

# Genesis

## Chapter 38:1-30

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When we ended last week in chapter 37, the last thing we read was that Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. Reading this week's chapter you may be wondering if I messed up or skipped a few chapters.

No I didn't, this is the way it was written in the bible. Starting with Joseph, then before we even get to the middle of Joseph's story, it's like God stopped Moses (who wrote the book of Genesis) and told him to tell of this story of Judah, which was one of Joseph's brothers.

So why would God do this? Whenever you ask a person why God would do something, unless it's indicated in the bible, then the answer will, or should be, I don't know.

But God does have a purpose for everything He does, just as God has a purpose of teaching us at this time about Judah.

So let's see what God, through His Holy Spirit, will be teaching us this week.

✧ **Gen 38:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.* <sup>2</sup> *And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her.*

*It came to pass at that time*, what time? It would be what we just read last week in chapter 37 of Joseph's brothers selling him to the Ishmaelites. It's possible that Judah was afraid to face his father, and he felt bad about what was done. He just couldn't live with the guilt of what he and his brothers did to Joseph.

This is the first time we read of Adullam, which was a city in Canaan. I couldn't find any additional information for Adullam, other than it was a town of the Canaanites allotted to Judah and lying in the lowlands; it's the site of the cave where David hid. The meaning of its name is "*justice of the people*".

So Judah befriended a man by the name of Hirah, which means "*a noble family*".

It's possible that Judah lived with Hirah until he was married or got on his feet.

Because of Judah's fear and/or the guilt he felt towards his brother Joseph, Judah didn't have his father's advice or blessing on his marriage since he left home. All he now had was his friend Hirah, who even though he was a noble man and probably one looked up to in the city; he was not a man of God who could give Godly counsel.

Even today, we look at the outward appearance or a person's title. We think if they are well educated or have a college degree, then they must be really smart or even think that they are wise. Maybe they have a good job or others go to them for advice and they seem to give good advice. But is it Godly advice, or worldly advice? Just because it may seem right or sound good doesn't always mean that it is good advice.

Think of times in the bible when the kings would seek the advice of the astrologers and soothsayers that were the king's advisors, and the bad counsel which was given to them

throughout the Old Testament. These kings would reject the counsel of God and accept the counsel of the world. The results were usually that they lost everything and/or even their lives because of this bad counsel.

We as Christians should not be going to the world for advice, even if this person is your best friend. If he or she is not a Christian, then you can very well be getting bad advice from them. Now it may not be intentional, it's just that they only know the ways of the world and not God's way.

An example of this would be, if you were having trouble with your marriage. Your friend(s) who are not Christians would most likely tell you to leave your husband or wife, which is against God's word. But if you went to your Christian friend(s) then they would encourage you to stay with your spouse and seek Godly counsel together as a husband and wife. So many Christian marriages end up in divorce because people seek the world for answers to their problems and not God. This is just one example, but it happens with a lot of situations. Your job or who you will marry (as we see this in this week's study with Judah) what you do with your money and so on.

Whatever you are going through this week, or have been going through. Don't seek the world for answers to your problems. But rather seek the counsel of God and search His word for the answer, or try asking a Christian who you feel comfortable talking to about your personal problems.

As Judah was in Canaan, he met a woman named Shua, which means "wealth". So it appears that Judah may have married into money.

✧ **Gen 38:3-5** <sup>3</sup> *So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.* <sup>4</sup> *She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.* <sup>5</sup> *And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him.*

Judah's first son was named Er, which means, "awake". It may have been an awakening for Judah and of what he had done by marrying outside of his family and to a woman of Canaan, which in the past we saw was not the thing to do. Even Judah's uncle Esau did the same thing, trying to run from his problems and seeking comfort from the world.

Judah's second son was called Onan, which means "strong" but as we will find out, he was strong or hardheaded.

Judah's third son was named Shelah, which means "a petition" born in the town of Chezib, which means "false". Once again even though Judah had a wife and three sons his whole life had now consisted of false joy as he sought comfort from the world.

✧ **Gen 38:6-11** <sup>6</sup> *Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.* <sup>7</sup> *But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him.* <sup>8</sup> *And Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother."* <sup>9</sup> *But Onan knew that the*

*heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. <sup>10</sup> And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also. <sup>11</sup> Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown." For he said, "Lest he also die like his brothers." And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.*

Judah chooses a wife for his first-born son Er, but Er was wicked. The term wicked means one who does not follow God's ways or is against God. The results of this was that God killed Er or as it says in the NLT "so the LORD took his life." Wow, it makes you think twice before you commit that sin doesn't it?

Does this happen today? Lets see what the bible says.

✠ **1 Cor 3:17** *If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*

✠ **1 Cor 5:5** *deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

God loves you and if you are a Christian, God may take you home to heaven early if you are continuing in sin. You may lose all your rewards, but you will be saved by what Jesus did on the cross to pay for your sins. This does NOT give you a reason to sin, but it is a warning from God.

So Er died and Judah told his second son, Onan to marry Tamar and have children. The only difference here was that when they did have children then they would take on the name of Er, Onan's brother. This was also God's law to the children of Israel.

✠ **Deut 25:5-6** <sup>5</sup> *If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup> And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.*

But even though Onan was considered strong, as his name implies, he was stubborn and hard headed. Because as we read, Onan did have sex with Tamar, but he performed a sort of birth control, so to speak, so that Tamar would not have his children. Onan may have thought that he could fool everyone by this and make it appear that Tamar could not have children. But the truth was that he couldn't fool God. God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was that their seed would be multiplied as the sand of the shore. With Onan doing such a thing he was being defiant of God's promise to his fathers.

Onan only thought of himself and the fact that he would not have his named carried on since the child would be considered the offspring of Er. So Onan died also, and the only son left was Shelah who was too young at this time to marry.

So Judah told Tamar not to remarry until his son was old enough to marry her, then he would give her to Shelah to marry. It's very interesting how the NLT puts this.

✧ **Gen 38:11 (NLT)** *Then Judah told Tamar, his daughter-in-law, not to marry again at that time but to return to her parents' home. She was to remain a widow until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went home to her parents.*

Judah was afraid that his last son would do something like his other brothers and be killed also. So he made it appear that what he was doing was right and noble. Sound familiar? It should, because as we read about Judah's friend Hirah, who's name means noble family, Judah may have gotten advice from Hirah who may have told him how to handle this situation.

But as we read on we will find out that this was bad advice.

✧ **Gen 38:12-23** <sup>12</sup> *Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.* <sup>13</sup> *And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."* <sup>14</sup> *So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.* <sup>15</sup> *When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face.* <sup>16</sup> *Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"* <sup>17</sup> *And he said, "I will send a young goat from the flock."* *So she said, "Will you give me a pledge till you send it?"* <sup>18</sup> *Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" So she said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand." Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.* <sup>19</sup> *So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.* <sup>20</sup> *And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.* <sup>21</sup> *Then he asked the men of that place, saying, "Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?" And they said, "There was no harlot in this place."* <sup>22</sup> *So he returned to Judah and said, "I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place."* <sup>23</sup> *Then Judah said, "Let her take them for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her."*

Judah's wife had died, and after he mourned for her, he left with his friend Hirah to Timnah to shear the sheep. But by this time his son Shelah was old enough to marry, and Judah didn't give him to Tamar so that she could marry him and have children. So Tamar who was in mourning all this time per Judah's instructions and she heard that her father-in-law was leaving town and she knew that he had not really intended to give his son to her to marry.

In this culture, not have children as a woman was considered a curse and you were looked down on if you had no children. So Tamar wanting to have children decided that if Judah would not give his son to her then she would take Judah himself. She may have heard of God's promise of multiplying the descendants of Israel and wanted to be a part of this.

Tamar then removes her clothes of mourning and changes them to appear to be a prostitute. But this was not as you would think of a prostitute today. You see the prostitutes were actually servants of false gods and their temples. They were used to persuade the men to be a part of this false religion.

So Judah, now being single, desired to be with a woman and saw this prostitute (or at least he thought she was) and propositioned her. The bible is not condoning this sort of behavior, in fact if you read throughout the bible, any man who has sex with someone other than his wife's pays dearly for his sin. So think twice and even a third time before you decide to fall into such a sin.

At the time Judah had no money or nothing to pay with. So he gives her his signet ring, his cord (which was his bracelet) and staff. This would be like give someone your checkbook and credit cards along with your driver's licenses for collateral until you could bring cash.

Tamar agrees and then gets pregnant by Judah, her father-in-law. Then they both go their way. Afterwards, Judah sends Hirah his friend to pay this woman get his things back, but Hirah can't find her and even the local people say that there never was such a person there. So Judah's response when he finds out is.

✧ **Gen 38:23 (NLT)** *"Then let her keep the pledges!" Judah exclaimed. "We tried our best to send her the goat. We'd be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again."*

What a story, but it's not over yet.

✧ **Gen 38:24** *And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry." So Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"*

The cats out of the bag, and Judah appears to be righteous and has pronounced a sentence upon Tamar. But he seems to forget that he has done the same thing also and little did he know with the same person he had just condemned to death.

Don't we do the same thing? We judge others forgetting what sins we have committed? Maybe even the same sin or worse. But it doesn't matter, because we are Christians and we have a right to judge others. Think twice before you find someone guilty and condemn him or her.

† **Romans 2:1-3 & 9-10** <sup>1</sup> *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup> But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

<sup>9</sup> *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Let's see what happens when Tamar is brought before Judah.

✚ **Gen 38:25-26** <sup>25</sup> *When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Please determine whose these are--the signet and cord, and staff." <sup>26</sup> So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never knew her again.*

Judah has been caught, and realizes that what he has done to Tamar was wrong by not giving his son Shelah to her to marry as he said that he would. But Judah did not marry Tamar even though she was going to have his sons. That's right, as we will see Tamar gave birth to twin boys. But it also does not mention that Judah gave her to Shelah to marry either. So Tamar remained a widow, but she does carry on the name of Judah.

✚ **Gen 38:27-30** <sup>27</sup> *Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb. <sup>28</sup> And so it was, when she was giving birth, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." <sup>29</sup> Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, "How did you break through? This breach be upon you!" Therefore his name was called Perez. <sup>30</sup> Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.*

Sounds like a struggle going on here between the two boys, just like their grandfather Israel (Jacob) and his brother, Esau.

† **Gen 25:22** *But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.*

Tamar named the boys Perez, which means: "Breach or breaking out" and Zerah, which means: "rising, scarlet or brightness".

Sometime after this, Judah does return home to his family, we know this because in chapter 49 when Israel is blessing his 12 sons', Judah is also included. And even though

Judah had messed up so much, God will still use him and bless his descendants. Judah is called Judea in Israel today, and even Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

‡ **Rev 5:5** *But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*

Isn't it comforting to know that God uses those who we would not think of using? Maybe you feel like you're someone that God wouldn't use. Maybe you messed up too much and think that God couldn't, or wouldn't use you. Take comfort in knowing that God will use you just as He used Judah and his descendants.

If you think about it, if God used only people that were worthy, then God wouldn't be able to use anyone. Or if God only used people with special skills, then they could brag or boast thinking that they did the work and not God.

I've shared before that I never graduated from high school and I didn't get my GED until I was in my 50's. I have no college experience and I have to type with two or three fingers because I don't have typing skills. I still struggle with sin just like everyone else and there are times that I fail just like everyone else does.

So why would God use me to teach His word? I have no idea! It still blows me away that God would even consider me for such a privilege and honor. But He does, but then that's why He's God and I'm not!

God knows what He's doing. Even if nobody comes to these studies and reads them, God has used them to teach me and I get so much joy out of studying His word. God has done so much for me by giving His Son to die for me on the cross to pay for my sins. God has blessed me with a beautiful wife, four children and four grandchildren. God has given me a good job, a car to get to work, and a nice home to live in. God always supplies my needs, maybe not what I think they should be, but what He knows I need. God is so good to me, how could I not want to love and serve Him?

‡ **Romans 2:4** *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

Yes. It's God's goodness that draws us to Him. Has God been good to you? If yes then why not thank Him with your service to Him. Show God how thankful you are for His Son Jesus. Don't just sit there thinking that you can't do anything. The truth is before you became a Christian, you couldn't do anything. But now that you are a Christian, you have the power of God in you, working through you.

So what can you do?

What if you were crossing the street and were about to be hit by a car? Before the car strikes you, someone pushes you out of the way saving your life, and in the process this person is killed instead of you. What would you do to thank that person even though he or she is no longer here any more? Would you tell others of how this person saved you so that you could live?

Isn't that what Jesus has done for you? Didn't Jesus die in your place?

It reminds me of the words to a song I heard which says, *“It’s not a question of what you can do for me, but what can I do for You my Lord?”*

Jesus has given His all for you, what can you do to thank Him?

Next week we will get back to Joseph.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!