

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### TAMAR: LESSON EIGHT

by Sandy Harber

**"Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah, my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house." Genesis 38:11**

After the death of his second son, Judah told Tamar to go back to her father's house and remain a widow until Shelah was old enough to marry her. Judah's real concern wasn't Shelah's age but that he would die like his brothers did. It appears that Judah attached some blame for their deaths to Tamar. Both sons married her. Both sons died.

Of course, the truth is that both men were responsible for their own deaths. God slew both of them because of their own actions. Er was "wicked" (v. 7). We are not given any details. Whatever he did merited death. And, Onan refused to do his duty and raise up a child to be his brother's heir (v. 9).

Perhaps Judah was not a great father. The Bible tells us to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). It seems likely that Judah did not train his boys properly. He made his home among the heathen. He married an idol worshipper. Er and Onan would have grown up surrounded by people who did not know the Lord. And the result was rebellious children whom the Lord slew.

It's always easier to blame someone else. Judah was looking for reasons outside of himself. He may have concluded that Tamar was a bad wife. She led them astray. Wait. Didn't Judah himself choose her for Er? Yes, he did (v. 6). And he instructed Onan to marry her as well (v. 8). Perhaps he was realizing it was a mistake to tie his sons to an idol worshipper. He was stalling, hoping to find an excuse to deny Shelah to Tamar.

Meanwhile, Tamar obeyed her father-in-law and returned to her father's house. That must have been hard. Her status as a daughter of the house subject once again to the rule of her parents was a step down from her position as the mistress of her husband's house. One thing we know about Tamar: she was obedient.

Judah and Tamar suffered the same loss. Judah lost two sons; Tamar lost two husbands. But their reaction to their situation was different. Judah began scheming for a way to get out of his obligation to give Shelah to Tamar as husband. He refused to acknowledge his sons' sins and, instead, blamed Tamar for their loss. Tamar, on the other hand, waited patiently in her father's house for her father-in-law to fulfill his duty.

We all face difficult times. We can look at them as opportunities to display our Christian character, trusting God's plan and obeying His Word. Our example may be the very thing that leads an unbeliever into the fold. We can't control our circumstances, but we can control our response.

*"...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22b*