

The Story of Joseph

The Lion's Tale

Part 14 - May 20, 2012



At the tail end of Joseph's story, his brother Judah is described as a *lion*. Today we finish chapter 38, the tale of the lion. Ever wonder why Jesus is the Lion of *Judah* instead of Joseph; or why God's chosen people were chosen in the first place?

Were they especially wise or strong or holy or beloved? Not from what we see in these *stories!* Paul gives us *God's* criteria in choosing:

But *God chose the foolish things* of the world to shame the wise; *God chose the weak things* of the world to shame the strong. *He chose the lowly things* of this world [Not the lofty; Jesus was born in the lowly manger not the loft] and the *despised things* — and the *things that are not* — to nullify the things that are, [Why?] so that no one may boast before him. [Pride must be surrendered] It is because of *him* that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our *righteousness, holiness* and *redemption*. — 1 Corinthians 1:27-30 NIV

God's power to redeem is only experienced in humility and best displayed against a backdrop of human weakness. That's why God said to Paul, "My power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9) The chosen people were chosen because they were *foolish, weak, lowly, and despised; and* God knew they would choose to surrender their pride, when benevolently broken, and repent.

THAT'S what we see in these stories! *That's* the tale of the lion!

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through *endurance* and the *encouragement* of the Scriptures we might have hope. — Romans 15:4 NIV

Judah was chosen to give *us* hope! "I'm no Joseph; but, *you worked through Judah?!* Wow. Maybe I *do* have a shot!" When we left off, *Judah* was publically surrendering his pride, and courageously confessing his sin. He was *benevolently broken* with the alarming realization that he's about to burn his own unborn child, along with *Tamar*, at the stake! He'd been handed the seal and staff he traded for sex (unaware he was being tricked to fulfill his moral obligation of levirate marriage). And in the inscription he sees God's name in his name. And 20 years of running from guilt and shame suddenly end.

Judah recognized them and said, "[*Tamar*] is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son *Shelah*." ["And what happened then? Well in *Hebron* they say, that ol' *Judah's* small heart grew three sizes that day!"] And he did not sleep with her again. — Genesis 38:26 NIV

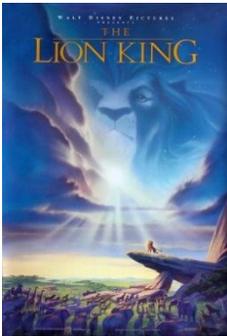


Remember how his wicked son, Onan, repeatedly made Tamar sleep with him, but refused to get her pregnant? This is a contrast. Judah gets her pregnant and doesn't make her sleep with him again. The tale of the lion ends with pride being conquered, redemption being found, and restoration taking place.

Remember the two sons Judah lost to wickedness?

When the time came for [Tamar] to give birth, there were *twin boys* in her womb. [A double blessing] – Genesis 38:27 NIV

Tamar not only gets an heir to her deceased husband's birthright, she suddenly has *two* sons to care for her. And Judah has a fresh start, with his own rebirth, and now the birth of two new sons. God is already undoing what so much sin has done.



Have you seen *The Lion King*? Simba sins and runs away and lives a self-absorbed, *hakuna-matata* life. His guilt and shame prevent him from going home, until he's confronted by the image of his father in his own reflection. His father's spirit tells him he's forgotten who he is, and he needs to lead his family. So, he returns, repents, and conquers his Uncle Scar, the false ruler of the Pride Lands; and at the end, he's presented with his newborn cub. I think someone at Disney's been readin' chapter 38!

There's always an "Uncle Scar" trying to rule the "Pride Lands".



Remember when Judah's grandma Rebekah was pregnant with his dad, Jacob, and his Uncle Esau? Flashback 127 years ...

The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." – Genesis 25:23 NIV

Here again, we see God choosing the weaker, lowlier brother, Jacob. But Judah rejected the faith of his father, Jacob, and was heading down the "Pride Land" path of his Uncle Esau.



Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself ... "I will kill my brother Jacob." [We could easily replace "Esau" with "Judah" and "Jacob" with "Joseph"] – Genesis 27:41 NIV

And like Uncle Esau, Judah marries a Canaanite. Uncle Esau was nicknamed "Edom" which means "Red" because he stupidly sold his birthright for a bowl of red stew. (Gen 25:30)

He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau [Uncle Red] despised his birthright. – Genesis 25:34 NIV

Like Uncle Red, Judah despised *his* birthright, by trading the Sacred Name he was given at birth for a worthless indulgence. There comes a point when we place so little value on what God has given us, like grace and mercy, that we actually *despise* them. The huge difference between Judah and Uncle Red is that when God's redemptive call of deliverance came, Uncle Red retreated, but Judah broke through, boldly surrendered, and chose God!

And he became the leader of his brothers, and eventually became one of the two nations that were at war in grandma Rebekah's womb. Flash-forward to a genealogy in First Chronicles ...

... Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him ... [King David] – 1
Chronicles 5:2b NIV

Uncle Red became the Nation of Red/Edom; his people were called Redites/Edomites. (Gen 36:43)



Ancient city of Petra

They reigned in the "Pride Lands" near Judah. And the book of Obadiah is a prophetic warning to them. Flash-forward 2,675 years ...

"The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?'" – *Obadiah 1:3 NIV*

God can ... and did. They were destroyed because of their pride. And do you know who the most famous Edomite was? King Herod, the one who tried to kill the Lion of Judah when Jesus was just a cub. Something's got to go: my pride or my Savior. I will ultimately despise one and esteem the other. We choose God by dying to pride.

Now, flashback to the birth of Judah's sons, who, because of the levirate marriage, will be considered the sons of Judah's eldest son, Er ... which makes Judah *both* their father *and* grandfather! And they're not only *brothers* ... they're each other's *uncles*!

Along with restoration, God gives Judah a little reminder ...

As [Tamar] was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." [They marked a firstborn twin to make sure he got his birthright, which in this case is the line of the Messiah. C'mon, deliverance is at hand! The birthright is yours! Don't retreat!] But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named *Perez*. ["breaking through"] – *Genesis 38:28-29 NIV*

If you want to take hold of the promises of God, you can't just raise your hand and retreat. You need to boldly break through! Flash-forward: to Perez's great(x4) grandson, Boaz, as he receives a blessing from the elders before marrying Ruth.

"Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." – *Ruth 4:12 NIV*

Do you know why this blessing of Tamar is so significant to Boaz? The woman he's marrying, Ruth, is a gentile. And his mother, Rahab, *was* a gentile prostitute. And his great(x5) grandma Tamar was a gentile who pretended to be a prostitute.

And of the four women Mathew lists in Jesus' lineage, these are three! The fourth is Bathsheba, the woman who has an affair with Boaz's great grandson, David! *You getting' all this?!*

But this is why we can come so boldly before God's throne! The Lion of Judah isn't just the friend of sinners, we're family!

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. — *Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV*

This is where the tale of the lion leads to and ends up: at the “**throne**” of “**grace**”, all power and authority, compassion and mercy, perfect sovereignty, perfect sympathy.

Imagine actually approaching that throne. I picture myself more like the Cowardly Lion approaching the Wizard! Until I see that Jesus is holding the staff that Judah traded. (Gen 49:10)

This struck me the deepest of everything in chapter 38: that Jesus *wants* Judah's staff in that throne room. “That is so me! My Sacred Name traded for sin and then used for redemption. This *has* to be my royal scepter. It's *perfect!*”

Okay, go back to the birth of Judah's sons. Look at this incredible, scarlet-thread reminder that God gives to Judah.

Then his brother, who had the *scarlet* thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah. **["Scarlet"]** — *Genesis 38:30 NIV*

Another twin birth, where the younger overtakes the older; and the one who retreats and forfeits his birthright is named *Scarlet*, and he's not only a brother, he's an uncle!

God gave Judah his own little Uncle Red!

It's just a reminder that there'll *always* be two paths, and we must choose to surrender again and again and again, and there's just no such thing as a sin beyond God's redemptive reach.

And this is where we have to close God's story for today.