

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### TAMAR: LESSON TEN

by Sandy Harber

**"And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife." Genesis 38:13-14**

Tamar decided that she had waited long enough. Shelah was old enough to marry, but she remained in her father's house waiting for Judah to summon her. She couldn't just marry someone else. Er's inheritance depended on her. If she married out of Er's family his inheritance and legacy would be lost to his family. She was bound by the Levirate Law to marry and produce an heir with Er's close kinsman.

So how long did she wait? The Bible doesn't tell us. But we know that all of the events recorded in chapter 38 occurred within a space of 22 years. Joseph was 17 years old when his brothers sold him into slavery. Chapter 38 began "at that time." Joseph was 30 years old when Pharaoh put him in charge of the grain. That's 13 years. There were 7 years of plenty after that, and, then, 2 years of famine before Jacob's family moved to Egypt. That's  $13 + 7 + 2 = 22$  years.

Er and Onan were probably born close to the beginning of the 22 year period. Both would have been married to Tamar as teenagers. Tamar herself was probably between 13 and 17 years old when she married Er. Her marriage to both brothers must have been very short. Her waiting period for Shelah then, could only have been about 3 or 4 years (if that long).

Someone told Tamar that Judah was going to Timnath to shear sheep. Who gave her this information and why they gave it is not revealed. It isn't important for us to know the specifics. It is what she did with that information that is important.

It doesn't seem like this was a spur of the moment decision for Tamar. It is more likely something she had been thinking about. Perhaps something she had been planning for a while.

After Shelah, Judah was the next closest kinsman of her husband Er. When she realized that Judah was not going to honor the Levirate Law and marry her to Shelah, she apparently decided to move on to the next kinsman. Judah was a widower. Maybe Tamar expected him to marry her.

Tamar had a long time to dwell on the wrong being done to her. She was in a bad situation for a woman at that time, being denied the opportunity to marry and produce children. Her father could not seek another husband for her because she was bound by the custom of the Levirate. It was her duty to marry Er's kinsman and produce an heir.

Dwelling on the wrongs that have been done to us can only lead to trouble. This is why we have been commanded to forgive those who wrong us. The forgiveness is for us. It frees us from the destructive emotion of anger. The object of our rage could probably not care less that we are angry and have not forgiven them. But, we dwell on it, causing sleepless nights and stomach issues among other problems. Clear the air and let it go.

Dwelling on the negative will ultimately take its toll on you physically. Dark thoughts can lead you to a dark place that is difficult to get out of. Take your problem to Jesus. Tell Him what is in your heart. Then open your Bible and let Him comfort and guide you through His Word.

*"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." Psalm 107:29*