

Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2019 5:47 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 38

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light! Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people! Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy! (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Genesis 38 is best described as a kind of "interlude" in the story of Joseph, the next patriarchal character we learn about in the book of Genesis! "Bracketed" by references in Genesis 37:36 (the closing verse in our last study) and Genesis 39:1 (the opening verse in next week's lesson) noting the sale of Joseph as a slave to Potiphar, a high-ranking officer to Pharaoh, in Egypt!

Genesis 38, as we found, is an explicit (and alarming!) episode in the life of Judah, the "chosen" son of Jacob (who had the prime role in selling off his brother into slavery), and a Canaanite woman named Tamar (some call her a "prostitute"), who enticed Judah into a sexual relationship, resulting in "unwanted" twins (from Judah's standpoint) named Perez and Zerah, all of whom, it turns out, "just happen" to be included, as "people of God," in the genealogy of David, king of Israel, and Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, and Savior of the world! (Matthew 1:1-3)

The story of Judah in this text is not a pretty one! In fact, the wickedness, immorality, and deceit depicted in Genesis 38 is close to pornographic and we wonder at first how it could even be included in the Holy Bible! And yet it's there, and even called by Shepherd's Guide, a "lesson in righteousness"! How that could be is actually the primary point of our study!

Our text begins with Judah "about that time" (after the sale of Joseph) "departing from his brothers and visiting a certain Adullamite (in the town of Adullam, a mile or so up the road from Hebron), named Hirah, and there seeing a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua," marrying her, and having three sons named Er (appropriately named), Onan, and Shelah. (Judah is the first "heir of promise" to marry and have descendants outside the patriarchal family!)

In the course of time, Judah "took a wife for his first-born" son, presumably another Canaanite woman, named Tamar, but Er turned out to be so evil in the sight of God that God "took his life" leaving Tamar childless. It was the practice in that culture (and later became part of Biblical law, in Deuteronomy 25:5-10) for the brother to marry his sister-in-law and produce a son for his dead brother to "carry on the line" (and also provide for the widow's welfare), a practice known as "Levirate marriage."

And so, Onan, Judah's second son, was charged with this responsibility, but, Genesis 38:9-10 says that Onan "knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground, in order not to give offspring to his brother"! This too was "displeasing in the sight of the Lord; so, He took his life also"! Wow! That left the third and last son of Judah, Shelah, but he was too young at the time so Judah asked Tamar to wait, actually never intending to follow-through on his promise, probably thinking that he might be killed as well!

And so, time went by while Tamar "went to live in her father's house." Later she realized that Judah would never give her Shelah, so finally, out of desperation, she devised a "deceitful" plan (a way of making things happen in keeping with patriarchal family tradition)! You probably know the rest of the story!

Sometime after Judah had lost his own wife, he "just happened" to be heading up to a "sheepshearer's event" with his friend Hirah, which Tamar found out about, and so she dressed herself up, and covered her face, posing as a prostitute "on the road to Timnah," where Judah "just happened" to encounter her and proposed a sexual affair, but at a price! A "goat" was offered by Judah as payment, but she wanted more! A "pledge" comprising of his "cord and seal" (a signet ring) and even his "staff"! Well, you know the result of this encounter! She became pregnant (in the "providence" of God) and three months or so later, after Judah had been unable to locate her to give her the goat and retrieve the things offered as a pledge, she (thought to be the "temple prostitute") could not be found!

About that time, Judah was told that his daughter-in-law, Tamar, had "played the harlot" and was now pregnant. Not realizing that he was the one causing it, he became so incensed and indignant (hypocritically pious) that he wanted her "brought out and burned," but then the truth came out! Tamar presented all "the things" Judah had left as a pledge and informed him that "she was with child by the man to whom these things belong"!

Genesis 38:26 says, "Judah recognized them and conceded that she was, "more righteous than he, inasmuch as he had not given her his son Shelah"! Wow!

And so, the "lesson on righteousness"! Judah had actually taken the first, all-important step in one's conversion (or salvation) experience, acknowledging his sin and unrighteousness and having a "repentant heart"! (So, based on what we now know, how is one as sinful as Judah, and you and I, able to be "declared righteous" before God? By acknowledging and repenting of one's sins and receiving forgiveness and the "righteousness of Christ," the One in the line of Judah who would one day complete the redemptive plan through His substitutionary death on the cross! A plan in the making during patriarchal times with the call of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Tamar, and Perez in the Genesis 38 account! We refer to this as "amazing grace"!)

And so, we can now see the reason for Genesis 38 being included, in its proper place, in God's inspired Word, the Holy Bible and 1 Peter 2:9-10 takes on new meaning: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Men, let's go with God this week and be a blessing to someone that God, in His providential way, "just happens" to bring into our lives!

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