

# *Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*<sup>1</sup>

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS:     ***Torah Vayashev:***            **Genesis 38:1-30**  
                  ***Haftarah:***                        **Amos 2:11-12**  
                  ***B'rit Chadasha:***            **Acts 6:11 - 7:1**

*She has been more righteous and just than I.*

[Genesis 38:26]

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Today's Meditation is Psalm 35:9-10;  
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 6, *B'racha* [Blessing]

Somewhere in ancient Kena'an a father grieves bitterly for his son. All Ya'akov has left of his beloved Yosef - the best and brightest star of his household - is the testimony of the tattered remains of the 'coat of many colors' that once adorned his son's powerful shoulders. And now the very sight of *that coat* - ripped asunder by hatred and stained with innocent blood - torments Ya'akov's soul day and night.

Once that garment carried the scent of *a field the Holy One has blessed*; now it emits only the stench of death. Its tatters conjure up in Ya'akov's mind sad images of *glorious dreams dashed* and *world-changing potential unfulfilled*.

Meanwhile, unheard by human ears the blood that was spilled upon that garment by Y'hudah and his co-conspirators cries out to the Holy One with sounds that cannot be uttered: "*How long O Lord, Holy and True, until you avenge . . . ?*"<sup>2</sup> Unbeknownst to anyone except the perpetrators of the crime and the hosts of Heaven the blood crying out to the Holy One is *not* the blood of the shining star of Ya'akov's heart – Yosef; it is instead the blood of a young goat which just happened to have found himself in very much the wrong place at very much the wrong time.

The true story has not been told – and indeed will not be told for quite some time. But those who have sown sorrow are about to begin a long season of reaping what they have sown. Y'hudah – the man whose '*Mah-betza?*' sent a stunned young Yosef off to a life of slavery in Egypt – is first in line.

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<sup>2</sup> The cry of innocent blood is a substantive and substantial spiritual force in creation. See Genesis 4:10, Genesis 18:20, and Revelation 6:10 for examples.

As you read today's aliyah of Torah of Y'hudah's darkest season of life keep in mind the testimony of three witnesses that Y'hudah and his brothers used to deal deceitfully with Ya'akov. They used the testimony of a **garment**, a **goat**, and the **outcry of innocent blood**. At the end of the story I think you will understand exactly why I told you to keep these things in mind.

### ***Y'hudah Boards the Equivalent of a Ship Bound for Tarshish***

Y'hudah – a principal player in the crime against the dreamer Yosef - is going to *run away from home* today. Torah tells us:

***Vayehi ba'et hahi vayered Yehudah me'et echav***

*Around this time, Yehudah left his brothers.*

***vayet ad-ish Adulami ushmo Chirah***

*He descended to the level of a man of Adullam by the name of Chirah.*

[Genesis 38:1]

What the incredibly talented and charismatic fourth son of Ya'akov is really going to run away from though is not so much the tents of his father, nor the haunting sound of his father's wailing cries, nor whatever nagging pangs of guilt he may feel over what he and his brothers have done.

What young Y'hudah is really going to run away from is **his destiny**. What the third son of Ya'akov's union with Leah is really trying to hide from is **his portion in the covenant cut between the Holy One and his fathers**.

And that means that Who Y'hudah is really trying to run away from is none other than the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient God. That means that no matter *how hard Y'hudah runs*, no matter *how cleverly he disguises himself in pagan clothing*, no matter *what amount of slime he chooses to wallow in* to try to cover up the scent of his calling, *Y'hudah will never be able to escape*.

The hounds of Heaven will follow him wherever he goes and will sniff him out. And - when the time is right – angels will bring him home. The Holy One *will not relent . . .* until he has Y'hudah's all. And that, Dear Reader, much more than the promises of possession of the land, of offspring, of material blessing and of a richly positive impact upon all nations of the world is the most wonderful part of the covenant we have with the most-High God.

### ***Run Baby Run!***

There is a song written by modern psalmist Jason Upton that expresses the concept I am talking about very well. The words of Jason's song, which draws off the

model of the story of Jonah and is called ‘*Run Baby Run*’<sup>3</sup> are as follows:

*I’ve been calling you to go to the city  
I’ve been watching you every day  
Now I’m paying for a one-way ticket on a ship that sails the opposite way*

*And you laugh and you cry . . . and you live and you die  
but you don’t really know who you are  
All alone in this world . . . orphan boy /orphan girl . . .  
‘cause you don’t really know who you are*



*Hear me laughing as you run from your calling  
See me crying in the storms that rage  
One way or another you will be going - to obey is such an easier way*

***But run baby run . . . my hands release you, baby  
run baby run . . . just as fast as you can  
Run till your legs lead your heart to the real truth  
You’re my daughter my son  
so run baby . . . run baby . . . run!***

Yes, *Y’hudah*. Yes, all you other *beloved prodigals* out there. *Run baby run!*

### ***Of Heroes and Halos***

The story we will read in today’s aliyah is one of those that my flesh really used to wish the Holy One had found a way to “leave out” of the Torah. It is a story about how *Y’hudah*, riddled with shame over his participation in the abduction and sale of *Yosef* and the deception practiced on *Ya’akov*, assumed the role of a prodigal and descended into the dark and disgusting world of *Kena’ani* filth and perversion.

I used to reason that it was bad enough for us to have had to see our ‘spiritual hero’ *Y’hudah*, whose name means ‘*He will praise the Holy One*’, participate in rape and pillage at *Shechem*. I used to cringe when *Torah* showed him conspiring against and then viciously attacking his younger brother *Yosef*. I used to want to scream out ‘NO HOLY ONE - IT CANNOT BE SO!’ when I saw *Torah* attribute to *Y’hudah* the heartless inquiry ‘*Mah-betza?*’ [What’s in it *for me?*] in the moment of

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<sup>3</sup> Copyright c. 2002 Key of David Ministries. For more information, see [JasonUpton.com](http://JasonUpton.com).

Yosef's most intense suffering. **Genesis 37:26-27.**

I used to consider it gut-wrenching to have Torah show Y'hudah participating in the infliction of needless suffering upon his father Ya'akov by showing him Yosef's 'coat of many colors' after deceptively soaking it in innocent blood. **Genesis 37:31-32.** I used to reason "haven't we seen enough to get the point?" I used to wonder "*Must Torah proceed to show us even more disgusting aspects of the darkness that resides in my forefather's soul?*" Must we really have a front row seat to witness first hand all Y'hudah's prophetic transactions in the marketplace of human misery?

There were some things, you see, which this inquiring mind really did NOT want to know. It used to make me uncomfortable to see a 'hero' of my ancestry – a prominent member of the household of faith - exposed for all to see as he wallowed in the miry clay of blatant rebellion and throes of disgusting sin. My flesh used to prefer that I be allowed to labor under the pleasant delusion that members of the household of faith – particularly leaders among them like Y'hudah – would always be *holy*, and *righteous*, and well . . . *above such things*.

That was of course before I had much life experience under my belt. Now I think otherwise. Now I realize that it is the wisdom of the Holy One to make known plainly to us that even '*spiritual heroes*' are *far from perfect* and are in fact perfectly *capable of engaging in the most absolutely disgusting behavior* known to man. Now I realize that the Holy One never wants us to judge sons of the covenant – or anyone for that matter – by *the sight of our eyes* or *the hearing of our ears*. Now I understand that *a season of rebellion does not separate us from the love of the Father*, nor does the stain of sin disqualify anyone from participation in the covenant. Now I realize that the gifts and callings of the Holy One *really are* completely, absolutely, 100% *irrevocable*.

When I think about it, you see, I realize that it isn't just Y'hudah who had sin problems like this. *Avraham* had major issues with truthfulness – especially about his relationship with his wife. *Sarah* had serious anger management problems – and an unusual sense of humor to boot. *Yitzhak* was so spiritually blind he couldn't see either Esav or Ya'akov through the Holy One's eyes. And what of *Rivkah*? That was some wild plan she cooked up for Ya'akov to carry out, was it not?

*Ya'akov*? Well, where do you want me to start? *Rachel*? What's that she's hiding under that saddle? *Sh'mon and Levi*? *Bloody swords* say all that needs to be said about them. *Moshe*? A little problem with rage and murder as I recall. *David*? Oh

yeah, there was that Bat-sheva thing. And let's not even talk about poor Uriah.

Okay – point made? The Holy One does not seem to want us to put ‘spiritual heroes’ on a pedestal or to imagine them wearing some kind of halo. He wants us to know that ‘spiritual heroes’ are just *ordinary people* like us – people who *make stupid mistakes*, who *commit disgusting sins*, and who yet, despite it all, *get redeemed by a great and loving God – a God Who then Divinely commissions, empowers and uses them to do great deeds . . . despite themselves.*

Hmmmmn. How about you? Are you imperfect? If so, ***congratulations*** - it is precisely for that reason that you qualify in the Holy One's eyes to be a ‘*spiritual hero*’.

### ***Keeping It All In Perspective***

It may give you some perspective before we delve into the disgusting aspects of today's aliyah to read Matthew 1:3. That verse tells us something we need to know before we see Y'hudah *out-paganing* the pagans of Kena'an. In that verse you see we find out that right there in the lineage of the Messiah are the names of two people we will read about in great detail in today's aliyah - Y'hudah, the third son of Ya'akov, and the Kena'ani woman *Tamar*, who in today's aliyah will seduce and commit adultery with Y'hudah and will thereby beget twins named *Peretz* and *Zerah*. Matthew 1:3 also tells us that one of these illegitimate twins [*Peretz*] went on to be the progenitor of the great Shepherd-King David, his son Sh'lomo, *and Messiah Himself*.

As you find yourself getting disgusted by today's sordid tale, keep in mind this end result. The Holy One is able to bring forth good from *absolutely anything*. This does not, of course, in any way *excuse* our breaches of covenant. Nor does it *relieve us personally* of the consequences of those breaches of covenant in this life. It does however hopefully help us to *see other people's sins against us in perspective*.

So every time you see someone else really mess up or do something clearly violative of Torah, or unspiritual, or even immoral, please pause before you judge that person. In the Holy One's eyes you see the person you are about to judge as unfit for your companionship might just be a ‘*spiritual hero*’ *in the making*.

## *Traveling the Prodigal's Pathway*

In today's aliyah we abruptly interrupt the story of Yosef, leaving him in Mitzrayim [Egypt] at his new position of slavery in Potifar's house. There will be much more in Torah about Yosef - and the house of Potifar - later. Today the Author of Torah turns our attention back to Kana'an.

What will be the "*fruit*" in the lives of the 10 eldest sons of Ya'akov of the sin of hating, conspiring against, brutally assaulting, cruelly shaming, kidnapping, and then selling a brother into slavery and probable early death? What will be the *consequence* in their lives of living a life based upon a deception practiced upon their father?

Today's aliyah shows us the fruit of these sins in the life of the fourth son of Ya'akov by Leah - the one Leah named Y'hudah. It was as you will recall *his idea* to sell the seed of Messiah *ben Yosef* into slavery in yesterday's aliyah. It will be he, we will find in today's aliyah, who himself takes the seed of Messiah ben David into the depths of idolatry and harlotry. Whose slavery - Yosef's or Y'hudah's - do you think wound up being worse?

### *Y'hudah's 'Rite of Passage'*

Quite full of himself after getting away with the sale of the "dreamer" into slavery, Y'hudah cannot wait to leave home. Undoubtedly he has convinced himself in his heart-of-hearts that he is now a "man". After all, he has done some "man" things - he has shepherded sheep, conducted slave trade with the Ishmaelites, earned a little money of his own. And physically, of course, Y'hudah did indeed have the appearance of a "man". *Spiritually* however Y'hudah remained *very, very immature*.

The picture Torah paints for us of Y'hudah in the years of Yosef's servitude and imprisonment is that of a man so far removed from the ways of the Holy One that he is *absolutely indistinguishable from his gaggle of Kana'anite friends*. He is, at this point in his life, *an embarrassment* to his grandfather, to his father, and most of all *to himself*. This future patriarch - whose name means "*He will praise the Holy One*" and through whom the Holy One has chosen to bring forth the Messiah - is demonstrated in today's aliyah to be *totally enamored by* and *engulfed in the secular society of Kana'an*. His soul is about to become enslaved by the sensuality and depravity of that culture.

Beloved, if Y'hudah's story does not cause you to be amazed at the grace and covenant faithfulness of the Holy One - despite the sin of His people - nothing will.

And in addition Y'hudah's story should cause us all to stop and take another look at, and hold off on final judgment regarding, those sons and daughters of the covenant we know who right now at least are behaving every bit as bad as the pagans in the world.

Maybe in light of what happened with Y'hudah in the end we should not be too quick to give up on these prodigals just yet.

### ***The Holy One Is Still Very Much In Control***

Though the Holy One may be – indeed had to be – less than thrilled by both Y'hudah's attitude and conduct, at no point does the Holy One even think of abandoning or giving up on the young prodigal. Redemption can be found right between “creation” and “signs and wonders” on the Holy One's resume.

As you read this aliyah therefore remember that the Holy One is always *moving furniture around behind the scenes* of Y'hudah's odyssey. Angels have been given charge over Y'hudah.

Please note therefore that *the Holy One does not let Y'hudah get away with anything*. The poor fellow just *keeps getting caught*. You see, Dear Reader, Y'hudah's destiny is far too important for the Holy One to allow him to squander it on the sensual pleasures of the Kana'anite lifestyle. The same holds true for YOUR DESTINY as well. You were born for *better things than this*.

### ***Seeing the Bigger Picture***

Even more importantly in the long run, keep in mind as you read of Y'hudah's experiences today that while the precipitating physical cause of Yosef's being sold into slavery in Mitzrayim was his brothers' hatred of and sins against him, the *real spiritual reason* Yosef is suffering in Egypt as the events of today's aliyah unfold was because unknown to anyone on Planet Earth the Holy One was using his suffering to rearrange the 'big picture' of the world and introduce the next phase of His redemptive plan.

The land and the lifestyle of Kana'an were both about to change dramatically - because the Holy One was about to bring about *a famine* that would *destroy the economy of that land* and turn the focus of the people away from *perverse pursuits of pleasure* to *sheer survival*. Granted, it is going to seem like “business as usual” and *laissez les bon temps rouler* for Y'hudah and his Kana'ani friends for a little while as they engage in their youthful follies. But in just a few days, even as they anesthetize themselves with sensual pleasures and material things the world as they know it is going to *totally change*. Their land, their lifestyles, and their lives would

never be the same.

The Holy One's redemptive plan for mankind, you see, involved having Yosef serve as the Covenant family's 'advance man' in Egypt. Before the famine that was about to shake Kena'an ever began, the Holy One wanted Yosef to be firmly established in the land in which Ya'akov and his family would find refuge from the famine. But because of Ya'akov's special relationship with Yosef and Binyamin, the sons of Rachel, Ya'akov was not about to send Yosef off to Egypt voluntarily. Torah does not even indicate the Holy One *asked* Ya'akov to send him – probably because He knew in advance what Ya'akov's answer would be.

Because the Holy One was moving behind the scenes, ever faithful to His covenant, when disaster and devastation finally struck Yosef the 'advance man' would be in place. The Holy One would use him to deliver His people. The stage would be set for *the birth of a holy nation* which would be visibly different from the Kana'ani – a nation who would live by the Holy One's Torah and who would fulfill the Avrahamic calling to:

***‘ . . . teach his children and his household after him,  
that they may keep the way of the Holy One, to do righteousness and justice;  
to the end that the Holy One may bring on Avraham  
that which he has spoken of him.***

[Genesis 18:19-20]

Being part of the Covenant family means that our smaller stories of *personal grief and familial shame* – however petty or epic they may appear to us - always merely pave the way for the manifestation of the grandeur and majesty of *the greater story* of the Divine Romance between the Holy One and fallen man.

### ***A Look at Kena'an's Marketplace of Human Misery – Up Close and Personal***

Before we get to the birth of a holy nation part however Torah sees to it that we first get a close-up and personal look at the depravity of the Kana'ani society and culture that the Holy One was about to destroy. The Holy One chooses to do this through including in the Torah at this juncture a very dark chapter in the life of our ancestor Y'hudah. He left his father and his brothers to deal with the fallout of the great *Yosef Deception* without him. He decided to drown out the voice of his conscience – and the '***Come to your Destiny!***' whispers of his father's God - in the perverse and irresponsible pleasures of a Kana'anite lifestyle. He wanted to forget *who he was* and become *what he saw other people doing*. He saw a beautiful woman. He did not restrain his lust. He took her, moved her in the tent with him, and proceeded to make babies with her. As Torah describes it:



***Vayar-sham Y'hudah bat-ish Kena'ani ushmo Shu'a***  
*Y'hudah saw there a daughter of a certain Kana`ani named Shua*

***V'yikacheha v'yavo eleyha***  
*And he took her, and went in to her.*

***V'tahar v'teled ben vayikra et-sh'mo Er***  
*She conceived, and bore a son; and he named him `Er.*

***V'tahar od v'teled ben vatikra et-sh'mo Onan***  
*She conceived again, and bore a son; and she named him Onan.*

***V'tosef od v'teled ben v'tikra et-shmo Shelah***  
*She gave birth once again to a son, and she named him Shelah.*  
[Genesis 38:2-5(a)]

Like Adam, like Noach, Y'hudah now has three sons. And that brings us to the really mysterious part of the story – the part where Y'hudah begins to reap a series of harvest of exactly what he has sown.

Y'hudah's oldest son, Er<sup>4</sup>, turns out to be so 'wicked' in the Holy One's sight that the Holy One actually '*put him to death*'. **Genesis 38:7**. Hmmmmn. Let's see now . . . his little brother Yosef had been wicked in Y'hudah's sight. For that reason Y'hudah had set in motion and participated in a plot to do away with Yosef, leaving his father bereaved. Seed sown. And Y'hudah's field of shame bore its first crop of like-kind fruit. *Measure for measure* Y'hudah. Are you *getting it* yet?

Alas Y'hudah did not 'get' it. He failed to see the connection. He remained unrepentant. That meant another harvest of the seed of 'son killing' is coming.

### ***Introducing Tamar – the Gentile Progenitor of Mashiach***

Complicating the situation for Y'hudah is the fact that before Er met the strange fate Torah describes Y'hudah had actually chosen a feisty Kena'ani girl named *Tamar* as a wife for him. Apparently Y'hudah used the same criteria in choosing a wife for Er as he had used in choosing a wife for himself – i.e. she was *attractive, available, and willing*.

Since Y'hudah was at the time fully immersed in a Kana'anite lifestyle, it made sense that would make his choice of a bride for his son using Kana'anite criteria. This is perhaps a good point in the course of these lessons to point out that for those in covenant with the Holy One, *choosing a wife* – whether for ones' self or for one's son - *is an act of great consequence*, requiring interaction with, and heeding the instructions, of God. Think of Avraham's care in seeking out a wife

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<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew the name ***Er*** [*ayin, resh*] means *aroused, awakened, incited, and/or stirred up*.

for Yitschak from his home country. Similarly, think of Yitschak and Rivkah, and how adamant they were that Ya'akov not take a bride from among the Kena'ani.

For sons of the covenant you see, the Kana'ani method of finding a wife – i.e. latching onto the first available member of the opposite sex to whom one is physically attracted - is almost always a *miserable failure*. Intense physical attraction does not exactly have a good track record as a successful foundation on which to build a long-standing marriage relationship. Things like *an understanding and appreciation of a calling to fulfill a great destiny, dedication to the God of the Torah, faithfulness in prayer, willingness to serve others, loyalty to the family unit, and ability to adapt to difficult circumstances* tend to mean a whole lot more in the long run.

But I digress. Back to our story. After Er is mysteriously struck dead by the Holy One, Y'hudah tries to marry Er's Kena'ani wife Tamar off to his second-born son Onan<sup>5</sup> – in order that, under ancient custom at least, the family line of Er would continue.

Onan however did not want any part of the 'continue the family line' concept. He was not any more dedicated to family than his father Y'hudah. I would go so far as to expect that when Y'hudah told Onan what he wanted him to do Onan's response was the equivalent in the Kena'ani language of '*Mah-betza?*' I think I see Y'hudah's field of shame germinating for a second time.

Onan was willing to take Tamar *as a* sex object to use for his own pleasure – but he absolutely refused to allow her to receive his 'seed' and thereby become pregnant with a child that could be attributed to Er. He apparently hated his brother. At the very least he disrespected him. Another seed sown by Y'hudah has become a harvest reaped by him through his children.

Torah tells us that what Onan did in this regard, namely spilling his 'seed' on the ground so that Tamar could not have a child to carry forth Er's lineage, was 'wicked' in the Holy One's sight, and that for that reason the Holy One '*put him to death also*'. As Y'hudah had sought to cut off his despised brother Yosef's lineage, so his son Onan did to his despised brother Er.

Wow. Things really aren't going too well for Y'hudah in his new Kena'ani lifestyle are they? The destructive things he did in the house of his father are being done in his own household now, measure for measure. Who does Y'hudah blame

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<sup>5</sup> In Hebrew the name **Onan** [alef, cholem vav, nun, nun sofit] means vigorous, potent one – i.e. a man empowered to sire offspring.

for this? Not himself, of course. Not his unconfessed sin against Yosef. Not his wholesale abandonment of his destiny. Not Er – or the Y’hudah seed in Er. Not Onan or the Y’hudah seed in Onan. Of all people he could have chosen, Y’hudah decided to place the blame on the only truly innocent person in the picture - *Tamar*. So if you think things are not going well for Y’hudah . . . well, just think what emotional trauma poor Tamar must be going through.

Y’hudah now has only one son left and this one is too young for Tamar to marry. Y’hudah therefore sends Tamar away, telling her to ‘*live as a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up.*’ Y’hudah just keeps repeating the same old sin patterns that got him in this mess. In yesterday’s aliyah of Torah Y’hudah was responsible for sending *Yosef* away to languish and suffer as a slave. In today’s aliyah he is responsible for sending Tamar away to languish and suffer as a ‘*black widow*’. He makes sure she cannot, since she is waiting on Shelah, marry anyone else. He sentences her to grieve and mourn perpetually the loss of her first love – just like Ya’akov, who would not be consoled or comforted regarding the loss of Yosef.

Of course, Torah makes it clear that though Y’hudah told Tamar he would marry her to Shelah<sup>6</sup> when Shelah was old enough, he never had any intention whatever of doing so. All Y’hudah really wanted was to *be rid of Tamar*. He told her what he figured she wanted to hear so that she would – at least for the foreseeable future - leave him and his favored son Shelah alone.

### ***Y’hudah Hits ‘Rock Bottom’***

But *Tamar* was not the root of Y’hudah’s problem. Getting rid of Tamar therefore did not make Y’hudah’s situation improve one whit. Oh Shelah apparently survived and grew up alright<sup>7</sup> – but Y’hudah’s Kena’ani concubine *bat-Shua* died on him.

The loss of his Kena’ani concubine however still did not get Y’hudah’s attention. It would take a blow even more crushing for the Holy One to bring Y’hudah to his senses. Y’hudah would, it appears, have to reach ‘*rock bottom*’. And so we reach the narrative of the lowest point in Y’hudah’s life – the most thoroughly disgusting part of his plunge into the sensual Kana’anite world in which he chose to live in the years following his sale of Yosef into slavery. This ‘rock bottom’ point in Y’hudah’s life is vividly portrayed in verses 12-18 of the 38<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis.

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<sup>6</sup> In Hebrew the name *Shelah* [shin, alef, lamed, hey] means *requested, prayed for*.

<sup>7</sup> In Genesis 46:12 the sons of Y’hudah will be listed and it will be stated that Er and Onan died, but no reference will be made to the death of Shelah, and it will appear that he goes to Egypt with Y’hudah, Tamar, and the twin sons Tamar bore to Y’hudah, namely Perez and Zerah.

In those verses Torah tells us:

***V'yinachem Y'hudah vaya'al al-gozezei tzono***  
*Y'hudah was comforted, and went up to his sheep-shearers*

***hu v'Chirah re'ehu ha-Adulami Timnatah***  
*he and his friend Hirah, the `Adullami. to Timnah,*

***v'yugad l'Tamar l'emor***  
*It was told Tamar, saying,*

***hineh chamich oleh Timnatah lagoon tzono***  
*"Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."*

***V'tasar bigdei almenutah me'aleyha***  
*She took off of her the garments of her widowhood,*

***vatechas batza'if vatit'alaf***  
*and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself,*

***vateshev b'fetach Eynayim asher al-derech Timnatah***  
*and sat in the gate of `Enayim, which is by the way to Timnah;*

***ki ra'atah ki-gadal Shelah***  
*for she saw that Shelach was grown up,*

***v'hi lo-nitnah lo l'ishah***  
*and she wasn't given to him as a wife.*

Please note if you will the *poetic irony* found in the Hebrew text above. Pay close attention to exactly what Torah tells us Tamar did in the gate of Enayim as the episode of Y'hudah's shame begins. Torah tells us she is [a] *seeking to deceive by dressing up in deceptive garments* [as had Ya'akov, when he wore Esav's clothes, and as had Leah, when she dressed herself in Rachel's wedding dress]; and she is [b] ***vateshev*** – *i.e. sitting* – a derivative form of the word ***vayashev***, the name of our parsha, which describes the kind of existence to which Ya'akov has been reduced by the loss of Yosef and to which Tamar has been reduced by Y'hudah's sending her into exile under false pretenses. The Hebrew text is therefore drawing a clear parallel between Tamar and her defrauded situation and Ya'akov and his defrauded situation – and is pointing out to those with ears to hear that, in large measure, Y'hudah is being held responsible by the Holy One *for both*.

The point is well taken of course that Y'hudah has indeed defrauded them both. Torah goes on however to explain *prophetically* how Y'hudah is going to suffer serious consequences as a result of both types of fraud he has practiced. Watch carefully how Torah develops Y'hudah's prophetic 'judgment day' scenario:

***Vayir'eha Y'hudah v'yachsheveha lezonah***

*When Y'hudah saw her he thought that she was a prostitute,*

***ki chistah paneyha***

*for she had covered her face.*

Remember how in the Book of Revelation 'Mystery Babylon the Great' is pictured as the 'great prostitute' and the 'mother of all prostitutes' and is said to **sit** [i.e. **vateshev**] on many waters. **Revelation 17:1-6**. Do you think there might just be a parallel here? But let's continue with the narrative. Yehudah is about to make another prophetic transaction in the marketplace of human misery. Torah tells us:

***V'yet eleyha el ha-derech vayomer***

*He [Yehudah] turned to her [Tamar] by the way, and said,*

***havah-na avo elayich***

*"Please come, let me come in to you."*

***ki lo yada ki chalato hi vatomer mah-titen-li ki tavo elay***

*for he didn't know that she was his daughter-in-law.*

Why on earth was a son of the Covenant *soliciting favors* from a woman he believed to be a prostitute? That is no way for a son of the covenant to act, is it? Methinks Y'hudah has been *living like a Kena'ani for way too long*.

What on earth could Y'hudah have been *thinking*? What could he have thought he was *doing*? Alas, how far has the prince among Ya'akov's sons fallen. All Y'hudah saw in the young woman sitting by the road wrapped in veils apparently was *an object through which to satisfy his lust*. At that moment, Y'hudah's verbal commitment to Tamar, the beautiful young Kena'ani woman to whom he had promised to give Shelah as a husband, was the furthest thing from his mind. The ways of the Holy One, as taught to him by his father, were also obviously nothing but a remote memory.

But all of that is about to change.

Please note as we read the rest of this sordid tale how the *Ruach HaQodesh* Who inspired the writing of the Torah refuses to spare Y'hudah from the disgrace he earns. The *Ruach* is going to expose Y'hudah's guilt publicly, right in the pages of Torah. Everyone, in every generation, will be made to see Y'hudah ben Ya'akov for the totally self-centered deceiver that he allowed himself to become.

Talk about *accountability*! Of those to whom much is given, much is required.

***A Goat and a Garment: It's All Part of the Deception***

As you read the narrative of Y'hudah's descent keep in mind the centrality of *garments as evidence* in this week's parsha. When the kidnappers of Yosef wanted to convince their father that Yosef had been killed by wild animals, for instance, what evidence did they offer? They showed their father *Yosef's garment* [the coat of many colors], which they had smeared with the blood of a young goat. Ten eyewitnesses stood silent while a bloody goatskin veritably screamed out a testimony that human eyes only thought they could decipher and that human ears only thought they could interpret.

Later in the parsha when Potifar's wife wants to convince her husband that Yosef has attempted to rape her, what evidence does she offer? She will show Potifar *Yosef's garment* that she had ripped from his body, which will also testify in a deceptive, incomplete way what happened.

Tamara as well, we are about to discover, is going to employ a *garment* as evidence. This time the garment will not be that of Yosef but of Y'hudah. Here is how Torah describes the events:

***V'yomer anochi ashalach gdi-izim***

*She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"*

***min-ha-tzon***

*[He said], "I will send you a kid of the goats from the flock."*

***vatomer im-titen eravon ad sholchecha***

*She said, "Will you give me a pledge, until you send it?"*

***V'yomer mah ha-eravon asher eten-lach***

*He said, "What pledge will I give you?"*

***V'tomer chotamcha uf'tilecha***

*She said, "Your signet and your outer garment,*

***umatcha asher b'yadecha***

*and your staff that is in your hand."*

***V'yiten-lah vayavo eleyha v'tahar-lo***

*He gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.*

\* \* \*

***Vayehi kemish'losh chodashim v'yugad li-Y'hudah l'emor***

*Some three months passed, and Y'hudah was told,*

***zantah Tamar kalatecha v'gam hineh ha-rah l'z'nunim***

*'Your daughter-in-law has behaved badly, and is pregnant from bad behavior.*

***V'yomer Y'hudah hotzi'uha v'tisarech***

*And Y'hudah said: 'Take her out and have her burned.'*

***Hi mutzet v'hi shalchah el-chamiha l'emor***

*When she was being taken out, she sent [the security] to her father-in-law, saying*

***l'ish asher-eleh lo anochi harah***

*'By the man who is the owner of these articles am I pregnant.'*

***V'tomer haker-na***

*[When Y'hudah came to her,] she said, 'If you would, identify [these objects].*

***L'mi ha-chotemet v'ha-p'tilim v'ha-mateh ha-eleh***

*Who is the owner of this seal, this outer garment, and this staff?'*

## ***Haker-Na!***

Torah tells us that when Tamar presented to Y'hudah the seal, the garment and the staff of the man responsible for her condition, she accompanied the presentation of these evidentiary items with the phrase '***Haker-Na***'. That phrase will drive the nail through Y'hudah's heart. You see, Beloved, the Hebrew phrase ***haker-na*** which Tamar spoke as she presented to Y'hudah the evidence she possessed of the identity of the man who engaged in adultery with her, means, roughly, '*Pray, can you identify!*'

If you do not read Hebrew you unfortunately miss a very important point – the words Tamar speaks are *the exact same words* which Torah records as having been spoken by one of the brothers – perhaps Y'hudah himself – to Ya'akov at the agonizing moment he was shown the blood stained 'coat of many colors' that had belonged to Yosef. See **Genesis 37:32**. ***Haker-na!*** he said to Ya'akov when he showed him the blood-stained coat of many colors. ***Haker-na!*** Tamar says to him as she holds forth the seal, the garment, and the staff.

The words cut like a knife. Y'hudah's soul is laid bare. ***Haker-na!*** indeed. With those simple words Y'hudah came undone. The cold, hard reality of the depth of his sin – of what he had done – were finally brought home to his heart. For Torah says:

***V'yaker Y'hudah***

*And then Y'hudah understood,*

***v'yomer tzadkah mimeni***

*and he said: 'She is more righteous than I!'*

Yes Y'hudah, you are exactly right. Tamar the Kena'ani, the one who played the prostitute to entrap you, is indeed more righteous than you. A hundred times more righteous. You are not even in her league. But do not despair. This is *not the end*



for you Y'udah. It is indeed only the beginning.

So please do not look at this snapshot of Y'udah, get disgusted, and give up on him – *or on any other son or daughter of the covenant*. Whatever bad things they have done, however hypocritical they have acted, or whatever perverse depths of sinful lifestyle into which they have fallen, do not 'write them off', judge them, or allow either revulsion or outrage to steal your love for them. Over the next few chapters of Torah we are going to see that the sheer *magnificence of the Holy One's tireless love* and the *immense power of His prophetic voice* can transform even a scoundrel like *Y'udah* into a force for good through whom all nations will be blessed – and, even more importantly, into a *tzaddik* through whom the Holy One's name will be glorified.

Never give up on your prodigal sons and daughters, Beloved. And prodigals – never, ever give up on yourselves!

*Haker-na*, Dear Reader – *Pray, Can you identify?*

### ***Questions For Today's Study***

1. Let's begin our study with some basic questions:

[A] Where does Y'udah go as we begin today's aliyah?

[B] What does the name of this place mean?

[C] Locate this place on your Bible Atlas. What direction and how many miles is it from Hebron, where a grieving Ya'akov, and the rest of the covenant family, was living?

[D] In whose dwelling does Y'udah abide? What is the meaning of that person's name?

2. Regarding the children born to Y'udah in the course of his 'sowing his wild oats':

[A] What was the name of Kena'ani woman Y'udah moved in with him?

[B] What does this woman's name mean?

[C] What were the names of the three sons born to Y'udah and this woman, and what does each name mean?

[D] Where were Y'udah and his Kena'ani woman when their third son was born? What is the meaning of the name of this place?

[E] What happened to the first two sons born to Y'udah by this woman? Why?

[F] Imagine you were an angel assigned to Y'udah (after all, from him will eventually come not only King David but also the Messiah!). When you report daily to the



Holy One during the period Y'hudah is living with this woman, what do you think is the Holy One's attitude toward Y'hudah? [Be careful - you are about to explore your concept of who God is and what He is like!].

**3. Regarding the bride Y'hudah chose for his son *Er*:**

[A] What was the name of the wife Y'hudah chose for Er?

[B] What does this name mean?

[C] Why did Y'hudah not give his youngest son, Shelah, to Tamar as he had promised?

[D] On what criteria do you think Y'hudah selected a wife for himself and for his sons (this can be referred to as the "way of Esav")?

[E] We have read the Holy One's way of selecting a wife for a son - the story of the selection of Rivkah for Yitzchak (**Genesis 24**). What do you think (in light of that story and, by negative implication, the story of today's aliyah) are the most important criteria a man should have in choosing a wife?

**4. Regarding the remarkable chain of events which led to the conception and birth of Tamar's twin sons:**

[A] Where did these events happen?

[B] What does the name of that place mean?

[C] List the things Y'hudah did in those verses that do not fit in with the lifestyle of Torah.

[D] What was Y'hudah's attitude when Tamar was found to be pregnant?

[E] How does this further illustrate Y'hudah's depraved condition?

[F] What were the names of Tamar's two children, and what do those names mean?

**5. Garments - articles of clothing - play a large role in this week's parsha - starting with the special robe of Yosef. What Y'hudah and his accomplices with the robe of Yosef will come back to haunt Y'hudah. Just as he sought to use the robe of Yosef as evidence to cover up his guilt in connection with Yosef's disappearance, it was a robe – his own robe - that Tamar used as evidence against him.**

[A] List all the garments - articles/types of clothing - mentioned in today's aliyah.

[B] What does this tell you of the way in which persons living a Kana'anite lifestyle utilize clothing [pay special attention to Tamar's use of clothing to entice Y'hudah]?

[C] What kind of clothing do you feel honors the Holy One, and is appropriate for you to wear? List the characteristics you feel are important.

[D] What characteristics of clothing would be inappropriate for those who wish to honor the Holy One?

6. In today's Haftarah reading the prophet Amos of Tekoa, a shepherd by trade, serves as God's spokesman concerning the sins of Israel, for which judgment is due. The Holy One's charge is that, in addition to "selling the righteous", Israel has abused the poor, denied justice to the oppressed, and profaned His Name through sexual perversions - all as a result of *imitating the idolatrous ways of the Emori*, whom the Holy One cast out of the land. The problem Amos specifically addresses in today's aliyah is the problem of *ignoring God, and rejecting and abusing His messengers of t'shuvah*.

*I raised up some of your sons for prophets,  
and some of your young men for Nazirim.  
Isn't this true, You children of Yisra'el?" says the Holy One.  
"But you gave the Nazirim wine to drink,  
And you commanded the prophets, saying, 'Do not prophesy!'*

[A] What two groups of people *outside the priesthood* does the Holy One say He has "raised up" - and given to the people in order to guide them back into righteousness?

[B] Which of these was Yosef? Which was Y'shua?

[C] What does the Holy One say the people did with these two groups of people? Why do you think they did this?

7. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha we see the seductive power of the *dibbah ra* (evil report). The *Y'hudim*<sup>8</sup> from Cilicia, from Asia, from Alexandria, and from the synagogue of the Libertines, [all Diaspora Jews] who could not contend with Stephen's *teaching* (because the *Ruach HaQodesh* inspired Stefanos), and got embarrassed and offended when they did not "win" the religious 'debate', decided to maliciously and underhandedly attack his *character* instead. This kind of thing is still going on today.

In this episode we see how even among people who are in the Holy One's covenant community a little jealousy and competition can quickly mushroom into the intent to destroy – all through the seductive power of juicy gossip and half-truths. In yesterday's aliyah we saw that the Y'hudim from Celicia, from Asia, from Alexandria and the synagogue of the Libertines got embarrassed publicly when they tried – and failed – to successfully challenge Stefanos' teaching. In today's aliyah we see their wounded response: they make it their mission in life to go around talking about Stefanos, taking things he has said out of context, and inflaming the passions and wounds of others.

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<sup>8</sup> It appears from the context that, as had Yochanan [John] in his gospel account, the writer of Acts classified as 'Yehudim' those of Hebrew descent who rejected Y'shua, and who made the choice to adhere to the man-made traditions inherent in the Judaisms of the day as opposed to returning to the Holy One through Messiah to the Covenant Lifestyle described in Torah.

They clothe their *dibbah ra* regarding Stefanos in high-sounding religious language to *appeal to the weak points in others*. They know what magic words and subjects will seduce potential allies – even former enemies - into their camp. They will fix that “dreamer”, just wait!

Watch the 7-step process these angry men use against Stefanos *very, very carefully*. This same process is going on today, in your community, all around you! The *dibbah ra* that sounds so spiritual and inflames your religious spirit (or reopens old wounds you had forgotten about) is even now being whispered in the shadows. You or someone you know may be its next victim.

If the intended victim is someone you know do not allow yourself to be sucked into the seductive web of the *dibbah ra*. If the intended victim is you . . . well at least may the Holy One cause your face, like Stefanos’, to *shine like an angel* in the midst of it all.

*Then they secretly induced men to say,  
"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moshe and God."  
They stirred up the people, the Zakenim, and the Sofrim,  
and came against him and seized him,  
and brought him in to the council and set up false witnesses who said,  
"This man never stops speaking blasphemous words against this holy place and the Torah.*

*For we have heard him say that this Y'shua of Natzeret will destroy this place,  
and will change the customs which Moshe delivered to us."  
All who sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him,  
saw his face like it was the face of an angel.*

As Bob Dylan once said: “*I would not feel so all alone . . . everybody must get stoned!*”

Don’t worry – it is just another prophetic transaction in the marketplace we are getting to know so well.

[A] What group of people was responsible for spreading a *dibbah ra* against Stefanos?

[B] What were the motivations of those spreading the *dibbah ra*?

[C] If these people had a legitimate offense against Stefanos, what were the proper steps, under the Torah, for them to have followed to resolve it?

[D] What three groups did the ones responsible for the *dibbah ra* “stir up” against Stefanos?

[E] List the 7 steps that the Y'hudim of Cilicia followed in order to get Stephen condemned to death.

[F] List each of the accusations levied against Stefanos.

[G] To what extent were any of these charges true?

*May the Holy One pursue us as He pursued Y'hudah,  
and may He bring each of us into our divine destiny, despite our weaknesses and depravity.*

***The Rabbi's son***

***Meditation for Today's Study***

Psalm 35:9-10

*My soul will be joyful in the Holy One.  
It will rejoice in his y'shuah.  
All my bones will say,  
"O Holy One, who is like you,  
Who delivers the poor  
from him who is too strong for him,  
Yes, the poor and the needy from him who robs him?"*