

# CHAPTER ANALYSIS FORM

**Chapter:** 38

**Chapter Title:** Judah and Tamar

## **1. Chapter Summary:**

### 1. Chapter 38

- a. Judah moves and marries 1-6
- b. Er, Onan, and Tamar 7-11
- c. Shua dies 12
- d. Tamar's subterfuge 13-19
- e. Judah's shame 20-23
- f. Judah's hypocrisy 24-26
- g. Judah and Tamar's children 27-30

2. Observation		3. Interpretation	
What Does It Say?		What Does It Mean?	
Verse		Verse	
	<b>Chapter 38</b>		
1-6	Judah goes to live near a friend and marries a Canaanite woman, Shua. She gives birth to three sons Er, Onan, and Shelah.	1-5	After the family history of bad marriages, you would think Judah would have better sense. But the heart will have what it desires.
7-11	Er marries Tamar but then dies because of his wickedness. They have no children so Judah tells Onan to marry Tamar and have children for his brother. Onan marries Tamar but does not want to let his brother have children for his posterity. He dies because of his wickedness also. Judah tells Tamar to live as a widow, in her father's house, until Shelah is old enough to marry.	6-10	We don't know the details of Er's wickedness but we know that it was bad enough for him to die. The laws for Levirate marriage weren't codified until Moses but we see it practiced long before. Onan is not just denying his brother's posterity but selfishly enjoying the benefits of the marriage bed without wanting any of the responsibilities. His self-interest causes his death. I am reminded of the passage where Paul says a believer's body should be handed over to Satan in order that his soul might be saved. Some people will slide into Heaven looking like a burning shipwreck. Truly, the wages of sin is death. Judah sounds good but the passage implies he has no intent of letting Tamar marry Shelah. After all, she has buried two brothers already.
12	Shua dies. After a period of mourning, Judah goes with his friend to the sheep shearers in Timnah.	12	

<https://bibleatlas.org/full/timnah.htm>

13-19	Tamar hears that Judah is going to Timnah so she disguises herself and sits in the gate of a town on the way. Judah mistakes her for a temple prostitute and wants to sleep with her. She agrees on the price – a young goat – but asks for his seal and staff as a guarantee he will send the goat. They have sex and she goes back to her father’s house.	13-19	What a mess. Instead of confronting Judah about his unkept promise, Tamar comes up with a plan to deceive Judah. Judah, instead of acting properly, decides to take advantage of the pleasures of a “cult prostitute.” This was a widespread practice in the fertility cults of the Canaanite worship of Baal and Asherah. The text doesn’t say much but I personally think this was not a shot in the dark. I believe Tamar concocted this scheme because she knew Judah’s habits. His consorting with cult prostitutes would have been acceptable behavior in the Canaanite culture. This was not the first time he had done so.
20 -23	When Judah gets home, he sends his friend with the goat but the “prostitute” is nowhere to be found. Judah tells his friend to keep quiet about the whole thing.	20-23	Judah may know what he has done is wrong because he doesn’t want anyone to know. Or he is more concerned with his reputation because he didn’t sleep with an approved cult prostitute, he apparently slept with a run of the mill prostitute. When we sin, hiding in the dark is our first thought. God will not allow his children to hide; sin will be seen in the light of day.
24-26	Three months or so afterwards, they discover Tamar is pregnant. It is obvious she committed adultery. Judah commands her to be burnt to death. Then Tamar produces the seal and staff, whereupon Judah admits she is more righteous than he because he did not keep his promise to her.	24-26	Here we see the hypocrisy of Judah. It was all fine and good for him to sleep with a “prostitute” but Tamar sleeping with a man outside of marriage was a capital offense. Tamar’s protection was Judah’s seal and staff because she knew he would be too ashamed to have this known publicly. He does admit his complicity in the whole mess and understands it was his fault. There is nothing new under the sun. The double standard started in the Garden and continues today.
27-30	Tamar gives birth to twins, Perez and Zerah. Zerah put his hand out first and had a scarlet thread tied around his wrist. He then withdrew his hand and Perez was born, then Zerah.	27-30	

4. Correlation		5. Application
Where Else Is It Explained?		What Will I Do About It?
Verse		
	<b>Chapter 38</b>	
1-6		
7-11	Genesis 46:12 Numbers 26:19-20 Deuteronomy 25:5 1 Chronicles 2:3 Matthew 22:24 Mark 12:19 Luke 20:28	
12		
13-19		
20-23		
24-26		
27-30		

## **6. Conclusions**

## **7. One Personal Application**