



They Did What? A Look at the Story of Judah and Tamar

Judah was the fourth son born to Jacob and Leah. In the previous chapter of Breisheet (Genesis), we found Judah speaking up in favor of selling his half-brother Joseph to Midianite passers-by rather than killing him. In chapter 38, we are asked to focus on Judah and his personal life, as he attempts to find a suitable marriage partner for his sons. In Hevruta, I ask you read the chapter together and discuss (among other issues) the following questions:

- I. Who is Tamar to you?
 - i. How do you think that she is depicted in the narrative – positively, negatively, neutrally?
 - ii. Is Tamar a good role model for her readers? Why or why not?
- II. Who is Judah to you?
 - i. How do you think that he is depicted in the narrative – positively, negatively, neutrally? [Unlike Tamar, there is much more material throughout our Biblical text on Judah, so for our purposes, I ask that we focus our thoughts and feelings only on what is reported in this chapter of the Torah.]
 - ii. Is Judah a good role model for his readers? Why or why not?
- III. Does the text attempt to influence our feelings/thoughts toward these two characters?
 - i. What role does the Narrator play in influencing the readers' opinions of the two main characters?

When we return to the classroom following our Hevruta work, we will have a chance to share feelings, thoughts, questions, comments, etc., as we together reflect on the effects created by the Biblical text.

Genesis 38:1-30

<p>1. About that time Judah left his brothers and camped near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. 2. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and cohabited with her. 3. She conceived and bore a son, and he named him Er. 4. She conceived again and bore a son, and named him Onan. 5. Once again she bore a son, and named him Shelah; he was at Chezib when she bore him.</p> <p>6. Judah got a wife for Er his first-born; her name was Tamar. 7. But Er, Judah's first-born, was displeasing to the Lord, and the Lord took his life. 8. Then Judah said to Onan, "Join with your brother's wife and do your duty by her as a brother-in-law, and provide offspring for your brother." 9. But Onan, knowing that the seed would not count as his, let it go to waste whenever he joined with his brother's wife, so as not</p>	<p>א ויהי בעת ההוא, ויֵרֵד יהודה מאת אָחִיו; וַיֵּט עַד-אִישׁ עַדְלָמִי, וַשְּׁמוֹ חִירָה. ב וַיֵּרָא-שָׁם יְהוּדָה בַּת-אִישׁ כְּנַעֲנִי, וַשְּׁמוֹ שׁוּעַ; וַיִּקְחָהּ, וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ. ג וַתַּהַר, וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן; וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ, עֵר. ד וַתַּהַר עוֹד, וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן; וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ, אֹנָן. ה וַתִּסֹּף עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן, וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שְׁלָה; וְהָיָה בְּכֶזֶיב, בְּלִדְתָּהּ אֹתוֹ.</p> <p>ו וַיִּקַּח יְהוּדָה אִשָּׁה, לְעֵר בְּכוֹרוֹ; וַשְּׁמָהּ, תָּמָר. ז וַיִּהְיֶה, עֵר בְּכוֹר יְהוּדָה-רַע, בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה; וַיָּמָתֶהוּ, יְהוָה. ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה לְאֹנָן, בֹּא אֶל-אִשְׁתִּי אַחִיד וְיָבִים אֹתָהּ; וְהָקָם זָרַע, לְאֹחִיד. ט וַיִּדַּע אֹנָן, כִּי לֹא לוֹ יִהְיֶה הַזָּרַע; וְהָיָה אִם-בָּא אֶל-אִשְׁתִּי אָחִיו, וַשְּׁחַת אֶרְצָהּ, לְבִלְתִּי נָתֹן-זָרַע,</p>
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to provide offspring for his brother. 10. What he did was displeasing to the Lord, and He took his life also. 11. Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Stay as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"—for he thought, "He too might die like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

12. A long time afterward, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. When his period of mourning was over, Judah went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, together with his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13. And Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is coming up to Timnah for the sheepshearing." 14. So she took off her widow's garb, covered her face with a veil, and, wrapping herself up, sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him as wife. 15. When Judah saw her, he took her for a harlot; for she had covered her face. 16. So he turned aside to her by the road and said, "Here, let me sleep with you"—for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. "What," she asked, "will you pay for sleeping with me?" 17. He replied, "I will send a kid from my flock." But she said, "You must leave a pledge until you have sent it." 18. And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your seal and cord, and the staff which you carry." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. 19. Then she went on her way. She took off her veil and again put on her widow's garb.

20. Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to redeem the pledge from the woman; but he could not find her. 21. He inquired of the people of that town, "Where is the cult prostitute, the one at Enaim, by the road?" But they said, "There has been no prostitute here." 22. So he returned to Judah and said, "I could not find her; moreover, the townspeople said: There has been no prostitute here." 23. Judah said, "Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock. I did send her this kid, but you did not find her."

24. About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot; in fact, she is with child by harlotry." "Bring her out," said Judah, "and let her be burned." 25. As she was being brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-

לְאָחִיו. י. וַיֵּרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה, אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה; וַיָּמָת, גַּם-אֹתוֹ. יא. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְתָמָר כְּלָתוֹ שְׁבִי אֶלְמָנָה בֵּית-אָבִיךָ, עַד-יִגְדַּל שְׁלָה בְנִי--כִּי אָמַר, פֶּן-יָמוּת גַּם-הוּא כְּאָחָיו; וַתֵּלֶךְ תָּמָר, וַתֵּשֶׁב בֵּית אָבִיהָ.

יב. וַיָּרְבוּ, הַיָּמִים, וַתָּמָת, בֵּת-שׁוּעַ אִשְׁת־יְהוָה; וַיִּנָּחַם יְהוָה, וַיַּעַל עַל-גִּזְזֵי צֹאנֹו הוּא וְחִירָה רֵעֵהוּ הַעֲדֵלְמִי--וַתִּמְנָתָה. יג. וַיַּגֵּד לְתָמָר, לֵאמֹר: הִנֵּה חֲמִיךָ עֹלָה תִמְנָתָה, לָגוֹ צֹאנֹו. יד. וַתִּסָּר בְּגָדֶי אֶלְמָנוּתָהּ מֵעָלֶיהָ, וַתִּכְסַּב בְּצַעֲרֶיהָ וַתִּתְעַלֶּף, וַתֵּשֶׁב בְּפֶתַח עֵינִים, אֲשֶׁר עַל-דֶּרֶךְ תִּמְנָתָה: כִּי רָאָתָה, כִּי-יִגְדַּל שְׁלָה, וְהוּא, לֹא-נָתַןָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה. טו. וַיִּרְאָה יְהוָה, וַיַּחֲשֹׁבָהּ לְזוֹנָה: כִּי כִסְתָהּ, פָּנֶיהָ. טז. וַיֵּט אֶלֶיהָ אֶל-הַדֶּרֶךְ, וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּה-נָא אֲבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ, כִּי לֹא יָדַע, כִּי כָלָתוֹ הוּא; וַתֹּאמֶר, מַה-תִּתֶּנְ לִי, כִּי תָבוֹא, אֵלַי. יז. וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִי-עֹזִים מֶן-הַצֹּאן; וַתֹּאמֶר, אִם-תִּתֶּנְ עֲרִבּוֹן עַד שְׁלֹחֶךָ. יח. וַיֹּאמֶר, מַה הָעֲרִבּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּן-לָךְ, וַתֹּאמֶר חֲתָמֶךָ וּפְתִילֶךָ, וּמַסָּךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדֶךָ; וַיִּתֶּן-לָהּ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ, וַתַּהַר לוֹ. יט. וַתֵּקֶם וַתֵּלֶךְ, וַתִּסָּר צַעֲרָהּ מֵעָלֶיהָ; וַתִּלְבַּשׁ, בְּגָדֵי אֶלְמָנוּתָהּ.

כ. וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת-גְּדֵי הָעֹזִים, בְּיַד רֵעֵהוּ הַעֲדֵלְמִי, לְקַחַת הָעֲרִבּוֹן, מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה; וְלֹא, מִצֹּאֶה. כא. וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ, לֵאמֹר, אֵיזָה הַקַּדְשָׁה הוּא בְּעֵינֵינוּ, עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, לֹא-הִיָּתָה בָּזָה קַדְשָׁה. כב. וַיֵּשֶׁב, אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיֹּאמֶר, לֹא מִצֹּאֲתֶיהָ; וְגַם אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּקוֹם אָמְרוּ, לֹא-הִיָּתָה בָּזָה קַדְשָׁה. כג. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה תִּקַּח-לָהּ, פֶּן נִהְיָה לְבוֹז; הִנֵּה שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה, וְאַתָּה לֹא מִצֹּאֲתָהּ.

כד. וַיְהִי כַּמִּשְׁלָשׁ חֳדָשִׁים, וַיַּגֵּד לִיהוָה לֵאמֹר זֹנָתָה תָּמָר כְּלָתְךָ, וְגַם הִנֵּה הָרָה, לְזָנוּנִים; וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, הוֹצִיאָהּ וַתִּשְׂרָף. כה. הוּא מוֹצֵאתָ, וְהִיא שְׁלָחָה אֶל-חֲמִיהָ לֵאמֹר, לֹאִישׁ



<p>law, "I am with child by the man to whom these belong." And she added, "Examine these: whose seal and cord and staff are these?" 26. Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again.</p> <p>27. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb! 28. While she was in labor, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first. 29. But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. 30. Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerah.</p>	<p>אֲשֶׁר-אֵלֶּה לוֹ, אֲנֹכִי הָרָה; וַתֹּאמֶר, הִכָּר-נָא--לְמִי הַחֲתָמֹת וְהַפְּתִילִים וְהַמָּטָה, הָאֵלֶּה. כּוֹ וַיִּכָּר יְהוּדָה, וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי, כִּי-עַל-כֵּן לֹא- נִתְּתִיהָ, לְשָׁלָה בְנִי; וְלֹא-יָסֹף עוֹד, לְדַעְתָּהּ .</p> <p>כּז וַיְהִי, בָּעֵת לִדְתָּהּ; וַהֲנִה תְאוֹמִים, בְּבֶטְנָהּ. כח וַיְהִי בִלְדָתָהּ, וַיִּתֵּן-יָד; וַתִּקַּח הַמִּנְלָדָה, וַתִּקְשֹׁר עַל-יָדוֹ שָׁנִי לְאָמֵר, זֶה, יֵצֵא רִאשׁוֹנָה. כט וַיְהִי כְּמָשִׁיב יָדוֹ, וַהֲנִה יָצָא אַחִיו, וַתֹּאמֶר, מַה-פְּרַצְתָּ עָלַיִךְ פֶּרֶץ; וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, פֶּרֶץ. ל וַאֲחֵר יָצָא אַחִיו, אֲשֶׁר עַל-יָדוֹ הַשָּׁנִי; וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, זֶרַח.</p>
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