

## Genesis 38: Tabloid Sleaze or Prophetic Foreshadow?

Daniel Botkin

Gates of Eden, Jan-Feb 1997. Vol. 3 No. 1, Page 4

In Genesis 37 we read about Joseph's being sold into slavery by his ten jealous brothers. Then we come to chapter 38, which reads like a soap opera. Judah, the brother who suggested selling Joseph, takes a pagan Canaan'rite to be his wife and has three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. When Er is old enough to marry, he weds a girl named Tamar. God slays Er because he is "wicked in the sight of the Lord." Tamar is given to the second son, Onan, who is expected to "raise up seed" to carry on the line of his childless de-ceased brother. Onan does not like the idea of raising up seed in his brother's name, so he spills his seed on the ground during intercourse with Tamar, and thus becomes the first person in recorded history to practice onanism, the form of birth control which now bears his name. Onan's action displeases the Lord, so the Lord kills him, too. At this point Judah is afraid to give his third son, Shelah, to Tamar. Judah suspects this woman is bad luck, so he tells her to go home and wait till Shelah is older.

Shelah grows to adulthood, but Judah does not give him to Tamar as he promised, so Tamar, still childless, takes things into her own hands. She covers her face and dresses like a prostitute and sits in a public place. Judah, not realizing who she is, happens to be the first man to proposition her. They agree on a price for sex, and Judah gives her his signet, bracelets, and staff to keep as collateral until he pays her.

When Judah tries to send the payment so he can retrieve his collateral, no one can find this harlot. Three months later, news reaches Judah that his daughter-in-law Tamar "hath played the harlot" and is "with child by whoredom." Judah orders Tamar to be brought forth and publicly burned to death. When Tamar is brought forth, she produces Judah's signet, bracelets, and staff, and announces, "By the man whose these are am I with child." Judah confesses, saying, "She hath been more righteous than I; because I gave her not Shelah my son." Six months later Tamar gives birth to twins, Pharez and Zerah. Thus ends chapter 38.

This is one of those Bible stories usually omitted from children's Sunday school lessons. At least I dont remember ever hearing the story as a child in Sunday school - and I doubt that I would have forgotten anything this racy. As a matter of fact, I do not recall ever hearing a sermon on this chapter as an adult, either. Most preachers apparently dont think the story of Judah and Tamar is suitable material for a public sermon, I guess. However, this story is recorded in the Holy Scriptures in all its unholy, lurid detail for a purpose.

Why is this story in the Bible? To entertain us with tabloid sleaze? The New Testament tells us that the events recorded in the Scriptures are "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4) and are to serve as "examples" or "types" to instruct us (1 Cor. 10:11). The Apostle Paul's view of Biblical events as types

1729 B.C. <b>CANAAN</b> 2 SHEKELS	
<b>ENQUIRER</b>	
<b>MAN DISCOVERS THAT HARLOT HE IMPREGNATED IS HIS OWN DAUGHTER-IN-LAW!</b>	
<i>INSIDERS REVEAL DETAILS OF SHOCKING SCANDAL</i>	
	JUDAH: "How was I supposed to know?"
	TAMAR: "If he had given me Shelah, like he promised...."
	SHELAH: "After what happened to my brothers, I think she's a jinx!"
<b>ER'S ERROR</b> page 8	<b>YOSEF BEN-YAKOV</b> Still missing, presumed dead
<b>ONANISM</b> What the medical experts are saying page 12	<b>EGYPT:</b> Psychics predict good crops for next decade. After that, who knows? page 5

and allegories and foreshadows is in accord with rabbinic thinking. The events in the lives of the fathers, the rabbis state, foreshadow the events in the lives of their descendants. The lives of the Patriarchs give a brief preview of the history of the nation which descended from them.

With this thought in mind, what significant events and developments in Jewish history can we see forecasted in the story of Judah and Tamar, the father and mother of the Jewish people?

The first thing we need to observe is the location of this story in the Biblical narrative. In chapter 37, Joseph is sold into slavery; chapter 38 tells of Judah and Tamar; chapter 39 then picks up the story of Joseph again. At first glance, chapter 38 seems to be out of place and irrelevant to the story of Joseph. The Scofield Reference Bible even gives this chapter the heading "Parenthesis: the shame of Judah, 11 and the story does seem to be a rather insignificant "parenthesis" in the story of Joseph. However, the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Lord does not need a course in creative writing to help Him improve the organization of His manuscripts. The story of Judah and Tamar is in the context of the story of Joseph for a reason.

Many students of Scripture have seen Judah's betrayal of his brother Joseph as an obvious prophetic picture of First Century Judaism's rejection and sale of Yeshua into the hands of the Gentiles, which results in Yeshua's being exalted among the Gentiles even as Joseph was, and eventually revealing Himself to His brothers and forgiving them, as Joseph did. If we want to understand how Judah's actions in Genesis 38 fit into the "Joseph equals Yeshua" allegory, we simply need to look at the things Judah did, and then ask some questions:

What theological developments began to take place in First Century Judaism immediately after Yeshua was "sold into the hands of the Gentiles"? When we look at Judah's actions, can we see any spiritual parallels in the development of Judaism? How are Judah's actions (and the results of his actions) prophetic of what evolved out of the womb of First Century Judaism?

The first thing Judah did was to join himself to a pagan woman. Has Judaism joined itself spiritually to paganism in any way? Yes, it has. The Talmud contains numerous references to the use of magical arts - amulets, incantations, charms, etc. The Talmud also teaches many vain superstitions which are obviously of pagan origin. (See A. Cohen's Everyman's Talmud, pg. 251 -297.) Some forms of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) make use of astrology and other "New Age" philosophies. Without the Messiah, First Century Judaism evolved into a less-than-100%-kosher religious system.

But historic Christianity has fared no better. Christianity without the Torah likewise joined itself to paganism. The Church adopted many, many pagan customs, and evolved into a less-than-kosher religious system. (See A. Hislop's Two Babylons or R. Woodrow's Babylon Mystery Religion for details.)

As Judaism without the Messiah developed into a less-than-kosher religious system, so Christianity without the Torah developed into a less-than-kosher religious system. In their present forms, both non-Messianic Judaism and Torah-less Christianity are hybrid, illegitimate religions. Christianity and Judaism both grew out of First Century Judaism after Yeshua was rejected by Israel's leaders and delivered into

the hands of the Gentiles. These two religious systems, Judaism and Christianity, grew and developed side by side, like twin sons, both coming out of the womb of First Century Judaism.

This brings us back to the story of Judah. After Joseph had been sold into the hands of the Gentiles, Judah brought two bastard sons into the world, twin sons from a single womb. After Yeshua was sold into the hands of the Gentiles, First Century Judaism brought two illegitimate religious systems into the world, twin religions that grew and developed side by side and came from a single womb.

The good news is that God can use someone or something illegitimate for His purpose and glory. Judah's twin sons, Pharez and Zerah, are mentioned in the genealogy of the Messiah on the first page of the New Testament.

God has used Judaism (even though it is illegitimate and incomplete without the Messiah) to preserve the Torah, the Sabbath, and the Biblical calendar. God has used Christianity (even though it is illegitimate and incomplete without the Torah) to preserve the testimony of Yeshua as the Messiah. This is why Satan hates Jews and Christians. And Satan especially hates Jews who believe in following the Messiah Yeshua and Christians who believe in practicing the Torah: "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Yeshua" (Rev. 12:17).

The Devil makes war against those who are the greatest threat to him. A zealous Jew, even without the knowledge of the Messiah, is a threat to Satan, as is a zealous Christian, even without the knowledge of the Torah. But a zealous Christian with the knowledge of the Torah or a zealous Jew with the knowledge of the Messiah is a double threat to Satan. These are the people described as "saints" just prior to the Return of Messiah in Rev. 14:12: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and (the faith of Yeshua." Then the next chapter describes these overcomers as those who "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3). The song of Moses" is Torah; "the song of the Lamb" is the testimony of Yeshua as Messiah.

Around the mid-1800s, the message of the seventh-day Sabbath began to be proclaimed more widely and more rapidly than it had ever been before. This was due primarily to the zealous efforts of the newly-formed SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) church. The SDAs believed that the call for the restoration of the seventh-day Sabbath was a fulfillment of Rev. 14:6-8. Even though I am not a SDA, I believe they were correct in their understanding of this. One reason I believe they were correct is because of the fact that the end-time message being preached in verse 7 is to "worship Him that MADE heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters,"

This call to worship God specifically as Creator ("Him that MADE") clearly points to the only commandment of the Torah which, when obeyed, specifically acknowledges God as Creator: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... For in six days Yahweh MADE heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it (Ex. 20:8,11). Rev. 14:7 is an echo of this commandment, and even mentions the same three elements of creation, i.e., heaven, earth, and water.

It is no coincidence that Satan inspired Charles Darwin to publish *On the Origin of Species*, which denies God as Creator, in 1859, during the same period of history in which God's people were attempting to restore the one command which points to God as Creator. It is ironic that most of the Christians involved in the "Creation versus Evolution" debate today do not obey the only commandment in the Bible which has as its basis the fact that God created the universe.

The Church needs to come to the realization that the 7th-day Sabbath is not a peripheral issue. It is not just a cute-but-optional "Jewish custom" that SDAs and Messianic groups practice. The restoration of the true Sabbath is significant because it marks the beginning of Babylon's fall. After the call in Rev. 14:7 to "worship Him that MADE heaven, etc." [a call to keep the Sabbath], another angel immediately announces, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Rev. 14:8).

The restoration of the Sabbath knocks the cornerstone of Babylon's foundation out from under her. Why can we make such a statement? Because the Roman Catholic Church boasts that her changing of the Sabbath from the 7th day to the 1st day of the week is "proof of her authority to enact new laws and to change or abolish old laws, even Biblical laws. And Catholic leaders rightly point out that Protestants are acknowledging Rome's claim to this authority by continuing to honor Sunday instead of the 7th-day Sabbath. (See Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions about Sunday. Write to us for a copy.)

By rejecting Rome's change of the Sabbath from the 7th day to the first day of the week, we take our stand with the God of the Bible, who declares, "I am Yahweh, I change not" and with the Messiah, who declares, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah or the Prophets" (Mal. 3:6; Mt. 5:17).

As we approach the final days before Yeshua's return, people are going to have to choose between Rome, the headquarters of Babylon, and Jerusalem, the headquarters of God's Kingdom. "How long will you hesitate between two opinions?" Elijah said to the apostate nation of his day. "If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but if Ba'al, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Those Christians who choose to include Sabbath and Torah observance in the practice of their faith, and those Jews who choose to include the testimony of Yeshua in the practice of their faith, will enrage Satan. For this reason we must be prepared for a militant lifestyle in the spiritual realm. The idea of a militant lifestyle may sound strange and foreign to the ears of American believers, but it is not an idea that is foreign to the New Testament:

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Yeshua the Messiah. No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life [NIV, "civilian affairs"; NAS, "everyday life"]; but that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3f).

Many Jews who are trying to follow Yeshua, and Christians who are trying to follow Torah, are still entangled in the affairs of everyday, civilian life. It is time for us to free ourselves from the things that hinder us from being soldiers. We need to learn what it means to be an army of true disciples, and prepare ourselves for the Enemy's rage that will soon be upon all those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah" (Rev. 12:17).