

Message title: Who wants them in their family tree?

When you read the Bible do you read the genealogies? And read the seemingly endless lists of difficult Jewish names? Or do you race to the next section? Recently I received a brochure from a large institution, the brochure was filled with names of donors, large amounts, small amounts, but about 40 pages of names, and more names. Who reads them?

Matthew wrote a letter written to Jews, but I don't mind if you read my mail. And like the many other biblical authors it appears that genealogies are very important, it established not just a name or a family line but a genealogy **establishes a reputation**, My name is Cohen, *“ah are you related to that Cohen, ooh”* And it looks like Matthew does this too,

When I read Matthew for the first time, I noted Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and I though I was still reading the Jewish Bible as these were familiar to me, Matthew starts with his Gospel with this genealogy, it would appear just to put us Jews at ease it seems.

Lately it seems that tracing one's family tree is becoming quite the thing to do. There are numerous organisations and websites dedicated to family tree research. We even had TV shows on SBS “Who do you think you are” tracing some famous British and Australian icons. Some of us who have traced their lineage have found relatives whose accomplishments were considerable; having made significant contributions to society, and who may even have gained fame as a result. If you wanted to impress somebody with your ancestry, you would undoubtedly want to highlight the more illustrious ancestors, and omit certain others. You would be proud of the great-grandfather who was the Chief Rabbi of such-and-such a city, or the great-great aunt who invented a cure for a particular disease, or the late cousin who founded a school or a hospital.

On the other hand there are those who are infamous, or worse these family members get little or no mention in our genealogies. We tend to skip them, or if we must give them a little obscure footnote, but no fuss is made. We smoothly glide over them to the next upright person.

In my own family tree there are plenty of people who I would like to exclude and ignore. While there are some great people in my tree there are also some that we will not mention the black sheep. As a Jewish believer in Jesus I'm proud to say that one of my ancestors was a Rabbi, until I found out that he burned the entire Jewish quarter down, He fell a sleep with a candle the candle fell over scrolls caught a light and there went the neighbourhood. So too in the genealogy of Jesus, [Yeshua] we see some that I would have skipped.

This is already a different genealogy than most of the genealogies of the Jewish Bible. It mentions women! This is generally not done, and Luke's genealogy does not deviate from Biblical tradition, Matthew does and so in a sense it SHOUTS at me. It is like taking a highlighter and going over these names. Matthew wants them to stand out in a major way.

If women were to be mentioned you would expect Sarah, Rebbecca, Leah and Rachel, there are great women in the Bible, but Matthew mentions women who are not so kosher. (Now the same could be said for the men, a study of Jacob alone, but Solomon, or Manasseh and you would stop writing your genealogy, but will save that message for "Fathers Day"). But as I said Matthew has a focus on these women. And so we must ask ourselves "who are these women?" and "why are these in the genealogy?"

It is an unusual list and curious to include them because of who they are.

1st Tamar women [verse 3]

Beautiful name it means upright, it is connected to the word Palm Tree

Lovely name, but not so lovely person, She is not-so kosher, She is most likely a Canaanite women, as the family of Israel is not very large (actually it is only Jacob and his sons and daughter)

1) She was the widow of Er, the firstborn son of Judah; Genesis 38:6-7

2) She was the widow of Onan the second born of Judah Genesis 38:8-10

3) She was the fiancée of Shelah, the third son of Judah; Genesis 38:11

But in the passing of time Shelah never becomes her husband

So in Genesis 38:13-20 she played the harlot with her father in law (38:24)

4) She becomes the wife of Judah and mother of Perez and Zerah Genesis 38:24-

This story in Genesis is not so kosher In essence she tricks and deceives, cheat and plays the harlot with her father in law, and manipulates him.

As I said before it is unusual to list women so why is Matthew highlighting this for us?

Would you highlight this in your genealogy? In my own genealogy I took a **Black highlighter** and made some markings NOT to highlight this)

Abraham yes, Isaac Yes, Jacob well ok he is a little tainted but Tamar, Oy there goes the family name and the family reputation.

2nd women Rahab [verse 4]

How many of you are name Rahab?

Name means wide, as in spatial, Not such a flattering name, and also not so lovely background, She too is not-so kosher, She also is a Canaanite women, a Harlot, (*ironic tone*) "*Note for the genealogy great, great grand mother Harlot.*"

Oy again not really what we wanted in our family tree.

She is first mentioned in Joshua 2:1 Rahab the harlot or the prostitute; and she welcomes the spies not in a prostitution sense but in a faith sense as indicated in New Testament Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 lets read what it says (James 2:25) "*And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?*"

If I had to write this genealogy I would have done what the writer of Ruth did in Ruth 4:20-21 that is **not mentioned her**) Or at least quietly skip her. But Matthew highlights her; you and I would have taken the black highlighter.

3rd women Ruth [verse 5]

Ruth lovely name some of you may be called Ruth, her name means friendly.

The opposite survives in our language in the word ruthless, to be compassion-less, but we should never be ruthless, we should be 'Ruthy' compassionate and friendly.

Ruth unlike the first two women whom we mentioned is not tainted by sexual promiscuity.

However her tribal background is an issue, she hails from across the Jordan River, and her people are at times arch enemies of Israel.

The Moabites tried to curse Israel Numbers 23:7, repeated in Joshua 24:9 her background is from the wrong side of the river, she is a descendant of Moab, You ask who is this Moab,

Remember Abraham's nephew Lot and his wife who left Sodom in a hurry and when his wife looked back was turned into a pillar of salt. It was that Lot who got drunk after the incident and had sex with both this oldest daughter (who produced Moab, meaning from my father) and his youngest daughter (who produced Ammon, meaning from my people).

So Ruth was from one of the wrong tribes from the wrong side of the river, her tribal background indicates incest, Moab / Moav from my father Genesis 19:37.

Where is the black highlighter, it really is a terrible genealogy. When I did my own genealogy there were some black sheep but here.

But she joins the commonwealth of Israel, but in all the biblical verses she is called

4th women Wife of Uriah / Bathsheba [verse 6]

In the oldest manuscripts her name is not mentioned, while some modern versions of the Bible insert her name, it is not really there.

This was not uncommon in Jewish theology, very much like the woman caught in adultery, John 8:3 where there is no name recorded. Just Silence!

Like Ruth most likely a convert to Israel, she and her husband Uriah (which means light of God) are from the Hittite nation. A nation that God said to cut off in Exodus 23:23 and in Deuteronomy 20:17 God even said to utterly destroy them.

Bathsheba is a lovely name, her name means “daughter of the oath”

Yet the story in which she is involved is not so lovely.

Uriah a Hittite bought a block close to the palace, (you know how that goes, a pushy real estate agent comes along with a property value, and yell its all about location, location location. And lets be honest close the palace, was location location, location. A two story house with a spa / bath on top.

David was suppose to be at war 2 Samuel 11:1; 1 Chronicles 20:1; his troops are out in the battle but he is not. Instead he is in his palace checking out the neighbours and the neighbourhood. And sees the spa / bath on the roof of his house, and King David looks down and says 'nice'(2 Samuel 11:2) and he was not talking about the bath but the person in it. He then invites Ms Uriah for dinner, which becomes much more they have sex and she becomes pregnant and when informed in he says 'oy gevalt' which is Yiddish and loosely translated it means "Boy am I in trouble".

In 2 Samuel 11:5 we read David making a diabolical scheme to try to cover the sin. He calls for Uriah to come back from the front, and he may have been fighting the Hittites his own country men. But like Rahab and like Ruth Mr Uriah has joint himself to Israel the People of God. When he is informed of his extraordinary leave from the war he goes back to his new home town Jerusalem but does not go home (2 Samuel 11:9) but sleeps at the door of the King's house. He lives only a block away, what is Uriah doing? Then King David personally speaks to him and says 'go home' you have been a good boy I can't do that in good conscience. Uriah is honourable and true to his name while David is in a dark and terrible place, and to make a long story short, from that dark place where David dwelled, Uriah is send to his death, killed off at the front of the battle, on David's orders.

A dark number of days in David's life

When Nathan the prophet confronted him he said the Hebrew equivalent of Mea Culpa “this is my fault” namely “Al Cheit” a confession of sin we see the repentance in Psalm 51.

Again Matthew highlights her and you and I would have taken our black highlighter and highlighted this entire episode.

We have seen the first four women, all gentile, all marred by sexual sin either directly or indirectly, yet that is only one reason why they are one the genealogy of Jesus. All show a remarkable fighting spirit. While the words only come from Ruth. All fight to be in the family of God, they all are tenacious ladies who show a incredible faith and pursue God. All four are singled out for their strength of faith and their commitment to God.

5th woman Mary [verse 16]

Mary beautiful name it comes from Miriam meaning rebelliously, not such a beautiful meaning.

A nice Jewish girl (in contrast to the other women in the genealogy),

(Luke 1:26-38) One day she comes home and says mum, dad I have never been with Joseph or any other man yet I am pregnant...Let me explain there was this an angel, who name was Gabriel who spoke to me, and he said something about the overshadowing of God and voila I am pregnant..

Would you believe your daughter with a story like this?

In today's society it would just be another statistic for the teenage pregnancy. But back then not so;

Mary knows about the Law of Stoning a virgin to death Leviticus 20:10; and Deuteronomy 22:21-22; suddenly her words in Luke 1:29 "she was greatly troubled" make sense.

The idea of an angel visiting you and me may sound great to us, this angel tells her she will be pregnant by the overshadowing of the Holly Spirit. Today to us this sound wonderful but during the Biblical time this would cause some fear. You see Engagement is marriage without sex. But it is binding upon both as a marriage.

And we are glad that the angels also spoke to Joseph. And so there was no stoning that day

And Mary is instructed to name her son Jesus, well actually Yeshua from the Hebrew word Yasha to Save -. For He shall save his people.

Now how many of us are called Salvation.

It is rather presumptions to name your son "he shall save his people" or in short Jesus / Yeshua

But Jesus was not called Ma-lamed – teacher, He was not called Rabbi – great one, He was not called Navi – prophet but He was called Yeshua For He shall save his people.

And while all women in this list are women of faith. All of them needed a saviour, just like these women our mothers, are just a little tainted. When I did the research for my genealogy I noted I could write a page on some of the matriarchs of the Cohen's, not a chapter just a little page.

And if you ever get the opportunity to do your genealogy, you will find the same. The bible calls these transgressions, sin, and even your mother pardon the expressions like my mother is a sinner.

Now while we focused on the mothers, much worse could be written on the fathers. Not just those in the genealogy of Jesus but also yours and mine, but that message has to wait for a Fathers day.

Why are these five women listed in the genealogy of Jesus?

Let me tell what is sometimes taught but **not** true, the four older testament women are the

worst kind of sinner. That is not true, in Matthew 1.10 we see king **Manasseh listed and what these four women did together was not as bad as what he did alone!**

One point of the genealogy is understand that the Messiah would die for the sins of all mankind, it offers a universal salvation. It demonstrates that Jesus identifies with sinners in His genealogy each of the four older testament women burst forth into Jewish, in to the line of the Messiah himself,

Jesus is identified with sinners be they male or female in his genealogy, as He will in His birth, life, and His death on the cross.

To show that there is a new place for women under the New Covenant. In the Jewish culture of that day which was very patriarchal, men had little regard for women. A woman could not give testimony in court! (But who was the first to report on the resurrection Matthew 28:1-7), Orthodox Jewish men still pray every morning, thanking God that they were not Gentiles, slaves, or women. But that they as men have been found worthy of receiving and being commissioned to obey the commandments,

It shows the incredible humility of Jesus, to become a man, a part of His creation, to be born in the backwaters of the mighty Roman Empire, not in the capital of Judea, but in a little town of no repute, not into a perfectly holy and righteous family but such a genealogy that we would never choose. He suffered all things, that we have, **so He understands** and we can came before him with boldness for he truly understands us.

It is a lesson for you and me, that what ever our background is, everybody can be used of God and everybody is important to God nothing in our past or our family past disqualifies us from serving God.

While the Bible deals primarily with men, we often forget who taught the men, even the wisest man on earth Solomon, had a teacher, indeed he had a female teacher; we know this from his own writings. In Proverbs 31 Solomon is using his nick name possibly given to him by his mother, it is the name Lemuel which in English would translate as “Belonging to God” Proverbs 31:1 *The words of king Lemuel; the oracle which his **mother** taught him.*

The God - Man is the Redeemer for all

Psalm 115:9-18 JPS ***O Israel trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield! (10) O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield! (11) You that fear the LORD trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. (12) The LORD has been mindful of (all of) us, He will bless - He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. (13) He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. (14) The LORD increase you more and more, you and your children. (15) Blessed are you of the LORD who made heaven and earth. (16) The heavens are the heavens of the LORD; but the earth hath He given to the children of men. (17) The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence; (18) But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for ever. Hallelujah.***

Concluding Prayer

Father God thank you for mothers, mothers of faith and deeds, we pray that you protect our mothers, our wives, our daughters. We pray that you will bless them with the courage of Rahab, the grace and tenacity of Ruth the praise of Mary and instil in you a faith like all the mothers listed in this genealogy. Grant them wisdom like Bat Sheba and make them teachers of children, young people, old men and of rules. And give them patience for us men. We pray this in name of the redeemer of all mankind Jesus.
Amen