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### The Main Events in the Life of Judah

The readings beginning in Genesis chapter 13 and ending in chapter 44 introduced us to the light and darkness found inside each of us. God always provides us with the resources, especially knowledge, to learn from our mistakes and to use these lessons as opportunities to seek the light and the goodness of God. Just like Joseph and Judah, I have experienced emotions such as evil, sin, rejection, hatred, jealousy, feeling unloved, death of loved ones, sadness, and sibling rivalry. Just like the brothers, I have also experienced love, kindness, forgiveness, remorse, and hope. God's love for us is so strong and unconditional that he will never give up on us even when we give up on ourselves. I felt Judah and his family represent a part of me today. Every day we experience struggles and challenges which can bring us down, but we know with God we will always have a strong hand to hold us up.

As the reading begins, Joseph was seen as the favorite son of Israel because he had been born during his dad's later years. This special love Israel had for his son Joseph did not go well with the rest of his sibling's creating friction and animosity. Joseph had experienced different dreams which he revealed to his brothers which only escalated the level of jealousy. His dream apparently revealed he would reign over the siblings and one day they would bow down to him. We later find how this dream became a reality.

When Israel sent Joseph to the area where the brothers were grazing near Schechem, the brothers saw this as an opportunity to kill him. Reuben, one of the brothers, did not want him dead and did not want anyone to lay a hand on Joseph but agreed to throw him into the cistern. Judah also did not want his brother killed and said, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood."

(Zondervan NIV Genesis 37:26). Judah felt it was better to sell him to the Ishmaelites and spare him his life. Once sold he was then taken to Egypt. When Reuben went to look for Joseph and found him gone, he decided to make it look as if he had been killed by an animal. When their father was informed, he was consumed with grief. I think the brothers did not tell their father the truth because they wanted dad to suffer since they were jealous of their father's love for their brother. Obviously, the brothers were so wrong in their decision. I'm sure the father was not aware this had created such destruction among their family as a whole. I'm sure the father loved all his children in different ways.

Judah eventually left his brothers and went to stay with a friend named Hirah. Judah then met the daughter of Canaanite named Shua. Judah married Shua. Their first son was named Er, their second son was named Onan and their third son was named Shelah. Judah's wife eventually passed away. Judah and his friend went to Timnah where he met a woman who he slept with. This woman, named Tamar, did not want to have sex with her husband's youngest sibling since she was not his wife. Tamar disguised herself so Judah did not know who she was. Tamar became pregnant from Judah and eventually he found out. Judah was under the impression Tamar was a prostitute and wanted her gone. Judah said "bring her out and have her burned to death." (NIV 38 :24). When Judah learned the truth about what had happened and why Tamar did what she did, he said "she is more righteous than I, since I would not give her up to my son Shelah" (NIV 38:26).

During his life, Judah's personality changed from one of hate, jealousy, anger, to one of forgiveness and remorse. His brother Reuben also had a change of heart. Both brothers who were initially full of darkness were eventually able to have a change of heart and instead of killing their sibling sold him so his life would be spared. The brothers knew in their heart the thought of killing their blood brother was evil and it brought darkness over them. Judah could have spent his life spent on negative

thoughts and behaviors but learned to forgive. Every step and journey we take just like those characters in this reading require us to seek God and to strive for a healthier relationship with Him.

Joseph, while in Egypt, continued to succeed in everything. The Lord blessed him and all he owned. During his time in Egypt, he was given a wife and had some children. There were periods of abundance and famine in Egypt. Joseph's brothers had traveled to Egypt to pick up grain. Joseph's dreams became a reality when his brothers had to bow down to him because he was governor of the land and sold grain to the people. Joseph eventually had a change of heart with the way he was treating his brothers during this period. Once all the grain had been eaten, the brothers made a second trip with their youngest brother Benjamin. Joseph tried to keep Benjamin as a slave by placing his silver cup into Benjamin's sack so he could be found guilty of stealing. As we continue to read, Joseph experiences another change of heart and does not keep Benjamin but lets him return back home to their father. I think Joseph was remorseful and knew keeping Benjamin as a slave was not the right thing to do because he also had experienced slavery. Even though Joseph met many dark roads in his life, he always received the blessing of God because he had a good heart and managed to forgive those who hurt him. God shone a light on Joseph and his family and provided them with years of blessings and abundance.

The main lesson I learned is how amazing God is and no matter how hard things are and no matter if it seems impossible for things to change, nothing is impossible with God. We need to always believe and to continue to grow in our faith through our readings and community service. We also need to surround ourselves with others like us who want to achieve the same goal which is to be like God and to share his blessings with others who may not be as fortunate as we are. My preaching's to others would include sharing some of my darkest moments in my life and how when I thought my life was not valuable and I wanted to end my life, God picked me up and showered me with abundance and saving Grace.







