

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

TAMAR: LESSON SEVENTEEN

by Sandy Harber

"And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out; and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee; therefore his name was called Pharez. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand; and his name was called Zarah." Genesis 38:27-30

The Lord blessed Tamar with twin sons. Judah's father, Jacob, was a twin. The birth of Jacob's twin grandsons, who had wrestled in the womb, mirrored Jacob's own struggles with his twin Esau.

Jacob's father, Isaac, was 40 years old when he married Jacob's mother, Rebekah (Gen. 25:20). Isaac and Rebekah waited 20 years for children (v. 26). God had finally answered their prayers and she was pregnant but Rebekah was worried. Something inside her did not feel right. So she took her problem to the Lord (v. 22). God reassured her. What she was feeling was two babies struggling together in her womb. Both babies would be born and grow up to be the head of a great nation. But, one child would be stronger than the other. The elder child, said the Lord, would be subservient to the younger (vv 22-23).

The first child born was Esau, whose descendants became the nation of Edom (v. 25). The younger child was Jacob, whose descendants became the nation of Israel (v. 26). The struggle between Esau and Jacob did not end at birth. Through deceit and trickery Jacob obtained Esau's birthright (vv. 29-34) and blessing (Gen. 27). Thus the younger son took predominance.

God blessed Jacob greatly with much livestock, many servants, and 12 sons. He inherited the promises God made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. Promises that his family would become a great nation dwelling in a land that God would give them. And a special promise that through his family all the families in the world would be blessed. That last promise was fulfilled in Jesus.

And now Jacob's grandsons were about to be born. During the delivery one baby thrust his arm outside of the womb. The midwife tied a scarlet thread about the hand before it was withdrawn. Then the other baby pushed his way out to be born first. He was named Pharez, which means "breach." Next, the baby with the scarlet thread around it's hand is born. He is named Zarah, which means "scarlet." Bible scholars point out the similarities of the two sets of twins. The second child pushing his way out to become the firstborn. Thus he was entitled to the birthright of Er, Judah's eldest son. He became an ancestor of King David and Jesus (Mt. 1:3).

God's plan for each life begins before conception. He knows what you will say before you say it and what you will do before you do it. He knows every problem and trial that will arise in your life and how you are going to respond to it. He uses the people and events in your life to guide you and teach you to be like His Son. That is His goal for every one of us: that we might be like Jesus.

So when we cry out, why me, God? Why did you let this happen to me? His answer is: because it will make you more like Jesus. We can embrace our circumstances and cooperate with His plan to transform us. Or, we can complain and rebel and never reach the goal. God gave us free will. What is your choice?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1