

## **Genesis Chapter Thirty Eight**

### **Genesis 38:1-5**

**And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her. So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. And she bore still another son and named Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him.**

- This story of Judah—offered as a contrast—with Joseph—two ways to walk—faithful or faithless
- About that time—would assume—when Joseph is being sold to Potiphar
- Adullam-town NW of Hebron—later to be famous for David's cave. Name means-'a testimony to them'.
- Hirah=paleness; hollowness
- Shua=a cry
- Took her—went in—sounds similar to story of Shechem and Dinah—instead leads to marriage relationship. There is no criticism within text of Judah marrying a Canaanite. (Canaanites known for immorality and wickedness)
- Interesting—Judah's friend is named—his father-in-law is named—but the wife goes unnamed.
- Er=awakening; stirring up
- Onan=their vigor; their iniquity
- Shelah=quietness

### **Genesis 38:6-10**

**Now Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's first-born, was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life. Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." And Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so it came about that when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground, in order not to give offspring to his brother. But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord; so He took his life also.**

- Must deal with passage of time—perhaps 20-25 years
- Perform duty—a man is to marry his brother's childless widow in order to provide continuity for the deceased—regarding inheritance—Deut 25:5-11
- This practice is referred to in Matt 22:24-26
- Onan's refusal—selfish and an interruption to genealogy by which Christ will inherit throne of David.
- Tamar is one of five women to show up in genealogy of Jesus—3 of them guilty of immorality ( Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba)

### **Genesis 38:11-14**

**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. 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. And it was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." 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.**

- In father's house—a place of no inheritance for her
- Tamar—in place of personal tragedy is not receiving justice from her elder
- Judah delays—considering Tamar a bad omen for future of Shelah
- Tamar--concerned with her right as matriarch of Judah's eldest son
- Sheep-sheering—a festive time—vulnerable to Canaanite practices which encouraged ritual fornication
- Timnah=Thou wilt withhold

### **Genesis 38:15-19**

**When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" He said, therefore, "I will send you a kid from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send it?" And 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**

**she conceived by him. Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.**

- Does Judah pursue a harlot to get over his wife?
- Harlot—suggests that Tamar poses as a cult prostitute (her face remaining covered—or perhaps it is in the darkness)
- Seal: for purpose of personal identification; serves as a legal and religious surrogate; its impression on a legal document declares its validity
- Cord: carried the seal
- Staff: similar to a pestle—validates a transaction
- She changes from widows garments—to garments of a harlot

### **Genesis 38:20-23**

**When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. And he asked the men 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." So he returned to Judah, and said, "I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, "There has been no temple prostitute here." Then Judah said, "Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this kid, but you did not find her."**

- Enaim= their fountain

### **Genesis 38:24-26**

**Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?" And Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.**

- Tamar's pregnancy exposes her to death/burning
- Judah had not been willing to endanger his last son—but endangers Tamar instead

**Genesis 38:27-30**

**And it came about at the time she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." 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. And afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.**

- King David comes from line of Perez
- Gospels trace Jesus back through this son of Judah and Tamar
- Perez=breach
- Zerah=a rising

# Genesis Chapter Thirty Eight Workbook

## Key Words:

## Harmonize:

Read the genealogy in Matthew 1

## Dig:

- 1) What do we know from Genesis ( so far)—about intermarrying with the Canaanites?
- 2) What do you know about Judah's character from this chapter?
- 3) Who arranged this partnership / marriage for Judah?
- 4) Who arranges the marriage for Er, Judah's son?
- 5) How does Onan displease the Lord?
- 6) What was the price paid to Tamar?
- 7) How is the birth of Perez /Zerah similar to a previous story in Genesis?

## Discuss:

- 1) What is a cultural norm in our day that would be inappropriate practice for a Christian?
- 2) Three of five women in the genealogy of Jesus are immoral. How are they similar? How do they differ from one another?
- 3) What would we consider a 'mixed-marriage' today?

**Point of Prayer:**

Pray for women who 'are invisible' in their roles' or circumstances in the world today.

**Integrate:**

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

**Application:**

- 1) What family expectations have come into conflict with your faith?
  
- 2) Have you ever been treated unjustly? How did you respond?
  
- 3) Are there double-standards that you have to deal with as a woman?
  
- 4) Have you ever disobeyed the Lord due to fear?
  
- 5) Are there privileges that your children receive based on their age?
  
- 6) Is wrong behavior ever justifiable?
  
- 7) Share an incident where God brought good to you in bad circumstances.