

What does Tamar Have to Do With It? (Rut 4:12): Women Who Risk It All

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Rut Perek 4

יא וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂעַר וְהַזְקֵנִים עֲדִים
יִתְּנוּ יְהוָה אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַבָּאָה אֶל בֵּיתְךָ כְּרַחֵל
וּכְלֵאָה אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ שְׂתִיָּהֶם אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וַעֲשֵׂה
חַיִּל בְּאַפְרָתָה וּקְרָא שֵׁם בְּבֵית לָחֶם:

יב וַיְהִי בֵּיתְךָ כְּבֵית פְּרָעַן אֲשֶׁר יִלְדָה תָמָר לִיהוּדָה
מִן הַזֶּרַע אֲשֶׁר יִתְּנוּ יְהוָה לָךְ מִן הַנְּעֶרָה הַזֹּאת:

Commentaries on Rut 4:12

ר' יוסף קרא

ואם תאמר: מה שיעקב נשא גיורת ונכרית בנות משפחתו, בנות לבן אחי אמו היה, אבל זו רות אינה בת משפחתו. הרי תמר אשת יהודה זקינינו אבי פרץ אבינו לא היתה בת משפחת יהודה. ועוד שיעקב נשא אחיות, ויהודה כלתו, וזו מותרת לך יותר.

הואיל משה

שגם הוא נולד מיבום יהודה לתמר כלתו, והעמיד אוכלוסין, ומגזעו גם דוד.

Breishit 38: Tamar and Yehuda

1 Now it came about at that time that Judah was demoted by his brothers, and he turned away until [he came] to an Adullamite man, named Hirah.

2 And there Judah saw the daughter of a merchant named Shua, and he took her and came to her.

3 And she conceived and bore a son, and he named him Er.

4 And she conceived again and bore a son, and she named him Onan.

5 Once again she bore a son, and she named him Shelah, and he (Judah) was in Chezib when she gave birth to him.

6 And Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, named Tamar.

7 Now Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death.

8 So Judah said to Onan, "Come to your brother's wife and perform the rite of the levirate, and raise up progeny for your brother."

9 Now Onan knew that the progeny would not be his, and it came about, when he came to his brother's wife, he wasted [his semen] on the ground, in order not to give seed to his brother.

10 Now what he did was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and He put him to death also.

אוֹיְהִי בַעַת הַהוּא וַיֵּרֶד יְהוּדָה מֵאֶת אָחָיו
וַיֵּט עַד־אִישׁ עַדְלָמִי וַשְּׁמוֹ חִירָה:

בַּיּוֹרָא־שָׁם יְהוּדָה בַּת־אִישׁ כְּנַעֲנִי וַשְּׁמוֹ שׁוּעַ
וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ:

גִּוְתָהָר וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ עֵר:
דַּוְתָהָר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אוֹנָן:

הַוּתָסָף עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלָה
וְהָיָה בְכִזִּיב בְּלִדְתָהּ אֹתוֹ:

וַיִּקַּח יְהוּדָה אִשָּׁה לְעֵר בְּכוֹרוֹ וַשְּׁמָהּ תָמָר:
זוֹיְהִי עֵר בְּכוֹר יְהוּדָה רַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
וַיִּמָּתֶהוּ יְהוָה:

חַוִּיאָמַר יְהוּדָה לְאוֹנָן בֵּא אֶל־אִשְׁתִּי אָחִיךָ
וַיְבִים אֹתָהּ וְהָקָם זָרַע לְאָחִיךָ:

טוֹיַדַע אוֹנָן כִּי לֹא לוֹ יִהְיֶה הַזָּרַע וְהָיָה
אִם־בָּא אֶל־אִשְׁתִּי אָחִיו וַשְּׁחַת אֲרָצָה
לְבַלְתִּי נִתֵן־זָרַע לְאָחִיו:

יַוִּירַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיָּמַת גַּם־אֹתוֹ:

11 Then Judah said to his daughter in law Tamar, "Remain as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up," for he said, "Lest he too die, like his brothers." So Tamar went, and she remained in her father's house.

12 Many days passed, and Shua's daughter, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was consoled, and he went up [to watch] over his sheepshearers he and Hirah, his Adullamite friend to Timnah.

13 And it was told to Tamar, saying, "Behold, your father in law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

14 So she took off her widow's garb, covered [her head] with a veil and covered her face, and she sat down at the crossroads that were on the way to Timnah, for she saw that Shelah had grown up, but as for her she was not given to him for a wife.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she covered her face.

יֵאָמֵר יְהוּדָה לְתָמָר כְּלָתּוֹ שְׁבִי אִלְמָנָה
בֵּית־אָבִיךָ עַד־יִגְדַּל שְׁלָה בְנִי כִּי אָמֹר
פֶּן־יָמוּת גַּם־הוּא כְּאֶחָיו וַתֵּלֶךְ תָּמָר
וַתָּשֶׁב בֵּית אָבִיהָ:

יְבִירְבוּ הַיָּמִים וַתָּמָת בֵּת־שׁוּעַ
אִשְׁת־יְהוּדָה וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוּדָה וַיַּעַל עַל־גִּזְזֵי
צֹאנּוֹ הוּא וְחִירָה רַעְהוּ הַעֲדָלְמִי תַמְנָתָה:
יִגְיָד לְתָמָר לֵאמֹר הֲנִיָּה חֲמִיךָ עֲלֶיךָ
תַמְנָתָה לְגַז צֹאנּוֹ:

יִדְוָתָסֵר בְּגִדֵי אִלְמָנוּתָהּ מֵעַלֶיהָ וַתִּכַּס
בְּצַעֲרֶיהָ וַתִּתְעַלֶּף וַתָּשֶׁב בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם
אֲשֶׁר עַל־דָּרֶךְ תַמְנָתָה כִּי רָאָתָה כִּי־גִדַּל
שְׁלָה וְהוּא לֹא־נִתְּנָה לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה:
טוֹוִירָאָה יְהוּדָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לְזוֹנָה כִּי כִסְתָהּ
פָּנֶיהָ:

16 So he turned aside toward her to the road, and he said, "Get ready now, I will come to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter in law, and she said, "What will you give me that you should come to me?"

17 And he said, "I will send a kid from the herd," and she said, "[Only] if you give me a pledge until you send [it]."

18 So he said, "What is the pledge that I should give you?" And she said, "Your signet, your cloak, and the staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her, and he came to her, and she conceived his likeness.

19 Then she arose and went away, and she took off her veil, and she donned her widow's garb.

20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his Adullamite friend to take the pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.

21 So he asked the people of the place, saying, "Where is the harlot who was at the crossroads on the way?" and they said, "No harlot was here."

22 So he returned to Judah, and he said, "I have not found her, and the people of the place also said, 'No harlot was here.'"

23 So Judah said, "Let her take [them] for herself, lest we become a laughingstock. Behold, I sent this kid, but you did not find her."

טז וַיֵּט אֵלֶיהָ אֶל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲבֵה-נָא אָבוֹא אֵלַיךְ כִּי לֹא יָדַע כִּי כִלְתּוֹ הוּא וַתֹּאמֶר מַה-תִּתֶנּוּ-לִי כִּי תָבוֹא אֵלַי:

יז וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֲשַׁלַּח גְּדִי-עֲזִים מִן-הַצֹּאן וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-תִּתֶנּוּ עֲרֹבוֹן עַד שְׁלַחְךָ:

יח וַיֹּאמֶר מָה הָעֲרֹבוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶן-לָךְ וַתֹּאמֶר חֲתָמִךָ וּפְתִילְךָ וּמַטְּךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ וַיִּתֶן-לָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ וַתְּהַר לוֹ:

יט וַתִּקַּם וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתִּסַּר צְעִיפָהּ מֵעֲלֶיהָ וַתִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדֵי אִלְמָנוּתָהּ:

כ וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוּדָה אֶת-גְּדֵי הָעֲזִים בְּיַד רַעְהוּ הָעֶדְלָמִי לְקַחַת הָעֲרֹבוֹן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה וְלֹא מָצָאָהּ:

כא וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמָהּ לֵאמֹר אֵיךְ הִקְדַּשְׁתָּהּ הֲוָא בְּעֵינַיִם עַל-הַדֶּרֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קֹדֶשֶׁהּ:

כב וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל-יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא מָצָאתִיהָ וְגַם אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא-הִיְתָה בָּזָה קֹדֶשֶׁהּ:

כג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה תִּקַּח-לָהּ פֶּן נִהְיֶה לְבוֹז הַגֹּיִם שְׁלַחְתִּי הַגְּדִי הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא מָצָאתָהּ:

24 Now it came about after nearly three months, that it was told to Judah, saying, "Your daughter in law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is pregnant from harlotry." So Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned."

25 She was taken out, and she sent to her father in law, saying, "From the man to whom these belong I am pregnant," and she said, "Please recognize whose signet ring, cloak, and staff are these?"

26 Then Judah recognized [them], and he said, "She is right, [it is] from me, because I did not give her to my son Shelah." But he no longer continued to be intimate with her.

27 And it came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.

28 And it came about when she gave birth, that he (the infant) stretched out his hand. So the midwife took and bound a crimson thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."

29 And it came about, as he was drawing back his hand, behold, his brother emerged, and she said, "With what strength you have strengthened yourself!" And he (Judah) named him Perez.

30 Afterwards, his brother emerged, the one upon whose hand was the crimson thread, and he named him Zerah.

כד ויהי | כַּמְשָׁלֶשׁ חֳדָשִׁים וַיִּגַּד לְיְהוּדָה
לֵאמֹר זָנַתָּה תָמָר כַּלְתֶּךָ וְגַם הֵנָּה הָרָה
לְזָנוּנִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה הוֹצִיאוּהָ וְתִשְׂרָף:

כה הוּא מוֹצֵאת וְהִיא שְׁלַחָה אֶל־חַמִּיהָ
לֵאמֹר לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אֵלֶּה לּוֹ אָנֹכִי הָרָה
וְתֹאמַר הַכֹּר־נָא לְמִי הַחֲתָמָת וְהַפְּתִילִים
וְהַמָּטָה הָאֵלֶּה:

כו ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני כי על-כן
לא-נתתיה לשלה בני ולא-יסף עוד
לדעתה:

כז ויהי בעת לדתה והנה תאומים בבטנה:

כח ויהי בלדתה ויתן-יד ותקח המילדת
ותקשר על-ידו שני לאמר זה יצא ראשונה:

כט ויהי | כַּמְשֵׁיב יָדוֹ וְהֵנָּה יָצָא אָחִיו וְתֹאמַר
מֵה־פְּרֻצַת עֲלֶיךָ פֶּרֶץ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּרֶץ:

ל ואחר יצא אחיו אשר על-ידו השני ויקרא
שמו זרח:

Life-Saving Women in the Bible, Edna Hilewitz

(PHD Dissertation)

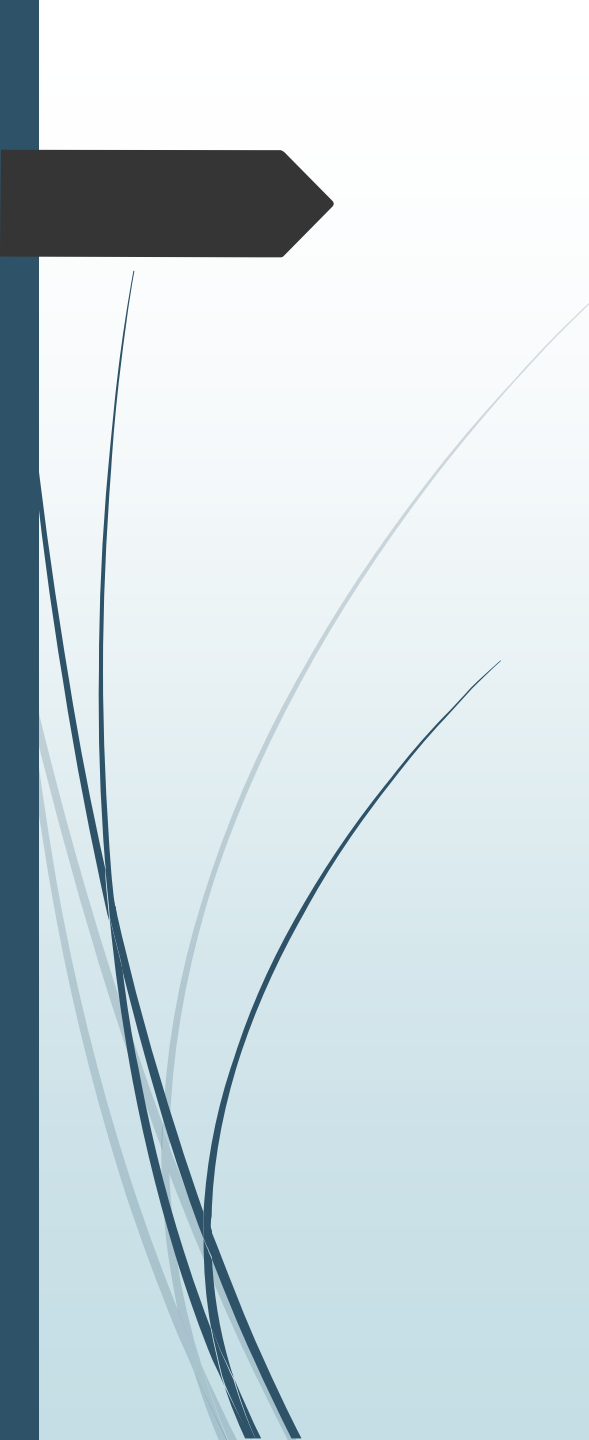
This dissertation deals with biblical narratives in which women save lives. We find twenty-one such stories in the Bible: Rebecca and Jacob (Gen. 27:42-46); the Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1:15-22); Moses' mother and Moses (Ex. 2:1-10); Moses' sister and Moses (Ex. 2:4-8); Pharaoh's daughter and Moses (Ex. 2:5-10); Zipporah and Moses (Ex. 4:24-26); Rahab and the spies (Josh. 2); the woman of Tevez (Judg. 9:50-55); Michal and David (I Sam. 19:11-17); Abigail and David (I Sam. 25); the nurse and Mephibosheth (I Sam. 4:4); the deliverance of David and the people at the hand of the maidservant (II Sam. 17:15-17); the woman from Bahurim who saves Jonathan and Ahimaaz (II Sam. 17:18-23); the woman from Abel-Beth-Maacah (II Sam. 20:15-22); Bathsheba and Solomon (I Kings 1:11-31); the harlot and her son (I Kings 3:15-27); the woman from Zarephath and her son (I Kings 17:8-24); the Shunamite woman and her son (I Kings 4:17-37); the little maid from Israel and Naaman (II Kings 5:1-19); Jehosheba and Joash (II Kings 11:1-3); and Esther (Book of Esther)...

In at least thirteen stories we find the woman as the main character, but by the end of the story she returns to her previous secondary status, and in some instances no further mention is made of her. Where the story of deliverance is not the woman's first appearance in the text, she will likewise have played only a minor role previously. **Hence, while she is not a round figure, in literary terms, it would be equally wrong to define her as a flat character. Rather, she is something in-between, with a one-time designated purpose.** (Rebecca and Esther are exceptions in this respect, and are presented as main characters not only in the specific episodes concerned.)

While we encounter biblical men who try to rescue others but are not successful, as in the case of Abraham who is unable to save the people of Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33); Reuben, who, despite his good intentions, fails to save Joseph (Gen. 37:21); and David, who cannot save the infant son born to him and Bathsheba (II Sam. 12:16-18), we do not find examples of women who seek to save lives but fail in their quest. This indicates that in terms of deliverance and gender there are trends that differ from the familiar heroic narrative. The man who is usually depicted as the savior and hero is not the only biblical rescuer. There is a clear tendency to present females, too, as saviors.

Guiding questions:

- Who encourages them to act?
- What is the way they go about succeeding?
- How much do they use their sexuality to achieve their goals?
- Are they criticized along the way?
- How does the Tanakh remember them?



Tamar and Rut are not on this list...they don't literally save lives from imminent death, but they risk it all to perpetuate their family's name.