

Genesis 38

Verse 1 -2

And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.² Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her *as a wife* and had relations with her.

And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

Hirah was an Adullamite by his residence.

See Map 3805



Adullam is 12-13 miles NW of Hebron.

And Judah saw there the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her as a wife and had relations with her.

Here the father of his wife is mentioned by name (Shua) but her name is not given. This may have been a way of saying that Judah made a mistake by marrying a Canaanite.

Abraham did not let Isaac marry a Canaanite nor did Isaac let Jacob marry a Canaanite. However, Jacob had 12 sons and it was not practical to send all of them to Haran to find a wife. The problem would only get worse as Jacobs 12 sons had sons. The solution to this problem will be seen in their departure to Egypt in about 20 years.

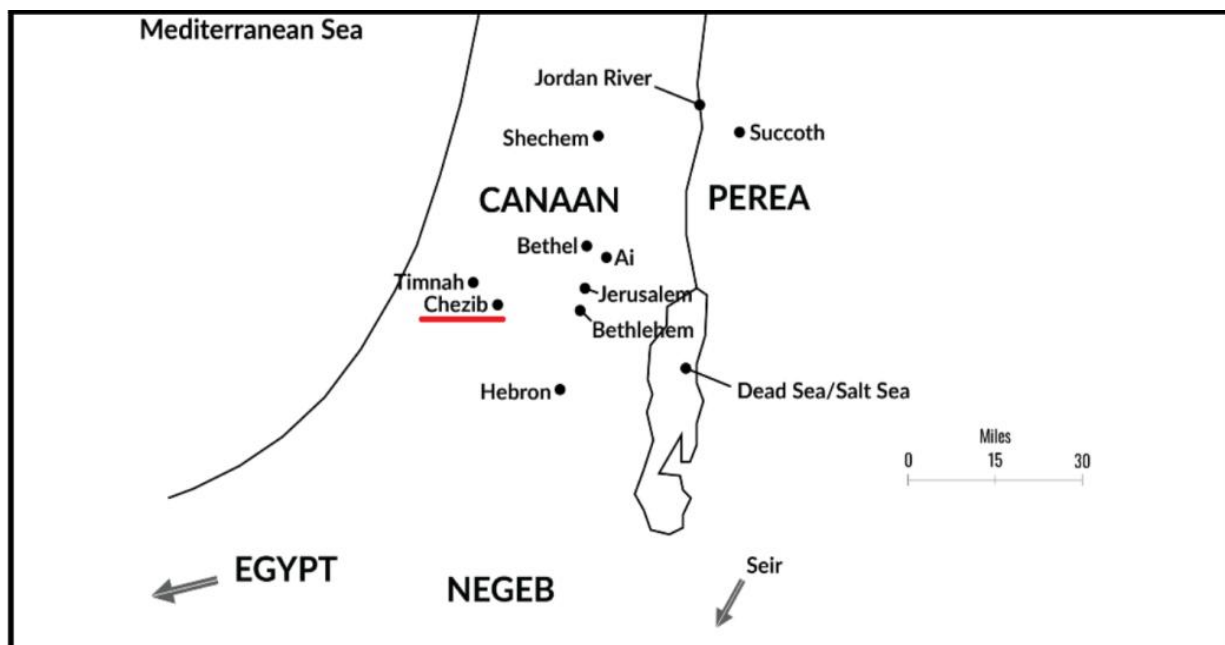
Verses 3 - 5

³ And she conceived and gave birth to a son, and he named him Er. ⁴ Then she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and she named him Onan. ⁵ She gave birth to yet another son and named him Shelah; and it was at **Chezib that she gave birth to him.**

Judah had 3 sons. He named his firstborn Er but his wife named the next two boys. It seems that a marriage relationship is one of co-equals even in a male dominated society.

Their 3rd son was born at Chezib.

See map 3810 The town of Chezib



Verses 6 - 7

⁶ Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life.

Tamar was a woman of good character but she was married to an evil man. We don't know what he did to deserve the death penalty, but we do know that God knows all and sees all and is fair in all of His judgments.

Verses 8-11

⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Have relations with your brother's wife and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up a child for your brother." ⁹ Now Onan knew that the child would not be his; so when he had relations with his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground so that he would not give a child to his brother. ¹⁰ But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord; so He took his life also. ¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "*I am afraid* that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.

⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Have relations with your brother's wife and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up a child for your brother."

Here we see the social custom of a brother raising up a child for a deceased brother. This was an established custom 300 years before it became part of the law.

See Deuteronomy 25:5

⁵ "When brothers live together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall have relations with her and take her to himself as *his* wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ It shall then be that the firstborn to whom she gives birth shall assume the name of his *father's* deceased brother, so that his name will not be wiped out from Israel.

Onan's treatment of Tamar was selfish and heartless. She desperately desired a child and he denied her of that blessing. In addition, a male child would take care of her financially in her old age (a retirement program in those days).

¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up”; for he thought, “*I am afraid* that he too may die like his brothers.” So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.

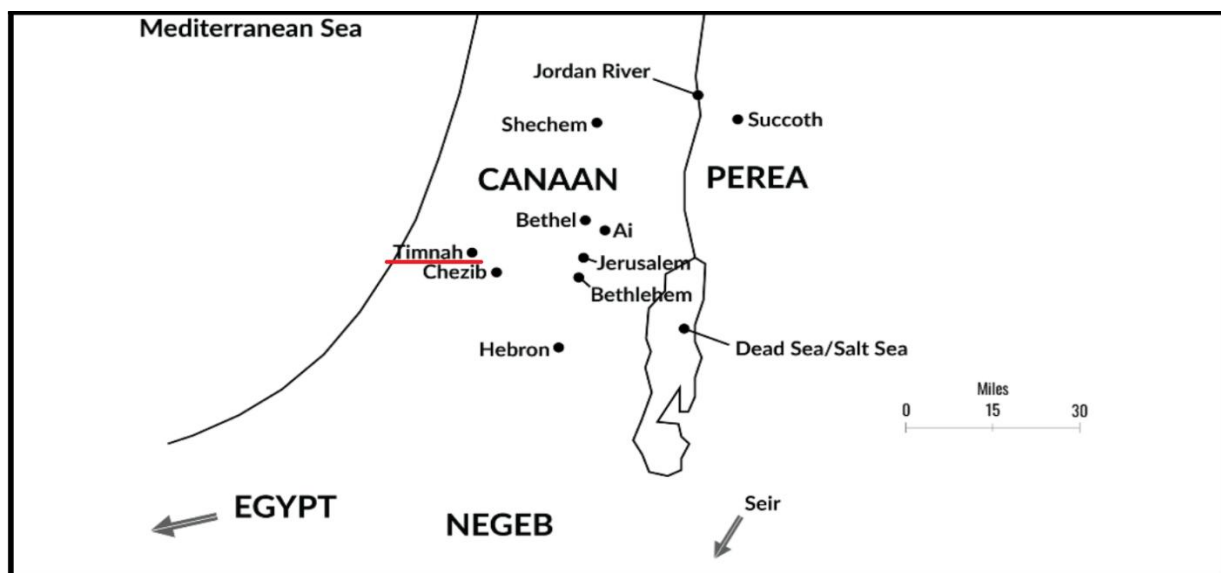
Tamar had been deceived by Onan and now Judah was doing the same because he had no intention of giving Shelah to her. Jacob deceived Esau; his 10 sons deceived him about Joseph; his grandson Onan deceived Tamar; and now his son Judah is deceiving Tamar. It seems like this sin ran deep in the family of Jacob. That could probably be said of all of humanity.

Verses 12 -14

¹² Now after a considerable time Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. ¹³ And Tamar was told, “Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.” ¹⁴ So she removed her widow’s garments and covered *herself* with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.

¹² Now after a considerable time Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

See Map 3815



Judah had lost two of his sons and now his wife dies. It seems that he has had to endure a lot of hardship in a relatively short period of time.

In the last chapter he learned that Jacob was living in Hebron but his flock was 50 miles away in Shechem. Now we find out that he goes to Timnah to shear his sheep and that Hirah the Adullamite was a longtime friend of Judah.

¹⁴ So she removed her widow's garments and covered *herself* with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.

The shearing of sheep was usually a festive occasion and Tamar understood the things that usually went on at such celebrations and clothed herself in the garb of one of the sacred Canaanite prostitutes. She then found a place where she might attract the attention of Judah.

Judah used deception to get his way (by not giving his 3rd son to Tamar) and now he will reap what he has sown.

Verses 15-19

¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he assumed she *was* a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me have relations with you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may have relations with me?" ¹⁷ He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She then said, "Will you give a pledge until you send *it*?" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave *them* to her and had relations with her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she got up and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he assumed she *was* a prostitute, for she had covered her face.

Judah had deceived her and now she has deceived him; people really do reap what they sow.

¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, “Here now, let me have relations with you”; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, “What will you give me, that you may have relations with me?”

The writers of scripture do not sugar coat the sins of even the most important characters in the bible. Judah had lost his wife but that is no excuse for hooking up with any woman that makes herself available. If he could not control his desires then he should have remarried.

¹⁷ He said, therefore, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” She then said, “Will you give a pledge until you send it?”

Judah promised her a young goat and she knew he would follow thru with his payment but she had something else in mind.

¹⁸ He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” And she said, “Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand.” So he gave *them* to her and had relations with her, and she conceived by him.

These items would be needed later to identify Judah as the father of her child. Tamar had thought out every detail of her plan.

Verses 20 - 23

²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman’s hand, he did not find her. ²¹ He asked the people of her place, saying, “Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?” But they said, “There has been no temple prostitute here.” ²² So he returned to Judah, and said, “I did not find her; and furthermore, the people of the place said, ‘There has been no temple prostitute here.’” ²³ Then Judah said, “Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”

²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman’s hand, he did not find her.

A rich man like Jacob can get other people to do his dirty work.

²³ Then Judah said, **“Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”**

Judah will get his personal items back, but in a circumstance that will bring him shame. To be a part of the greatest story ever told is a great blessing and privilege but it can work the other way when one is caught in a sin.

Verses 24 - 26

²⁴ Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has prostituted herself, and behold, she is also pregnant by prostitution.” Then Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned!” ²⁵ It was while she was being brought out that she sent *word* to her father-in-law, saying, “I am pregnant by the man to whom these things belong.” She also said, “Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?” ²⁶ And Judah recognized *them*, and said, “She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not have relations with her again.

²⁴ Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has prostituted herself, and behold, she is also pregnant by prostitution.” **Then Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned!”**

The Law of Moses will not be given for another 300 years but this may have been the penalty for prostitution at that time. Also, was that the penalty for both parties or just for the woman?

²⁵ It was while she was being brought out that she sent *word* to her father-in-law, saying, “I am pregnant by the man to whom these things belong.” She also said, **“Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?”**

This may have been the day of her “trial” before the people but Tamar had seen this day coming and had secured all the evidence she needed.

²⁶ And Judah recognized *them*, and said, **“She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.”** And he did not have relations with her again.

There was no way Judah could deny it, and he knew she was in the right.

Tamar was not motivated by lust but by her lawful desire to have a child. However, she was not without fault because she used deception to get her legal right.

Judah took responsibility for his actions and no doubt he provided for Tamar and the child but his physical relationship with Tamar was ended.

Verses 27 - 30

²⁷ It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, that one *baby* put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet *thread* on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But it came about as he drew back his hand that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand; and he was named Zerah.

²⁸ Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, that one *baby* put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet *thread* on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But it came about as he drew back his hand that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez.

This event was somewhat reminiscent of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25.

²⁴ When her days leading to the delivery were at an end, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ Now the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

In this case Esau was the 1st born but Jacob managed to procure the right of the 1st born from him.

Did Perez pull Zerah back in by his heel like Jacob may have tried to do to Esau? In this case there could have been some question about who was the first born but it seems that Perez got the advantage while still in the womb and was born first.

In any case, Perez was the firstborn, the one through whom Jesus would come.

See chart 3820

