

Ruth- background

#1 Skeletons in the closet

JUDAH AND TAMAR

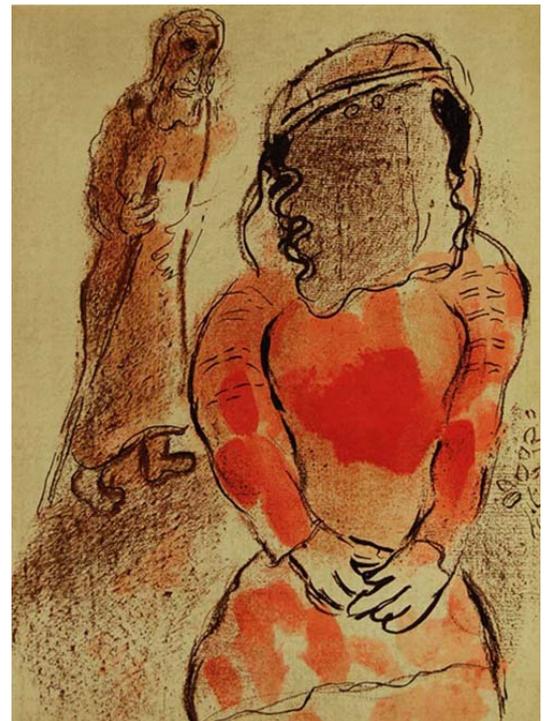
The setting for much of the book of Ruth is the village of Bethlehem in the territory of the Israelite tribe of Judah. The people of Judah were descendants of a man also called Judah, the fourth son of Jacob.

Genesis 38 contains crucial information about the origins of the tribe of Judah. This is “adults only” reading, and quite disturbing. The Canaanization of the Hebrew people is on show.

Let's consider the following preliminary questions:

- a. The Joseph story began just prior to the events recorded in Genesis 38. What was the conflict between Joseph and his brothers. What happened to Joseph?

- b. What was Judah's involvement (see Genesis 37:26)?



A Shocking History

Read Genesis 38

This story touches on an institution common in the ancient Near East called levirate marriage, a practice that also features prominently in the book of Ruth.

- a. Why did the LORD put Er to death?
- b. What did Judah tell Onan to do after Er's death?
- c. Why did Onan refuse to do as Judah had instructed?
- d. If Tamar had given birth to a son by Onan, what would this have meant for Er? What would it have meant for Onan?
- e. What happened to Onan?

Consider Judah's reaction to the deaths of his two oldest sons.

- f. What did Judah promise to do for Tamar?
- g. Why did he break his promise?
- h. What does this indicate about his faith at this time?
- i. What was Tamar's status at the end of verse 11? Why from her point of view was her situation an impossible one to endure?
- j. What did Tamar do when she realized that Judah did not intend to keep his promise to her? What do Tamar's actions reveal about her?
- k. How much had Judah become like his Canaanite neighbors? What warning should we Christians take from this?
- l. What did Judah mean by his words in verse 26?

Judah and Lot

Answer the following questions about Judah and Lot.:

- a. How were these two patriarchs responsible for the tragedy and shame that befell them?

- b. Scripture is full of stories about people like Lot and Judah who break their promises to God and each other. How would this have affected the view of God an “outsider” might have had? What does this mean for us as Christians living in a world full of people who do not know Christ?

- c. In what ways did God show mercy and grace to Lot and Judah? How does God’s faithfulness to these wayward patriarchs encourage us in our walk as His children?

- d. Do we have “Lots” and “Judahs” in our congregation here? Explain your answer.

Read Genesis 44:18-34

- e. How did Judah change? What does this teach us about how the Holy Spirit works repentance in us?

Judah’s son Perez became the ancestor of the most powerful and influential clan of the tribe of Judah. David and all the kings of Judah were members of this clan.

- f. What does this reveal about the way God works?

Read Matthew 1:3

- e. Why is Tamar listed in Christ’s genealogy? What does this teach us about God and His plan of salvation? How does Romans 8:28 underscore this point?

