



A delightfull readable yet profound survey of the way stories inform our faith and values, and are essential to our Christian witness. Ralph Milton at his best.

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**Tamar**  
**...a woman destroyed**  
based on 2 Samuel 13:1-33  
by **Ralph Milton**  
from [Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?](#)  
**Wood Lake Books**

She stopped and kicked the dust with her sandal. A deep breath, then Tamar walked down the street toward her home. She had to know.

Without a word to the servant at the door, the thin, pale teenager moved down the corridor to a room she had known well but seldom entered. She knocked and opened the door. A thin, pale woman sat weaving wool, a woman old before her time.

"Why have you come, niece? You know I don't like visitors."

"I have to know." said Tamar. "I have to know your story."

"It's over. And it's none of your business."

"My father named me after you, Aunt Tamar. I am your namesake. Some say I have your eyes and they are beautiful. But whenever I ask about you, people turn silent."

"It's just as well. There is nothing to be said."

"My father announced my engagement yesterday."

"So? Congratulations, I suppose."

"When my father announced the name of the man I am to marry, my mother gasped and said, 'Oh, Absalom. What will Aunt Tamar say?'"

"Why? What business is it of mine?"

"I am to marry my cousin. Amnon's son Jonadab."

"Oh my God!"

"Why, Aunt Tamar? What is the story known to everyone but me? Please tell me. I am a woman now, and I have to know."

"Why did Amnon name his son Jonadab?"

"Jonadab was my uncle Amnon's best friend."

"Yes. I know." Suddenly her hands became busy at the loom. The shuttle fairly flew. Then just as suddenly she stopped. "Do you know why I never married?"

"No. Well, perhaps. The children in the street have taunted me. 'Tamar,' they say, 'have you been ruined like your auntie Tamar?' But I don't know what they mean. That's why I came. I want to know."

"Very well, my child. I didn't want to tell you this, but you are right. You are a woman now and you must know. It was years ago and I too, was dreaming of my wedding night. My father sent me word to go and make some food for my half brother Amnon because he was sick. If my father had not been so busy being King of all of Israel, he might have seen through the trick. But King David was like all the other men. He didn't really care.

"It was Jonadab who put Amnon up to it. Jonadab thought up the ruse. He suggested that Amnon feign an illness and ask for me to bring him food. And it worked. I found myself alone in a room with Amnon who grabbed me and threw me to the ground and raped me. I begged him not to. I told him he could marry me if he asked my father, David. I tried everything I could but he was stronger than I. He hit me and he raped me. I wish he'd killed me."

The younger Tamar's eyes were wide with horror. "No wonder mother was upset."

"No, that isn't why. Amnon was a violent man, but worse, he was a cruel man. After he had raped me, he yelled at me, called me a 'dirty slut' and threw me out onto the street. The law of Israel says that if he had sex with me, he had to marry me, but Amnon branded me a slut and threw me out, and I had nowhere else to go but to my brother Absalom. Absalom told me not to worry. 'Forget about it, sis.' he said. How could I forget about it? I was a ruined woman. No one would marry me now. I would never bear children. I asked my father for some help. He was angry, but he wouldn't do a thing. 'Don't worry about it, Tamar,' he said. 'Boys will be boys, you know. I can't do anything about Amnon. He's my son, after all.' "

The older woman paused, took a deep breath, then: "The laws of Israel do not protect the women, Tamar. Only men."

"So that is why you spend your days here, by yourself, spinning?"

"Absalom killed him. It took him two years to work himself up to it but Absalom invited Amnon to a feast and got him drunk and killed him. He killed the man who would have been your father-in-law if he had lived."

"I knew my father killed Amnon. I never knew why. That must be why my mother is so upset. But father said he wants bygones to be bygones, and the dowry is so generous, he cannot refuse."

"No doubt. But child, that is not why your mother is upset. Amnon was a cruel and a violent man. I was not the only object of his cruelty. When he went in to see his wives and concubines, he would beat them, abuse them."

"But surely Jonadab will not be like his father! Surely not!"

The older Tamar saw herself reflected in the sad, dark eyes of her young namesake. She stood and walked to the casement window where the hot red sun was lowering to the west. Her niece watched patiently in silence till her aunt returned to sit before her loom and grasp the shuttle with whited knuckles. "I will pray to God that Jonadab is good and kind, my child. I shall come to your wedding feast and I will rejoice with you. I will pray for you then – and always. And I shall weave a pure white wedding shawl to grace your deep black eyes. Now go to your own chambers. The day is ending."

"Thank you Aunt Tamar," said the girl.  
She glanced back at the older woman as she left, and knew she would return to talk some more. She didn't hear the whispered prayer, "Oh God, must the sins of fathers be repeated by their sons? Must they?"

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,  
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