

Genesis Chapter 37-38 – John Karmelich

1. Today we begin Genesis Part 3. This whole section can be called “Redemption”.
 - a) Many people divide Genesis into 3 major sections:
 - i) The first is from Adam to the birth of Abraham.
 - ii) The second is from Abraham to the events of Joseph’s life.
 - iii) The third Joseph life’s and death.
 - iv) Genesis contains a few more things that ☺, but if you were dividing Genesis into a time line, these are the 3 major sections.
 - b) For those of you who have been with me since Genesis 1:1, my gratitude that you are still here. You can mark the time by now saying you’ve made it “2/3’s” through Genesis and there is one third to go.
2. One of the challenges of teaching Genesis is deciding what specific topic to focus upon.
 - a) As lengthy and detailed as these studies are, one can go into far more detail.
 - i) For example, you can teach Genesis as a book of prophecy (predictions).
 - ii) You can also teach Genesis as a book on psychology by studying all the different personality types.
 - iii) You can teach Genesis as a book on science, especially in the early chapters.
 - b) I made a conscious decision prior to the first Genesis lesson to focus on “personal application” to a follower of Jesus Christ. I nicknamed these lessons “Why Genesis?” My primary focus is on how these stories apply to our lives today as Christian believers.
 - c) I stated that because one can do a detailed study of Joseph as a “model” of Jesus.
 - i) Part of understanding prophecy (bible predictions) is that prophecy is predominately “word-pictures”.
 - ii) There are parts of the bible that are blunt predictions, but the large “bulk” of bible prediction are simply “word-pictures” being painted that are somehow predictive of future events. Many of these tie to Jesus himself.
 - iii) When you read through the New Testament, you often read how when Jesus did something, it “fulfilled the Scriptures”. When you go back and study that particular Old Testament Scripture, it often a “word-picture” as opposed to a blunt prediction.
 - iv) There is a classical Christian expression that goes something like, “The Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament and the New Testament is expanded upon in the Old Testament. All 66 books are designed to be read as a single message system.
 - v) I state this here because again, you can do a great study of Joseph as a model of Jesus. I remember the first time I read the story of Joseph as a born-again Christian, and I was actually “giddy” noticing all the prophetic aspects of Joseph. I remember thinking, “Every paragraph about Joseph is also about Jesus”!
 - a) Remember that the book of Revelation teaches, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev 19:10b, NIV)
 - d) As we go through the story of Joseph, I probably point out a “prophecy or two” ☺, but I want the main focus to be on personal application: That is, “What does this story have to do with my life, here and now?”
 - i) I take the view those that read these studies are Christians.
 - ii) There are lots of good bible studies out there designed to teach nonbelievers about Jesus. This study is primarily designed for those who do believe in Jesus and want to grow in their faith and knowledge as a believer. Thus, I focus on the personal application of these studies.
 - e) Now that I’ve got my disclaimers out of the way, I can focus on Joseph. ☺

3. The story of Joseph is probably one of the most famous in the entire bible.
 - a) It is the story of a boy, hated by brothers, sold into slavery and this boy ends up being the #2 man of the largest world empire of that day (Egypt). His brothers eventually have to visit Joseph to buy food and don't recognize him. When they come to Joseph a second time, Joseph reveals who he is, and the rest of the family comes to live with Joseph in Egypt and they all live happily ever after. ☺
 - b) There, I've just summarized Joseph in 3 sentences. We're done for today. ☺
 - c) The story itself is considered "classical literature". It is almost a shame to comment upon it as it ruins the beauty of the story itself. If you are not familiar with the story of Joseph, I encourage you to read it through sometime without this or any other commentary.
 - d) The story of Joseph is a great visual tale. It makes a great movie or play. I have seen several wonderful productions of Joseph have that have been done in my lifetime.
4. If I had to pick one line to memorize of anything said by Joseph, it would be as follows:
 - a) You (Joseph's brothers) intended to harm me (Joseph), but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (Genesis 50:20 NIV)
 - i) This verse is six-verses from the end of Genesis.
 - ii) It is probably one of the most important verses in all of Genesis.
 - iii) Most of Joseph's life was a series of tragedies and suffering. Yet Joseph's attitude in the end is summarized in Genesis 50:20.
 - iv) Joseph looked back at his life and realized that everything that happened to him was for a reason. God allowed him to go through tremendous suffering for a particular reason.
 - a) Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. That got Joseph to Egypt.
 - b) Joseph was sold to an army captain. He eventually became head of the household. This taught Joseph leadership skills.
 - c) Joseph was put in jail for years on a false accusation. That gave Joseph the "toughness" to eventually be the ruler of all of Egypt.
 - d) Joseph's gift of interpreting dreams got him a trip out of prison to see the Pharaoh himself. The successful interpretation got Joseph the promotion to be the #2 man under Pharaoh himself.
 - e) With that in mind, now read Genesis 50:20 again.
 - b) Here's the personal application, which starts with one of the most famous New Testament verses in the bible:
 - i) "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28 NIV)
 - ii) Remember, "All means all, and that is all, "all" means"!
 - iii) This means that everything that happens in the life of a Christian believer has a purpose, period. Every circumstance, every event, every victory, every tragedy is "God-filtered" for a purpose.
 - a) The ultimate purpose is for God to be gloried by your life.
 - b) Sometimes God allows "negative events" to happen over and over again as God is trying to teach you some sort of lesson.
 - c) Sometimes God allows tragedies and death to occur to make you a better person, or often so you can "relate" as you help someone else going through the same tragedy.
 - iv) We may not fully understand everything that happens to us, but God does. The one thing I know for sure is that all the events of our lives, like Joseph's, is "God-filtered". Nothing that happens to us does not happen for a reason. Once you understand that, once you understand Romans 8:28, once you understand that Joseph is a model of a "God-filtered" life, the pain of life is now more bearable.
 - v) In tough times, remember the prayer, "Lord, let not these lessons be wasted".

5. Before we tackle Verse 1, you have to remember there are two “big theme’s” being worked on over the remainder of Genesis:
- a) The “Nation of Israel” is being born. Remember that Genesis is a book of “beginning”. Much of Genesis leads up to the birth of the Nation of Israel. The purpose of the nation of Israel is to be “God’s witnesses” to the world and to bring in the Messiah.
 - i) The “line of the Messiah”, which started with Adam, and through Abraham, will now continue and go through Judah. That is why Chapter 38 is necessary.
 - ii) Chapter 38 is the only chapter in the remainder of Genesis that does not Joseph as the center focus, other than some moments that still focus on Joseph’s father Jacob.
 - iii) The purpose of Chapter 38 is to show that the line of the Messiah is carried on, despite some horrible sins committed by Judah. God’s promise of the Messiah, first told to Adam, and more so to Abraham, is an unconditional promise. Therefore, no matter how bad the sins of Chapter 38, the Messiah will come.
 - b) One also has to remember something else told to Abraham:
 - i) Then the LORD said to him (Abraham), "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. (Genesis 15:13-14 NIV)
 - ii) Abraham was the great grandfather of Joseph.
 - iii) I am certain Abraham told this 400-year prediction to Isaac, who then told Jacob. Although it is not stated in the text of Genesis, I believe that when Jacob and his family went to go visit Joseph in Egypt, Jacob knew “This was it, this was the start of the 400 year period”. Further, God spoke to Jacob near the end of his life and told him essentially, “Don’t be afraid to go to Egypt, I’m making you a great nation down there”. (Ref.: Genesis 46:2-4)
 - iv) Which gets back to the theme of everything in life being “God filtered.”
 - a) All the events we are going to read about Joseph are “God filtered”.
 - b) All of the tragedies about Joseph are designed to prepare Joseph and his brothers for the big-picture idea of getting the family into Egypt for the remainder of their lives.
 - c) The personal application is to see that everything we do has a purpose. Even the sins we commit are “used” by God for his glory. It doesn’t excuse the sins, it simply means that since God knows all things we do in advance, God can “use” those events for His ultimate purposes. We still suffer due to our mistakes, but they are also eventually used for God’s glory.
 - c) OK, two and one half pages down, and I haven’t touched verse yet. ☺ Let’s go!
6. Chapter 37, Verse 1: Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.
² This is the account of Jacob.
- a) The first thing to ask is, “Wait a minute, this is the story of Joseph, why does Verse two say, “This is the account of Jacob”?
 - b) First, you can read the first two verses as being a “wrap up” of the previous section of Genesis. Personally, I see it differently:
 - i) Remember that Jacob, renamed “Israel”, is the father of the Nation of Israel.
 - ii) The story of Joseph is about the “beginning” of the formation of Israel.
 - iii) Joseph is one of 12 brothers. Those 12 brothers become the 12 “tribes” of Israel that we read about through the rest of the Old Testament.
 - iv) With that mind, the remainder of Genesis is not just the story of Joseph, it is the story of the formation of the Nation of Israel.
 - a) That is why this is called “the account of Jacob”.
 - b) It is not so much about Jacob himself, but about Jacob’s family.

- c) As to Verse 1, this verse is a reminder that Jacob didn't own the land of Israel, but lived there as a stranger, as did his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham.
 - i) The point of Verse 1 is that the promises to Abraham haven't happened yet.
- 7. Verse 2 (cont.): Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.
 - a) Remember that Joseph's mother Rachel died a few chapters back. (Ref: Genesis 35:19)
 - i) Joseph was probably raised by his half-brothers and Jacob's other wives.
 - b) Also remember that of Jacob's 4 wives (ok, 2 wives, 2 concubines), Rachel was his favorite.
 - i) Remember that when Jacob was afraid of seeing his brother Esau, he put Rachel and Joseph in the last group so that if the "one's in front" were killed, the "one's in back" (Rachel/Joseph) could make a run for it. (Ref.: Genesis 33:7).
 - ii) Don't think the other brother's didn't notice Jacob's favoritism.
 - iii) The "seeds" of jealousy started that far back.
 - c) Verse 3 says, "Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age;
 - i) Genesis goes back and forth between calling Jacob, "Jacob" and "Israel".
 - a) Sometimes Jacob is still called "Jacob", even after God renames him.
 - b) Commentators believe that whenever Jacob is not in "God's will for the moment", the name Jacob is used again.
 - c) When Jacob is doing "God's will", or at struggling with God to get God's will accomplished, the new name "Israel" is used at that point.
 - d) Here we read of "Israel" loving Joseph over the other brothers".
 - (1) I don't believe God is condoning the favoritism that leads to jealousy, I believe God is condoning the fact that "God's will" of redemption for the Nation of Israel is going to get accomplished through Joseph, and thus the usage of the word "Israel".
 - ii) Why does Jacob love Joseph, "because he had been born to him in his old age"?
 - a) I suspect it means he loves Jacob "like a grandfather".
 - b) Grandparents think, "This is my grandson....let the parents do all the dirty work, and I'll just spoil him". Jacob figured the older brothers can do all the hard parts of raising him and I can just "enjoy" Jacob."
 - c) Whether or not this was the right thing to do, the main point to see is the "seeds of jealousy" being planted in Jacob's brothers by this event.
 - d) An alternative idea is that Joseph was raised after Jacob matured in his relationship with God.
 - (1) There is the possibility that Joseph "benefited" from the fact that the last few years of Jacob's life has seen Jacob grow in his relationship with God. Joseph lived most of his life after Jacob "wrested with the angel" and thus Joseph may have received a better spiritual education than his older brothers. (This is a theory, not a fact.)
 - d) Now let's talk about the famous "richly ornamented robe".
 - i) The King James Version calls it the "coat of many colors", which was taken from the original Greek translation completed several hundred years before Christ.
 - ii) The English Bibles vary on this phrase because it is tough to translate.
 - iii) Here's the main thing to remember: This robe is about leadership.
 - a) Remember that this family was shepherds. To work out in the field requires short-sleeves. Shepherds do not wear a "big robe".

- b) Therefore, this robe-gift implies leadership.
 - c) If you're on a construction site, and somebody pulls up in a 3-piece suit, you know it's not one of the construction guys. This is one of the "head guys". That is the idea behind Jacob giving Joseph this robe.
 - iv) This was "not missed" on Joseph's brothers. Thus Verse 4 is all about hatred.
 - a) By Verse 4, we are now at the point where the jealousy was so strong, and the anger was pent up so high, they couldn't even talk to Joseph.
 - b) On a side note, there is a good lesson here about not letting your anger "pent up" inside of you. The longer you wait, the more damage that is done when it comes out, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers.
- 8. Verse 5: Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."
 - a) In summary Joseph had this dream. The dream is obviously a word-picture about his brothers bowing down to him. Notice it says, "my sheaf" and "your sheaf".
 - i) A "sheaf" is a bundle of grain. You can think of each of the brothers as a head of a family, or a head of a tribe. When Joseph becomes head of Egypt, his family has superior rank to the brother's family.
 - b) I've always wondered about Joseph at this point:
 - i) Was he naïve about his brother's jealousy of him?
 - ii) Was he arrogant? Did he think, "I've got this dream and I'm going to tell it?"
 - iii) It is obvious that Joseph lacked tact, but the important thing is that he had the dream and somehow, Joseph knew it was important to tell it to his brothers despite the consequences.
- 9. Verse 8: His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.
 - a) This verse is here to show that the brothers understood the implication of this dream. They understood that Joseph didn't just eat some bad pizza and had a nightmare. ☺ They understood that Joseph was making a prediction about the future.
- 10. Verse 9: Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.
 - a) The main difference between "Dream 1" and "Dream 2" is that the second dream somehow included Joseph's mother and father bowing down to Joseph.
 - b) Joseph said in Verse 9 that the "sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down".
 - i) Joseph's father Jacob understood that somehow, the "sun and moon" were references to Jacob and his wives.
 - ii) When you study Revelation Chapter, 12, it opens with a word picture: "A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." (Revelation 12:1b, NIV).
 - a) This Revelation reference ties back to this vision by Joseph. The writer of Revelation wants you to understand that the vision of Revelation 12 is about the Nation of Israel. The reference to the "sun, moon and 12 stars", refers to the family of Jacob, which is the nation of Israel.

- c) Notice Verse 11, says, "His father kept the matter in mind".
 - i) This means, "I won't react now. I'll wait and see what happens".
 - ii) This verse reminds me of when the (Virgin) Mary was told about the predictions about her son Jesus, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19B, NIV).
 - iii) The concept is the same. Sometimes God gives us information and wants us to store it for future recall.
 - iv) A similar idea is that of when we hear predictions. When someone tells you "Thus says the Lord...". The bible calls on to test those prophets and see if comes to pass. (See Deut: 13:1-4, 1st John 4:1).
11. Verse 12: Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem,¹³ and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied.¹⁴ So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem,¹⁵ a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"¹⁶ He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"¹⁷ "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.
- a) In summary, Joseph's brothers are off tending the sheep. Dad sends Joseph off to go check on them and report back. Joseph goes to Shechem, where they were last reported, and discovers they moved on to a town called Dothan. His brothers spot Joseph on the way, and plot to kill him.
 - i) This tells you that Jacob did not make Joseph work like his brothers. The fact that he gave Joseph the coat means he wanted Joseph to be their leader.
 - b) If you know nothing else about this paragraph, know the word "Shechem" is bad.
 - i) Shechem is the place where Joseph's sister Dinah was raped, and the brothers over-reacted and killed all the men of this town and plundered the goods.
 - ii) Jacob had to leave the area out of fear of retribution by the neighbors.
 - iii) Now here were the brothers back where they shouldn't be. Jacob was aware of it.
 - iv) The fact that the brothers went to Shechem is a subtle hint that they are not doing God's will. I'm sure that location reminded the brothers of the murder. That locational reminder probably gave them the idea of killing of killing their brother.
 - c) I can't resist the "word-pictures" of Jesus. Here is Joseph, sent to "check on his Jewish brothers", and they refuse to accept them as their leader (i.e., "king"/Messiah"). They plot to kill him! In their minds they "do" kill Joseph and thought he was dead. When they eventually see him alive again, (in a word-picture) he was "resurrected".
 - d) OK what's the deal with Shechem and Dothan? Why bother mentioning both places?
 - i) Dothan means: "double place" or "two wells". A word-picture idea is that the brothers were "double minded" in their plan to deceive Joseph and kill him.
12. Verse 19: "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other.²⁰ "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.²² "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.
- a) The simple lesson of these verses is that when God makes a prediction, it comes true despite Satan's best efforts to stop it.
 - i) You have to believe the desire to kill Joseph had "demonic roots" in that it would stop God's redemptive plan for the Nation of Israel.

- b) Here's Reuben, in a sense, coming to the rescue. He is the oldest and leads the others by saying "Let's just leave him in a pit". Verse 22 says that Reuben's plan was to rescue Joseph later. Since Reuben is the oldest, he is also accountable to his father for Joseph.
 - c) Remember that father-Jacob was known as a "deceiver" his whole life. You can now see that trait being passed on to the children. Even Reuben in his "rescue plan" wanted to use deception in order to save Joseph's life.
 - d) I was thinking about this paragraph from Joseph's perspective.
 - i) He was minding his own business, doing what his dad told him to do.
 - ii) He wasn't guilty of anything, other than a lack of tact dealing with his brothers.
 - iii) Yet his own brothers left him for dead.
 - iv) This is the first of many lessons Joseph had to learn how God is in control of his life, even when he doesn't understand why.
 - a) One of the difficult things for all believers to deal with is why does God allow horrible circumstances to happen to us?
 - b) Often we don't know the reason until many years later, like Joseph.
 - c) In some cases, we never know the reason. Something that happens to us may serve as an example to someone in the future. All I know for certain is that everything that happens to us is "God-filtered" for a purpose.
13. Verse 23: So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing--²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.
- a) Here is the first we read of Joseph's brothers rejecting him as their leader. The text emphasizes the removal of the robe, which is the symbol of his leadership.
 - b) The text also makes a point about how the cistern (or hole, or well) had no water.
 - i) This is to emphasize that Joseph could not survive in the pit for very long without any water to drink. Remember this is hot desert country. This was probably an old hole made to collect rainwater.
 - ii) There are lots of commentaries on "spiritual applications" about the waterless cistern. Many prophetic commentators see this as part of the "Jesus model" because a waterless hole is symbolic of Hades (or hell). Although we don't know how long Joseph was in this hole, this little section is a word picture of "rejection, left for dead and resurrected". If you see this fine, if you think it's a stretch of the imagination, that's ok too. ☺
14. Verse 25: As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. ²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. ²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.
- a) Let me summarize the text:
 - i) Reuben, the first born, was not around at this moment. (See Verse 29).
 - ii) The brothers were probably camping not far from Joseph's hole. I suspect they probably heard him crying out in the background.
 - iii) They decided to sell Joseph to some Ishmaelites. This way they would feel "less guilty" about their crime and wouldn't have to kill them.
 - a) At this point, you could see that they were "sons of Jacob" in that the conniving aspect of their father was past on to the children.
 - b) It always amazes me how people can "rationalize" sin away. The brothers felt "less guilty" because they didn't kill their own family member.

- b) Judah saw a group of Ishmaelites heading to Egypt to trade.
 - i) Remember that Judah's father is Jacob. Jacob's uncle was Ishmael.
 - ii) Ishmael settled in the land where the Midianites lives and thus we read of the Midianite merchants and the Ishmalites together.
 - c) OK, let's talk about the symbolic aspect.
 - i) Here is Judah, who made up this scheme to sell Joseph.
 - ii) Judah, of all people, is the one who through the Messiah comes.
 - iii) We're read of a lot more of Judah's sins in Chapter 38 in a moment.
 - iv) Here's the big question: Why is Judah made to look so bad in the later part of Chapter 37 and all of Chapter 38 and at the same time, God picked Judah to be part of the Messianic line?
 - a) If I were to write the bible, I would make the "hero" Joseph part of the Messianic line, or at least not write all of the negative things about Judah.
 - b) First of all, you have to remember that God is in charge, and we are not.
 - c) If God wants to pick Judah, faults and all, He can and He did.
 - d) If anything, it validates the bible, as you and I would not include all of this negative history in the Messianic line.
 - e) This is another example of how God's will does get accomplished through imperfect people. Despite Judah's faults, God does use him.
 - v) OK, is there "symbolism" in the fact it was Judah that kept Joseph alive?
 - a) Possibly. The most important thing is that it was God's intention for Joseph to remain alive and eventually be a ruler in Egypt. God used the sin of the brothers' rejection of Joseph for His glory.
 - b) In a prophetic picture, Joseph was "saved" by the actions of Judah. The "messianic line" of Judah is kept alive by Joseph, who would lead all of Israel.
15. Verse 29: When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.³⁰ He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"
- a) Remember that Reuben was the oldest and therefore accountable to his father.
 - b) You get the impression he didn't really care if Joseph lived or died, just about the consequences of that action to his father. You get the impression Reuben had the same hatred of Joseph as the rest of the brothers, but he was scared of being punished by his father. He was motivated by fear of punishment and not for committing a sin.
 - c) The text doesn't say whether or not the brother's told him that they sold Joseph. I suspect they told him. It's hard for a bunch of brothers to all keep their mouth shut.
16. Verse 31: Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood.³² They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." ³³ He (Jacob) recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces."
- a) The brother's took Joseph robe, tore it up, smeared goat's blood on it and then went to go lie to their father Jacob about what happened. Their father Jacob saw Joseph's robe, covered in goat's blood and assumed Joseph was dead.
 - b) If you remember, many years earlier, Jacob deceived his father Isaac in Genesis 27.
 - i) Jacob pretended to be his brother Esau.
 - ii) Jacob wore goat's skins to be more hairy like his brother.
 - iii) Now here were Jacob's sons, deceiving Jacob also using a goat.
 - iv) This is a reminder of the biblical principal of:
 - a) "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23, NIV)
 - b) John's translation: "What goes around, comes around". God sometimes finds a way to remind you of a particular sin many years after the event.

- (1) Often, bad characteristic traits are past on to your children if they are not kept in check.
- v) I am sure, that one day late in Jacob's life, after he found out that Joseph was alive again, his sons told him about the deception with the goat's blood. I suspect at that moment Jacob remembered how he deceived his father with a goat, and his own sons deceived him using a goat.
17. Verse 34: Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son." So his father wept for him.
- a) There is no pain worse for a parent for losing a child. I don't think there are any comforting words one can say, other than you will see that child again in heaven.
- i) In a sense, that is what Jacob is saying in Verse 35 when he says, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son". He is saying in effect, "I will be in mourning until I die and see him again in the next life.
- b) You can have a field day with prophetic pictures on this one:
- i) Here is the "father of the nation of Israel", looking at the blood of his son, and assuming he's dead. He is not happy again until he discovers Joseph is alive. In Jacob's mind, Joseph will be "resurrected" because he "came back to life again.
18. Verse 36: Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.
- a) Biblical archeologists suspect that the word "Potiphar" is a title for the captain of the guard. It could be a name, but most people suspect it was a title. Potiphar was probably the leader of the Pharaoh's "personal army", a squad of soldier's hired to personally protect the Pharaoh and execute his commands.
- b) We'll pick up on Potiphar in Chapter 39. Meanwhile we have to deal with Chapter 38.
19. Chapter 38 is a strange break from the story of Joseph.
- a) Chapters 37 and 39-onward focus on Joseph, yet we have this one chapter break to focus on some additional sins committed by Judah:
- b) Here are some "big-picture" ideas to see:
- i) God wants to show the Messianic line will continue through Judah. The remainder of Genesis shows how God used Joseph to lead all of the brothers into Egypt, but God was also "still working" on the Messianic line through Judah.
- ii) The sins of Judah are also shown to contrast what Joseph did right.
- a) Judah got into trouble as he gave himself over to sexual temptation.
- b) Joseph will "shine" in Chapter 39 as he flees from sexual temptation.
- iii) There are lots of other subtle lessons from Chapter 38, but I believe the main idea is to show the contrast of Judah's actions with Joseph's actions over the next several chapters. Further, the other important item is the Messianic line continues despite Judah's sins. With that said, let's start Chapter 38.
20. Chapter 38, Verse 1: At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah.
- a) The chapter opens with "at that time". This would be the time after the brothers deceived their father with Joseph's coat.
- i) Maybe Judah "couldn't handle the guilt" and wanted to get away.
- ii) All we know from this verse is that Judah becomes "buddies" with this guy named Adullam. He is called a friend of Judah later in the chapter.
- b) Even from this Verse you know Judah was getting into trouble.
- i) We infer from Joshua 12:15 that Adullam was a Canaanite. This means that Adullam was part of the people that God "condemned" to be killed when the Israelites took over the Promised Land.

- a) In Deuteronomy 7, God told the Israelites to have no part with these people. Further, God said he was going to destroy the inhabitants of the Promised Land due to their wickedness. (Ref. Deut. 9:4)
- c) My point is Judah was “hanging around with someone he shouldn’t have been.
 - i) There are times God calls to witness to others, and times God just wants us to “flee temptation” and separate ourselves ungodly people. Often this takes good biblical discernment. Sometimes, it is just obvious that “you shouldn’t be here”.
- 21. Verse 2: There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and lay with her; ³ she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. ⁴ She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. ⁵ She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.
 - a) Here we see the “growth” of Judah’s sin. He married a wife, who is never named in the text, other than the “daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua.”
 - i) Personally, I see this as a sin. It is as if God is saying, “I don’t even want to mention her by name”.
 - ii) Anyway, it is mentioned that they have 3 sons: Er, Onan and Shelah.
 - a) How can you name a boy “Shelah”? Did they really want a girl? ☺
- 22. Verse 6: Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death.
 - a) Remember that marriages were prearranged in those days.
 - i) (As a father of two girls, I approve of this practice! ☺)
 - ii) Judah found a wife for his firstborn son Er, and her name was Tamar.
 - b) Verse 7 is a strange verse: Er did something “wicked”, and God killed him.
 - i) That gets me. There is no mention of what Er did.
 - ii) You read of all the sins committed in Genesis to date, and not once did God strike any of them dead. Yet here, we read of some unnamed sin, and Er is gone.
 - iii) Once in a rare while, you will read in the bible of someone being struck dead by God, mainly as a witness to those around him:
 - a) Aaron, the first high priest of the Nation of Israel, lost two of his sons when they were assistants to the high priest. God struck them dead. (Lev. 10:1-2)
 - b) In the New Testament, a husband and wife couple was suddenly struck dead when they lied to the apostles about how much money they gave to the church (Acts Chapter 5).
 - c) At least in those cases, we had a minimal amount of text saying what they did wrong. Here in Genesis there is no explanation.
 - c) The only “clue” we get is coming up in the next 3 verses, so I’ll discuss it further then.
- 23. Verse 8: Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother." ⁹ But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.
 - a) When you read Exodus through Deuteronomy, Moses gives hundreds of commandments for the Israelites to obey. Remember Moses wasn’t born until the early chapters of Exodus. There is no formal “law” in Genesis. Yet, occasionally, you will read of some of God’s laws discussed in Genesis. That is the case here.
 - i) In Deuteronomy 25:5-6, it says that if a man dies without any children. The brother of the man should take the same woman and have children “in his brother’s name”. This keeps the inheritance alive for that brother.
 - ii) Notice in Verse 8, Judah says to “fulfill your duty”. Somehow, Judah knew of this law, or of this principal, even before it was formalized in Deuteronomy.

- b) In Verse 9, Onan directly disobeyed that command by performing a method of “birth control”. God was angry with Onan for doing this and God killed Onan.
 - i) This makes me believe that the sin of Er, the first son to die, was to not have sexual relations with his wife, or at least, to practice some sort of birth control.
 - ii) If that is true, Er was disobeying God’s command in Genesis to “be fruitful and multiply”. (Ref: Genesis 1:22, et.al.)
 - iii) I find it interesting that Er was willing to have sex with her, but not children. (Maybe dad was standing outside of the tent saying, “Go on son, get in there!” ☺)
 - c) OK John, What’s your point?
 - i) The point is that God wanted to continue the Messianic line through Judah.
 - ii) It was important for Judah to have grandchildren, to continue the line.
 - iii) The second son, Onan, failed to do this and God “zapped” him.
 - iv) I suspect the first son died for the same reason.
 - v) God killed them to teach the importance of His will getting accomplished.
 - a) I stated a page back about two other examples where God immediately killed someone. This was done as an example to those around them.
 - b) One has to remember that the person being killed may still be in heaven. This is not about eternal condemnation; this is about God using those people as an example to others.
 - d) One more thing and then I’ll move on.
 - i) Many people use these verses as an argument against birth control or against masturbation. That is not what the text is teaching. Those are both long topics all unto themselves, which I won’t tackle here simply because I’m running long.
 - ii) These verses are only about obedience to God’s command of raising offspring, and the son’s failure to do so.
24. Verse 11: Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He may die too, just like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.
- a) Personally, if I was Judah’s 3rd son Shelah, I’d be nervous right now. Both of his brothers married this girl, and both were killed by God. I’m not sure I want this gal. ☺
 - b) Shelah was probably not old enough to be married yet. Judah tells his daughter in law Tamar to go back to her parents’ house until Shelah is old enough.
 - c) What is implied by the text is that Judah is stalling. Verse 11 says, “He may die too, just like his brothers”. Therefore, there is the possibility that Judah himself was not being obedient to God’s command to raise offspring and told his daughter in law to go home.
25. Verse 12: After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him.
- a) Verse 12 mentions a long time span. After this time period, Judah’s wife died.
 - b) What is not mentioned is Judah commanding his 3rd son to go marry the daughter in law.
 - i) The point is that Judah is at fault for not working on continuing the Messianic line.
 - c) Remember that “Hirah the Adullamite” is the friend of Judah mentioned in Verse 1.
26. Verse 13: When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep,"¹⁴ she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.
- a) Now the plot thickens. Tamar, the daughter in law, disguises herself as a prostitute in order to have sexual relations with her father in law. She hears that Judah is coming to the area and devises this whole stint.

- b) One has to remember that culture: To not have any children is a sign of failure for a woman. She still “belongs” to Judah’s family, even though she is living with her father.
 - c) In that culture, a Canaanite prostitute had her face covered. Judah could have sex with her and not see her face.
27. Verse 16: Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you." "And what will you give me to sleep with you?" she asked. ¹⁷ "I'll send you a young goat from my flock," he said. "Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?" she asked. ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge should I give you?" "Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand," she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. ¹⁹ After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again.
- a) Some stories are so vivid they don’t need much commentary. Here is Judah hanging out with his Canaanite buddy, and he goes to have sex with a local prostitute who it turns out was his daughter in law. She got pregnant from this action, which was her intent.
 - b) There is so much sin here, you don’t know where to begin. ☺ In summary, you know you are not being a good witness for God when you are hanging out with ungodly people looking for a prostitute. ☺
 - c) In order to pay her for her services, Judah promises her a goat. (I guess that’s the going rate. ☺) He gives her a pledge in the meantime, which is his signet ring and his staff.
 - d) The signet ring has a personal emblem. When it is pushed in wax, it leaves a personal signature. It would be like a guy leaving his credit card as collateral until he could come back with the payment.
28. Verse 20: Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. ²¹ He asked the men who lived there, "Where is the shrine prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?" "There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here," they said. ²² So he went back to Judah and said, "I didn't find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, `There hasn't been any shrine prostitute here.'" ²³ Then Judah said, "Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn't find her."
- a) Judah sends his buddy into town with the goat to look for the prostitute to make the payment. Was Judah to embarrassed to do this himself? Judah was supposed to be one of God’s witnesses! He was in hiding due to his sin!
 - b) The text says the townsfolk say there is no temple prostitute around her. Judah then says in effect, “Let her keep my signet ring and staff or we will be a laughing stock in town because we’re trying to pay off a hooker who doesn’t exist”.
 - c) Notice Judah doesn’t care what God thinks, only what the townsfolk’s think! You are in trouble when you get your focus off of God and start worrying what others think of you!
29. Verse 24: 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!"
- a) Verse 24 is the comical verse of the chapter. Judah doesn’t condemn himself for his sins, but oh boy, when his daughter in law, does this, she deserves to be burned!
 - b) This verse is a reminder that people often complain the loudest about the sins they are most guilty of themselves.
 - i) This makes me wonder about the driving habits of those who are mad at me when I accidentally cut them off in traffic. ☺
 - c) Remember that this text is also meant to be read in contrast to Joseph in the next chapter, who flees the temptation of adultery.

30. Verse 25: As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." ²⁶ Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah." And he did not sleep with her again.
- a) You know, Hollywood loves a good drama. I don't know how they missed this one!
 - i) Here is the big scene where Judah realizes the prostitute was his daughter in law.
 - ii) We can all relate to Judah's facial expression when he realized what he had done.
 - b) Here is where Judah gets some credit: He takes personal blame for it. Although it is not a format confession to God, it is at least the realization that what he did was wrong.
 - i) Further, Judah realized that this was "just punishment" for not giving his daughter in law Tamar to his 3rd son Tamar.
 - ii) In a sense, the whole prostitution story is about the punishment of Judah for failing to make his 3rd son take Tamar as a wife.
31. Verse 27: When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁸ As she 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." ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah.
- a) The big-picture idea of this horrid story is all about the continuation of the messianic line.
 - b) We have the story of twins being born.
 - i) One of the twins, Zerah, had his hand came out first. A scarlet thread was tied around the wrist. Zerah then went back in the womb. His brother Perez then came out first. (I don't even want to think how painful this labor was! ☺)
 - ii) Perez became part of the Messianic line.
 - c) There are wonderful bible lessons on the topic of "the scarlet (red) thread".
 - i) You can look at several stories in the bible of a scarlet thread. The word-picture ties to the blood of the cross as a means of salvation.
 - ii) In the book of Joshua, a scarlet thread was placed in the window of the one family that was spared prior to the destruction of Jericho. (Joshua 2:18)
 - iii) In fact, in the construction of the tabernacle, "scarlet thread" is a fabric used in the manufacturing of the curtain.
 - iv) In Leviticus, when a person is found to be clean of leprosy (a word-picture of sin), part of the ritual to give thanks to God involved a scarlet thread (Leviticus 14:6).
 - v) Given all that, some see a "word-picture" of the baby with the scarlet thread "gave way" so the other baby come out first. The one with the "scarlet thread" gave "life" to the other baby as part of the Messianic line.
 - d) One more bit of bible trivia, I can't resist to mention:
 - i) "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 23:2, NIV)
 - ii) These twins were the bastard children of Judah and his daughter in law.
 - iii) The 10th generation after these twins is King David, to whom God gave the specific promise that the Messiah would come from his line.
32. I'll wrap this up with my "theme verse" of the week, spoken by Joseph in Chapter 50:
- a) You (Joseph's brothers) intended to harm me (Joseph), but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (Genesis 50:20 NIV)
 - b) All of the rotten things that happened to Joseph was "allowed" by God.
 - i) A reason was to get Joseph's family into Egypt and to prepare him for leadership.
 - ii) Further, those events helped Joseph be a great leader in Egypt.
 - iii) Those events tested Joseph's faithfulness to God and God rewarded him.

- c) In contrast, we also had some sordid tales of Judah's life.
 - i) In summary, you can call these, "don't let this happen to you".
 - ii) You can read of Judah's failures in contrast to Joseph's successes.
 - d) The most comforting thing to get out of both chapters, is that when we do good, God's will gets done and when we do bad, God's will gets done. We still have to suffer consequences when we mess up, but God is not "sweating" that His will for the world is not going to happen because we are messing up. We can take comfort in that fact.
 - e) Further, our trials in life don't seem so bad once we accept the fact that everything that happens to us is "God-filtered" for His ultimate glory. We may not understand everything we are going through, but we can have rest knowing that there is a purpose for all the events that occur in our life.
33. Let's Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for these lessons you have taught us about Joseph as well as Judah. Help us to absorb both the positive and negative lessons so we can learn from the good and not repeat the mistakes. Help us to keep You as the center-focus of our lives, especially during the difficult moments. May you be gloried by all we do as we live to serve you. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.