

And They will All be Taught by God

He was fourth of twelve sons born into a dysfunctional family rife with jealousy and sibling rivalry. The pivotal moment in which Judah distinguished himself from his brothers revealed an irresponsible, self-centered, shallow coward. To be the man God intended Judah needed divinely orchestrated tutoring.

God instigated two requests to identify a source and make a decision about “the problem.” Judah’s personalized divine tutoring contrasted deception’s divisive slavery with truth’s redemptive freedom and ultimately revealed “the real problem.” Both episodes demonstrate God’s merciful grace – his loyal unfailing unconditional transformative love. They also present graphic lessons of how God takes *what was meant to harm* and transforms it into His purpose – *to preserve the lives of many people*.^A

The Joseph Problem

Among his twelve sons, their father Jacob had a favorite. Hatred for their father’s “pet” consumed ten of the brothers and they treated Joseph the “pet” with intense animosity. One day Judah and nine of his brothers were engaged in the family business when they saw Joseph approaching. Consequences never penetrated their thought processes when they decided that Joseph, not their jealousy, was “the problem” which needed to be eradicated so they plotted to kill him. But Judah had a better idea. They could eliminate the “Joseph problem” and make some easy money. *“Let’s sell him to the Ishaelites.”*

Next they concocted a cleaver cover-up scheme. After Joseph’s coat was shredded and soaked in blood they presented it to Jacob and asked him to make an identification and decision partially based on fact to convey deception. *“We found this - determine now whether it is your son’s tunic or not.”* Jacob jumped to the intended conclusion. *“A wild animal has eaten him! Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!”* Judah watched helplessly as his father descended into *inconsolable mourning*. Did Judah leave his brothers because he couldn’t bear to see his father’s pain? Could he ever escape the memory of *Joseph’s distress when he cried for mercy* or forgive himself because *he refused to listen*?^B

The Tamar Problem

A new location didn’t help. Judah still made cowardly decisions and shirked responsibility. Judah’s two oldest sons died because of their sinful behavior but he blamed his daughter-in-law Tamar. So he sent Tamar back to her father with no intention of honoring his promise for his youngest son Shelah to marry her. Three months after what the widower Judah considered a harmless tryst (where he left incriminating evidence) he was told *“Your daughter-in-law Tamar has turned to prostitution - she is pregnant!”* Finally, Judah had what he thought was a valid excuse to eradicate “the Tamar problem.” *“Let her be burned!”* But Tamar asked Judah for a decision totally based on fact to reveal truth. *“I am pregnant by the man to whom these belong - identify the one to whom the seal, cord, and staff belong.”*^C

The Real Problem Revealed

Judah was convicted and found guilty by truth – irrefutable evidence of his selfish irresponsible behavior. He had to make a decision. Would he make defensive excuses, blame someone else, withdraw into denial, try a cover-up, or run away? No. He identified “the problem” and admitted the truth, *“She is more upright than I am.”* His redemptive transformation began by accepting responsibility and repenting of his sin. Then with Shelah, Tamar and their sons Perez and Zerah, Judah returned to his family.^D

The Fruit of Redemption

The severe drought which gripped entire region continued but Jacob dithered about making a vital decision - accede to an Egyptian ruler’s demand to see his youngest son Benjamin and risk further heartbreak *or starve!* Judah bravely stepped forward – a man with a plan. Judah *pledged himself as security* for Benjamin’s safety and *held himself liable* for the outcome. *“Send the boy with me. We will go immediately. We will live and not die!”* Judah was becoming the man that God intended, a humble confident leader who would later offer to *remain as a slave* in exchange for Benjamin’s freedom.^E

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free

Truth, not accusation, recrimination, shame or blame set Judah free. Divine tutoring is like that – it zeros in and identifies the “real problem” unrelated to any extraneous or interfering human agenda. The Divine Tutor has the perfect personalized curricula to expose those *hidden desires and thoughts of our hearts*. He *guides us down paths we have never traveled* and *turns our darkness* (blindness to our “real problem”) *into light*. Then He *levels out the rough places*, and *our restoration quickly arrives*. And like a loving father the Divine Tutor *never abandons us*.

Jesus explained how this happens. Our Heavenly Father *calls us each by name* and sends the *Spirit of Truth* to reveal *our sin, God’s righteousness, and His judgment* about our condition. With *tender words He allures us* and reveals how He transforms the “Valley of Trouble” into an “Opportunity for Hope.” When we humbly admit our failures and surrender to God’s will, He *teaches us how to succeed, leads us in the way we should go, and guides us into all truth!* God’s word, His message revealing His wisdom, thoughts, plans and purpose *is truth*. Then *through His word* our Heavenly Father *sets us apart* and the *Spirit of Truth opens our minds so we can comprehend the scriptures* and *have the mind of Christ*, the Father’s message of love, hope and redemption.

Divine tutoring *fits beautifully in its appropriate time*. Paul said we are not to *judge anything before the time* – not ourselves, our circumstances, or anyone else. God said *if we remove the burdensome yoke of judgment (stop pointing fingers and speaking sinfully) when we call out the LORD will reply “Here I am!”* With praise and thanksgiving entrust God with “the problem” and *wait until He comes. Those who wait for His help find renewed strength*. We have His promise - *everyone who hears and learns from the Divine Tutor comes to Jesus. Because of His absolute power and awesome strength, not one is missing.*^F

***My plans are not like your plans, and my deeds are not like your deeds
Just as the sky is higher than the earth
So my deeds are superior to your deeds and my plans superior to your plans
The promise that I make... is fulfilled as I intend***

Who but the Creator of the Universe would use such uniquely imaginative personal development training programs to fulfill His purpose like He did for Judah, Tamar and Joseph?

Judah’s name means “praise.” Jacob prophesied that Judah was the one whom his “*brothers will praise*.” From the beginning it was God’s plan that from Judah “*the scepter will not depart... nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs - the nations will obey him*.”

The House of David, the royal family of the nation of Israel, began with Judah and Tamar, continued through the descendents of their son Perez, and ended with the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Christ Jesus is *he who came* – the one to whom the Scepter of Sovereignty over the entire world belongs.

But, what happened to Joseph? He spent 13 years as an Egyptian slave and then, because of a false accusation, a prisoner. During that time Joseph mastered the language and culture and perhaps learned to read and write. But most importantly he decided to have a teachable spirit and trusted God’s personalized development course. Then God exalted him to the position of second-in-command ruler over Egypt. “*Don’t be upset and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here,*” Joseph said to his brothers, “*for God sent me ahead of you to preserve life by a great deliverance!*”

It is time for you and me to put our failures in the past and prepare for the future. Allow the Divine Tutor to do something new! You will *go out with joy and be led along in peace* because He *makes a road in the desert and paths in the wilderness so you, whom He created for His glory, will praise Him!*^G

***Great and astounding are your deeds, Lord God, the All-Powerful!
Just and true are your ways, King over the nations!
Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name, because you alone are holy?
All nations will come and worship before you for your righteous acts have been revealed.***^H

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^A John 6:45a quoting Isaiah 54:13; Genesis 37:1-30, 45:7, 50:19-20

Jacob had two wives and two concubines. Judah was the fourth of six sons born to Jacob's first wife Leah. Rebekah, Jacob's favorite wife and Leah's younger sister, was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, Jacob's youngest sons. Like DNA, jealousy and rivalry between Jacob and his twin brother Esau, as well as the sisters Leah and Rebekah was inherited by the next generation. (The concubines had two sons each. See Genesis 35:22b-36)

^B Genesis 37:1-35; 38:1, 42:21, 44:34

^C Genesis 38:2-25

^D Genesis 38:26-30

Tamar gave birth to twin sons. She named the first born Perez which means "he who breaks through." To Tamar the name signified the completion of her struggle for justice. It also represents how God "breaks through" any barrier, including Judah's proud façade, to fulfill his plan and purpose. It is a most appropriate name for an ancestor of the Messiah.

The other twin was named Zerah.

^E Genesis 43:3-8, 44:18-34

Why would an Egyptian ruler demand to see Benjamin? Later Jacob's family learn that Joseph was that ruler. He simply longed to see his youngest brother.

^F John 6:45b, 8:32, 36, 16:8-14, 17:17, Luke 24:45; I Corinthians 2:16, 4:5, Ecclesiastes 3:11; Isaiah 40:26, 31, 42:16-17, 48:17, 58:8-9; Hebrews 4:12; Hosea 2:14-15

Jacob's faulty judgment based on incomplete information which created unspeakable heartbreak graphically illustrates why God says *do not judge*. Paul used the metaphor of *looking into a mirror* in which *we are known only in part*. A mirror presents a one-dimensional often distorted image. Our judgments are partial information tainted by bias. Only God sees the entire image. His unbiased judgment is truth.

A *burdensome yoke* relates to those areas in which our attitudes and behaviors are in an enslaving partnership with the enemy of God and humanity. (He is characterized as *a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies* whose goal is to *kill, steal, and destroy*). Our loving Heavenly Father wants us to exchange all *burdensome yokes* for *abundant life* – an amazing partnership with the Creator of the Universe. "*Come to me,*" Jesus calls out, "*all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.*" Then we will enjoy God's *Sabbath Rest* and *live to glorify God* in every aspect of life. (John 8:44-45, 10:10; Matthew 7:1-5, 11:28-30; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, 13:12; Hebrews 4:1-13)

^G Isaiah 43:7-9, 11, 18-21, 55:1-12; Genesis Chapters 39-41, 45:5-7, 49:8-12; Luke 3:23-33; Matthew 1:1-16, 16:16-17

Joseph's trust in God enabled him to have insight about a *matter decreed by God*, which *God will make happen*. Thus he could *give wise and discerning* advice. God shaped the circumstance so Joseph was rightly perceived as a man *in whom the Spirit of God is present*. Joseph's wise administration in Egypt saved an entire region from starvation. (Genesis Chapter 41)

^H Revelation 15:3-1