

What Happens in Enaim Stays in Enaim (Not Really)

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A Sermon Series on the Life of Joseph

Gen. 38

We are studying the life of Joseph in the Bible. He was raised in a big family. Twelve brothers and one sister. Not all were from the same mother. Let me introduce you the mothers and their children:

LEAH	ZIPAH (Leah's servant)	BILHAH (Rachel's servant)	RACHEL
Reuben (1)	Gad (7)	Dan (5)	Joseph (12)
Simeon (2)	Asher (8)	Naphtali (6)	Benjamin (13)
Levi (3)			
Judah (4)			
Issachar (9)			
Zebulun (10)			
Dinah (11)			

Jacob had a list of favorites. That fact also shows in the following story. Jacob and his brother Esau were not in a relationship for many years. Finally in Genesis 33, we read that they agree to meet each other. Let us see how Jacob lined up his wives and children to meet his brother Esau (this was before Benjamin was born):

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. ² And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³ He himself went on before them... (Gen 33:1,3 ESV)

Question: Can anything good come from this dysfunctional family? The answer is yes, God does not give up from humanity. God's grace comes and penetrates in the midst of this family. God teaches us to learn to turn to Him and be faithful to Him in our daily walk with Him. Those children would become the twelve

tribes of Israel. And from those families Christ would be born. Christ will replace the twelve tribes of Israel with the twelve disciples.

We ended last Sunday with Joseph being sold to the merchant heading for Egypt. Today we arrive to chapter 38. One can wonder why the narrator took a shift towards the story to Judah (child # 4). Bear with me and see why this chapter is vital in the Joseph's story.

-Judah's Marriage (38:1-4)

It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. ²There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, ³and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. ⁴She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. ⁵Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.(Gen 38:1-5 ESV)

-“Judah went down” literally means moving down from the Hebron heights (Gen. 35:27) to the lowland of Canaan. **It also mirrors Judah's spiritual condition.** What are you doing, Judah? Why in the world you go out and find a Canaanite woman (no name mentioned) as a wife for you in Adullam (where David hid from Saul in the cave 1 Sam 22:1,2). Remember how God asked Abraham, Isaac and Jacob not to marry foreign women; **Judah is in a foreign land, far away from his family. Not a good idea.**

-I see Judah lost his communication with God. And when one is away from God, the devil can use the opportunity to devour the person. In this story, Judah is making himself vulnerable to sexual temptations.

-The narrator uses a few verbs to describe the strange relationship of Judah and his wife. Bruce Waltke says: *“In Hebrew it is written, he saw...and took...‘took’ by itself is the normal expression for ‘marry’ (Gen 4:19). The conjunction of the two verbs (saw and took) has overtones of lust.”* This is not a healthy way to start a family. I don't think she worshiped Yahweh. Judah named their first child **Er** (*other manuscripts, Targums and Samaritan Pentateuch read she names*). She names two other kids (**Onan** and Shelah). We don't see either husband or wife asking Yahweh to name these kids.

- Wicked Children (38:6-10)

And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death. ⁸Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother's wife and perform the

duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.”⁹ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother.¹⁰ And what he did was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death also. (Gen 38:6-10 ESV)

The story gets worse. **Er** (Evil in Hebrew if you read backwards) marries **Tamar** (a Canaanite woman, meaning palm tree). They did not have children. I don't know what was the wickedness of Er but God put him to death. The atmosphere is wicked. I don't think **God** is pleased with the Judah's choices.

It is duty of the family to produce offspring. Since Tamar did not have children, her brother-in-law Onan married her. Yet we see **Onan** has a sexual relationship with her yet intentionally refuses to conceive Tamar with a child. Again we see God puts **Onan to death**.

- Judah's Promise to Tamar (38:11)

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.

Judah realizes how bad was the situation of his family. He makes a promise to his daughter-in-law according to the customs of the day, that one day when the third child grows up (**Shelah**) he would marry her and they would have offspring for the family. It is important to see here how Tamar obeys her father-in-law. She goes back to her father's house wearing grieving clothes (remains a widow). Later we will see she kept her vow to remain a widow.

- Judah's Lustful Relation (38:12-19)

In the course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.¹³ And when Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep,”¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.¹⁶ 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. She said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”¹⁷ 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—" ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

Judah lost his wife. After he was "comforted" (how long for comforting? the Bible does not say) he is going around.

Tamar, on the other hand, was waiting for her father-in-law's promise to be fulfilled. The third child (Shelah) did not marry her. **She took a big risk.** She removed the widow's garment; (her grieving garment) (*Joseph's garment became a grieving garment, she was wearing grieving garments because of her loss; the entire situation is grieving*). She covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up like a prostitute, and sat at the entrance to **Enaim**; she also covered her face. Judah saw her and thinks she was a prostitute. Judah wanted to sleep with her. (*What will you give me?*) There is bargaining going on like a business transaction. In the end Tamar asks for guarantees: "**Your seal and its cord, and your staff.**"

Seriously, Judah, do you know what she is asking?

After this event, Tamar comes back to her father's home and wears her grieving clothes again (the garment of widowhood).

-Is her action right? No, she deceives her father-in-law.

Bruce Waltkie says: Hittite and Middle Assyrian laws legislated that if a married man died and his brother also died, then "his father shall take her...There shall be no punishment." The Mosaic Law did not go this far, but her actions are not inconsistent with the principle." (p 512)

Yet, having said that, still her actions were deceiving. Even according to her Canaanite laws.

-What Happens in Enaim Stays in Enaim (Not Really) (38:20-26)

When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." ²² So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been

here.”²³ And Judah replied, “Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her.”

²⁴ 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.”²⁵ 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.”²⁶ 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.

Judah, sends his friend **Hirah the Adullamite**, to find his seal and staff. I assume he is ashamed of his action. The man cannot find any prostitutes in Enaim. So the story continues by hearing that Tamar, their family bride, is pregnant. Of course according to the law, she must be burned. How ironic it is that Judah gives the verdict: “she must be burned”. And when Tamar sends the evidence (the seal and the staff) Judah faces the reality. Judah says those words:

She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not know her again. (38:26 ESV)

The Literal Hebrew translation is: **“She is righteous, not I.”**

Dysfunctional families and God’s grace. The turning point of the story starts here. Judah is vulnerable now. Whatever happens in Enaim cannot be hidden; it is revealed. **Judah faces his sin.** How ironic that God is using a Canaanite woman to teach him and her a very important lesson. Later you will see how Judah will have an important role in Jacob’s family. Later one can see how Tamar was in the genealogy of Jesus.

Application:

1. None of us faces these kinds of situations. You will wonder why I am preaching this chapter to you. The dysfunctional situation is all over us; we are part of it as well. The Bible says we all are sinners. We all caused grief to someone, or someone else brought grief into our lives.
2. Judah faced his sin. It was costly, yet he faced it. How long can each of us hide with unconfessed sins? Some of us hide in the church. God loves us, and He cares for each of us. God likes transparency. Be open to God. He will heal you;

He will transform your heart. Judah was a different man after this event. Later you will see how he played an important role in the life of Jacob's sons.

3. Judah left his family and his environment. Watch out where you go and with whom you associate. This does not mean you will not be in the world. We will be in the world but not of the world.

His wrong choices showed he had turned away from God Yahweh.

4. Sexual temptations will come and knock the door. Joseph faced also temptation. He fled from them. Judah did not. Be open to God for your desires and lusts. He will guide you and give you discipline.

5. Tamar manipulated her father-in-law. Tamar was also faced with her sin. As you can see, she will be used by God to play an important role in the Messiah's genealogy. She gave birth to twin boys, one of whom, **Perez**, became an ancestor of Jesus.

Waltke says: God makes the most surprising choices. Here he chooses a family divided by favoritism, immaturity, jealousy, and vengeance. Yet he will bring about his purposes through them and in the process will bring about their **radical transformation and restoration**. The road to kingship in Israel is much more tortuous than in Edom; the elect must be redeemed before they rule. Waltke (P 505)

How important is this. The wicked situation revealed important values that Judah ignored. Later we will see God is in control the situation; even in watching over Joseph in Egypt. God will use Egypt to shape the Israelites.