

Tamar Gave Birth to Twin Boys, She Named them Perez and Zerah

38: 27-30

DIG: Why is Tamar only in Matthew's genealogy? Why is Perez in both genealogies of Matthew and Luke?

REFLECT: What can we learn about God's grace from Judah's story? When has the LORD brought something good out of a bad situation for you? Where would you like to see some good come out of a bad situation today?

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so assuming that the baby would be born first, the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said: **This one came out first.** This would secure his right as the firstborn. **But** then, unexpectedly, he drew back his hand, and his twin brother came out, and she said: **So this is how you have broken out! And he was named Perez** because it means *breaking through*. His name is a word play in Hebrew, *paratzta peretz*, meaning *you have breached a breach*. Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name **Zerah**, which can mean *scarlet or shining* (38:27-30).

There is an interesting parallel between the birth of Rebekah's **twin boys** and those of **Tamar**. In Rebekah's case, the firstborn came out with reddish hair (along with the red stew for which he sold his birthright), which caused his nickname to be Edom. His twin brother, Jacob, held on to his heel as he emerged, and even though he was not born first, he was chosen to be the seed son and receive the promises of **God**. In the case of **Tamar's** twins, the one that apparently was to be firstborn was likewise marked with a red or scarlet color, but was replaced by **his brother** who was destined to inherit the promises of **ADONAI**. Both **brothers**, as well as Judah's other living son, Shelah, eventually became ancestors of large families in the tribe of Judah but it was **Perez** who was the ancestor of King David (**Ruth 4:18-22**) and eventually of **Jesus Christ**.⁵⁹⁰

Perez is listed in the genealogies of both **Matthew** and **Luke**, whereas **Tamar** is named only in **Matthew's** genealogy. There are two genealogies in the New Covenant because there were two requirements in the TaNaKh for kingship. One related to the Southern Kingdom of Judah with its capital of Jerusalem, which said that **the Messiah** had to be in the line of King David, *so no one who was not of Davidic descent could sit on the throne in Jerusalem*, and anyone who conspired to do away with the house of David was doomed to failure. The other related to the northern Kingdom of Israel with its capital of Samaria, which said *no one could sit upon Samaria's throne unless he had divine appointment*, and anyone who tried to become king without it was assassinated.

The purpose of Matthew's genealogy is to show that if Jesus really were Joseph's son, He could not be King. **Mattityahu** focuses on the story from Joseph's viewpoint. He starts his gospel with the genealogy and presents us with a problem. The problem is that **Matthew** breaks Jewish tradition by adding the names of women and skipping names, both of which are forbidden in formal Jewish genealogies. But the biggest problem in **Matthew's** genealogy is that we are told that Joseph was a direct descendant of Solomon and then **Jeconiah**. In **Jeremiah 22:24-30** we are told that a curse has been put on **Jeconiah** and no descendant of his could sit upon the throne of David. *So if Jesus really were Joseph's son, He could not be King.* So even though Joseph was a descendant of King David, he was also a descendant of **Jeconiah**. **Matthew** solves this problem with the virgin birth.

Because **Mattityahu** breaks with Jewish tradition and lists women, **Tamar** is listed in his genealogy. He also mentions **Rahab**, **Ruth** and the woman who had been **Uriah's wife**, or **Bath-Sheba**. It is remarkable that all four of these women were Gentiles who came to a believing faith in the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** by other Jews. **Tamar**, who posed as a prostitute, was a Canaanite, **Rahab**, was a prostitute and a native of Jericho and presumably also a Canaanite, **Ruth**, who persuaded Boaz to marry her after spending the night at his feet, was from Moab, **Bath-Sheba**, who committed adultery with King David, was probably a Hittite (by marriage to Uriah, if not by birth), and the Hittites were the second of eleven Canaanite nations. Yet in spite of the apparent unsavory past of these women, each one became faithful believers and **ADONAI** honored them by placing them in **Matthew's** genealogy. The one who was, in her early days, probably the most carnal of them all was **Rahab**, and she has actually been included by **the Holy Spirit** in the great catalog of the heroes of the faith in **Hebrews 11:31**. What a marvelous testimony to **the LORD's** grace and the truth that **He** forgives past sins and brings new life to those who ask for forgiveness.⁵⁹¹

The purpose of Luke's genealogy is to show that Jesus is King of the Jews by divine appointment. Luke focuses on the story from Mary's viewpoint. Luke's genealogy follows strict Jewish custom and he mentions no women, not even Mary whose line he is tracing, and he skips no names. He shows why Jesus could be King, because Christ was a descendant of David, but apart from Jeconiah. Both genealogies trace descendants down to King David, and then they split with two of his sons, Solomon and Nathan. Joseph's genealogy was traced through Solomon and Jeconiah, whereas Mary's genealogy was traced through Nathan. So there was no blood of Jeconiah in Yeshua and therefore, He could be King. But that did not solve the entire problem because there were many other descendants apart from Jeconiah after Nathan. Why would Jesus be chosen above all the others? Because of the virgin birth, Luke proves that Jesus is King of the Jews as a result of divine appointment.

Judah did not act in ignorance. He brought shame on himself by the sinful decisions he made. However, the LORD did not write him off. He showed grace to Judah and worked out his sovereign plan even through Judah's wrong choices because his son Perez became a Seed son, and an ancestor of Yeshua Messiah (Luke 3:33). Therefore, it should be no surprise that the grace and mercy of ADONAI extends to us as well. No matter who you are or what you have done, God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).⁵⁹²

When Joseph was sold into slavery, all seemed lost. But by the grace of God, He would not only save Joseph, but He would save the entire nation of Isra'el. ADONAI had called Jacob back to Bethel (28:20-22; 31:13), but he took his family to Shechem instead and his family was seduced by the worldly Canaanites. His oldest son then slept with his father's concubine Bilhah (35:21-22a). Then the prince of Shechem raped his daughter and his sons deceived and slaughtered the men of the city for revenge, then took their wives and children captive (34:25-29). The morality of his sons had sunk so low that they sold their brother Joseph off into slavery (37:25-36). And just when Jacob thought it couldn't get any worse, Judah moved away and married a Canaanite woman just as his brother Esau had done (38:2). But when Judah fathered a child with his daughter-in-law Tamar because he mistook her for a prostitute, the family had hit rock bottom (38:12-30). The terrible influence of the Canaanites was so damaging to Jacob's family, it reached the point where the LORD had to act. No further damage could be done. If He did not intervene and literally drive them out of Palestine and isolate them in the land of Egypt, they would be lost. By God's grace, Joseph would save them.