

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### TAMAR: LESSON FIVE

by Sandy Harber

**"And Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, whose name was Tamar." Genesis 38:6**

When Er, the firstborn son, was of marriageable age Judah chose a wife for him. It was customary at that time for parents to choose the appropriate marriage partner for their child. Thus, we would presume, that Judah and Tamar's father (name unknown) came to an agreement which betrothed Tamar to Er.

Tamar was a Canaanite like Judah's wife. From his choice of friends, a wife, and a daughter-in-law, we can conclude that Judah was very comfortable with the idol worshippers of the land. He had no hesitation in allying himself and his family with people who did not worship or honor the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Judah's ancestors).

The Bible does not tell us whether Tamar embraced the God of her husband's family. Since she is in the line of the Messiah it is to be hoped that she did so.

Why didn't Judah choose a bride for his son from among the daughters of his ten brothers instead of settling on a pagan girl? Apparently, Judah was still keeping himself somewhat separate from his father and brothers.

A guilty conscience will do that. Nine of his brothers knew exactly what he did. They were guilty, too. Every time he looked at one of them he remembered Joseph and what they did to him. Every time he saw his still grief-stricken father he felt that stab of guilt as the blood rushed into his face and chest in the blush of shame. A wave of nausea swept up from the pit of his stomach. No wonder he preferred the company of outsiders.

Judah choose Tamar. How did she feel about it? The Bible doesn't give us any insights into Tamar's feelings. She may have loved Er. Some parents did take into consideration their children's feelings when choosing a mate. On the other hand, the fathers may have based the choice on their own friendship with one another or on financial considerations. The bride's family paid a dowry to the groom's father. And the "mobar" (work compensation) was paid by the groom's family to the bride's family.

The wedding of his eldest son was probably one of the highlights of Judah's life. The same would be true of Tamar, assuming she was comfortable with the chosen groom. Customarily, weddings and the subsequent wedding feast were joyous times shared by the friends and family of the bride and groom.

We all experience times of joy and celebration. No one's life is all pain and sorrow. God allows a mixture of both good times and bad. While we prefer the good times, we may derive more benefits from the bad times. The lessons we learn in bad times stick with us. And our relationship to God grows more intimate based on the intensity of our suffering. We realize our need for God when we are hurting. Just don't neglect to thank and praise Him for those good times!

*"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4*