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The Family of Abraham: Part 28—Judah and Tamar

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Today, I discuss Genesis 38 and the story of Judah and Tamar.

Within my discussion, I mention the following article by Jeffrey Geoghegan on sheepshearing: https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=article&id=3189028&journal_code=BIB. I also mention Stewart Fleming's stimulating exploration of connections between the Tamar and Ruth stories: <https://famousfox.org/2017/07/22/the-tamar-and-ruth-narratives-considered-intertextually/>.

My blog for my podcasts and videos is found here: <https://adversariapodcast.com/>. You can see transcripts of my videos here: <https://adversariapodcast.com/list-of-videos-and-podcasts/>.

If you have any questions, you can leave them on my Curious Cat account: <https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

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Transcript

Welcome back to this, the 28th in my series in the story of the family of Abraham. Today we're looking at Genesis chapter 38, which is the story of Judah and Tamar. Now, according to many biblical commentators, this chapter is an interpolation within the larger story of Jacob and Joseph.

It doesn't really fit very well, and some redactor has forced this chapter into its current position, and it just interrupts the flow of the text. So if you read verse 26, 36 of chapter 37, now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. And then go to verse 1 of chapter 39, now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

It just seems as if everything that goes between those two is interrupting the flow of the text. So you've got this resumptive statement in 39 verse 1, but 38 just does not fit. And this has been suggested by a number of commentators, and I submit it's because many commentators are simply not good readers of the you will see it is profoundly well situated.

It belongs exactly where it is, and when you read it carefully in its context, it will make sense why it is here. And I hope this will become clear as we go along. First of all, let's take stock of the context.

When we look in the context, what has just happened? Joseph has been sold into Egypt. Judah was the leader of the brothers in this plot. Reuben's the oldest, but Reuben was really trying to have to work against the brothers.

He wasn't able to share his plan to try and deliver Joseph, whereas Judah was the one who instigated the plan to sell him to the Ishmaelites. It does not appear that they were the ones that sold him to the Ishmaelites. It seems as if it was the Midianites that did that, and then Reuben found out, being the first person to get to the pit, that that had happened in their absence.

But Judah was the leader of the brothers, and presumably, Judah having sold Joseph into slavery, the idea was go back to the father, tell the father that Joseph has been killed by some wild beast, present him with the cloak and the blood stains upon it, and he will be none the wiser. And of course, it's a tragedy. He's going to struggle to deal with this, but give it time.

Time heals all wounds. And give him the love of family, and all these different, his children rising up to console him. That will help him to get over it.

And eventually, it might take a year or two even, but he'll be back to his old self, and we'll be able to move on, and Joseph will no longer be a problem. Now, of course, that plan does not work. What happens is that Jacob refuses to be comforted, and he says, I will descend to my son in the grave in mourning.

He's going to go down in mourning to his son. And so there's a descent here, the descent of Jacob to the grave. Another thing to notice is that there is a deception of the father using a goat and coats, or the tunic of Joseph, and a goat, the blood of a goat, presented

upon that.

So there's a deception of the father using goats. Now, as we read the story of Jacob, we'll see that that harkens back to previous events, harkens back to his deception of Isaac, his father, where using goats, he presented himself as the loved, favoured son, the b'kor, Esau, and he received the blessing instead of the firstborn. And there seems to be a continuation of that theme as he is deceived concerning his beloved son, his favoured son, by his own sons.

They're using, in many ways, the same ploy against him as he used against their grandfather. So we see that continual theme, and there's more of that within chapter 38. Other things to notice that there is, there are three descents that take place.

There's the descent of Jacob to the grave in mourning, and then there's the descent of Joseph into Egypt, and in chapter 38, verse 1, it came to pass that Judah went down from his brothers. Judah leaves the rest of his brothers, he goes down from them. Now, this is presumably a geographical descent, a descent from the high country, but it seems also that it's a descent in other ways, a descent in status.

Judah was the leader of the brothers, he was the one who was really heading them up as a group, he was the one that suggested the plan concerning selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites, he was the one who seemed to be the leader of the group, and now he descends from the brothers. The plan has failed, everything has gone wrong, and now it seems there's a threefold descent in the house of Jacob. The descent of the patriarch to the grave in mourning, the descent of the favoured son into Egypt and seeming death, and the descent of Judah, the leader of the brothers, the king of the brothers as it were, into a state of exile, of being away from the rest of the brothers and losing his office.

So this fits in with the surrounding themes on that front, but there's more to say about this. As we read the story of Judah, we'll see that the story of Judah is juxtaposed with the story of Joseph. These two characters play off each other.

I've mentioned in the past the diptychs of the story of Genesis, that we have characters that are juxtaposed and play off against each other as two panels within a painting as it were. So you have Cain and Abel, Lot and Abraham, we have characters like Esau and Jacob, Ishmael and Isaac, Sarah and Hagar, Leah and Rachel, and now Judah and Joseph. And as we see these characters off against each other, we'll be able to understand them better as we place their characteristics in contrast and see them against the foil of the other character.

Now Judah's story has great similarity to with the story of Joseph. There's a descent from the brothers, there is themes of death playing out, there's themes of wandering, and there's having two children at the end of the story, there's temptation by a woman and to have sexual relations, illicit sexual relations, and there's being divested of personal

items, and those things later on being presented as evidence. And so there's a very close parallel between this and the chapter that immediately follows it concerning Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

In that chapter a garment is taken from Joseph, once again presented as evidence against him, and in that case he resists the temptation of illicit sexual relations with the woman. Whereas here Judah falls into the trap that Tamar has set for him, and so there's a juxtaposition there, and there's a contrast between these two characters that helps us to see the righteousness of Joseph more clearly and the wickedness and unfaithfulness of Judah in a sharper manner as well. So there's a juxtaposition, but there's also an entanglement.

Judah's story is entangled with what he has done to Joseph, his brother, what he led the brothers in doing, and so his story is going to have to play out against the story of Joseph, and in parallel with that he's going to have to work out his destiny. We'll see Judah and Judah coming to the fore later on in the story of Joseph. Judah was the leader of the brothers, then he has to lead them again in the redemptive cycle.

So Judah's story and Joseph's stories are both juxtaposed and entangled. There are three descents then, Jacob, Joseph and Judah, and these descents are of different characters. Jacob's descent is one of mourning, Judah's descent is one of loss of office, and Joseph's descent is into slavery and into exile, the foreign land.

The story of Judah begins with him marrying the daughter of Shewa. He marries a Canaanite and he seems to be playing out patterns that are very similar perhaps to Esau. He's an esoteric Christian despising his birthright later on, but he marries a Canaanite woman, Bathshewa, the daughter of Shewa, and he has a friend called Hira the Adolomite.

He goes to see him. Now the character of Hira the Adolomite is just a weird presence within this text. I mean, why have Hira the Adolomite? He's mentioned at the beginning as the one that Judah goes down to see the Adolomite, then he's mentioned later as someone who goes up with Judah to the sheep shearing festival celebrations, and then he's mentioned as the one that's sent out with the goat.

So he's a presence in three different stages of this story but he doesn't seem to... his identity, the particularity of who he is doesn't seem to be relevant and so his presence within the story raises questions. What is he doing here? And I really don't know. We have reason to believe that his presence is significant but why he's mentioned, if you have any ideas please mention them in the comments.

Maybe some association with Hiram, some have suggested. Hiram, David's friend throughout his reign and so Judah, the ancestor of David has a friend called Hira and so Hira, Hiram, I'm not sure about that. I don't find that very convincing.

I don't know what you think. If you have any suggestions please leave them in the comments. The story is one of descent from his brothers but it's not just descent from his brothers, it's descent into death.

Judah has three sons, Onan and Shelah, and his oldest son Ur marries a woman called Tamar and Tamar is the wife of Ur. Ur dies, he's killed by the Lord because he's wicked. His wickedness plays off his name, his name reversed so he might say Ur-Urd and there's a playing off the name there and so he's killed by the Lord and then there's the performance of Ebum, the the Leveret marriage rite and so Tamar is given to the next brother down, Onan.

Now Onan does not want to ruin his own inheritance and so he has relations with, he seems to have relations with Tamar but he ejaculates outside of her to ensure that there's no children that were born and so he's violating her and also he's in, he's acting against his brother's interest, his dead brother and so there's a twofold violation here. He's violating the widow and he's violating his brother and his inheritance and so he's not doing his duty of love to his brother and he's dishonouring the widow of his brother as well in a very powerful way and God kills him too. Now at this point it seems that Tamar is bad news.

We don't know or no one else in the story knows apart from the reader, the reader knows that Tamar is not the one to blame here, that the one who is at fault is well Ur and then Onan, both of them independently wicked children and they've both been killed as a result of their sin. But what does Judah see? What do other people in the story see? They see this woman and what's the common, she's a sort of black widow character, the people who marry her or have relations with her seem to meet messy ends and so what's going on there? Maybe we want to keep the rest of the family away from this Tamar woman, this woman who seems to spell doom and so Judah is reluctant to give his son Shelah to Tamar and tells Shelah to go to her father's house and remain there until Shelah is grown but of course even when Shelah is grown he does not give Shelah to Tamar. Now his wife dies, Judah's wife dies and well when Judah's wife dies he's consoled as a result of this and he goes up to his sheep shearers at Timnah.

Now it seems that sheep shearing was an important festival, it was a time of celebration, it was a time where you went away for a while and enjoyed some festivities. We see sheep shearing mentioned on a few occasions in Scripture associated with feasts or associated with significant events and we'll get to that in a moment but Jeffrey Gagan has a very good article on this I might link to that in the show notes but something at this point changes, he's consoled and there seems to be a change or a juxtaposition between this and his father. Judah is consoled very shortly after the death of his wife and he's lost two sons as well.

On the other hand Jacob is going down to his grave in mourning as a result of the death

of Joseph and so the father who's easily consoled concerning the death of his two sons and the death of his wife contrasts with the father who cannot be consoled. These two characters play off against each other then. As he goes to Timnah, Tamar hears that her father-in-law is going to Timnah, she's told look your father-in-law is going to up to Timnah to shear his sheep so she takes off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself and sat in an open place or aenayim which means two springs or two eyes and those words it means the same thing which was on the way to Timnah for she saw that Sheila was grown and she was not given to him as a wife.

So she's on the way to somewhere and she's at this place called aenayim, two springs. In the previous chapter we've seen a place called Dothan, two wells. Could these places be related? Particularly as we see that Joseph is told that his brothers have gone to Shechem to shear their sheep and he's first of all sent to and goes to Shechem and then on the way he meets someone and then he's sent to Dothan.

It seems to be a significant location. Is there something that connects these two places? I think there probably is and she sits in an open place and Judah sees her, thinks that she's a harlot because she had covered her face, 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? Now let's take a step back.

We've seen that Judah has descended from his brothers. Judah has left the rest of his brothers. He's no longer the leader of the crew.

He's the guy who's off by himself with Hira the Adomite and now he's married forming his own family but his family is dying and so he's descended from his brothers and his family is dying off. He's lost his two oldest sons. He's got one son left and that son is he's marked out for Tamar but he doesn't want to give that son to Tamar because he knows that that seems to spell doom and so his family does not seem to be in a good state at all.

He's in a position where his family is marked out by death, seems to be marked out for death and there's a crisis looming here but he does not seem that worried about it and Tamar is the one that's taking action to try and rectify the situation. She seems to know that her father-in-law is someone who would go into prostitute. She doesn't actually seem to instigate these things at all.

She goes there, puts herself in the way of Judah but Judah instigates the negotiations so he's a pretty disreputable character we would think at this point. She said, what will you give me that you may come into me? Now think for a moment. If we're having a story in the book of Genesis would we expect a number of verses devoted to negotiations with a prostitute concerning payment? It just seems unnecessary.

It seems to be, what does it add to the story and why is this unseemly negotiation taking

pride of place within this chapter? I mean it's the very center of the chapter. Your attention is drawn to this but yet it just seems, it seems as if it should not really belong here. He said, I will send you a young goat from my flock, from the flock and she said, will you give me a pledge till you send it? 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 into her and she conceived by him. So she arose and went away and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood. So there's a two-stage negotiation here.

He does not give her money. He says he will give her a young goat from the flock and then she asked for a pledge until he gives that to her. Notice what's happening here.

She's offered a kid from the flock. What has she been looking for? What has she been waiting for? She's been waiting for Judah to give her his kid, his kid Shelah, his son. And we've seen the association between sons and goats elsewhere in the story.

In the story of Judah, in the story of Jacob and Esau, we have two goats associated with the two sons. In the story of Ishmael and Isaac, we have the ram associated with the son and these two stories of these children being sent out that brings to mind these two kids being sent out. So when we get to this story here, we should see that there is a play upon the meaning of the kid.

That the kid is associated with Shelah but the kid is also absent. There is no kid. In the previous chapter we saw a kid.

A kid's blood was presented on the tunic of Joseph to the father Jacob. There's no kid here. The kid, as it were, has been killed and the kid has to be brought.

The kid has to be given to Tamar. Maybe there's some sort of theme playing out here. That there is once again a story involving divesting, someone being divested of personal items and of identifying personal items and then someone using a goat within these proceedings.

I believe there's a connection here that really helps us to understand what's going on. As we look at this story then, I think we'll see that Judah gives something very significant to Tamar. Some have suggested that the cord referenced here actually refers to a garment.

I'm not convinced. I think it probably refers just to a cord and he gives his signet or seal in his cord and the staff that is in his hand. These are important items to give.

It's like giving your passport and your credit card but for Judah it's more significant. The staff is associated with rule and the signet is also associated with office. He's giving up the signs of his office.

We've already seen him depart and descend from his brothers and now he's giving these signs of his office. He's divesting himself of his very identity, these identifying items that are part of his rule and he's giving those over to this unknown prostitute. Now we've read earlier on in the story of Genesis about Esau who despises his birthright, who gives up his birthright for a meal of for just a bit of lentil stew and here we see something very similar in what Judah is doing.

Judah is giving up the signs of his authority, these very tokens of his identity to this unknown prostitute. It's a crazy thing to do and once again there are themes of deception here. What we might suggest here is this is a further descent into death.

He's going down from his brothers, he's lost the glory of the group around him, his family is dying off and now he's giving up his very identity. As you read the story of Genesis 38 pay attention to how much time is passing. We've already had him go down, he goes down from his brothers, he goes with Hira the Adolamite, then he sees the daughter of Shewa, marries her, then has three children with her, they come of age, the oldest marries Tamar, then he dies, then the next marries Tamar, he dies and then the next still comes of age, he could marry Tamar but he's withheld from Tamar and then his wife dies.

All that passage of time, this is at least 30 years or so and so this although it's placed here it seems to burst the banks of the initial context so it extends far beyond this initial scope between chapters 37 and 39 in the story of Joseph. It extends far out into the future after they would have descended into Egypt perhaps but there's a long period of time that passes here and Judah is still on his descent, he's falling, he's fallen from his brothers, his house is falling into decay and ruin and now he's giving up his identity to a prostitute. This is crisis time, this is the one who's supposed to be the tribe that leads and yet he's giving everything up and so he gives the tokens to Tamar, unbeknownst to him it's Tamar and then she puts aside her veil, puts on the garments of widowhood again and Judah sends the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adalamite by Hira to receive his pledge from the woman's hand but he did not find her.

He goes and asks the men of the place where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside and they said there was no harlot in this place and he returned to Judah and said I cannot find her. Also the men of the place said that there was no harlot in this place. 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.

So he's concerned that there will be a scandal, that he'll be shamed in the sight of the people around but he sends this person to do his errand for him, he doesn't do it himself and as he does that we see that the goat doesn't get to its destination. It fails to reach the one that it's supposed to be given to. Three months pass and Judah is told 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. 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 whom whose these are the signet and cord and staff.

So Judah acknowledged them and said she has been more righteous than I because I did not give her to Sheila my son and he never knew her again. There is a transition that takes place here something changes. The action that Judah takes is again a rash one.

He says let's send her out to be burned and going to burn Tamar and as she's being brought out she brings forth the tokens and what could he do at this point? He could deny they were his, he could hide the whole matter up and maybe take them back or bury them or whatever. He could cover it up somehow but he confesses and as he confesses he realizes that things are changed and she is not sent to her death. He admits that she is more righteous than he was and there is a change in the whole situation.

He never knows her again but he gets back his tokens of identity. As he receives back his tokens of identity he acknowledges them. They're found to him and then he acknowledges them.

Now those are the same words that we see in the previous chapter that are used as the tokens of Joseph's identity are presented to Jacob and Jacob says he's told found these things and then they're presented to him acknowledge please and he acknowledges these are the things of my son and here we see Judah the same thing happened to him. There is a disguise and then he's put in a position where he has to acknowledge what he has done. As we read this story it might remind us of again something like the story of David.

You are the man. This moment of recognition where he casts judgment but that matter in which he cast judgment he himself is implicated and maybe there's a relationship between Bathsheba the daughter of Sheba and Bathsheba. Maybe there's something going on there but might look at that in a few moments.

Or Tamar rather than the daughter of Sheba and he recognizes that he has not given her Sheila his son and that failure the goat that was not given to the person to whom it was owed then he recognizes that he was in she was in the right or she was more righteous than he. It comes to pass at the time for giving birth that behold twins were in her womb 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. 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. Afterward his brother came out who had the

scarlet thread on his hand and his name was called Zerah. Looking at this story more generally there are a lot of deep themes here.

Deep themes that connect it not just with the immediate context of the Jacob and Joseph story but the wider context of Scripture and the story of David and his family for instance. The story of the great women of the history of the Old Testament. Many of them find parallels here.

Tamar is a sort of scapegoat within this story. Just as she's about to be judged it's revealed that she is the scapegoat character and Judah recognizes acknowledges his part. There's a sense of confession.

Confession is associated with Judah's name. To confess and to praise are both playing off Judah's name. So he confesses what he has done and he realizes the meaning of his name in that time.

Then he receives back his identity. He receives back the tokens of his rule and he's established with two more children. He's lost two children.

Now he gets two children back and so as he sends, as it were, that goat to the masked woman he receives back the two sons that he has lost. There is a restoration of two sons at the end. There's a loss of two sons at the beginning.

So this chapter has again bookends to it. There is near-death of Tamar and then maybe associated with the death of Shewa and all these other events that connect with each other. And at the heart you have the negotiation between Tamar and Judah.

Now what else is taking place here? We've seen the contrast between Joseph and Judah and the way that Joseph acts in relation to Potiphar's wife and the way that Judah acts in relationship to Tamar. We've seen the contrast between Judah and his father Jacob but also the similarities. It's another goat and personal items story.

Personal items being brought forward as evidence and goats playing part in the story. There's another story of giving collateral and we'll see that coming out later on that there is collateral given in the story of Joseph at various points. Two wells and two wells associated with Dothan, two wells associated with Anani.

And that might also connect with the two children that we see Peres and Zerah at the end. Tamar almost killed. This might recall two other events where there is a rash statement made that someone should be put to death.

We see it in the story of Rachel where Jacob pursued by Laban says that the person with whom the terror theme are found should be put to death. And we see it also in the story of Benjamin when pursued by the Egyptians and trying to recover the cup of divination, Joseph's cup of divination, the brothers declare that the person whose possession it is

found will be put to death. Again we have three rash vows made concerning someone being put to death.

In the first case it's Rachel, in the second case it's Tamar and in the third case it's the son of Rachel, Benjamin. And I wonder if there's not some connection here. At the end of the Joseph story I suggested that there were connections with that Rachel story.

The tearing of Joseph connected with the terror theme and the way that the bloodied garments beneath Rachel are associated with the bloody garments presented to Jacob. And so the camels coming from Gilead, all these themes that hearken back to the story of the pursuit by Laban and the story of the terror theme. Now maybe there's something going on here again.

Jacob is put in a position by his sons and particularly by Judah. Now Judah finds himself in the same position. What will he do? Can he redeem the situation? Can he make atonement for what he has done? Can he recover the status that he has lost? Can he recover the items that he has divested himself of? Can he restore to himself these things? And that's the question that you have within this passage but then also in the story concerning Benjamin.

Will he intercede for Benjamin in a way that recovers the lost child or the near lost child of Rachel? And notice again in that story we have a similar set of themes. You have a son that is lost. Joseph is lost.

Then they go down to Egypt to get food. Simeon has to be left behind as collateral and then Jacob has lost two sons. He's lost Joseph and he's lost Simeon and he's told he must give Benjamin, the one son he does not want to give.

He's reluctant to give this Benjamin to the unknown man, the unknown man who turns out to be Joseph. And as he gives Benjamin he receives back all the sons. And so there's a similar theme playing out here in the story of chapter 38.

Two sons lost at the beginning receiving back two sons at the end as that goat is given. As that goat is given, in this case it's Judah himself bearing children with Tamar and it's taken from him in some sense. He's not really wittingly doing it but there is a restoration of all that he has lost and I think we're seeing that in the Jacob story as well.

There's a parallel. The recognize please that he tells his father Jacob is now said to him. Recognize please.

Who do these belong to? They belong to you Judah. You are the man. Will you confess? Will you own up? Will you follow your name and confess that this is yours? And as he confesses he's restored.

Everything is given back to him. There's the use of disguise. We see the use of disguise

in the story of Joseph as well.

And the story of collateral I think is important there and confession is needed in order to redeem the collateral. We see that again in the story of Joseph. The brothers are lost and then they are restored through confession.

There's a parallel between the brothers and the switching of the two children at the end. We have the story of Jacob and Esau and two twins wrestling in the womb beginning this story and now at the end we have two twins that switch in order. The one that's associated with the scarlet cord with the color red, the Esau type figure, does not in fact come out first.

It seems as if he's going to come out first but the other child makes it out before him. This is a theme of Jacob himself triumphing ultimately over his brother. And we've seen that story of the birth of Jacob played out on three occasions.

This is another occasion in which it plays out in the next generation and we'll see it play out once more in the story of Joseph. Joseph who has two sons Manasseh and Ephraim and those sons, Manasseh being the firstborn, Ephraim the secondborn, are switched in order by Jacob and so Ephraim triumphs over his brother Manasseh just as Jacob ultimately triumphed over Esau. So the red cord associated with Esau at this point.

We might also see some parallels between the story of Moab and Judah and the daughters who sleep with their father who's in a dissolute state and presumably Judah is drunk in the festivities around sheep shearing and then his daughter-in-law sleeps with him. This might recall the story of Lot and his daughters. And here we have it played out in a more redemptive tone but there's something taking place here that connects these figures and bear that in mind because later on we'll see those figures brought more closely together.

The names of the children at the end are interesting. We see Perez is the name of the child that ultimately comes out first, the one who makes the breach. As we read through the story of Jacob and the story of David we'll see this word Perez come up at key points or parats.

Parats is associated with breaking out or with breaking away or pressing, these sorts of things and it appears at key moments. So we're told that Jacob has broke forth in a multitude in Genesis chapter 30 around the time of sheep shearing when he leaves the house of Laban in that chapter. Again it's a significant thing that's taking place here.

In that chapter, in the succeeding chapter, he breaks forth into a multitude and then he breaks away from his master and father-in-law at the time of sheep shearing. Nabil in the story of David says that many men break away from their masters in 1st Samuel 25 and again that's at the time of sheep shearing that this story takes place. In 2nd Samuel

chapter 13 Absalom presses, again it's the same verb, David to go to the sheep shearing festival and then when David declines to let Amnon go.

And so what we're seeing here is this term Perez. It's being played upon. It's a significant term.

We need to pay attention to that. Jeffrey Gagin has, as I mentioned, written a significant article on some of these themes. I disagree with a number of the conclusions he makes but some of these connections are very helpful.

Jacob is the one who breaks through and then David is the one who breaks through and this name Perez I think is again it's one of those names like Esau or Edom or Laban or something like Isaac that we have a lot of word play upon. You're supposed to notice the word and see the way that that word is played upon over the history to give some sense of the significance of this character. Now there are a lot of interesting details within this chapter that I simply do not know what to make of.

I've mentioned Hiero the Adolamite. Why mention him at so many points? It just seems unnecessary. Other things like the fact he's an Adolamite.

We don't see Adolam mentioned elsewhere in scripture really apart from the cave of Adolam which is associated very strongly with David. And there are other things about this chapter that associate with David. We'll get to that in a moment.

So these details are interesting. Hiero, Hieron, the Adolamite, cave of Adolam. These are associations that maybe recall David.

I'm not sure but for some reason or other Hiero seems to have a significance within this story. Sheila we're told is conceived at Chesed. Now why mention that? Again it seems like a superfluous detail.

Is it suggested that it's associated with falsehood? Maybe. I'm not sure. Again if you have any suggestions on these please share them in the comments because I'm at a loss.

As we read through this story, the story of Tamar and Judah, it plays upon some continual themes that we find throughout scripture. The woman deceiving the serpent type figure. We see that story played out in Jail and Sisera and Rahab and the men of Jericho and Michael and Saul.

In all these different stories we see Esther and Haman. We see people being deceived by the woman. Now I wonder whether there's some sort of, a number of these figures might be associated with Esau.

We see Saul associated with Esau at particular points being deceived by Michael, his daughter. Or the character of Judah I've mentioned here is associated with Esau. He's

someone who despises his birthright and he's someone who has similar characteristics at points to Esau.

We might see it also as maybe Rahab and the men of Jericho. I'm not sure. Anyway think about some of the connections between Tamar and the other stories of women in scripture.

Think about her connections with the story of Rahab. Tamar plays the prostitute. Rahab is a prostitute in the city of Jericho.

What is Jericho known for? Jericho is the city of palms. Tamar means palm. She's rescued from being burned with fire.

The city of Jericho is burned with fire and Tamar is rescued from being burned with fire. At the end of the story we find a scarlet thread and in the story of Rahab of course there's a scarlet thread that's very prominent within the story. In the story of Rahab there's two spies that are delivered through the window and there's two and that window is associated with the scarlet thread.

There are two children that come out of the womb of Tamar. The two children that are delivered and maybe there's a connection there as well. That last one might be a stretch but some interesting connections there.

Think about the story of Ruth as well. Stuart Fleming has written some notes on this which I'll leave a link to below. Again worth paying attention to.

The story of Ruth there's two dead sons and a dead spouse. In this story there's two dead sons and a dead spouse. Bathsheba is dead.

Although there's a switching of the genders here. So it's returning to father's house and returning to mother's house. Orpah and Ruth are told to return to their mother's house and Tamar is told to just return to her father's house.

In both cases however there are faithful daughters-in-law who fulfil Eva more deliberate to restore a house that's being brought down into death. Young woman Ruth takes the place of the older woman Naomi to raise up seed. And in this one it's the different way around.

The old man Judah takes the place of the younger man Sheila to raise up seed. And in both cases it's the unlikely person who performs Eva. In both cases the children of the older generation are too young.

The children of the parents of the older generation are too young. So we're told that Naomi is not going to bear any more children and there's no point in Ruth waiting around for her children to become of age. She's not going to have another child at that point.

And even if she did Ruth would be waiting around for too long. And again we have similar themes associated with Sheila. The leveret that is fulfilled by the daughter-in-law who works to secure the future of the family.

A pledge that is given by Judah and his descendants. So Judah gives and his descendants. So we have Judah giving a pledge here of the tokens of his rule.

And Boaz gives as a token he gives seed. He gives something that's associated with the promise of seed being given. Nira Kinsman does not perform the leveret.

Onan fails to do his duty and we see again in the story of Ruth the Nira Kinsman does not perform the leveret. Lest he impair his own inheritance. Again there are Moabite themes.

Ruth is the Moabite S. She's the one who is associated with the ancestors who slept with Lot when he was not completely aware of what was taking place. And sexual relations at the time of sheep shearing. Again that sort of illicit sexual encounter at a particular agricultural festival.

It connects with the story of Boaz and Ruth. Their meeting on the threshing floor is one that's charged with sexual symbolism. Now I don't believe there's actual sexual Congress there but it's charged with sexual symbolism.

And it reminds you of the story of the mother of the Moabites going into her father Lot. And so we have a meeting of two characters here. But what the meeting of the two characters is is a descendant of Tamar and a descendant of the Moabites.

And both of those two groups of people had a judgment proclaimed upon them. One because of the illegitimate son could not enter into the congregation could not enter into full rule for ten generations. The same was true of the Moabites.

And in the book of Ruth we have the Moabites and the descendants of Tamar being brought together. And at the very end of the book of Ruth we have Tamar, her story being presented as prominent. So the very end of the book of Ruth we read, now this is the genealogy of Perez.

Or earlier on. But may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman. And then it begins with the genealogy of Perez.

Perez begot Hezron. Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Aminadab.

Aminadab begot Nashon. Nashon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz.

Boaz begot Obed. Obed begot Jesse. And Jesse begot David.

So in the line of David we have these themes playing out. These themes of the woman

who intervenes to restore the fate of a dying family. It happens in the story of Judah and it happens in the story of Ruth and Boaz.

It's a death and resurrection story. The story begins with the father and the two sons dying in a land that goes away from their heritage. We see the same thing in the story of Judah and Tamar.

The death of Ur and Onan and Bashuah. And then we have the restoration through the faithful daughter-in-law. There are other connections here.

We might think of the story of David. There's another character called Tamar in the story of David. The daughter of David.

David is a Judah type character. He's also associated with Jacob. Tamar is associated with a multicolored cloak.

She's the one other character in Scripture who wears such a coat. Obviously reminding us of Joseph. She suffers a terrible fate that has consequences for the family.

She's raped by her brother Amnon. And at the time of sheep shearing her brother Absalom kills Amnon. And again there's other themes like remaining in the house.

She remains in the house of Absalom and Absalom eventually avenges her much as Tamar remains in the house of her father. Absalom has three sons and a daughter named Tamar. Again similar themes and all these things happening at the time of sheep shearing.

What else can we see as a connection, set of connections? Perhaps the most interesting connections of all. And I simply do not know what to make of these but I'll give you some of the pieces and see if you can put them together. I have some reflections but let me throw these out there.

The story of the Day of Atonement. The story of the Day of Atonement begins in Leviticus chapter 16 with the story of the death of two sons. The death of the two sons of Aaron when they offered profane fire before the Lord.

Then it involves sending a goat by the hand of a suitable man. In the story of Genesis chapter 38 we have a goat sent by the hand of a suitable man. We have mourning.

This is a day of deep mourning and distress and afflicting yourself. And the story of Judah is a story that's just marked by mourning, by death. Death afflicting this house and the house descending into the depths.

The depths of the grave. All these children dying and then also Judah losing all the signs of his rule. He's losing his status.

Judah having to be divested of his vestments. He's not wearing his glorious vestments anymore. He's not wearing signs of his rule.

In the same way the high priest wears linen garments. He didn't have the garments of gold on the Day of Atonement. He didn't use those for the Atonement ritual.

There are twin goats and these goats according to Jewish tradition going back a long way are distinguished by the fact that one of them has a scarlet cord on it. You'll see that in the painting by William Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat*. The goat has scarlet cord wrapped around its horns.

And the point is to distinguish these two goats that look very similar from each other. One of them has to be distinguished from the other and they're distinguished using scarlet cord. As we read through the story of Genesis I've suggested before that there are points where we'll see parallels with the ritual of the Day of Atonement.

There are two sons sent out in Genesis chapter 21 and 22. There's the one that's brought up and offered as a an offering to God. And the chapter beforehand there's the child that's sent out, the kid that's sent out by the hand of Hagar into the wilderness.

And so you have these two sons and the fate of these two sons which involves their fate is entwined. And it's the fate of the house of Abraham that's playing out in both of these stories. Elsewhere we see it in the story of the two goats, the two kids that are used to set up the deception of Isaac, to set up that event.

There's the goat using the stew, covering him with the skin of the goat. And then in that story there are two sons. One sent away from the fat of the land and the other goes to the site of Bethel, the site where he lays down his head and that becomes the site of an altar as it were.

It's the site where God, the ladder ascends and descends. And so I think we're seeing the ritual of the Day of Atonement being alluded to here. Tamar we're told she's going to be burnt.

Again that might recall some sort of burning the sacrificial themes. And the emphasis on the Day of Atonement is confession. Confession leading to restoration, restoring the nation in its true state, covering it once again.

It receives the tokens of its rule and authority, these statements, these tokens of rule and they receive them back and their sin is forgiven and they're restored. And I think we're seeing something very similar play out in the story of Genesis 38. There's a transition.

There's a transition from Judah being defined by his unfaithfulness, by this goat that he has, this child that he's wronged, this kid that Joseph that's represented by the goat, the

blood that's put upon the tunic that's presented to the father and now we see him giving back the kid and that's associated with his own house. His own house suffers a similar fate to the fate of his father's house and he has to set things right. And there is a sort of unwitting atonement ritual being played out here.

There's the goat sent by the hand of a suitable person, Hierotheodolomite, into the wilderness, sent to Tamar to provide some sort of recompense for what he has failed to do and at that point then he can be restored and at that point he confesses his sin and in his confession of his sin, the Yadad, this confession of his sin and the way that that plays off the meaning of his name Judah, we see him fulfilling his identity and being restored to who he truly is. I believe then that this chapter really belongs in its place. It helps us to understand so many of the themes that are playing out.

It helps us to, it connects with the theme of the rash statement about the person being put to death. It connects with the theme of goats and coats, of deception and disguise. It connects with the themes of tokens of identity being presented as evidence.

It connects with the theme of the woman deceiving the serpent figure or the unfaithful figure. It connects with the themes of Esau and Jacob. It connects with the themes of the house of David and the destiny of the tribe of Judah and in all these different ways and many others it shows the fact that in the story of Judah at this point we are seeing a deeper insight into everything that's going on in Genesis.

We're seeing a deeper insight into how Joseph is as a character juxtaposed with this character Judah in his unfaithfulness. We're seeing the way in which their stories play out in a redemptive way for both of them so that at the very end of the book Judah will be spoken of very positively as one who has a similar status to that of Joseph and indeed in chapter 5 of the book of 1st Chronicles we see that we are told now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel he was indeed the firstborn but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright yet Judah prevailed over his brothers and from him came a ruler although the birthright was Joseph's and so we're seeing the two tribes their identities and their destinies being played out in the very early stages and at the end of this book we'll see that Judah is the one the brothers will bow to and that of course connects with the story of Joseph. Now there is so much here that I've brought out that I haven't fully put together the pieces of particularly the connections with the Day of Atonement where there are several connections but it's just hard to see how they all fit together.

If you have any suggestions on this or anything else please leave it in the comments I'd love to hear your thoughts. Thank you very much for listening. Lord willing I'll be back again tomorrow with some thoughts on chapter 39 and the story of Joseph in the house of Potiphar and Potiphar's wife.

If you have any questions leave them on my QRushCat account. If you'd like to support this and other videos like it please do so using my Patreon or PayPal accounts. God bless and thank you for listening.