Judah ever rebuked his boys.

This story takes place while Joseph is in Egypt. Judah's first two boys would had to have been of marriage age, and we know that Joseph was

born in Padan-Aram, long before Judah met Shuah's daughter. Judah was at most 3-4 years older than Joseph (see Lesson 34).

And how does Judah treat his daughter-in-law? He tells her, "Remain a widow at thy father's house..." He didn't want anything to do with her. There were still additional brothers in her husband's family who could fulfill the obligation they owed to their late brother. None of what happened was Tamar's fault. All the blame belonged to Judah and his two sons.

Eventually Judah's wife died and after he was done mourning for her he went to visit his friend Hirah and they went together to Timnath so that Judah could shear the sheep.

Unlike other animals, domesticated sheep are unable to shed, they must be sheared for the health and hygiene of the animal.

Judah visits a prostitute

38:13: And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

38:14: And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

38:15: When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.

38:16: And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his

daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

38:17: And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it?

38:18: And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

38:19: And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

38:20: And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

38:21: Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place.

38:22: And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place.

38:23: And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

We need to keep in mind that Tamar couldn't be given to another man; she was under Judah's headship per cultural norms and laws. But Judah had no intention of giving Shelah to Tamar. We are told that Shelah was grown and nothing was done.

Tamar hears that Judah has gone up to Timnath and she is determined to have children one way or another.

So Tamar wraps up her face so she wouldn't be recognized and went to the place prostitutes hung out—the place they met their customers. She basically disguised herself as a woman of the street. But she only planned to meet one customer – Judah.

Now, I want to ask you this: Why did she do this? Did she know her father-in-law's habits and besetting sin? She must have known Judah otherwise she wouldn't have done what she did.

Judah saw her and thought, "Oh, what an opportunity!" So he went and negotiated the price for her services and the act was done.

But the negotiations involved payment that Judah did not have on hand, a kid. Tamar therefore demands a pledge for future payment. And Judah gave her his signet, bracelets and his staff! Basically his ID.

God does not hide man's sin—no matter who they are. We on the other hand, hide our sins, we keep our skeletons in a hidden closet somewhere hoping no one finds out about them; but rest assured God knows.

Judah did this thing secretly, but God will soon expose the whole thing.

But after her encounter with Judah, Tamar quickly puts away her disguise and resumed normal life.

Judah gives the kid to his friend Hirah and asks him to take the kid to the town prostitute, Hirah obliges, likely because he lived near there.

But when he arrives in town he doesn't find her and then asks around and the townspeople confirm that they have no such woman in their midst.

Judah is now embarrassed. He is probably thinking, sure enough this harlot will go up and down the town showing everyone the signet and bracelets and saying: "You see this? A Jew came here and did his business, he got what he wanted and never paid me!"

This is what Judah is worried about when he says, "Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed (vs. 23)"

Not only is he embarrassed, but he is also upset at Hirah for not finding her: "...thou hast not found her!"

Tamar is pregnant

38:24: And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

38:25: When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

38:26: And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.

38:27: And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb.

38:28: And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first,

38:29: And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez.

38:30: And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

The encounter between Judah and Tamar resulted in her getting pregnant. There came a point when Tamar couldn't hide the fact that she was pregnant.

When it was found out that the widowed, unmarried Tamar was pregnant she became the talk of the town. They all knew what she had done! "She committed immorality!" And they told Judah, her father-in-law.

Why would they tell Judah? Because he was head over her; by law she was his family—and we all know how he treated her.

And when Judah finds out the she "hath played the harlot" he passes judgment quicker than a New York minute. King David did likewise right before he was confronted with his sin with matter concerning Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:5).

The whoremongering Judah was the one God would chose to be father of the Messianic line! What did God see in Judah? He saw a man that would speak the truth regardless of the consequences, and a man who spoke the truth despite his own shortcomings. Many of us hide behind our besetting sins afraid to speak the truth because the guilt of our sin has emasculated us. This is why it is so important to confess our sins before God and seek immediate restoration so that we do not lose the boldness that comes with being in Christ.

Judah pronounces judgment: "...she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, "Bring her forth, and let her be burnt."

Tamar is not going down without a fight, she has evidence that she has been holding onto for months! She rats out Judah!

"By the man, whose these are, am I with child...Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff."

All Judah had to do was lie; it would have been his word against hers! "She stole my staff and my signet! Not only did she commit whoredom she is also a thief and a liar—burn her!" What chance did she have in a male dominated society? None.

But Judah does something that God looks for in men. He told the truth about himself. Judah had a heart that responded to the truth. He did not try to pass the blame; he did not try to equivocate. Not only did he confess to his sin, he passed to blame to what Tamar did on himself. Judah acknowledged the truth.

Make no mistake, what Tamar did was a sin; but Judah says, "She hath been more righteous than I." "She did what she did because I forced

her into it—Tamar was set aside for Shelah by the word of Judah, she was claimed! She was bound by the word of head of the house.

Judah is a picture of the sinner who is under conviction and yields to it. He never justified himself—he “fessed” up.

Luke 18:13: And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

And when time came for Tamar to give birth, she gave birth to twins: Pharez and Zarah. But Zarah stuck out his hand and they tied a thread around his hand, but Pharez ended up being born fist. Could you imagine that! The babies were rolling around in her womb!

Zarah slips back up into the womb and Pharez is now the first born and ends up being the one to be in the line of Christ. God now makes an exception to what he has been doing all along, that the second born is the chosen one (Abel, Shem, Isaac, Jacob). Technically though, Pharez is not Judah’s first born; but Pharez is Tamar’s firstborn.

When Tamar conceived, it was certainly not Judah’s plan, it was probably Tamar’s plan but imagine the timing.

Can we say this was God’s plan? No, but it became God’s plan. Yes, God did know that all this would happen. God took this ungodly situation and turned into something part of His plan.

God saw something in Judah that pleased Him and took Judah’s shortcomings and sins and used them for His ultimate purpose.

This is a wonderful example of God's grace. God chose both Tamar and Judah despite their sins, to be in the line of the Messiah and to have a part in God's plan of redemption. He had to choose one of Jacob's sons—it ended up being Judah.

Gen. 49:8: Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Gen. 49:10: The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

This, from a man who was a whoremonger, a liar and a hypocrite. Once again the following verse proves true:

Rom. 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.