

How Jesus Read the Bible – The Torah Series

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How Jesus Read the Bible

Because the message today is how Jesus read the Bible. As believers and a king, if we knew and understood what Yeshua saw when he read the Bible, would that be something pertinent to us? Would that be something that we would want to know about, possibly replicate? If only there were verses in the Bible that showed us such things. There are. Okay, so we're just going to jump right in because I love this topic and I'm so blessed that I get to present it today.

So Luke chapter 24, you may be familiar with this chapter. Hopefully you are. This is after Yeshua has done his mission work. He has disciples, lots of them left him, but he also has a lot of followers. He goes to Jerusalem and things kind of turned exactly towards the direction that he said it was going to turn, but maybe his followers didn't catch on. He was crucified, but then something happened three days later, and the resurrection came. And so [Luke 24](#) records some of his followers that got up early Sunday, or early the first day of the week, early the third day, if you will—that's what it says. And they began walking away from Jerusalem very disappointed. And they had a chat among themselves, both of them. And they were like, yeah, we really thought that this Yeshua guy was going to redeem Israel. And I mean, they killed him. So it didn't happen. Obviously, they had other visions of what it was going to be like. They probably thought that he was going to raise up a physical army and attack the Romans and go and kill everybody and take out the Roman empire. And yeah, that just did not happen. Like man, them Romans nipped that in the bud real quick. They didn't understand. And as they're walking, they come across a third figure that's walking among them. Hey, how are you? What are you guys

talking about? Have you not heard what happened in Jerusalem? No, I don't know what you guys are talking about. And it's Yeshua walking with them, and he's like, "No, please tell me everything." And they're like, "Man, we were following this Yeshua guy and like he was awesome and we truly thought he was the prophet, he was the king, he was the Messiah, and we thought he was going to redeem Israel, but he didn't." And finally they get to a place, and he breaks bread, and it's revealed to them who he is. And it speaks about how, wow, like this whole time they didn't recognize him until that last moment. And now, like, wow, did our hearts burn within them? So they go back and they join the 11, right? They go back and they find the 11. And they sit down with his actual disciples and they begin telling him, "Hey, we just saw your rabbi. We just saw this Jesus, this Yeshua walking among us."

The Risen Jesus Appears

And so this brings us to verse 36 of [Luke 24](#). "As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them." So we need to visualize and read the Bible as a story. So you have these guys, these witnesses, they're talking to the disciples, right? The 11, you know, because the 12th didn't—yeah, he's gone. But the 11 are there and they're all sitting around. They're like, "Yeah, Jesus is alive. I saw him. He talked with us. It was wonderful. Like we didn't recognize at first, but he's here." And they're like, "What are you talking about? Like, no, last time we saw him was a couple of days ago and they took him down off the cross." And then it just—it doesn't say he walked through the door. It's just like, and Jesus stood among them. Yeah, yeah. He's like, "Huh?" And he said to them, "Shalom." But they were startled and frightened as they thought they saw a spirit. So would we be. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled?" Just so relaxed. Like I picture, "Hey guys, Shalom." He said, "Hey, why are you guys startled? Don't worry. Why do you have doubt in your heart? See my hands? See my feet? Is it not? Is it not I? Touch me. See me. For spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." But when he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they were still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Hey, you guys have anything to eat? Because what else would you—if you defeated death and sin and the beasts of the world and were resurrected, I mean, you'd be hungry. This is the biblical story." So they gave him a piece of fish and he took it and he ate it before them.

Now I want you to envision this. Okay, Yeshua's sitting down. All the disciples are sitting there with their jaws in the floor. And he's just like, everyone's quiet. And all you see and hear is Yeshua. Like that's totally what would have happened. Just this very like almost awkward, but

amazing situation and scenario. And he's just chowing down. Like, why do you guys have such a hard time believing this? Just eating his fish.

The Bible as One Story

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." These are the words that I spoke to you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Yeshua apparently viewed the Bible as a single story, as one big unified story. And the Bible, of course, at this time is the Old Testament. So when Yeshua was referring to the Bible, he's saying the Old Testament. It seems here that he thinks the Bible is just a single story that pointed to him—not a creation story and then that story ends, and now there's a story about Rachel and Leah fighting over their husband. Oh, and then that story ends. And now there's like another story where the plagues overtake Egypt. Oh, cool. No, no, no, no. Take the periods and the ends of the chapter, like take the ends off of the books. They don't belong there. All of these stories fit into a single story. They all build and they all push and they all flow towards a single story. They're all attached to each other. And this larger narrative speaks of a God that will redeem his creation through a king that will conquer the force that has infected it. This is how Jesus read the Bible. And here is Yeshua summarizing what he thinks the entire story of the Old Testament is about.

Let's see here. So haven't you guys, like when you read the Old Testament, like this is exactly what you see, right? And so here's that awkward moment when all of us believers and Christians look back at Jesus and we say like, "All right, where is that specifically written? Like, in Leviticus somewhere?" Because I didn't see it when I read Leviticus. Or Judges. But here Yeshua is expecting you to say, "Oh yeah, it's right there, clear as day," when we look at the story of the Old Testament. And if we're stuck, and if we're looking back at Yeshua saying, "No, it's not really as clear as day as you're saying it is. Like, it's not specifically right there." Then—then it's not a question that he should. It's a question that we should ask: why not? Why are we not seeing the Bible the way that Jesus did when he taught his disciples? And here it says that he taught his disciples how to read the Bible like he did. You guys understand what I'm saying?

Sometimes we're taught—so this is one of the reasons why I believe the Old Testament has been minimized in Christianity for a long time. Like we look at the Old Testament and we're just like, "Okay, we believe in this Yeshua, but there's a lot of stuff in the Old Testament that we

just don't get, don't understand. And seriously, how does all of it have to do with him?" Anybody? No one else. Okay. It's just a reality when you jump in the Bible.

The Purpose of Scripture

Paul follows up. Paul speaking to his protege, Timothy. He's a young guy, young pastor in Ephesus in [2 Timothy 3:14](#). "But as for you," he's encouraging. "As for you, continue what you have learned and firmly believed." So here, Paul is reaffirming to Timothy the purpose of the Old Testament. And what does Paul say the purpose of the entire Old Testament is? To give you what? Wisdom. Wisdom to trust in the allegiance or faith of a king, the Messiah, a king named Yeshua or Jesus, King Jesus, King Yeshua.

Again, I know that is exactly what we have all seen and recognized when we read the Torah and the prophets, right? Like when we crack open the Torah portion each week, we clearly obtain wisdom about salvation through King Messiah, right? Like every single Torah portion? I don't—every single Torah portion. Is that too vulnerable for you guys when I'm looking and reading in Leviticus chapter 4: "You shall take this goat away. Take its blood, and you need to put it on the horns of the altar, and it's going to drip, but not before the priest catches it after its throat is," and the priest is going to manipulate it and put it on the—yes, about Jesus on the cross or something. No one else. Okay. This has been my experience.

Paul and Yeshua seem to be trying to tell us that we're missing something if you've struggled with the scriptures like I have. They seem to think that you should recognize this basic story. This is what you should know from your childhood, he says. That's a convicting verse. So Paul's speaking to Timothy, and he says, "From your childhood, this is what you've known. From your childhood, you should know this. Not Adam and Eve, not Noah and the flood, not Moses. No, from your childhood, when you read the Old Testament, you should know King Jesus," according to Paul.

Teaching Children the Gospel

When we teach our children about the Torah and the Old Testament, according to Paul, they need to be seeing, gaining wisdom, and cultivating a spirit and a heart for understanding that they have a need for salvation. And there's only one way that's going to happen, and that's through the trust of what God has done through the person of Yeshua. This is what both Yeshua and Paul say here.

And this is a great time to stop and reflect, because I'm now a parent of a four-year-old and an almost one-year-old. Are we doing our job as parents? Taking this scripture, we're going to take an exit rant. Are we doing our job as parents to the legacy of our community if we're teaching them that the Old Testament is something different? If they know more about Noah and the ark than Yeshua, then we're doing it wrong. If they know more about Hebrew blessings than Yeshua, we're doing it wrong. If they know more about the six-day creation story than Yeshua, I regret teaching my son how to say the Shema in Hebrew before I taught him how to say Yeshua, based on this verse.

When Yeshua looked at the Old Testament, here's what he saw: a story about him. And sometimes we put on these lenses, and I've heard people and critics say, "Yeah, but you can't just paint Jesus all over the Old Testament." No, you can, because that's exactly what the New Testament does, right? And not only that, that's what the Old Testament is about. Everything contributes to the story of God's redemptive power through the need of salvation through King Yeshua.

So as we explore the Old Testament, when we encounter the stories, hopefully you can see the patterns, you can see the overarching themes and the hyperlinks of each story—they ultimately contribute to this truth. Not Yeshua and, not King Messiah and, not salvation through Jesus and this other stuff. This is it, according to Yeshua himself.

Four Narrative Shifts

With that being said—Geek Town, I'm so happy—there are scholars like John Selhammer. There's a great book called **The Narrative, The Pentateuch as Narrative**. Fantastic resource. Professor Tim Mackey always has great stuff. Robert Alter is a Hebrew scholar, an amazing Hebrew scholar. He has a book called **The Art of Biblical Narrative**. Fantastic resources for you guys to check out. But they're big scholars, and they point out that the Torah specifically is divided into four narrative shifts, four blocks of how the bigger story flows. And of course, the Torah contains all these little stories within it, and they're attached to these bigger stories. But as far back as you can get, there are four narrative shifts, big flows that go through the Pentateuch—the Torah.

I want to show you this. Yes, I get to write now. I get the board today, I'm so excited. They let me have it back after last time. So the very first narrative shift that we see—the very first plot in the Torah—we'll just say Torah, right—is [Genesis 1](#) through 11. And what happens in [Genesis 1](#) through 11 is Creation, right?

So we have the whole world, and there we go. Yes, that's Earth. God creates the land and the sea, what's above us, what's below us. What else do we have? The story of mankind, Adam being created, right? That was definitely a good thing for us. What happens when mankind increases upon the earth? What does God do? A flood. A big flood. Was it a little flood? No. It was a big flood. So we have the creation of the whole world. We have the creation of mankind. We have a flood that impacts the whole world. We have this tower that's built by a multitude of people—the entire population. Things just get out of hand real quick.

But what is the scope of [Genesis 1](#) through 11? It's impacting the big history of mankind and creation, right?

From Abraham to Egypt

And then the next block that we have, the next narrative shift that flows throughout the Bible, is [Genesis 12](#) through 50. It's the remainder of Genesis. And what's the focus of the rest of the story? One man. We'll give him a little turban. Abraham. The rest of the story focuses on Abraham and his three generations: Isaac, Jacob, and then all the grandkids and Dina, the granddaughter.

Now, I want you to take this in because if we're reading this as a story, this should make you go, "Hmm, it's kind of a big deal." And the reason why I say it's a big deal is because everything's flowing forward. And the story starts out—let me give you an example, I think it was by John Selhammer—but let's say that I'm going to tell you the history of the United States, right? Like the Native Americans, and then when we came over and established, "This is now our land," and everything that built up. Then England was like, "No," and we were like, "Yeah, a Revolutionary War." Then the Civil War was like, "No, we want to be independent." Back and forth, right?

Going through everything, geez, we're going all the way up through all of the presidents, all of the scandals, everything that has impacted the whole nation—Vietnam War, Iraq War. 9/11 impacted the nation, cultivated this huge patriotic feeling, truly molded us into a patriotic nation over past decades. Afghanistan—all of these things.

Okay, so let's say I'm telling you all of this to culminate, to reach its peak on July 27th, 1976. The day when Jason Price was born. Now, some of you are like, "That's a lot to talk about just to build up for one person being born." I know—that's a lot. But this is how the story is written.

The Narrative Pattern

The creation of the world isn't simply an isolated incident. It pushes forward to the creation of man, to the flood, to the Tower of Babel. It all moves forward. All of these things collectively, as a shift, move forward to build up the introduction to Abraham and his three generations.

Something must have gone terribly wrong in section one. Otherwise we wouldn't just stop and say, "Okay, here comes Abraham because he has to fix this." God's going to fix something through here. And if we've read it, we know that God makes a promise to Abraham that through him all nations will be blessed. Through him will be the seed that comes from the woman that crushes the snake's head.

So here we go. I'm getting too excited. Let's see here.

And we have the third block, which is [Exodus 1](#) through 15—not 14. Now the narrative shifts, concluding with Abraham's family multiplying where? In Egypt. And what happened in Egypt? They became enslaved. They cried out. This whole story is about how God is going to bring some type of salvation or restoration of the world because of everything that happened here, and the hearts of mankind just continue to descend.

He introduces Abraham: "Listen, I'm going to have a seed that comes and brings restoration that blesses all nations." His seed expands and fills Egypt. Then they're enslaved. Now God brings salvation to the seed of Abraham. This is what happens—the whole Passover incident, them going through and exiting Egypt. And the remainder, [Exodus 16](#) through [Deuteronomy 34](#), is the next narrative shift, when law and the Mount Sinai experience happen.

Everybody with me? This is the flow of the Torah.

Law as Part of the Story

We love to think of the Torah as simply a law book. But although there are lots of laws and they're awesome—I love the laws, Sabbath, I love them all—law is part of the Torah's story, not all of it.

And so this next shift is them going to Mount Sinai, them receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, them leaving Mount Sinai, and then, did they keep the commandments that they were given? No. So what does God do? "Great idea, I'll give them some more commandments." Did they keep those commandments? No. "Okay, it's okay. I'll give them some more commandments." Did they keep those commandments? This is a cycle that continues for the rest of the Torah until finally, at the end of Deuteronomy, Moses is like, "Listen, you guys, this is not the Torah's fault. This is not the law of God's fault. Okay, the commandments are great. They're blessed.

They're from heaven. They're here to help transform the very thing that led to all this mess in section one."

Moses says it's the heart of the people. The law was given to transform the heart of people. It's not the law's fault that when you go into the land you'll still mess this up. It's because people just suck. You guys suck. That's what he says. That's how he concludes.

And this is the Torah. And it's beautiful when you lay it out with the narrative shifts. I love it.

Israel's Continued Rebellion

And the story of the Old Testament continues past this point. It continues to show how Israel, despite having all these laws and a covenant with God, fall even further away from God, continuing to prefer ruling the world around them their own way, apart from God. They go into Joshua. That's an up and down, up and down, up and down. They're loyal to God. No, they're not. They're loyal to God. Then we go into Judges, the book of the Bible that tells the story of Israel hitting rock bottom on all accounts. People completely forgetting the character of the God that saved them. Completely forgetting. One guy kills his daughter because he thinks it brings honor to God.

Israel's History and God's Promise

A Levite sends his girlfriend in 12 different packages via FedEx all over the nation. And then a tribal community implodes, almost wiping out one of the tribes, Benjamin. Like this is the Rated book of the Bible. And it shows how Israel has completely lost focus on who their God is. How will God fix this? He made a promise to Abraham: bless all nations. Bless all nations. How will he fix this? Israel gets on their feet. Saul becomes king. Didn't last too long. Wasn't a great session. Then King David, the man after God's own heart. Things are looking up. Samuel and then kings and Solomon. Man, Solomon comes on board. Things are looking up. Then they're not, because Israel effectively becomes the new Egypt—a new Pharaoh exploiting weaker nations around them. Through the Bible, we're halfway through the whole testament. So what does God do to Israel because of their wickedness, because of them becoming Egypt? He sends them into exile. He kicks them out of the land, and sitting in Babylon, the prophets begin to reflect on the need and the promise of salvation, of restoration. How will God fix this?

Ezekiel says, "God's going to give us a new heart. Not one of stone that we've made, but a beating heart of life and flesh." Jeremiah says, "That heart that's so hard the commandments couldn't even pierce? God's going to etch the commandments into it and give you a new spirit to

live out everything that he promised he would do in the story." Isaiah, he's like, "You know what? Creation itself cycles. What God is going to do, he's still going to continue his promises of bringing us back to Eden in an intimacy with him. It's still going to happen through the seed of Abraham somehow. And it's going to be as if there's a new heavens and a new earth. A new humanity will rise out of the ashes of the old. And it will be so magnificent that the old won't even be thought of or remembered."

How will this be done? A suffering servant born of a virgin, like Isaiah says. Daniel chimes in: one like the son of man who will defeat the forces within us that fight against God's reign. He will allow the force of the beast to overtake him. He will be defeated as a result. He will be raised up to the throne room of God, given all power and authority over creation, instituting a kingdom that will last forever. And how people will stand in his kingdom as beacons of light. That's Daniel chapter seven. It's an amazing chapter. When will this happen? How will this happen? When will God act?

And then we turn the page after Malachi, or Chronicles in the Jewish canon, and we turn to Matthew chapter 1. And this is the setting. All of this buildup is the setting as we enter into the New Testament, where John just starts out. He's like, "Yeah, there's another creation account that's already happened. It happened through Jesus—new heavens, new earth. Like in the beginning, there was the word, and it was Yeshua."

Joseph's Story Begins

And so as we travel through the Torah, we should see the stories as mini-narratives that contribute to the overall story that Yeshua said was all about God acting his salvation through him.

In Genesis, in the late 30s, we have a story about Jacob. And Jacob has some sons. And the youngest—well, the favored one—who is it? Joseph. And Joseph is favored. And Jacob gives Joseph a what? A big old multicolored coat. Joseph's the one that's having dreams where all of his brothers are bowing down to him.

So do we have any people with siblings in here? Anybody? Okay, so imagine if you were one of the older brothers. Imagine if your younger sibling woke up one day and was like, "Hey, guess what, guys? Over breakfast, eating Cheerios. I had a dream last night." "What was your dream?" "Oh, y'all bowed down to me." What? What feelings would you harbor towards him? "Oh, wow, that's a very commendable dream you have there. Maybe it'll come to fruition one day. Is there

anything I can do to contribute to this dream?" No, you would probably wait till mom's not looking and slap the back of his head, right?

Okay, so that's what happens in the story. Joseph's all like, "Man, I'll keep having these dreams. And all you guys, all you jokers, are bowing down to me. It's going to be great." Dad's favoring Joseph. All the brothers are like, "Man!" He gets this big jacket—like Dad buys him a new car. I mean, in today's terms, that's spoiling him. And so the brothers decide to do what we probably all wish we could do: get rid of him. They get rid of Joseph, so they toss him into a pit.

And that's the part of the story that we land in right here. We're landing this in Genesis chapter 37, and we're going to sit in 37 and 38 for the rest of this message.

So if you want to turn with me to Genesis chapter 37—the very end of 37—we're going to start this story, and I want to show you how beautifully crafted our Bible is, and the genius that went into crafting what can only be summed up as divine art in literary form.

Genesis chapter 37, starting in verse 26:

And then one of his brothers named Judah said to his brothers, "What gain is there if we kill our little brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and our hand will not be against him. For he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. And the Midianite merchant men passed by and pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph to Egypt.

Jacob's Deception and Mourning

And Reuben came back to the pit. And look, Joseph was not in the pit. And he rent his garments. And he came back to his brothers and he said, "The boy's gone. Where can I turn?" And they took Joseph's tunic and slaughtered a kid or goat and dipped the tunic in the blood. And they sent the ornamented tunic and had it brought to their father. And they said, "This we found. Recognize, pray. Is it your son's tunic or not?" And he, Jacob, recognized it. And he said, "It is my son's tunic." Jacob concludes, his father, a vicious beast has devoured him. Joseph is torn to shreds.

And Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, mourned for his son many days. And all of his sons and all of his daughters rose to console him. And he refused to be consoled. And he said, "Rather, I will go down to my son in Sheol mourning." And his father keen to mourn for him. But the Midianites had sold him to Egypt, to Potiphar, Pharaoh's courtier, the high chamberlain.

I want you to plant a seed here. Down at the very bottom, you see where I highlighted? There are two words there, usually translated as "pray"—it's *hakar*—and this word to recognize: *vayakir*, *vayakira*, or *yakira*. Just note that these two words orbit around the mourning and the deception that takes place with Jacob. Make a mental note of that.

The Art of Mourning in Scripture

In the two brief verses we just read, a half dozen different activities of mourning are recorded. It's a big deal. Including the refusal to be consoled and direct speech in which the father expresses the wish to mourn until he joins his son in death in Sheol: "I am going to cry until I see my son again in the grave." Some translations give it this type of atmosphere where he's like, "I only want to go see my son, even if I have to go to the grave right now." It's very dramatic.

And so he goes down, and he wants to go down to Sheol to see his son. And it's interesting because ironically he wants to go down. It's this language that's used, and we see these little language patterns all over the Bible. He wants to go see his son down in Sheol. But later in the story, we know that he does see his son—down in Egypt, right? It's one of these literary patterns. It's pretty neat.

The Reader's Expectation

So as a reader, what do you expect to happen next in the story? Okay, everybody caught up in the story? This really dramatic thing happened: the brothers got rid of their brother. They made it look like he got eaten by a lion. They gave the coat to Dad, and Dad is just broken—very dramatically, just broken.

What should happen next? We see that Joseph is now where? In Egypt. And he's at this guy Potiphar's house, this high official in Egypt. So we would expect to turn the page and see: okay, do they show him his room? Is he a slave? What's he doing? Is he a new cook? Is he taking out the trash? What's he doing? Are there any animals in the house? Something about Joseph. Let's turn the page because the biblical authors decide, "You know what? Let's just change the story altogether. Let's jump into a whole other story, and we'll continue this one later."

Genesis 38: And it happened at this time that Judah went down from his brothers and pitched his tent by an Adullamite named Herah.

Wanted to know about Joseph, but now we're talking about Judah. Okay, the brother. And Judah saw there was a daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. And he took her and came to bed with her. And she conceived and bore a son and called his name Ur. Can you imagine every time you get mad at your son? Ur. So I didn't mean to disrupt the flow. I'm going to read this as a narrative.

We're going to read this as a book, as a story. And I want you to notice the fast pacedness in how this was written for you to read. And it happened at the time of Judah. He went down from his brothers and pitched his tent by an Adulamite named Hira. And Judah saw that there was a daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. And he took her and came to bed with her. And she conceived and bore a son and called his name Ur. And she conceived again and bore a son and called his name Onan. And she conceived. And the Lord put him to death. And Judah said to Onan, come to bed with your brother's wife and do your duty as a brother-in-law for her and raise up seed for your brother. And Onan knew that the seed would not be his. So when he would come to bed with his brother's wife, he would waste his seed on the ground, so as not to give seed to his brother. And what he did was evil in the eyes of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death as well. And Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, listen, stay a widow in your father's house until Shelah, my third son, is grown up. For he thought, lest he too die like his brothers. And Tamar went and stayed at her father's house.

The Narrative's Rapid Pace

It's quite a different pace than the story we just came out of. First of all, that escalated quite quickly. Right? Just very. And the story is intentionally placed here, disrupting Joseph's story in the Bible. And it's here to tell us something about Judah and how Judah is directly linked to the larger aspect of Joseph's story. Spoiler alert. Does anyone find this interesting thus far? Okay, this is the Bible. It's so cool.

So right off the bat, we see the author dropping links from the Joseph story using the same language. But as far as the narrative goes, we go from a story about a father who was mourning the death of his son to a story of Judah fathering three sons back to back to back to back in one breathless pace, instant, poof. Right? And then I'm going to geek out a little bit. So sometimes you see different efforts that are made in the biblical text that show someone took the time to really reveal this. And there's a duo of triad verbs indicated here that are crammed together. They give the story a progression that's very quick and fast and urgent. And it really raises the drama up. And those are the verbs in Judah's action. So if you look: Judah saw that there was a daughter named Shua. He took her and came to bed with her. One, two, three. And then right

after this, Shua conceived, bore, and named a child. And you're supposed to notice that. It's intentional. So when we jump over to the next part of the story. Without warning, we have this man, he's married, he has these kids, and then a whole generation just goes by. Bam! Ur, Judah's son, got married to Tamar. Firstborn, was evil, so God killed him.

The Firstborn's Plight

Notice how the fact of him being a firstborn is highlighted repetitively. You see that? It's mentioned twice in the verse. As if that's why he was evil. Matt, where would you get that idea? That seems to be a common theme of the firstborns in the Torah. Cain, Esau, anyway. So there's a pattern in the Torah where the firstborns are overtaken by their brothers, by the younger brothers. So he did evil, God killed him. Next, Onan is told to marry Tamar, his brother's wife. You're still with me? And the reason why he's told to marry Tamar is to have a child with her so that his brother can have a child with his name on it. This is in the Torah. It's a very common practice in the Near East. Have you ever read the book of Ruth? That's what the whole book of Ruth is about.

Everyone's like, "Oh, it's a big love story between Boaz." No. It's a story about Ruth finding someone to raise up a child in the name of her dead husband. That's what the whole chapter 4 is about. So that her husband will be remembered forever among her people. I know everyone was like, "Oh, it's like a Twilight love story." Good. No, it's about her honoring her dead husband, but it's neat.

The Contrast Between Jacob and Judah

Notice how we just witnessed a gross emphasis on Jacob mourning for Joseph. Jacob is mourning, the father. He will not stop mourning until he sees his son again in Sheol. Judah on the other hand loses two sons and there's just not a peep recorded out of him. And you see how the stories are contrasted very uniquely. Judah then talks to Tamar and he says, "Hey, remain a widow and wait for my youngest son, Shelah, to grow up." Seems reasonable, but there's a subtle hint here. He names Tamar as his daughter-in-law. Why is that in there? Because it's something that's already known in the story. It's emphasized in there for you to realize that he knows he's about to do something wrong because he's legally obligated to give her to a husband. She's part of the family. She married one son. He needs to give her another.

Now the story shifts and jumps in time again. Okay, I know I just ran through that. It's a rushed story. Y'all still with me? Fantastic. Verse 12. And a long time passed, and the daughter of Shua,

Judah's wife, died. And after the mourning period, Judah went up. So how long has this been? A long time. Tamar has been without her promised husband for how long? And Judah's wife has died. Look how it's emphasized that the mourning period is over for Judah. Do you know what that means? To put it bluntly, he would not dishonor her life if he was active again. Okay, we're good. Yes.

A Desperate Plan

Verse 13. And Tamar was told, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." And she took off her widow's garb and covered herself with a veil and sat by the entrance to Anahim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given him as wife. And Judah saw her and took her for a whore—a prostitute.

Verse 14. And she said, "Your seal—probably a little ring in a cord, or something around his neck—and the staff in your hand." And he gave them to her, and he came to bed with her, and she conceived by him. And she rose, went her way, and took off the veil she was wearing, and put on her widow's garb again. She pulled an old switcheroo.

And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend, the Adulamite, to take back the pledge for the woman's hand and did not find her. And he asked the men of the place, saying, "Where is the cult harlot, the one of Enaim, by the road?" And they said, "There has been no harlot here." And he returned to Judah and said, "I could not find her." And the men of the place said, "Well, there's been no harlot here." And Judah said, "Let her take whatever she took lest we be a laughingstock. This is an awkward situation. Look, I sent this kid and you could not find her. Is it an awkward topic to talk about in church? Is it awkward to read the Bible in church? It can be, but the story is important.

Tamar is sitting there and she sees her promised husband still not given to her in marriage. She's been gypped. And Judah, past his mourning period, sees her, and he just can't stand it any longer. He's like, "Hey, let's, I'll send you a goat if we can work out an arrangement." So she says it's fine, but he'll have to give her a credit card to put on file. "What are you going to give me as collateral in case you don't send a goat?" He says, "I'll give you my seal, my necklace, and my staff. It's a nice walking stick." She took it. And they do that, and she conceives. Then Judah tries to send a goat, but the people of the city tell him that there's no cult harlot here, no one here. No regular harlots or cult harlots. So he shrugs. He says fine. She can keep my staff and my ring, and this sets up the climax of this mini-story that was shoved in the middle awkwardly

of the story of Joseph that's about to continue, by the way, and will contribute to the larger narrative of the Old Testament.

The Revelation

So verse 24: And it happened about three months later that Judah was told, "Hey, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has played the harlot. And what's more, she conceived by her whoring." And Judah said, "Take her out to be burned." Very dramatic. So there are two Hebrew words there that are just slammed together in the text. It's a knee-jerk, angry—take her out. Take her out to fire is pretty much what it is. Take her out to be burned.

Do we have verse 25? And out she was taken. And she said to her father-in-law, "By the man whom these belong, I was conceived," she said. Now I want you, Judah, to recognize, I pray, Hakernah, whose are this seal and cord and this staff? And Judah, Vayekir, recognized them and said, "She is more right than I, for I have failed to give her to Shelah's son." And he knew her again no more.

The Birth of Perez and Zerah

Now the chapter concludes with Tamar giving birth very quickly. Let's read this last part real quick. Here we go, verse 27. "And it happened at the time she gave birth that, look, there were twins in the womb. And it happened as she gave birth that one—and it happened that in the womb this one stuck its hand out. And the midwife took it and bound a scarlet thread on his hand, to say, this one's the firstborn, this one came out first. And as he was drawing his hand back, look, out came his brother. And she said, what a breach you have made for yourself. And she called his name Perez. And afterward out came his brother, on whose hand was the scarlet thread, and she called his name Zerah."

Do you see the beauty of the language here that's used? It's very graphic, and it's intentional, and it's also very over-the-top dramatic. So one thing—why do we need a story about a baby not all the way proceeding outward, getting something tied on his hand and pulling back like that? That's not something that really needed to be recorded in this story of Judah. Judah messed up, his line was preserved by his righteous daughter-in-law, and we can get back to why this is in here. But look at the over-the-top drama. I love this. So one hand reaches out of the womb and then gets drawn back in, and then—this is the Robert Alter translation, it's a great translation, but yours should say something like—as he drew his hand back in, look, out came his brother. It's supposed to be like, bam. And this is even confirmed: "And she said, what a breach you've

made for yourself." Like, wow, that was a great exit. That's what it says. And you're laughing because you're supposed to—when you read this, you're supposed to be like, wow, that was really over the top. This story has more detail and drama in it than almost the rest of the Judah story. Why?

Firstborn Overtaken by the Younger

Firstborn came out, but was overtaken by the younger. And here we have the same pattern that is demonstrated throughout the entire Torah—of the younger brother overtaking the older, the younger brother getting the blessing over the older, the younger brother getting the birthright over the older. I love that. So why is it so special that Perez is emphasized, the younger brother, and then it's emphasized that nope, he overtook his older brother and came out first? What's so special about Perez? Well, because it's through his lineage that King David comes. And it's through King David's lineage that Yeshua was born into. So right then and there, we have something special about this overarching narrative, about this younger overtaking. There's nothing we can do to stop God's providence and who he anoints and who he chooses. It's all one big story.

Did you guys notice the Hebrew combination at the top? Recognize—*haker* and *vayaker*. That's what happened over time in the story of Jacob, right? It's the same words that are used over in [Genesis 37](#), 32 and 33—the same two words during the deception of Jacob, Judah's father—are now used to link the stories in a type of poetic justice, as well as anchoring them together, as we'll see in a moment. Now, these words are used to reveal how Judah had been played by deception. Justice. I love that.

So notice how chapter 37 ended—oh, sorry, in 37, with Jacob wanting to go down to Sheol. And chapter 38 begins how? With Judah going down from his brothers. I'll give you one guess how chapter 39 begins. Oh, we've picked back up on the story of Joseph. Wasn't that just an awkward exit ramp out of the main story? "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, courtier of Pharaoh, the high chamberlain, an Egyptian man, bought him from the hands of the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there."

Why Judah's Story Is Here

Why is this so significant? What—they gave me a board to use, I'm just saying. Why is it that we have the story of Joseph right here, and for some reason the biblical authors say, you know what, let's talk about Judah right here? At the climax of the action and the drama of the story—

why? Because, well, Judah's lineage is preserved by the actions of a pseudo-prostitute. And then we jump right back into the Joseph story, where he's preserved from being killed, preserved from rotting in prison, and not just that, exalted up in a way that is unforeseen. He's given a wife, two sons, that end up being adopted as lead figures of the twelve sons of Jacob. They become tribes. It's kind of a big deal.

At this point, the story flows to fulfill the dreams that God gave Joseph. Everyone in Egypt, including his brothers, ends up bowing down to him just like his dreams produced. And then we get to the end of Genesis, and Jacob is about to die. There's something about this Judah story that's about to tie in to the Joseph story.

Jacob's Blessing Over Judah

We continue reading to the end of Genesis, and in [Genesis 49](#), Jacob gathers up all of his sons, and he says this. Let's see here—chapter 49, verse 1. "Jacob called his sons and said, gather round that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come." Your translations may say "the end of days." And he goes through and he blesses each one of his sons. He criticizes his firstborn, and then the other firstborn—he criticizes Reuben and Simeon and Levi for doing stupid stuff. And then he gets to Judah.

And you guys may be familiar with the blessing over Judah. Here's what he says to Judah—Jacob, after all of this big story, Jacob says: "Judah, you..." Verse 1—"he binds his ass to the vine, and his ass's foal to the grape bough. He washes his garment in wine, his cloak in the blood of the grape. Eyes darker than wine and teeth whiter than milk." It's a fancy way of saying he's bringing lots of wine and blessings. So here we're told that from the line of Judah is going to come a king that will rule like a lion. And look at this—"and your brothers will bow down to you." It's a hyperlink. Who had a dream about their father's sons bowing down to them? It's the story we just read—the story where Judah's story is shoved right in the middle and anchored as a part, by various themes and patterns, to Joseph's story.

The Blessing Points to a Future King

What happened to Joseph in the narrative has been picked up by way of imagery. And this blessing is transferred to the future house of Judah. That which happened to Joseph will happen to the future king in the days to come. The one who will crush the head of the snake in [Genesis 3](#), the one who will bring all blessings to all nations, will come from Judah—that's what this blessing says. And the author here is linking that future king, he's linking that future kingship

back to the story of Joseph. The story where Joseph is thrown down, hated, stripped of his clothing, treated like bottom class, a slave. But somehow, somehow, through God's provision and anointing, he's exalted up to rule and reign, and his own brothers end up bowing down to him at the end. That's kind of neat. That's kind of neat.

And there are many different theories in critical text criticism—people who study the Bible and the text, the manuscripts—about why Judah was chosen and how it happened. But collectively, it's just the hyperlinks and all of the details that spread out between them—they're overlaid on top of each other. The Joseph story is going to have something to do with Judah. And in the blessing given to Judah, that's where the final link is met. Judah, it's going to be you. Your future—Joseph's story is going to become yours. Joseph's story is going to become yours, through the lineage that leads to the royalty, the royal king.

The Messianic King in Isaiah and Zechariah

This is exactly the portrayal in the Old Testament of the future messianic king in Isaiah and in Zechariah. You know, Isaiah has a suffering servant, this messianic king that's going to suffer and then be exalted up. [Zechariah 12:10](#)—messianic verse, I love it—"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn." Kind of reminds you of Jacob mourning over his child. What's interesting about the Jacob story is when the brothers came and they gave Jacob the jacket, remember, they didn't say "this is Joseph's." They said "this is your son's," as if they disconnected themselves from their brother. This is all fueling and building the foundation—within the small stories, into the bigger stories, into the large story of the Bible.

[Psalms 2:8](#) speaks of a messianic king inheriting all nations. [Daniel 7](#) has a vision of a king known as the son of man, who defeats the beast of the human heart, sin and death, through self-sacrificial love, like a mighty warrior. [Revelation 5:5](#) and 5:9. Isaiah—I don't think I put the verse in here—[Isaiah 63:1](#) through 6 envisions a coming time of a conquering king whose clothing is like the one that treaded the wine-press, just like the blessing over the future king of Judah. Revelation speaks of Yeshua coming, riding on a horse with his garments dipped in blood. He treads the wine-press. It's apocalyptic literature describing the awesomeness of the Son of Man battling the beast, and the victory that was won on the cross.

It is both the story of Judah and his blessing and the king royal line that's coming from him, and the story of Joseph, that become fused together to present us this picture of this coming king. And I think that's amazing. And that's just one of the—I know we went from a macro view down to a micro view, but this is the story of the Bible.

The Bible's Promises Fulfilled

The story of the Bible is not a random collection of stories. And dare I say we read the stories and just think, oh, that was an interesting story and it has nothing to do with anything else. No, they all flow together. They all support one another. They all flow to the promises that God will not let his creation be overtaken with corruptness, that his kingdom will reign once and for all, and his ultimate peace, shalom, love, mercy, and justice will engulf all of creation. This is where the Old Testament ends, with these promises from God. This is why the New Testament is so important. Because without the New Testament, the God of the Bible is someone who just doesn't keep his promises. That's what the New Testament testifies of. That's why Yeshua told his disciples, don't you remember when we read the Old Testament? This is everything that was going to happen. Because it was.

Keep Reading

So hopefully, hopefully something edifying came from this today. Hopefully you at least saw something that made you go, hmm, that's really neat about the Bible. It got you excited about the Bible. It makes you want to read the Bible. Guys, the Bible is intentional with its words, and it's just an amazing thing. And when we read the Old Testament, we're supposed to be gaining wisdom of the faith of salvation through Yeshua. Amen? Okay, worship team, you guys can come up. And please stand as we conclude services.

And I don't know where you guys are at today. Maybe you haven't picked up a Bible in a very long time. Maybe you made the mistake of opening up to the wrong chapter of Judges one day and you were like, uh-uh, this is too much. Or you got drug through the first section of Numbers and it was like, man, this is boring. I want to encourage you, keep reading. Keep engulfing yourself with the stories of the Bible. They're amazing. They all link together and they all ultimately point to God answering the promises and fulfilling the promises that he made through the person of Yeshua, Jesus Christ, Yeshua the King, King Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Avinu Malkeinu, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time together. Father, I ask that you would allow us to have a fire in our hearts to learn and gain the wisdom that only you can give, the wisdom to grasp hold of eternity, that we can live out a type of eternal life that brings life and vitality and the essence of your kingdom to all the world. Father, we thank you for your spirit that you've given to us. Allow it to guide us in all things. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

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