

# The Story of Joseph

## *The Lion Swallows His Pride*

Part 13 – May 6, 2012

In Sunday school, children learn about David and *Goliath*, but not so much about David and *Bathsheba*. A boy battling a giant: appropriate! A man battling sexual temptation: uh, not so much. But the Bible isn't a *children's* book. David conquers a giant *and* is conquered *by* adultery. He not only gets the gal pregnant, he has her soldier-husband abandoned in battle to cover his tracks. Victory stories inspire; but stories of sin and shame and loss resonate *deeply* because we can see how God *really* feels about us.



After Joseph is sold into slavery, his brother Judah forsakes his faith and family, and flees to Adullam for about 21 years. Now, Adullam was known for its many caves and caverns. Remember when David and his might men were hiding from the murderous King Saul? Flash-forward 863 years: to Judah's great(x7)grandson, David.



David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household hear about it, they went down to him there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him. – *1 Samuel 22:1-2 NIV*

David may have been fond of Adullam because it sits in the Valley of Elah, where he fought Goliath 10 years earlier. (1 Sam 17:2) But *that's* a victory story. When we left off, 863 years earlier ...



Judah had traded his seal and staff (both inscribed with God's sacred name enveloping praise), for sex with a woman who looked like a shrine prostitute, but was actually Tamar, his daughter-in-law he claimed was cursed, tricking him into fulfilling his levirate obligation of providing her with a son. Her ensuing pregnancy annoyingly discredits his accusation and, like David, he decides to kill to cover his sin.

About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant." Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!" – *Genesis 38:24 NIV*

Judah condemns Tamar for the very sin *he* committed. Why is it *so easy* to recognize and rebuke sin when we see it in others? 888 years later, Judah's great(x7)grandson David reacts the same way, when *his* sin is described and attributed to another man.

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, **[the prophet who told him the story]** "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!" – *2 Samuel 12:5 NIV*

Flashback to Judah's fire: preparations are made, the stake driven into the ground, an eager crowd is gathering. Hirah is probably piling on the wood, "This bonfire is gonna totally rock!"

As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. [She *could've* made quite a scene, "Look! These are his! The Sacred Name of *his* God enveloping praise is inscribed on 'em! Who else in all Adullam would have *that* name?! He thought I was a *prostitute!* [Believe it or not, the Canaanites *condemned* prostitution except for "sacred" purposes] He gave 'em as a pledge and tried to redeem 'em with a goat! He's a liar, a hypocrite, and a fool! His sons were wicked because of him, and died because he's under the curse of his own God, whose sacred name he trades for whoredom! I only did what was legal and moral and necessary!" She *could've* gone public, but instead, she sends them privately with a message:] "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. – *Genesis 38:25a NIV*

What she does is noble, honorable ... and *so* risky! Sister's playin' with fire! She's handing the evidence over to a hypocrite who has vilified and betrayed and condemned her. One of two things happens when we see our sinfulness in contrast to God's holiness. Flash-forward 888 years: to when Judah's great(x7)grandson, David, unknowingly denounces his own sin.

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" – *2 Samuel 12:7a NIV*

Either, your heart will harden defensively, against God's divine right to rule and reign over your life. Or ... It'll soften submissively as you sense a desperate desire for His love, grace, forgiveness, redemption, and intimacy.

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin." – *2 Samuel 12:13a NIV*

Why is our confession *so* reluctant when forgiveness is *so* ready? God is *waiting* to spring forgiveness on repentant hearts. Grace is the big surprise of the Bible. Again and again, God meets our sin with grace, and guides us into grateful obedience. Flashback 888 years to Tamar's message, and just watch God work!

And she added, "See if you recognize [literally, in Hebrew, "Examine please"; transliterated as "Nakar na'"] whose seal and cord and staff these are." – *Genesis 38:25 NIV*

Tamar happens to add the very words used when the brothers deceived Jacob 20 years earlier ...

They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see ["Examine please", "Nakar na'"] whether it is your son's robe." – *Genesis 37:32 NIV*

With the words of his own deception echoing in his head, his heart racing, the hair on his neck rising, everything seeming to happen in slow motion, Judah inspects the inscription.

**Tamar:** "See if you recognize *whose* these are. Nakar na the Sacred Name." **God:** "Judah, whose name do you bear? Do you know who I Am? Have you run so far, and sunk so low, that you refuse to see the grace and the gift I offer you, even now?"

Judah recognized them ... [Never was more said with less! His seal of authority and staff of identity, both emblazoned with the Sacred-Name-enveloping-praise (that he's denied God for 20 years), now reflecting the flickering flames of the hellish fire he has spitefully, unwittingly prepared ... for his *own unborn child!*] – *Genesis 38:26a NIV*

We'll never know the thoughts that raced through Judah's mind in that moment. But we can venture a decent guess!

**Judah:** “I am so unclean ... so ashamed ... I’ve betrayed my brother, deceived my father, abandoned my faith and family, destroyed my sons, and slandered and deprived Tamar ... I’ve given your Sacred Name to a whore ... who turns out to be a blameless woman, forced to fool her father-in-law into doing what’s right ... and even as she faces this fire, she sends your Sacred Name to me, quietly and virtuously ... treating me with respect I don’t deserve, even as I refuse her the respect she’s ...”

**Hirah:** “Dude! You found your stuff! That’s awesome. And we still got the goat! That’ll come in hand, eh? ... What? What’d I miss? I missed somethin’. What’s goin’ on?”

... and [Judah] said, “She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn’t give her to my son Shelah.” – *Genesis 38:26b NIV*

He doesn’t say, “You are more righteous”, because he’s *not* speaking to Tamar. He says, “She is more righteous”, because he’s publicly declaring! He’s declaring that he defrauded Tamar and willfully broke the law of levirate marriage. He’s announcing that his accusations against Tamar are baseless, that she has been faithful to his family, and that he has sinned not only against Tamar, but against his own first-born son, (by denying him an heir). He’s affirming that he’s the father of Tamar’s baby; he’s admitting that he uses prostitutes, that his indignation is hypocrisy; that his faith is hollow; and that he himself is the one who deserves the punishment he had prepared for Tamar. And as wonderful as all that was, Tamar isn’t *attracted* to him.

And he did not sleep with her again. – *Genesis 38:26c NIV*

Even though she’s legally his wife (by levirate marriage), he forever treats her with nobleness, kindness, and tenderness. The next time we see Judah after chapter 38, he has returned to his flawed family, the famine has hit, and he’s taking charge! In Judah’s absence, Jacob seems to have grown suspicious of the sin his sons committed. Classical rabbinical sources teach that he presumed Judah was the guiltiest, because he ran away. On the first food run to Egypt, Jacob sent all ten sons ...

But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. – *Genesis 42:4 NIV*

And when Joseph demands that they bring Benjamin on the second food run, Jacob seems to think it’s another deception.

Israel [Jacob] asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?” [“Why would the dark lord of Egypt demand to see your little brother? I’m not stupid.”] – *Genesis 43:6 NIV*

And #1 son (Reuben) argues as if Jacob has already accused them of planning to put Benjamin to death as they had Joseph.

Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.” But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.” [He says “you will” instead of “it will”] – *Genesis 42:37-38 NIV*

Chapter 38 shows the 20-year melting of Judah’s hardened heart, and prepares us for the transformed Judah of chapters 43 and 44. It’s like when Scrooge wakes up to discover it’s Christmas, and it’s not too late, and he’s still got time to make things right!

Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.” – *Genesis 43:8-9 NIV*



The fact that Jacob entrusts Benjamin to *Judah* speaks volumes about Judah’s undeniably profound transformation. His confidence and faith and courage instantly make him the family’s de facto leader.

Joseph was still in the house when *Judah and his brothers* came in ... [Nowhere does it say “Dan and his brothers” or “Naphtali” [NAF-tuh-ligh] who? My point *exactly*] – *Genesis 44:14 NIV*

But Judah’s shining moment comes when the dark lord of Egypt [“Psst, it’s me, Joseph!”] orders Benjamin to remain behind. And the once *cowardly* lion suddenly finds his roarer!

“Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!’ Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, [It was Judah’s idea to sell Joseph into slavery; now he demands to be enslaved in place of his father’s favorite] and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.” [This is so unexpected and so surprisingly sincere that it absolutely wrecks Joseph without warning] Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” [It was Judah’s arrogance, cowardice, and selfishness that once “doomed” Joseph; now his humility, courage, and selflessness is about to “resurrect” him!] So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. – *Genesis 44:32 - 45:1 NIV*

Since the creation of mankind, there have been a few OT moments that are rated the most arresting, the most amazing, the most awe-inspiring. Well ... *this one* leaves ‘em all behind! What a testament to God’s grace, freely given to all who soften their hearts, confess their sin, and repent. The lion who preyed on his brother, turned on his faith, and ran from his family, has repented, returned, and will stray no more. Flash-forward to Jacob’s deathbed blessing ...

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son.” – *Genesis 49:8-9 NIV*

And the lion became the lineage of the Messiah, and the namesake of God’s people; Jew is short for Judean (from Judah’s tribe). Flash-forward 845 years, to when Saul has died and Judah’s great (x7)grandson, David has settled in Judah’s old home in Hebron.

Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. [And years later ...] All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “We are your own flesh and blood.” – *2 Samuel 2:4a, 5:1 NIV*

And together they conquered Jerusalem, and David established his throne, and had a daughter, who he named ... Tamar. And God had one last big surprise for Judah before chapter 38 is done; but this is where we have to close His story for today.