

Seek and Find

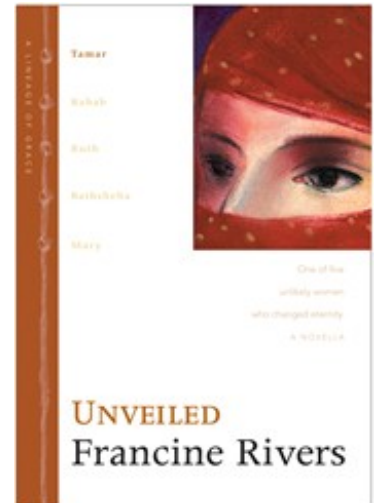
DEAR READER,

You have just read the story of Tamar as perceived by one author. Is this the whole truth about the story of Tamar and Judah? Jesus said to seek and you will find the answers you need for life. The best way to find the truth is to look for yourself!

This “Seek and Find” section is designed to help you discover the story of Tamar as recorded in the Bible. It consists of six short studies that you can do on your own or with a small discussion group.

You may be surprised to learn that this ancient story will have applications for your life today. No matter where we live or in what century, God’s Word is truth. It is as relevant today as it was yesterday. In it we find a future and a hope.

Peggy Lynch



LEADING HOME

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Go back and read the Bible passage quoted in "Setting the Scene" on pages 3–5.

- What part did Judah play in this sibling rivalry story?
- What did he and his brothers tell their father?
- Based on this passage, list some possible reasons that Judah chose to leave his family at "about this time."
- Have you ever felt ashamed of some careless act you did that affected others? Were you fearful of being found out? What choices did you make?
- Judah had choices. What could he have done differently?

Proverbs 28:13 tells us, "People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy."

Had Judah confessed to God and to his father, the story would have ended there. However, he did not. Instead, he got married! It would seem that Judah was on a pathway of separation from truth. He chose to run and hide rather than confront the real issues. He chose to handle things for himself rather than let God direct his path.

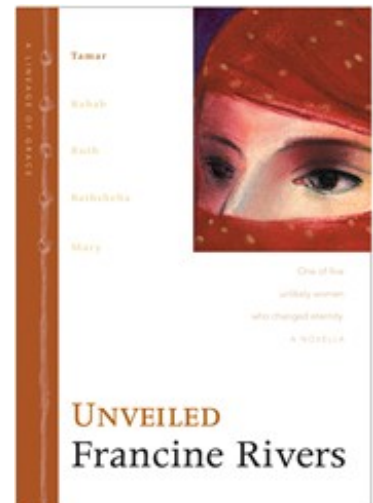
FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- What have you learned about Judah so far? Would you consider him confrontational or passive? Why?
- In what ways do you identify with Judah?
- How do you deal with jealousy? with conflict?
- Where do you turn with life's struggles—to yourself? to family and friends? to comfortable patterns? to God?

STOP AND PONDER

People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy. Proverbs 28:13

Take a moment to ask God to search your heart. Be quiet before Him. Reflect on what He offers here.



Family Ties

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passages:

About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he visited a man named Hirah. There he met a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her. She became pregnant and had a son, and Judah named the boy Er. Then Judah's wife had another son, and she named him Onan. And when she had a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

When his oldest son, Er, grew up, Judah arranged his marriage to a young woman named Tamar. But Er was a wicked man in the Lord's sight, so the Lord took his life. Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "You must marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. Her first son from you will be your brother's heir."

But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with Tamar, he spilled the semen on the ground to keep her from having a baby who would belong to his brother. But the Lord considered it a wicked thing for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the Lord took Onan's life, too.

Then Judah told Tamar, his daughter-in-law, not to marry again at that time but to return to her parents' home. She was to remain a widow until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. (But Judah didn't -really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went home to her parents.--Genesis 38:1-11

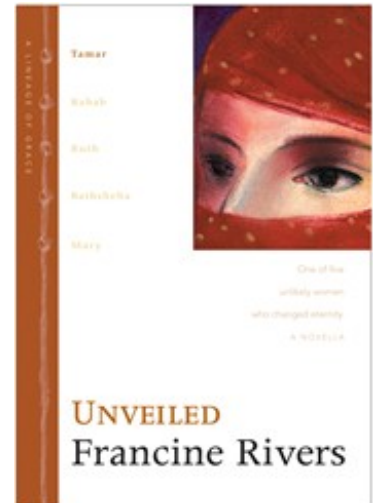
Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah, survived the Flood with their father. (Ham is the ancestor of the Canaanites.) From these three sons of Noah came all the people now scattered across the earth.

After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done.

Then he cursed the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham:

"A curse on the Canaanites! May they be the lowest of servants to the descendants of Shem and Japheth." Then Noah said, "May Shem be blessed by the Lord my God; and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge the territory of Japheth, and may he share the prosperity of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."--Genesis 9:18-27

• According to the second passage, who was the father of the Canaanites? Abraham found a wife for his son Isaac from afar—not a Canaanite. Esau displeased his father, Isaac, by marrying not one, but two, Canaanite women. Isaac sent his son Jacob far away to get a wife who was not a Canaanite.



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- How did Jacob's son Judah acquire a wife?
- Who helped him? Who were her people?
- Their firstborn child was a son. Judah named him Er. Who named Onan and Shelah?
- What kind of son was Er?
- According to the following passage, what does God hate? There are six things the Lord hates—no, seven things he detests: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord among brothers.--Proverbs 6:16-19

We read above that “Er was a wicked man.” The Hebrew word here translated as wicked is also used in numerous other Bible passages. In Genesis 13, Sodom and Gomorrah were called wicked for their practice of sodomy; in the book of Esther, Haman is called wicked for plotting to exterminate the Jews; in Deuteronomy, anyone leading God's people to worship false gods was called wicked.

- What did God do to Er?
- What might be the reason for Er's death?
- What kind of man does God declare Onan to be?
- How did Onan displease God? What did God do to him?
- Judah's remaining son, Shelah, should have been given to Tamar, according to marriage customs of the times. What reason did Judah give Tamar for delaying the marriage?
- What was the real reason?

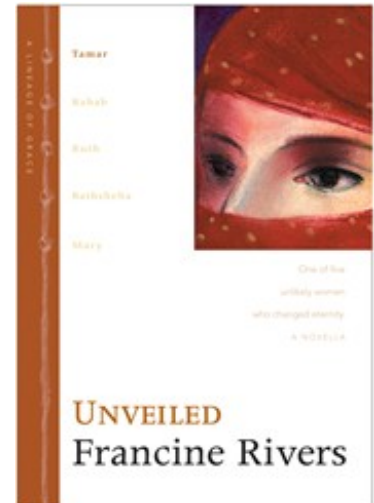
FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- Judah was grieving over the past as well as the present, and he was gripped with fear of the future. What fears grip you?
 - How do you deal with fear?
- Er and Onan did their own thing, and it led to death. As the book of Proverbs tells us, “There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death” (Proverbs 14:12). In contrast, Jesus said, “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness” (John 10:10).
- Do you know the One who gives life in all its fullness?

STOP AND PONDER

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me”; “Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.”--John 14:6; Revelation 3:20

- Will you accept His invitation?



The Bride

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

But Er was a wicked man in the Lord's sight, so the Lord took his life. Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "You must marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. Her first son from you will be your brother's heir."

But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with Tamar, he spilled the semen on the ground to keep her from having a baby who would belong to his brother. But the Lord considered it a wicked thing for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the Lord took Onan's life, too.

Then Judah told Tamar, his daughter-in-law, not to marry again at that time but to return to her parents' home. She was to remain a widow until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. (But Judah didn't -really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went home to her parents.

In the course of time Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. Someone told Tamar that her father-in-law had left for the sheep-shearing at Timnah. Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but they had not called her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. Judah noticed her as he went by and thought she was a prostitute, since her face was veiled. So he stopped and propositioned her to sleep with him, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

"How much will you pay me?" Tamar asked.

"I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised.

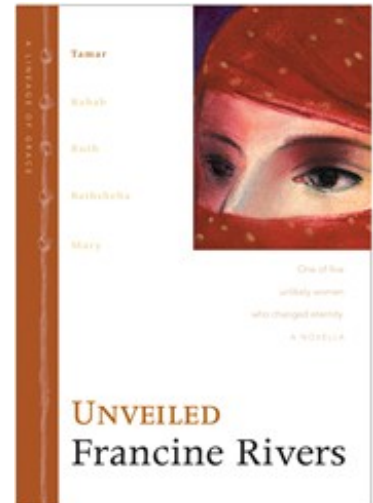
"What pledge will you give me so I can be sure you will send it?" she asked.

"Well, what do you want?" he inquired.

She replied, "I want your identification seal, your cord, and the walking stick you are carrying." So Judah gave these items to her. She then let him sleep with her, and she became pregnant. Afterward she went home, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothing as usual.--Genesis 38:7-19

We learned in our previous lesson that Judah chose to marry a forbidden Canaanite girl. He also chose a Canaanite bride for his son. This young bride's name was Tamar. Tamar means "date palm." Date palms were highly valued trees, not only for their delicious fruit but also for their stately beauty and ability to thrive in the desert climate. This teenage bride was not named so by coincidence.

- What do we learn about Tamar from the preceding passage?
- What kind of choices (if any) did Tamar have?
- When she went back to her father's house, do you think she expected to ever return to Judah's household? Why or why not?
- At what point do you think Tamar realized there would not be another wedding?



Tamar decided to take things into her own hands. She may have thought, Judah is a widower and free to take another wife. Certainly his own seed would secure his promise to me of offspring. Or, I'll take only what is promised to me!

- When Tamar set her plans in motion, she changed out of her widow's clothing. What did she do at the end of the passage? What is significant about this? (If you need a hint, consider the following: Did she stop any other men who were on their way to the sheep-shearing? Did she stay on with Judah? Did she continue to play the harlot? Did she brag about her actions?)

This woman of action now waits. She waits to see if Judah will accept her solution to their dilemma. She waits to see if she will be the one to build Judah's household. She waits to see the God of Judah judge between Judah and herself!

Read the following passage:

People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives.

Proverbs 16:2

- What does Proverbs 16:2 say about people's opinion of themselves?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- Up to this point in Tamar's life she had been abused, used, abandoned, and forgotten. Have you ever been treated unfairly? How have you handled broken promises?
- In what ways do you identify with Tamar?
- Have you ever run ahead of God and tried to fix things yourself? If so, what was the outcome?

STOP AND PONDER

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light."--Matthew 11:28-30

Pause to consider the burden you are carrying. Will you do as Tamar did and try to handle it yourself? Or will you let Jesus take your grief, disillusionment, unfair treatment, and disappointments? Take on Jesus' "yoke." Allow Him to give you a hope and a future.

Exposure

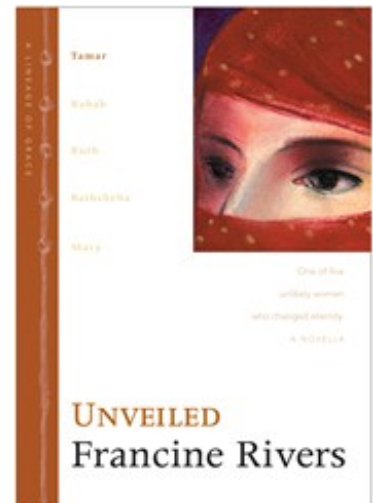
SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

About three months later, word reached Judah that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was pregnant as a result of prostitution. "Bring her out and burn her!" Judah shouted.

But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: "The man who owns this identification seal and walking stick is the father of my child. Do you recognize them?"

Judah admitted that they were his and said, "She is more in the right than I am, because I didn't keep my promise to let her marry my son Shelah." But Judah never slept with Tamar again.--Genesis 38:24-26



When Judah heard that Tamar was with child, what was his response? Was this a private proclamation or a public one?

- Judah may have thought, This will let me off the hook with my promise to her of Sheilah! He may also have thought, Who will blame me for getting rid of Tamar? What was Tamar's response to the death sentence her father-in-law demanded?
- Why do you think Tamar asked Judah a question rather than making a proclamation? What does this reveal about her character?
- A choice was now laid before Judah. He could once again run and hide, ignoring the truth; or he could, at last, do what was right. According to the passage we just read, what was Judah's response?
- What does Judah's response reveal about his character?

Read the following passage:

People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy.--Proverbs 28:13

A heart that has confessed and forsaken sin will be declared righteous by God through Christ Jesus. Both Tamar and Judah found God's forgiveness and saw Him work out His good purposes through their lives. Only God can bring blessing from disaster, deceit, and disillusionment. Only God knows the heart of a person.

Read the following passages:

In due season the time of Tamar's delivery arrived, and she had twin sons. As they were being born, one of them reached out his hand, and the midwife tied a scarlet thread around the wrist of the child who appeared first, saying, "This one came out first." But then he drew back his hand, and the other baby was actually the first to be born. "What!" the midwife exclaimed. "How did you break out first?" And ever after, he was called Perez. Then the baby with the scarlet thread on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.--Genesis 38:27-30

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (their mother was Tamar). Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. Matthew 1:3

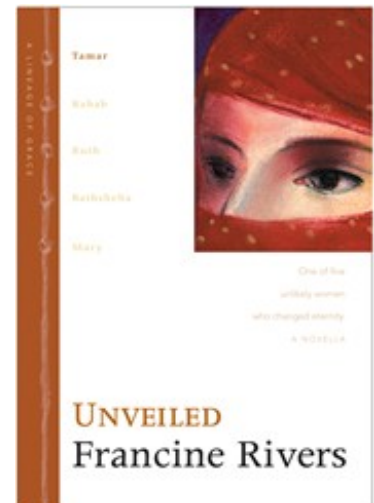
- Tamar had hoped for a son. What did God do for her?
- Judah had hoped for an heir. What did God do for him?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- Have you ever been privately confronted about something you did or said that was wrong? If so, how did it make you feel?
- Have you ever been openly rebuked, embarrassed, or corrected? How did you respond?
- When Tamar was openly confronted, she presented the truth (as she knew it). When Judah was confronted with the truth, he repented. He had run away from both his family and his faith. God used the consequences of his choices to bring about repentance and restoration. In your experiences of being confronted with something you did wrong, what were the consequences? If you had it to do over again, how might you respond differently?

STOP AND PONDER

Let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.--Hebrews 10:22



God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.--Ephesians 2:8-9

• How is God drawing you?

Seasons for Change

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

From our brief study, we have seen how circumstances offer choices to be made in life. Those choices can lead to destruction and disillusionment or to restoration and a productive life. In review, look back at the Bible passage in "Setting the Scene" on pages 3-5. What kind of man was Judah then?

The following passage is lengthy, but it's important for learning the end of Judah's story. It took place many years after the incident with Tamar, when Judah and his brothers appeared before their long-lost brother Joseph. Joseph had risen to a position of great authority in Egypt. He recognized his evil brothers and decided to put them to a test to see whether they had changed. The brothers did not know that the man wielding the power of life or death over them was, in fact, Joseph.

When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to the man in charge of his household: "Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man's money back into his sack. Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother's sack, along with his grain money." So the household manager did as he was told.

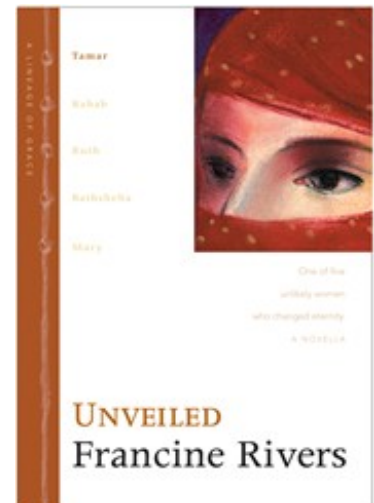
The brothers were up at dawn and set out on their journey with their loaded donkeys. But when they were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his household manager, "Chase after them and stop them. Ask them, 'Why have you repaid an act of kindness with such evil? What do you mean by stealing my master's personal silver drinking cup, which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!'"

So the man caught up with them and spoke to them in the way he had been instructed. "What are you talking about?" the brothers responded. "What kind of people do you think we are, that you accuse us of such a terrible thing? Didn't we bring back the money we found in our sacks? Why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? If you find his cup with any one of us, let that one die. And all the rest of us will be your master's slaves forever."

"Fair enough," the man replied, "except that only the one who stole it will be a slave. The rest of you may go free."

They quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. Joseph's servant began searching the oldest brother's sack, going on down the line to the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack! At this, they tore their clothing in despair, loaded the donkeys again, and returned to the city. Joseph was still at home when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him.

"What were you trying to do?" Joseph demanded. "Didn't you know that a man such as I would know who stole it?"



And Judah said, “Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we plead? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—we and our brother who had your cup in his sack.”

“No,” Joseph said. “Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go home to your father.”

Then Judah stepped forward and said, “My lord, let me say just this one word to you. Be patient with me for a moment, for I know you could have me killed in an instant, as though you were Pharaoh himself.

“You asked us, my lord, if we had a father or a brother. We said, ‘Yes, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, his youngest son. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’ And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him.’ But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’ But you told us, ‘You may not see me again unless your youngest brother is with you.’ So we returned to our father and told him what you had said. And when he said, ‘Go back again and buy us a little food,’ we replied, ‘We can’t unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We won’t be allowed to see the man in charge of the grain unless our youngest brother is with us.’ Then my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife had two sons, and that one of them went away and never returned—doubtless torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since. If you take away his brother from me, too, and any harm comes to him, you would bring my gray head down to the grave in deep sorrow.’

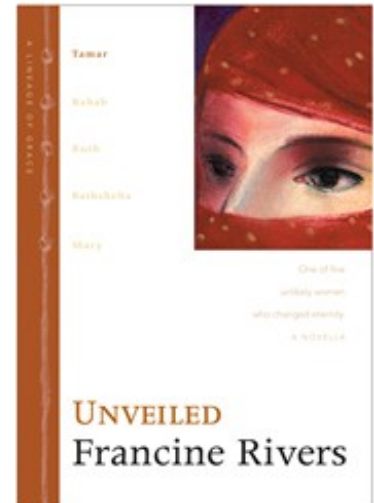
“And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life. When he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We will be responsible for bringing his gray head down to the grave in sorrow. My lord, I made a pledge to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’ Please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I cannot bear to see what this would do to him.”--Genesis 44:1-34

What do we learn about Judah from this account?

- In what ways had Judah changed?

Read the following Bible passage, which tells the end of the story:

Joseph could stand it no longer. “Out, all of you!” he cried out to his attendants. He wanted to be alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. Then he broke down and wept aloud. His sobs could be heard throughout the palace, and the news was quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.



"I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. "Come over here," he said. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don't be angry with yourselves that you did this to me, for God did it. He sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. These two years of famine will grow to seven, during which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God has sent me here to keep you and your families alive so that you will become a great nation. Yes, it was God who sent me here, not you! And he has made me a counselor to Pharaoh—manager of his entire household and ruler over all Egypt.

"Hurry, return to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. Come down to me right away! You will live in the land of Goshen so you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that you have. I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you and your household will come to utter poverty.'"

Then Joseph said, "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! Tell my father how I am honored here in Egypt. Tell him about everything you have seen, and bring him to me quickly." Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin also began to weep. Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and then they began talking freely with him.--Genesis 45:1-15

- Clearly, Joseph was deeply moved by Judah's plea. What was Joseph's response to Judah and the rest of his brothers?

God had made provision for the entire family. He had spared Joseph's life and given him a position of great authority. He had brought restoration to Judah and his brothers.

Reread the following passage about Tamar:

Then Judah told Tamar, his daughter-in-law, not to marry again at that time but to return to her parents' home. She was to remain a widow until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. (But Judah didn't -really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went home to her parents.--Genesis 38:11

- At that point, what kind of future did Tamar have to look forward to?

Now read the following Bible passage, written many years later:

And may the Lord give you descendants by this young woman who will be like those of our ancestor Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah.--Ruth 4:12

- How was Tamar remembered by her descendants?

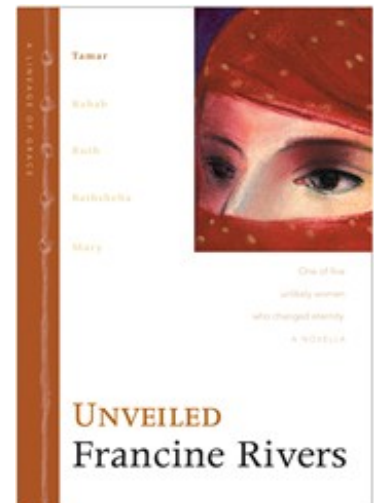
Tamar had her hopes and plans, but God had bigger plans. He gave her twin sons, who became the forebears of the tribe of Judah. Ultimately, the Messiah—the promised Savior of the world—came from that tribe.

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- Just as God worked in the lives of Judah and Tamar, He works in our lives today. In what ways is God revealing Himself to you?

- As you have worked through these lessons, what changes do you sense you may need to make in your life?

- Who holds your future? According to Jeremiah 29:11 (see page 89), who is offering you a future?



STOP AND PONDER

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. There is no judgment awaiting those who trust him. But those who do not trust him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of God.--John 3:16-18

Are you ready for the future? If you have not given your life to Jesus Christ, you can do so right now. All you need to do is say a simple prayer. Confess that you are a sinner and that you desire to turn around, and invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart as your Lord and Savior. When you belong to Jesus, you can be assured of an eternal future and hope for today.

Choose life!

Blessings and Songs

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

As we've already seen, the story of Tamar does not end with the birth of her twin sons. We can trace Judah and Tamar throughout the Bible. The following passages are a few examples of the future God had in store for them:
"I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. "Come over here," he said. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don't be angry with yourselves that you did this to me, for God did it. He sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. These two years of famine will grow to seven, during which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God has sent me here to keep you and your families alive so that you will become a great nation. Yes, it was God who sent me here, not you! And he has made me a counselor to Pharaoh—manager of his entire household and ruler over all Egypt.

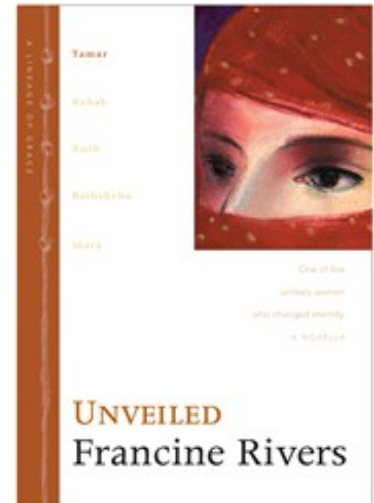
"Hurry, return to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. Come down to me right away! You will live in the land of Goshen so you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that you have.'"
Genesis 45:3-10

Read the following passage. How was Moses' blessing different from Jacob's blessing?

Moses said this about the tribe of Judah: "O Lord, hear the cry of Judah and bring them again to their people. Give them strength to defend their cause; help them against their enemies!"--Deuteronomy 33:7

In the following passage, who chooses Judah?

Then the Lord rose up as though waking from sleep, like a mighty man aroused from a drunken stupor. He routed his enemies and sent them to eternal shame. But he rejected Joseph's descendants; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim. He chose instead the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved.--Psalm 78:65-68



Genesis 38—the story of Tamar and Judah, upon which Unveiled is based—can be seen as a celebration of the father and mother of a tribe. Tamar was held in great respect. Her actions were carried out with the sole intention of having a child to carry on the family. God saw her heart and gave her children. God also knew Judah’s heart and provided a way for him to be restored to his family, as well as his descendants, to carry on his name. Ultimately, God used the line of Judah to give the world the Messiah. The Messiah is often referred to as the Lion of Judah. Jesus is Messiah!

FIND GOD’S WAYS FOR YOU

- Is there someone with whom you need to make amends, as Judah did?
- Like Tamar, we all have hopes and dreams for the future. What kinds of things do you hope for?
- How do you want to be remembered?

STOP AND PONDER

“My thoughts are completely different from yours,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

“The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands! Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the Lord’s name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.”—Isaiah 55:8-13

May God’s Word always produce the fruit of obedience and accomplish much in you.

