

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

Judah turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah

Hirah was an Adullamite by 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 but hers is not given

Maybe this was a way of saying that Judah made a mistake by marrying a Canaanite

Did Abraham let Isaac marry a Canaanite? No

Did Isaac let Jacob marry a Canaanite? No

This is why this event is introduced at this time in the story

If the sons of Jacob had remained in Canaan, the nation of Israel would have been absorbed into the fabric of the Canaanite culture and disappeared.

Verses 3-7

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. 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.

Judah had 3 sons. He named his firstborn Er but his wife named the next two boys

A marriage relationship is one of co-equals even in a male dominated society

And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

Tamar was a woman of good character married to an evil man

But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life.

We don't know what he did to deserve the death penalty, but we do know that God knows all and sees all.

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.

And Judah said to Onan, Go to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her

Here we see the social custom of brothers 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

Onan’s treatment of Tamar was selfish and heartless

She desperately desired and needed a child and he denied her that blessing

"Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son be grown-up; for he said, Lest he also die, like his brethren. And Tamar went and dwelt 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.

Have we ever seen a problem with deception in the family of Jacob?

Jacob deceived Esau; his 10 sons deceived him about Joseph; his grandson Onan deceived Tamar; and now his son Judah is deceiving Tamar

Seems like this sin runs deep in the family of Jacob

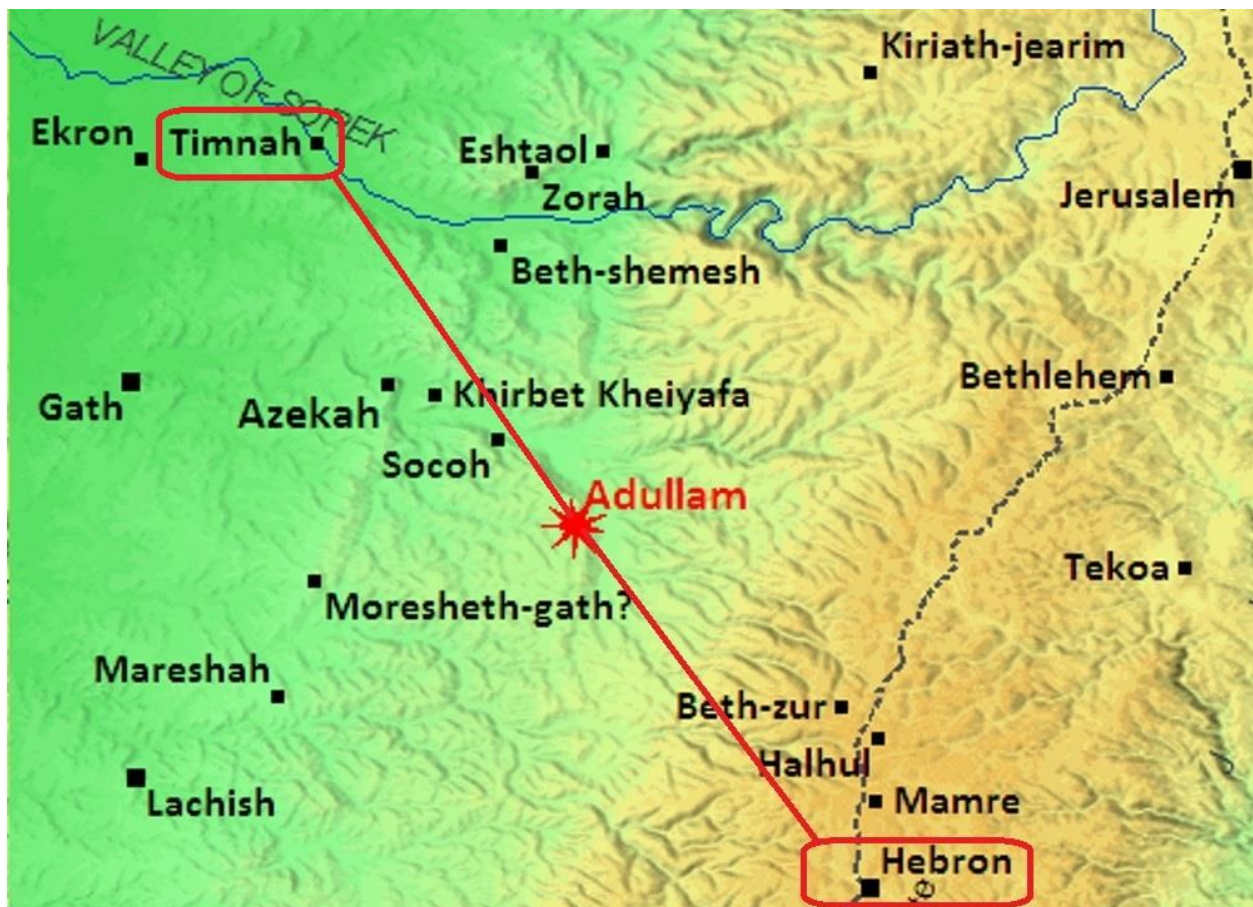
That could probably be said of all of humanity

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.

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 3810



Timnah is 9 miles NW of Adullam

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

We also find out that Hirah the Adullamite was a longtime friend of Judah

Tamar sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way of Timnah;

The shearing of sheep was usually a festive occasion

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.

For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she was not given to him to wife

Jacob had once again used deception to get his way

Now he will once again 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

Judah deceived her and now she deceives him; people really do reap what they sow

Here now, let me have relations with you

God is grooming Israel to become a light to the world and Judah will become the leading tribe of Israel

And Judah and Tamar are in the direct line to the messiah

Only God could bring about our savior using a group of misfits like mankind

And she said, “Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand

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.”

Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite

Why did Jacob send his friend?

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

Then Judah said, “Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock

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

Well, most of the time!

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.

Then Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned

Was that the penalty for prostitution at that time?

Was there a written or oral law of the land in 1728bc?

The Law of Moses will not be given for another 300 years

Was that the penalty for both parties or just for the woman?

It was while she was being brought out that she sent *word* to her father-in-law

This may have been the day of her “trial” before the people

Tamar had seen this day coming before she put the veil on and had secured all the evidence she needed.

And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She is more righteous than I, forasmuch as I gave her not Shelah my son.

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 for a child

However, she is not without fault because she used deception to get her legal right

Judah said, she is more righteous than I, which is another way to say she is less sinful than me

That is the best that mankind can ever say about themselves

And he did not have relations with her again.

Was this part of some written law or oral code of that time?

We don't know with certainty, but his 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.

Behold, there were twins in her womb

Perez, was the firstborn, the one through whom Jesus would come

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

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

Did Perez pull Zerah back in by his heel like Jacob tried to do to Esau?

Life is filled with mysteries!