

## THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

*"The sordid story of Judah's sin with Tamar serves to magnify the grace of God when we remember that the Lord Jesus was descended from Judah."  
 –William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary*

## God, Judah &amp; Tamar

The Background:

- Genesis 38 serves as a literary pause in the Joseph narrative, informing us of what is transpiring in Canaan while Joseph is in Egypt. It also serves to describe several key events in the life of Judah, Jacob's fourth son, who will begin to take a leadership role among the children of Jacob. Finally, it once again illustrates the difference in character between Joseph and the other sons of Jacob.

Judah's Family:

*It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. –Gen. 38:1*

- The terminology of "turning aside" is rarely used in Scripture in the context of visiting a person or place but is instead primarily used in a figurative way of turning away from the path of loyalty or righteousness (Ex. 32:2; Judg. 9:3; 1 Kings 2:28).

Shua–

His Sons: (1) Er–

(2) Onan–

(3) Shelah–

Tamar– A \_\_\_\_\_ woman from the city of Enaim. Her name means "palm/date tree" which was symbolic of someone who was beautiful and graceful in stature.

God's Judgment on the Wickedness of Judah's Sons

*But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. –Gen. 38:7*

- His wickedness is never specifically identified in the text, but Rabbinical commentary speculates that he commits the same sin of Onan, "so that she [Tamar] should not bear children and her beauty thereby become impaired."

Levirate Marriage:

⇒ It was customary in the ANE for a man to marry his widowed sister-in-law so as to have children on behalf his deceased brother.

- This allowed the brother's \_\_\_\_\_ to endure because the son would be considered his child.
- This made sure that the brother's \_\_\_\_\_ stayed within the family.
- This provided \_\_\_\_\_ for the widow's future.

- While Onan seemed to obey the law publicly, his intent was not for Tamar to become pregnant.

*And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. –Gen. 38:10*

Judah & Tamar:

*Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. –Gen. 38:11*

- Seemingly concerned for his son's safety, Judah sent Tamar away allegedly until Shelah would be old enough to marry. It seems clear from the text, however, that Judah had no intention of allowing Tamar to marry him.

The Road to Timnah

- Sometime later Judah's wife died. Following his time of mourning, he decided to go to where the sheep were sheared.

*And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. –Gen. 38:13-14*

- Realizing that Judah had no intent of caring for her, Tamar determined to make sure that she was treated justly by her father-in-law.

Contrast: Judah's time of mourning was \_\_\_\_\_ while Tamar was to mourn \_\_\_\_\_.

When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. –Gen. 38:15-16

### ANE Cultic Prostitution:

- Ritualistic prostitution was common in the ancient world and was related to the worship of specific fertility gods. At certain religious sanctuaries and shrines there were both male and female prostitutes. The acts committed in these places were intended to guarantee the fertility of the people, land, and animals of the region.

### The Agreement

She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. –Gen. 38:16b-18

Signet & Cord →

Staff →

- Each of these individually could have been used to identify Judah, but together it would be unmistakable.

### The Results

Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood...About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned."

- While it was not uncommon in the ANE for a woman to face death for committing adultery, burning was reserved only for the most serious of offenses. (Lev. 20:14, 21:9).

Point of Emphasis: Judah acted in a more \_\_\_\_\_ way than Tamar because of his position of authority!

As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again. –Gen. 38:25-26

Point of Emphasis: Judah recognized his own unrighteousness and his repentance was demonstrated in his care for Tamar but also in his refusal to "\_\_\_\_\_" her again.

When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah. –Gen. 38:27-30

→ In spite of all that she had gone through, God \_\_\_\_\_ Tamar not only with one son, but with two!

→ God graciously \_\_\_\_\_ Judah's family, giving him two sons in place of those whom he had lost!

## The Significance of Judah and Genesis 38

1. This story is a key part of biblical account of Judah because he will be declared as the one whose family will lead God's \_\_\_\_\_.

Gen. 49:10—The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

- Notable Members of the Tribe of Judah → Caleb, David, Solomon, Daniel and his friends

2. The kings that will come from the tribe of Judah will share many of the same \_\_\_\_\_ that we see in him in this chapter.

Sexual Immorality (2 Sam. 11:3-5; 1 Kings 11:3-4)

Flawed Leadership (2 Sam. 24:1-2,15; Is. 39:1-3)

3. Many of these kings, however, also shared Judah's willingness to \_\_\_\_\_ before the Lord.

David—(Ps. 32; 51; 2 Sam. 24:10-15)

Solomon—(Ecclesiastes)

Josiah—(2 Kings 22-23)

4. The failures of Judah and his descendants all pointed towards the need of someone greater than them to lead God's people!

Revelation 5:1-5—Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."