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BIB102 - Assignment 1

### From Bitterness to Compassion: The Changed Heart of Judah

It is safe to say that we do not always get along with our families. As much as my brothers and I used to argue when we were children, committing a crime against them has never crossed my mind. Sibling rivalry was taken to an entirely new level with the story of Joseph and his brothers. Judah and his brothers threw Joseph into a pit and then sold him off to slavery just to be rid of him. In the end, God makes all things new, including the bond between brothers.

Judah is introduced to us in Genesis 37:26 where it states: "26. So Judah said to his brothers, 'what profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27. Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.'" and his brothers listened." We see here that Judah's voice carried weight. His brothers seemed to respect him. He held bitterness against his brother Joseph, same as his brothers, but he was the one who suggested that they sell his brother off to slavery as opposed to killing him. Even though they didn't outright kill him, selling their brother to slavery was a heartless thing to do.

Chapter 38 of Genesis brings us to the strange story about Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Judah married a Canaanite woman, and with her, he had a few sons. His eldest son was named Er and Er was said to be so wicked that God killed him. Er left Tamar as a widow, and according to the customs of those times, the brother of a deceased man was supposed to marry the new widow. Tamar's next husband also died, which caused Judah to become superstitious and he thought his youngest son would also die if he married Tamar. Tamar ended up dressing as a "harlot" and came across Judah. She was intimate with him and became pregnant. Upon learning this, Judah was going to have Tamar executed until he learned he was the father of her twins. He corrected his error of not marrying Tamar to his son, and in the end, these people ended up in the lineage of Jesus.

We get back on track with the story of Joseph and we're told Joseph is now the right hand man of Pharaoh. The famine has taken over the land of Egypt, and Joseph's brothers have now come to try to buy food for their family. Joseph requested Benjamin, the youngest of the brothers, but Judah is now asking to be taken instead. Chapter 44:33-34 tells us: "33. Now please let your servant remain here as my Lord's slave, in place of the boy. Let him go back with his brothers. 34. For how can I go back to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the grief that would overwhelm my father." Judah had a firsthand account of how Jacob reacted when he saw Joseph's tunic covered in goat blood because he thought it belonged to Joseph.

Judah now understands the pain that he put their father in when he thought he lost Joseph. We see a man who is now empathetic towards the pain of his family and now understands that they did a terrible thing to Joseph and to their father. This moment helped him evolve as a person.

I think a lesson that can be learned from Judah is that no matter how far gone we think we are, God can always use us for his plans. Ultimately, I feel that Judah's story is a story about grace. It is a story about how God can grant anyone his mercy, and use them for his purposes. Judah is a part of the lineage of David and Jesus. The turning point of Judah was when he saw his father's pain. Judah and his brother's were cruel, but Judah has now seen the error of his ways.

Another person whose personality changed due to events in their life was Saul who later became Paul. At the time, Saul was a major persecutor of followers of the Christ, and due to an encounter with God, he became one of the most powerful Apostles ever. It is amazing what God can do in our hearts. He can take bitterness towards our families in our hearts and turn it into love and compassion.

Works cited:

John H. Walton, NKJ Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2016) ISBN-13: 978-0310003557