

Community Bible Church

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 38

On first glance, **Genesis chapter 38** seems somewhat out of place in the historical flow of this book.. **Chapter 37** concludes with Joseph being sold as a slave in Egypt, while **chapter 39** describes Joseph's rise to success in that country. However, **chapter 38** interrupts the Joseph narrative with a story of sin and dysfunction in the family of Judah. One author describes this chapter as "*an interlude or interruption.*" However, this story does play a significant role in the redemptive history of the nation of Israel and the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth.

Recall that Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. His mother was Leah, one of Jacob's four wives. As we read in **chapter 37**, Judah was the brother who suggested selling Joseph. **Chapter 38** introduces Tamar, a Canaanite woman who married Judah's son. After this son dies, Tamar is impregnated by her father-in-law, Judah, and gives birth to twins. One of the twins was named **Perez**. Out of this somewhat sordid and embarrassing story we see the name **Perez** as an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ in the genealogy of **Matthew chapter one**.

*"Abraham was the father of Isaac, and
Isaac was the father of Jacob, and Jacob
was the father of Judah and Judah was the
father of Perez, by Tamar. . . and . . .(ultimately)
Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born."
Matthew 1: 2-3, and 16*

In this genealogy we learn that Perez was an ancestor of King David, as well as Jesus of Nazareth.

It should also be noted, that in **Genesis 49** an elderly Jacob prophesies that from the family and line of Judah the Messiah would be born. The **tribe of Judah** would be in the royal lineage of Jesus as prophesied in Genesis. **Revelation 5:5** reads: "**Behold, the lion (Jesus) that is from the tribe of Judah.**"

The Old Testament authors wrote with with clarity and honesty in revealing the sinfulness of man in the creation of Israel from the twelve tribes of Jacob, including the genealogy of Messiah from the tribe of Judah. This chapter can be outlined as follows:

The Story of Judah	38:1-5
The Sadness of Judah	38:6-10
The Sin of Judah	38:11-23
The Surprise of Judah	38:24-26
The Sons of Judah	38:26-30

1. The first paragraph of **chapter 38** gives a description of Judah's family. From **38:1-5** briefly summarize this passage. Do you see any lapses of wisdom or judgment on the part of Judah?

2. The history of Judah's family is given in **38:6-10**, which describes further sin and the judgment of God. Note that the judgment, or curse, of Onan (**38:10**) was due to his failure to care for his brother's family, as was the tradition, and was not an indictment against birth control. A Canaanite woman named Tamar is introduced in **38:6**. In a single sentence, write a brief summary of this passage.

3. From this narrative, it appears that unrighteousness in Judah's family continues to prevail. Read **38:11-18** which gives the main story of this chapter. How can God fulfill His covenant promise to Abraham that all men would be blessed through his off-spring when the family of Judah is in such disarray?

4. Things seem to worsen for Judah. From **38:24-26**, what new information emerged and what was the response of Judah?

5. There is a pattern seen throughout the history of the patriarchal period in **Genesis**, whereby God does not always bless, nor endorse, the eldest son as tradition would dictate. This is seen again in **38:27-30**. From this passage describing a multiple birth delivery, which of the twins would be considered the oldest and in line for a blessing?

6. What **personal lessons** or **applications** can you identify in **chapter 38**? (Possible topics include interaction with Canaanite (unbelieving) people, separation from family and community, accountability to others, God's grace and sovereignty among sinful and imperfect people, repentance and forgiveness)