

THE DRAMA OF SIBLING RIVALRY

The Story of Joseph and His Brothers

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

I. **BACKGROUND:**

A. Jacob marries Leah and Rachel: Genesis 29:14b-30

B. Jacob's children: Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-18

Leah — Zilpah

Reuben Gad

Simeon Asher

Levi

Judah

Issachar

Zebulun

Dinah (Only girl listed)

Rachel — Bilhah

Joseph Dan

Benjamin Naphtali

NOTE: The custom of surrogate employed as Sarah did. The "birth" of the 12 tribes of Israel occurs here. What this also sets up is an inevitable sibling rivalry. The narrative reads like a soap opera.

II. **CENTRAL PLOT:** Genesis 37

A. Joseph's Dreams: 37:1-11

B. Joseph sold by his brothers: 37:12-36

1. To kill or not to kill?
2. The power of jealousy
3. Irony of the action

III. **RECONCILIATION AND REDEMPTION:** Genesis 42-45

A. Joseph's brothers go to Egypt: 42

B. Second journey to Egypt: 43

C. A Silver Cup in a Sack: 44

D. Joseph makes himself known (The Great Reveal): 45

E. Joseph and Jacob finally reunite: 46:29-30

IV. **CONCLUSION:** Key concept that pulls drama together and provides Judaism with an understanding of history: Genesis 50:20 *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. As you think about the dynamics of the twelve brothers, what is your first impression about the possible interaction among the siblings? Add to this the fact that Joseph is the first-born of Jacob's favored wife, Rachel.
2. If you come from a family with more than one sibling did your parents have a favorite? How did that impact the familial relationships? If you have/had more than one child, did you show partiality to one over the other(s), even though you may have tried to be fair to all? What motivated your feelings and choices?
3. In the Joseph story, there is a redemptive purpose that depends heavily on the character of Joseph. Putting yourself in Joseph's place, could you have acted so magnanimously toward your siblings? What do you see as the most significant character-building encounter that Joseph had?
4. The way Joseph processed the "big picture" of his experience with his brothers in the end emerges in Genesis 50:20. How do you react to his assessment?
5. What are some of the most striking insights that you personally take away from the drama of this sibling rivalry? In many ways, it is a retelling of the struggles and dysfunctional nature of families in our society today. What are the lessons we can learn?