

“Judah & Tamar” Genesis 38

1. Judah was the fourth son born to Jacob and Leah, but he surpassed his older brothers (Reuben, Simeon, Levi) who had discredited themselves in their father’s eyes. But Genesis 38 shows Judah at his worst. In verse 2 we see that Judah takes a Canaanite woman as his wife and they have three children. What are their names?
In the custom of arranged marriages, who does Judah acquire as a wife for his son Er (v.6)?
What happens to Er (v. 7)?
2. According to the custom of levirate marriage, if a husband died childless, the husband’s household was obligated to provide a male heir to the widow. So what does Judah tell his second son (v.8)?
Why does Onan disobey his father?
What was Onan’s consequence for doing what “was displeasing in the sight of the Lord”?
3. What does Judah then tell his daughter-in-law in verse 11?
What is Judah really thinking as he’s saying this?
4. The phrase, “after a considerable time”, reveals that Judah was not willing to give his youngest son (Shelah) to Tamar even though he had become of marriageable age. Also, it is revealed that Judah’s wife has died. Judah travels to nearby Timnah for the shearing of his flock and takes along his friend Hirah. How does Tamar take matters into her own hands on the road to Timnah in order to deceive her father-in-law and remedy her situation (v.14)?
5. What does Judah agree to send to Tamar if she sleeps with him?
What pledge does Tamar ask for to ensure the agreed upon deal?
6. Judah later sends his friend Hirah to deliver the goat to Tamar but he does not find her. Since an effort is made to meet his obligation, Judah was satisfied to let her keep his items and happy to forget that this sorry episode ever happened in the first place.
But what does Judah find out in verse 24?
What is his response?
7. What does Tamar reveal to save her life?
She turns the table on Judah. She does not make a direct charge but Judah is left to draw the obvious conclusion. What does Judah say of Tamar in verse 26?

He does not indicate that her action was approved but acknowledges that her motivation was consistent with the purpose of levirate marriage which Judah had attempted to circumvent.

What are the names of Tamar’s twins?

Whose birth (Gen. 25) is echoed by the birth of these boys?