

The Separation of Judah

Genesis 38:1-30

I. THE SEPARATING OF JUDAH (Genesis 38:1)

A. The Timing in the Separation (Genesis 38:1)

1. *“It came to pass at that time...” (Genesis 38:1).* What time? What we just read in chapter 37.
2. The time refers to the things that occurred in chapter 37, the meanness of the brothers to Joseph, the subsequent selling into Egypt and Joseph’s coming to live in Potiphar’s house (approximately 15 years) (Genesis 37:36).
3. While Joseph was standing strong in Potiphar’s house, and later in the prison, Judah was floundering in bad behaviour in the homeland. The contrast of Judah’s behaviour in chapter 38 with that of Joseph’s in chapter 39 is pronounced. One yielded to immorality while the other spurned it.

B. The Cause of the Separation (Genesis 38:1)

1. *“Judah went down from his brethren...” (Genesis 38:1).*
2. We are left to surmise as to why Judah left the presence of his brethren.
 - a. It could be that the brothers had other disagreements amongst one another.
 - b. It could be that Judah did not agree with the idea of wanting to kill Joseph.
 - c. Or, it could have been some other entirely separate event. Whatever the case may be...
3. We do know this; sin does not foster good relationships. The brothers were cruel and dishonest in the way they treated Joseph. It is well known that cruelty will not stop with one person. It was in these brothers’ character, and they would be this way with each other (Proverbs 11:17; 12:10).

C. The Companion in the Separation (Genesis 38:1)

1. *“Turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.” (Genesis 38:1).*
2. Judah makes a friend and companion soon after he moved away from his brothers. This friend was quite subservient to Judah (see Genesis 38:20). It would seem that this friend didn’t have any kind of wholesome influence upon Judah. Canaanite (worldly) friends rarely do, they will not encourage

you in the spiritual things of this life. The friends we choose can either help us or hurt us.

D. The Country of the Separation (Genesis 38:1)

1. *“Adullamite.” (Genesis 38:1)* – The fact that Judah picked up a friend referred to as *“a certain Adullamite”* lets us know that he was in the vicinity of Adullam which is situated northwest of Hebron¹. This area would later become part of the land that would be given to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:20-21, 35).
2. Adullam would later become famous in the time of David as he would flee to a cave there when pursued by Saul (1 Samuel 22:1, 2), it would also be a stronghold for David while fighting the Philistines (2 Samuel 23:13).

II. THE SONS OF JUDAH (Genesis 38:2-11)

A. The Mother of the Sons (Genesis 38:2-6)

1. A forbidden marriage – *“Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her” (Genesis 38:2).*
 - a. The word Canaanite makes this wife a bad one. Canaanite wives were forbidden for God’s people, just as unbelievers are forbidden for believers in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 6:14).
 - b. Many over the years have disregarded this above warning, but it has almost always been to their hurt and shame.
2. A fruitful mother – *“She conceived, and bare” (Genesis 38:3)* a total of three sons. Judah names the first son (Genesis 38:3) but she will name the second and third son (Genesis 38:4, 5).

B. The Wickedness of the Sons (Genesis 38:7-10) – The first two sons of Jacob were very wicked men. The third son, Shelah was apparently of different character.

1. The details of the wickedness – *Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked... Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother (Genesis 38:7, 9).*
 - a. Er’s sin is not detailed, but Onan’s is. Onan had been commanded to raise up seed for his brother’s name via Er’s wife, Tamar (a practice that would later be incorporated into the law of Moses – Deuteronomy 25:5-6).
 - b. Onan refused. His method of refusal was by letting it spill upon the ground, thereby, refusing to fulfill his responsibility (Genesis 38:7, 10).
2. The discerning of the wickedness
 - a. It was *“wicked in the sight of the LORD” (Genesis 38:7).*

¹ See Appendix 2, pg. vi.

- b. One thing we see from this statement in vs. 7 is that God saw this sin and counted it as sin. You cannot hide your sin from God (Proverbs 15:3; Zechariah 4:10).
 3. The defining of the wickedness – *Wicked in the sight of the LORD*” (Genesis 38:7). This phrase, “*in the sight of,*” also means that in God’s view the deed was evil. God defines what sin is, not society or culture.
 4. The displeasing by the wickedness – “*The thing which he did displeased the LORD*” (Genesis 38:10). It goes without saying that sin displeases God. Who are you striving to please? – Note: Sin separates (Isaiah 59:2).
 5. The death for the wickedness – “*The LORD slew him... wherefore he slew him also*” (Genesis 38:7, 10). We now have two boys dead because of their sinful wickedness. This says something about the seriousness of their sin. God does not look lightly upon the wickedness of this world or his people. “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23), and if you escape eternity in hell it is only by the Divine grace of God which provided His son Jesus Christ as Saviour.
- C. The Widow of the Sons (Genesis 38:11) – “*Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father’s house.*” (Genesis 38:11).
1. The promise for the widow – “*Remain a widow at thy father’s house, till Shelah my son be grown*” (Genesis 38:11).
 - a. Judah made a promise to Tamar to give her Shelah when he was grown.
 - b. Tamar kept her part of the promise by going to her father’s house as instructed.
 2. The prominence of the widow – Tamar would get a son, but it would not be by Shelah, but through Judah, as we will see later. This will give Tamar a prominent place later in the genealogy of Christ in the book of Matthew (Matthew 1:2, 3).

III. THE SHAME OF JUDAH (Genesis 38:12-26)

- A. The Environment for the Shame (Genesis 38:12) – Note: Judah experiences a set of events that weakened his resistance to the evil deed that he would commit. When one’s character is already weak circumstances can and will cause one to compromise one’s standards and convictions
1. The sorrow in the environment – “*In the process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah’s wife died.*” (Genesis 38:12). Sorrow is a circumstance that can weaken one’s resistance to evil. Satan knows when to attack, and when one is down due to sorrow or misfortune it is during these time that one is more vulnerable to temptation than at other times.
 2. The sheepshearing in the environment – “*Judah... went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath,² he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite*” (Genesis 38:12).

² See Appendix 2, pg. vi.

B. The Enticement for the Shame (Genesis 38:14, 16)

1. The aggravation for the enticement – *“For she [Tamar] saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife” (Genesis 38:14).*
2. The apparel for the enticement – *“And she put her widow’s garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself” (Genesis 38:14).*
 - a. She disguised her identity and dressed in the attire of a harlot (Proverbs 7:10).
 - b. From this Tamar was able to snare Judah into immorality.
3. The area in the enticement – She *“sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath” (Genesis 38:14).*
 - a. Tamar had to be seen by Judah, therefore, she placed herself in a spot that was easy to view.
 - b. Judah would not have fallen had he been circumspect and careful of what his eyes pondered. Evil is all around us. Satan will see to it that evil confronts us daily. Therefore, we must place guards on our eyes, our hands, our feet, our thoughts, etc. If not, we will be defeated in this battle (Job 31:1; Psalm 119:37; Proverbs 4:23-27; 1 John 2:16).
4. The willingness to the enticement – *“When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot... he turned unto her... and said, Go to, I pray thee, Let me come in unto thee” (Genesis 38:15, 16).* The quickness of Judah’s yielding to this enticement shows his character. It didn’t take much for Judah to yield to the flesh.

C. The Exposing of the Shame (Genesis 38:24-26)

1. The prediction of the exposure – That Judah’s sin would be exposed is predicted in scripture time and time again. Take for instance Numbers 32:23, *“Be sure your sin will find you out.”* While this comes later in history, the truth remains. You cannot conceal sin; it will be revealed sooner or later.
2. The child in the exposure (Genesis 38:24a)
3. The punishment for the exposure – *“Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt” (Genesis 38:24b)*
 - a. The hypocrisy of Judah is high in this instance. He insists that she should be punished for her wrongful act, all the while knowing that he had done the same thing.
 - b. Hypocrisy is no help in covering one’s sin.
4. The presentation for the exposure – *“By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff” (Genesis 38:25).*
5. The product of the exposure – *“Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more” (Genesis 38:27).*
 - a. This part is very important in the story, as it shows Judah’s repentance of the evil deed.
 - b. True repentance does not look for excuses nor does it blame others for one’s wrongdoing. True repentance forsakes sin.

IV. THE SUCCESSOR OF JUDAH (Genesis 38:27-30)

A. The Birth of the Successor (Genesis 38:27-29)

1. The bearing of two – Twins were carried by Tamar (Genesis 38:27)
2. The branding of one – One put forth his hand first in the process and was marked by the midwife with a scarlet thread (Genesis 38:28)
3. The breaching of one – *“As he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? This breach be upon thee: Therefore his name was called Pharez”* (Genesis 38:29).

B. The Benefactor in the Successor (Genesis 38:29-30)

1. The birthright inherited – Pharez being the first-born son of Judah, inherited the birthright which means from his seed would come the promised Messiah.
2. The benefactor’s placement – In the line of Christ
 - a. This is found in the genealogies in both Matthew and Luke (Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33).
 - b. This fact explains why this record of Judah is found in Scripture—it speaks of the line of Christ. Sometimes a passage such as this may seem out of place or strange, however, we know that the true author (the Holy Spirit—God) makes no mistakes.
 - c. Such passages will be found to be of great value because they speak on and focus on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.