

**Gen. 38:1** And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name *was* Hirah.

**Gen. 38:2** And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name *was* Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

**Gen. 38:3** And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er.

**Gen. 38:4** And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan.

**Gen. 38:5** And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

This chapter tells the story of Judah, his marriage, his children and his daughter-in-law. Judah left his family and went to stay with a friend, Hirah, an Adullamite. While there, he met the daughter of a Canaanite man; we aren't even told her name, just that she is the daughter of Shuah. Although it doesn't say so, I assume he took her for his wife. Their marriage produced three sons—Er, Onan and Shelah.

**Gen. 38:6** And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name *was* Tamar.

**Gen. 38:7** And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the LORD slew him.

**Gen. 38:8** And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

**Gen. 38:9** And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

**Gen. 38:10** And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

**Gen. 38:11** Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren *did*. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

There is no record of the years in between; we just immediately jump to the time when Judah is taking a wife for Er, his firstborn; her name was Tamar. Er was very wicked in God's sight, so the Lord put him to death. (I can't help but have questions regarding people that the Lord allows to live who seem to embody evil—i.e., Hitler, Manson, etc. I again believe that foreknowledge must have quite a bit to do with it—hand in hand with accomplishing His plan.)

According to their custom, Judah gave Tamar to Onan to produce offspring for his brother. Onan knew that the children would not be his, so he spilled his semen on the ground whenever he lay with Tamar. This was wicked in God's sight, so He killed Onan too.

It's obvious that these ancient peoples had been given some guidelines as to what was pleasing to God somewhere along the way and that they knew what was right and wrong—what was pleasing to God and what wasn't. If God had really provided us a much more inclusive book of history, I can't imagine how big the Bible would be!

Judah sent Tamar back home to live with her father, as a widow, to wait on Shelah to grow up. But in his mind he was thinking, "He may die too, like his brothers." I don't think he ever intended to have Shelah provide her with children.

**Gen. 38:12** And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

**Gen. 38:13** And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

**Gen. 38:14** And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which *is* by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

Next we are told that Judah's wife died. After recovering from his grief, Judah headed to Timnah with his friend Hirah to see the men who were shearing his sheep. Tamar heard where her father-in-law was headed. She took off her widow's clothes and put on a veil for disguise and sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which was on the road Judah was traveling. She knew that Shelah had grown up and that she had not been given to him as a wife.

**Gen. 38:15** When Judah saw her, he thought her *to be* an harlot; because she had covered her face.

**Gen. 38:16** And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she *was* his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

**Gen. 38:17** And he said, I will send *thee* a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send *it*?

**Gen. 38:18** And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand. And he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

**Gen. 38:19** And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

When Judah saw Tamar, he thought that she was a prostitute; he didn't recognize her; her face was covered. Judah approached her and asked to sleep with her. She asked him what he would pay. He said he would send her a young goat. She asked for something as a pledge until he sent the goat. Judah said, OK- what? So she asked for his seal and its cord and his staff. He agreed. They slept together and she got pregnant. She left and changed back into her widow's clothes.

**Gen. 38:20** And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

**Gen. 38:21** Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where *is* the harlot, that *was* openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this *place*.

**Gen. 38:22** And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, *that* there was no harlot in this *place*.

**Gen. 38:23** And Judah said, Let her take *it* to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

Meanwhile, Judah sent the goat through his friend Hirah, who could not find her when he got to Enaim. In fact, the men who lived there claimed there had never been a shrine prostitute there. So he went back and reported to Judah. Judah decided not to pursue the matter for fear that people would think him crazy. (Enaim must have been a small place without much traffic for Tamar to pose and wait unseen to intercept Judah.)

**Gen. 38:24** And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

**Gen. 38:25** When she *was* brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these *are*, *am* I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose *are* these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

**Gen. 38:26** And Judah acknowledged *them*, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.

Three months later Judah got word that Tamar had prostituted herself and was pregnant. Judah demanded that she be brought out and burned to death. Tamar sent a message to Judah and said, "I am pregnant by the man who owns these (his pledge); do you recognize them?" Judah knew they were his and knew it was his fault for not giving her to his son Shelah. Judah said that she was "More righteous than I" because of what she had done. I'm not sure what that meant, but I guess it was tied in to the guidelines that had been established for carrying on family lines. A point is also made that Judah never slept with her again.

**Gen. 38:27** And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins *were* in her womb.

**Gen. 38:28** And it came to pass, when she travailed, that *the one* put out *his* hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first.

**Gen. 38:29** And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? *this* breach *be* upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez.

**Gen. 38:30** And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

When it came time for Tamar to deliver, she had twins. The first thing to emerge was a hand and the midwife tied a scarlet thread around it to indicate the firstborn. But he drew back his hand and his brother came out first. She named the firstborn Perez (breaking out) and the second one Zerah (scarlet or brightness).

Note: Tamar was part of the lineage of Jesus.