

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

TAMAR: INTRODUCTION

by Sandy Harber

Tamar was one of the five women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Mt. 1:3). Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary being the other four women mentioned (Mt. 1:5, 6, 16). She is not mentioned in the genealogy of King David given at the end of the book of Ruth, but that genealogy begins with her son, Pharez (Ruth 4:18). Tamar, then, was well connected, being an ancestress of the royal line of Israel.

Her story is recorded in Genesis 38. As a young Canaanite girl, Tamar was brought into the family chosen by God to be His special people by marriage to the grandson of Jacob (renamed "Israel" by God). Her union with this family was not a happy one. Twice widowed at a young age, Tamar was sent back to the home of her father to await a third marriage that never came.

Tamar took matters into her own hand. Through deceit she forced her father-in-law to acknowledge his part in denying her the opportunity to remarry and produce children. Never-the-less, she became the mother of twin boys.

God demonstrated His love for all people by bringing the Gentile girl Tamar into the family of His Messiah. Tamar was raised in idolatry. She was exposed to the true and living God through her marriages to Judah's sons. The Bible doesn't tell us that Tamar embraced the God of Israel, as Rahab and Ruth did - both of them Gentile ladies who were raised in idolatry like Tamar. But, Tamar and her twin sons lived with God's chosen people. It seems likely that she came to worship the Hebrew God Jehovah.