

# THE STRANDS OF REDEMPTION

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Levin*

*... And let your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore unto Judah, of the seed which HaShem shall give you of this young woman.' (4:12)*

After comparing Ruth to Rachel and Leah, the verse connects her with Tamar. There is, of course, much similarity between Ruth and Tamar.

Two women took risks in order to join the tribe of Judah: Tamar and Ruth (Yalkut Ruth cited in Nachals Yosef).

There were two women - Tamar and Ruth - from whom the line of Judah was built, and from whom issued King David, Solomon and Messiah. These two women were similar: after their first husbands died, they proactively acted to gain their second husbands - to build and shape the line of Judah (Zohar 1:188b).

On a fairly superficial level, Ruth rectified the deed of Tamar whose purpose was praiseworthy but whose means were impure and sinful. Whereas Tamar employed deception to assure that the effectuation of her levirate marriage, Ruth avoided sin and temptation in a very similar situation, full of temptation and opportunities to sin. She achieved righteous results through virtuous means. Coupled with the realization that Boaz also rectified the sins of his ancestors Er and Onan, the sons of Judah, an apparently sufficient, albeit limited picture of redemption can be drawn. The Sages, however, are never satisfied with the obvious and the superficial. On the basis of the same word used in two different contexts, they traced the thread of Redemption farther, much farther. Let us look at the following two statements by the same Rabbi.

1. R. Tanchuma in the name of Shmuel said: What is it that it writes (of the intention of the two daughters of Lot): 'We will produce SEED from our father' (Gen. 19:32)? In the book of Ruth it also says "SEED", The seed that came yet from another place. Which is it? The King Messiah (Ruth Rabbah 7:15).

We now understand that Ruth did not redeem only the error of Judah and Tamar but also the willful incestuous ignorance of Lot and his daughters. In all these situations we read about junior women and a senior man. Judah thought that he sinned with a loose woman after his wife died, in his eyes a minor sin, if a sin at all; Lot did not know that his daughters repeatedly committed incest with and through him, although according to the Rabbis, he should have known (Rashi to Genesis 20:33 from the Sifri). Yet in both these sins there was a kernel of good intention, sufficient that it deserved a

chance at redemption. Before Ruth and Boaz, all the players in the cosmic drama of Redemption that instantiated in their particular lives, succeeded in some ways and failed in others. On one side we see the men; Judah, his sons Er and Onan and Shela, his distant descendents - Elimelech, Kilyon and Machlon (see [Lesson 6](#), to review and flesh out these ideas); on the other, the women - the daughters of Lot, Rachel and Leah, Tamar, Orpah and Naomi.

However, we are not yet far enough and deep enough. The root of the problem reaches back to ... Adam and his sons. The Sages teach us that all the souls of humanity were included in Adam. In him the roots of the souls of men and women were united as is each marriage a reflection and an unification of the roots to create (hopefully) the harmony of a family.

2. "...And she called his name Seth for God has given me SEED in stead of Abel whom Kain has killed (Gen. 4:25). R. Tanchuma in the name of R. Shmuel said: "She saw that seed that came from another place - this is the King Messaiah (Gen. Rabbah 23:5).

This should not surprise us. Cain killed Abel and how could that fissure between brothers be fixed? Through the birth of another brother who, unlike the first two, was "in his (Adam's) image, in his appearance (Gen. 5:3)".

The letters of Adam are deconstructed as: Adam, David, Messiah. "Adam took seventy years of his life and gave them to David, son of Jesse (Numbers Rabbah 14:12)".

The listing of connections and interrelationships that you encountered so far in this lesson may appear complicated, vague and difficult to fully grasp and understand. Clearly they need to be fleshed out and explained at greater detail. We will, please God, attempt to do so next week. The ideas that we have read are interpreted by some Kabbalists as referring simply to transmigration of souls, who was reincarnated in whom, and how he or she stood up in front of the tests that they failed in previous lives. There is however another explanation. Next week we will examine the comparison of Rachel/ Leah and Naomi/ Ruth at a greater length, to focus on the antecedents of harmony and disharmony as preludes to Redemption.

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