

Who was Perez in the Bible?

Perez was one of the sons of Judah through an illicit affair with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Perez's twin brother was Zerah. In the biblical genealogies, Perez is listed as an ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ.

The name Perez in Hebrew means “breach” or “he who bursts forth,” and it refers to how he was born.

Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons, was leader of the Israelite tribe bearing his name. His sons were Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah arranged for the marriage of his oldest son, Er, with a Canaanite woman named Tamar. But Er, who was “wicked in the sight of the Lord,” died before producing an offspring, leaving Tamar a childless widow (Genesis 38:7).

Er's next oldest unmarried brother, Onan, was required to enter into a levirate marriage with Tamar, with a goal of producing an heir for his deceased brother. But Onan refused to have a child with Tamar, knowing the offspring would be heir to his brother's estate and not his own. So, the Lord punished Onan with death (Genesis 38:8-10).

Judah's third son, Shelah, was not yet old enough to marry, so Judah told Tamar to return to her father's house and wait for Shelah to grow up. When Shelah came of age, Judah failed to keep his promise, and Tamar took matters into her own hands.

She devised a plan to entice Judah into having sex with her and thus produce an heir. She covered her face and disguised herself as a prostitute. The plan worked. Tamar became pregnant with twin boys as a result of her encounter with Judah. When the time

came to give birth, Zerah's hand emerged from the womb first, so the midwife tagged the child's wrist with a red thread to identify him as the firstborn. But then Zerah pulled his hand back, and suddenly Perez burst forth from Tamar's womb, earning his name and the rights of the firstborn (Genesis 38:27-30).

Both Tamar and Judah sinned in their immoral union, but God worked through their sinfulness to bring about the birth of Jesus Christ through their bloodline (Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33). The Messiah is called Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), having descended from Judah through Perez.

Perez fathered two sons, Hezron and Hamul, and became the ancestral leader of the Perezite clan (Genesis 46:12; Numbers 26:20). The family was well respected, as evidenced by this blessing pronounced upon Boaz when he committed to redeem Ruth: "Then the elders and all the people standing in the gate replied, 'We are witnesses! May the LORD make this woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, from whom all the nation of Israel descended! May you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. 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 4:11-12, NLT).

It was through Perez's son Hezron that King David and, eventually, Jesus Christ descended.

When the Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon, 468 Perezites were chosen to live in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 9:4; Nehemiah 11:4, 6). The Bible says they were "all outstanding men."