

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

TAMAR: LESSON NINE

by Sandy Harber

"And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite." Genesis 38:12

Judah's wife died "in the process of time." Her death occurred after that of her two eldest sons. No parent expects or wants to outlive his/her children. Mrs. Judah was on a rollercoaster ride moving up and down from celebrating the marriage of her first son to mourning the loss of her first son to celebrating the marriage of her second son to mourning the loss of her second son. These emotional ups and downs must have taken their toll on her, perhaps contributing to her demise.

Judah was then bereft of his wife as well as their two eldest sons. All we know about his period of grieving is that he "was comforted." Comfort can come in different forms. I found comfort in reading the Word of God when my husband died. Judah did not have the Bible to comfort him since the first books were not written until after his death (with the possible exception of the book of Job). But he had the oral traditions - stories handed down from the time of Adam and Seth. Parents taught their children the history of their people. This oral history was where Moses got some of the material that he used to write the book of Genesis, according to Bible scholars. Judah knew the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Perhaps he drew some strength and comfort from his faith.

Friends are also a source of comfort. For me, my Christians friends and/or my Church Family were an ongoing source of comfort. God often speaks to us through the voice of a friend. Scriptural quotes and words of encouragement buoy up a flagging spirit. Did Judah have this source of comfort? The only friend mentioned is Hirah, the Adullamite.

Family is another source of comfort. Judah had a very large family. He had separated himself from them after he and his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery. But he obviously kept in touch with them because he accompanied his brothers to Egypt to buy food during the famine. His family would share his loss. Jacob lost two grandsons and a daughter-in-law. Judah's brothers lost two nephews and a sister-in-law. Comfort in the family group may be mutual. Each family member has lost someone close to him/her, though the degree of loss varies. Shelah, for example, lost his mother and both of his brothers.

In the case of family grief Judah would have found himself in the role of comforter to his remaining son, Shelah, and probably to his father, as well. There is healing in the process of taking the focus off of yourself and your grief to give comfort to someone else who is hurting.

Judah found that life moved on in spite of his loss. He and Hirah took their flocks to Timnath for shearing. The shearing of sheep was done at the end of the summer and was followed by several days of feasting and celebration.

Life goes on for all of us, even after a devastating loss. We need to keep on going. Put one foot in front of the other and move forward. It gets easier with time.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23