

OTHER THINGS WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT:

CHARACTERIZATION OF WOMEN = PAWNS OF PATRIARCHY: For patriarchy to retain power, women cannot have it. To prevent women from having it, characterize them as “tricky” (to be feared) or “loose” (to be consumed) or “wife/mother/daughter” (to be possessed). These characterizations are so old, we’ve accepted them as gospel.

FEAR OF WOMEN: Powerful theme for all our history. If women are scary, with their tricks and schemes, they can’t be trusted. When men of power begin saying out loud, “This is a scary day to be a man,” take notice. Historically, when powerful men encourage the fear of women, all people stand to suffer.

ANDROCENTRIC INTERPRETATION: In every traditional commentary Tamar is named a “prostitute.” It’s unquestioned. Some have even interpreted her actions with Judah as “adultery,” since she had been promised to Shelah (even though she/we/ everyone who can read sees she was never actually wed to Shelah). She wasn’t a prostitute. What else might we name her?

JUDAH, THE UNSUNG FEMINIST HERO: When we focus on Tamar’s deception, we miss the profound nature of Judah’s response. He calls her “more right” (literally “more just/righteous”) and “does not lie with her again.” He takes her into his home and fathers the children. Profound turn from “burn her.”

OUR TENDENCY TO JUDGE PROSTITUTION PRACTICES: Have we solved the problems of the commercialization of women’s bodies? Ummm...

JESUS’S GENEALOGY: Why do these women appear in Jesus’s family tree? No really, why? These are more subversive than we think.

REDEMPTIVE IMAGINATION:

(AKA, QUESTIONS W/NO ANSWERS, THAT REQUIRE US TO MAKE SOME STUFF UP...)

THE LOCATION OF TAMAR’S STORY. It chronologically doesn’t fit. Why there? Right before the story of Potiphar’s wife? Perhaps, as a warning to not fear the woman. Without her, the line of Judah would have ended. Without her, Judah would have cursed himself (not practicing correct marriage customs).

GYNOCENTRICITY: Why do these (especially Tamar) stories appear so gynocentric? The dudes are killed off by God for unnamed evil, while the woman is victor. What if... these stories are evidence of the Spirit’s subversive story of love, equality, justice, woven by crimson thread through all of history? Do we really think the pen of patriarchy is more powerful than She?

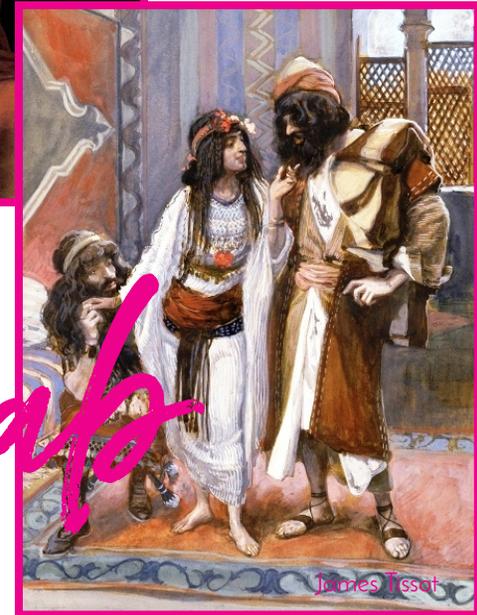
Tamar



Rembrandt

PROSTITUTES -OR- PROTECTRESSES?

Rahab



Dorees Jesuit

THEMES:

Scandal, Tricky Women, Fear of the Woman

FOUND IN:

Tamar: Genesis 38:6-30, Ruth 4:12, 1 Chronicles 2:4, Matthew 1:3
Rahab: Joshua 2:1, 3, 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

TIME OF WRITING:

Genesis: during/after Babylonian Exile, 6th century BCE
Joshua: shortly before Babylonian Exile, time of King Josiah

TYPE OF LITERATURE:

theological history (think more “legend”), etiology

10 "HISTORICAL" WOMEN IN GENESIS

MOTHERS (8)

SARAH
LOT'S DAUGHTERS
HAGAR
REBEKAH
RACHEL
LEAH
TAMAR

TRICKSTERS (6)

LOT'S DAUGHTERS
REBEKAH
RACHEL
TAMAR (HARLOT)
POTIPHAR'S WIFE
(TEMPTRESS)

RIVALRY (4)

RACHEL & LEAH
SARAH & HAGAR

BARREN (3)

SARAH (MAID)
REBEKAH
RACHEL (MAID)

VICTIMS (3)

HAGAR
LOT'S DAUGHTERS
DINAH

FOREIGNERS (3)

HAGAR
POTIPHAR'S WIFE
TAMAR

How do these categories continue to influence how we identify women?

Harlot. Trickster. Hero.

RAHAB INFO:

TRANSLATION NUANCE: Verse 2:1. "spent the night" or "lie down." One means sleepover, one means sex. One word changes the start of the story.

NATIONALITY: Unknown. Widely believed to be Canaanite (makes sense), but the text isn't explicit. "Foreignness" certain.

BELOVED UNDERDOG: Israel sees herself as the "underdog," and celebrates other underdog characters. Think: exaltation of the youngest sons, and here, prostitute.

SOCIAL STATUS: Rahab's profession was an accepted, but unsafe. Kings used prostitutes, but could also dispose of them. King at Rahab's door, not friends.

PROBLEMATIC IMPERIALIST UNDERTONES: Think, Pocahontas. The female hero who sells out her own people. How could this text be used as propaganda for others to sell out to Israelite invaders? Is the female valued strictly because she recognizes the specialness of her conquerors?

STATEMENT OF FAITH: Self interest was likely part of Rahab's motives, but her statement of faith is a profound one, both literary and culturally. She acts in a way that affirms life. An actual hero of faith.

TAMAR INFO:

Trickster. ~~Harlot.~~ Mother

LEVERITE MARRIAGE: The practice of marrying your dead husband's brother, if you don't have any children. Brother's "seed" will fulfill the line of dead husband. Why? If women can't possess wealth, this keeps wealth within dude's family.

LETTER OF THE LAW: Remember, no Jesus yet. Laws/rules/customs own the day. Jesus was revolutionary b/c he said poeey on the laws, act in love for all people. But that hasn't happened yet. Righteousness = law following.

ACTIVE GOD: At this point in our theological history, God still "acts." Humans do not create history, God does, and humans experience and record.

THEOLOGICAL HISTORY: "Historic," but not in the way we understand history in our modern context. Think more grandpa "walking uphill both ways." Less about historical reporting, more about meaning/lesson/theological conviction.

PROSTITUTION: Problematic for Tamar and not Judah. Culturally, acceptance of "the wily woman made me do it." Male sexuality can't be controlled. (See >>>)

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX WORK:

Leviticus 19:29 | Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, and the land will not become prostituted and full of premeditated wickedness...

Leviticus 21 | ⁷ The Sons of Aaron shall not take a woman who is a prostitute or has been penetrated; neither shall they take a woman driven away from her man. For they are holy to their God...¹³ The priest shall take only a woman who is a virgin. ¹⁴ A widow-woman, or a driven-away-woman, or a penetrated-woman, a prostitute-woman, these he shall not take, for only a virgin woman of his own people shall he take...

- Laws around sex work in Leviticus indicate it's widely practiced in time/place. Both accepted, and shunned. Normative for men, a death sentence for women. Prostitutes are usually foreign women.
- Laws are progressive for their day (re: *not* progressive for *this* day). Why does that matter? These laws seem nuts, but they were a leaning forward for the time. To honor that tradition we wouldn't follow those laws. We'd lean forward ourselves.
- Prostitution/harlotry/whoredom language used both for sex work, and for people who worship other gods/idols. Lots of "to-do" about sexual worship in neighboring cultures, but no actual evidence of that. (#PatriarchyProblems)