

crazy siblings

brotherly trouble in the bible...

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The American Jewish
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*Behold, how good and pleasant it is
for brothers to live together in harmony
It is like the precious ointment on the head
that poured down on the beard, even Aaron's beard,
even down the hems of his clothes.
The love of brothers is like the dew of Mount Hermon
and as the dew that came down on the mountains of Zion,
for that is where God commanded the blessing
of the brothers forever.*

Psalm 133

The Bible is frequently presented as a guide which will point the way towards spiritual peace and harmony but there are family tensions throughout the entire narratives. The first brothers we meet are Cain and Abel are brought into a world that is almost perfect and their parents have fresh memories of the Garden of Eden.

“Am I my brother's keeper?”

What is the perfect sibling relationship according to the Tanach? From the moment that Cain asks the question “Am I my brother's keeper”, we are thrown into difficult territory and it becomes clear that the text is not telling us how to behave from the stories it is presenting, but its way of teaching is like that of the ancient Greeks – via negativa – showing us the way not to behave and allowing us to work out how we should be working for ourselves.

“Go find your brothers, who are tending flocks at Shechem, and bring me back word of them”

(Genesis 37:14)

It has often been surmised that human history runs in cycles and this model is clear from the beginning of the Bible. Jacob lies to his father Isaac when he pretends to be his brother Esau in order to receive a blessing, and Jacob is later lied to by his sons when they want to receive the favourable intentions that would otherwise be bestowed upon Joseph. The themes of siblings and murder run deeply throughout the narratives and it seems that Joseph is about to be a victim of fratricide, just like Abel, when one of his brothers makes a different choice.

The Bible is one of the richest texts we have access to, the cornerstone of the Jewish religion, and yet it asks so many questions of us that



we can approach it from a new perspective every time we pick it up. This project will look at sibling relationships in the Book of Genesis, using drama-based methods to explore the stories, as well as giving your students the opportunity to create some new midrashim of their own. No previous experience is needed. Let's begin to play...

Activity One: Crazy Siblings!

Activity Two: Other Brothers

Activity Three: Dreams, dreams, dreams

Activity Four: Bibliodramatise!



Activity One: Crazy Siblings

Objective: To explore participants' experiences of sibling relationships (or the lack thereof) to understand the stories from a personal point of view.

Aims: By the end of this session, participants will be able to find a personal point of reference in the stories and be able to talk about part of the text as if they had experienced it themselves.

Time: 60-90 minutes.

Preparation: Ask everybody to bring in a photograph of themselves with their brothers or sisters. If they are an only child, bring in a photograph of themselves with their cousins or friends. You will also need to provide a copy of the Tanach (Bible) for everyone in the group, or at least enough to share around.

I. Introduction. The purpose of this is to introduce a piece of text and get participants into a creative mood!

a. Read the following text or hand out a copy to everybody.



“Joseph, youth only seventeen years old...was already a [sophisticated] youth (Genesis 37:2). He did the things that such youths do: he made eyes at girls, he walked with a swagger, and he styled his hair”.

Genesis Rabbah, 84:7-8

b. Thinking warm-up exercise: Ask the group: Have you ever met anybody like this? What would you think of him if you met him on the street? Where would you be likely to meet somebody like this?

c. Physical warm-up exercise. Explain that it is a midrash, a tale from the rabbis, to tell us more about the character of Joseph. We are now going to create a ‘physical midrash’, to tell us more about another Biblical story. In groups of four or five, make a tableaux – a non-speaking, non-moving physical picture – of any biblical scene, and then show it to other groups. This process should take approximately three minutes.

2. Discussing our siblings. Over the next four sessions, we are going to be looking at some difficult relationships between siblings. Discuss the following questions;

- a. **Who has a brother or sister?**
- b. **Who has ever had an argument with them?**
- c. **Can you tell everyone the story of that argument?**
- d. **Is there a ‘Jewish’ way that siblings should behave towards one another? What might that be?**



3. Family Photographs. Sit in a circle, and in pairs, and show your partner the photographs that you have brought in. Each person should ‘interview’ their partner, finding out as much as they can about the sibling and the relationship. Once they have asked the questions, get everybody in the group to share their results. If people are stuck, here are some questions they might ask to help things along:

- a. **What is the name of the other person your photograph?**
- b. **What do you like about them? Why?**
- c. **What do you dislike about them? Why?**
- d. **What is their ambition in life?**
- e. **If they were asked to describe you, what would they say about you?**



4. Biblical siblings – thinking through the Text

'Our masters taught: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" (Leviticus 19:17). You might think that the Torah asks you not to strike him, not to slap him and not to curse him. But in saying "In your heart", the Torah also bids you to have no hatred in your heart at all'.

Babylonian Talmud, Arachin 16b

Make a list of all of the Biblical siblings you can think of and using a copy of the Tanach, fill in the following chart. If people are stuck, the siblings you might think of are: Cain & Abel, Abraham & Ishmael, Isaac and Esau, Moses & Aaron. This activity can be done in groups of two or three.

Name of the Brothers	Find a story of something that happened between these siblings. What happened?	What might this come to teach us?



5. One thing leads to another – dramatising the commentaries

The Rabbis believed that there was a process of cause and effect. Hand out copies of the following extract;

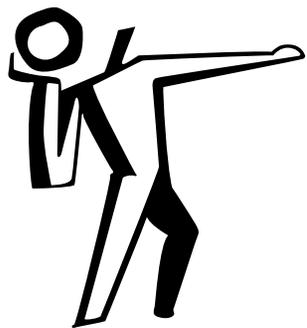
“But if any man hate his brother, and lie in ambush for him” (Deuteronomy 19:11). From this verse the sages inferred: when a man break law that is light, he will eventually break a law that is fatal. For example, if he breaks the law **“You shall love your neighbour as yourself”** (Leviticus 19:18), he will eventually break the rule **“You shall not hate your brother”** (Leviticus 19:17), **“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge”** (Leviticus 19:18) and **“That your brother may live with you”** (Leviticus 36:22) until finally he comes to shed blood, as it says **“If any man hates his brother/neighbour, he will eventually lie in ambush for him, rise up against him, and kill him”** (Deuteronomy 19:11)

The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan

- a. Read this text in small groups. Once everyone has understood what it is saying, ask; do you agree with the rabbis? Does one thing really lead to another in this way?
- b. Separate the four stages of this text and write them out.
- c. Create a short scene with a tale between siblings – brothers or sisters – that includes each of these four stages in the story (in other words, it should go from **HATING to TAKING VENGEANCE/ BEARING A GRUDGE to NOT ALLOWING THE BROTHER TO LIVE WITH YOU to MURDER**).
- d. Perform the scenes for everybody else!

6. Conclusion. Ask everybody to say one new thing that they have learnt or thought about in today’s session.





Activity Two: Other Brothers

Objective: To introduce two early examples of sibling rivalry in the Torah, and gain a greater understanding of the texts 'from the inside'.

Aims: By the end of this session, participants will be able to find a personal point of reference in the stories and be able to talk about part of the text as if they had experienced it themselves.

Time: 60-90 minutes.

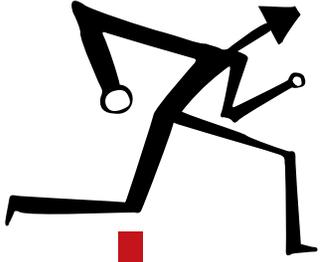
Preparation: Bring some classical music and a stereo, candles are optional!

1. Introduction. Lead everybody through a basic physical warm-up, stretching their arms, legs and so on, and then ask people to walk around the room without looking at one another. At various points, ask everybody to freeze and make an image that expresses the following emotions. Take time to look at some of the images people make;

- a. Fear
- b. Anger
- c. War
- d. Peace
- e. Love
- f. Hate
- g. Jealousy
- h. Loneliness



2. The Text: Genesis 27-28:10. The story of Jacob and Esau is a sad tale that ends with their father dying, their family torn apart and a grudge that will last for decades. Read the following verses in pairs (chevruta learning) and see if you can find answers to the following questions;



1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said to him: 'My son'; and he said to him: 'Here am I.'

2 And he said: 'Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.

3 Now therefore take, I pray you, your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison;

4 and make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless you before I die.'

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

6 And Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying: 'Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying:

7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury food, that I may eat, and bless you before the LORD before my death.

8 Now therefore, my son, hearken to my voice according to that which I command you.

9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury food for your father, such as he loveth;

10 and you shall bring it to your father; that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.'

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother: 'Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.

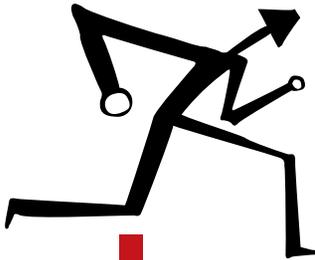
12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a mocker; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.'

13 And his mother said to him: 'Upon me be your curse, my son; only hearken to my voice, and go fetch me them.'

14 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savoury food, such as his father loved.

15 And Rebekah took the choicest garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob





her younger son.

16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.

17 And she gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came to his father; and said: 'My father'; and he said: 'Here am I; who art you, my son?'

19 And Jacob said to his father: 'I am Esau your first-born; I have done according as you badest me. Arise, I pray you, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me.'

20 And Isaac said to his son: 'How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?' And he said: 'Because the LORD your God sent me good speed.'

21 And Isaac said to Jacob: 'Come near; I pray you, that I may feel you, my son, whether you be my very son Esau or not.'

22 And Jacob went near to Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said: 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.'

23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

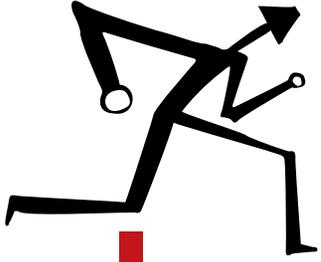
24 And he said: 'Art you my very son Esau?' And he said: 'I am.'

25 And he said: 'Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you.' And he brought it near to him, and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

26 And his father Isaac said to him: 'Come near now, and kiss me, my son.'

27 And he came near; and kissed him. And he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said: See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed.





28 So God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fat places of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.

29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be every one that curseth you, and blessed be every one that blesseth you.

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father; that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 And he also made savoury food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father: 'Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that your soul may bless me.'

32 And Isaac his father said to him: 'Who art you?' And he said: 'I am your son, your first-born, Esau.'

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said: 'Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before you camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.'

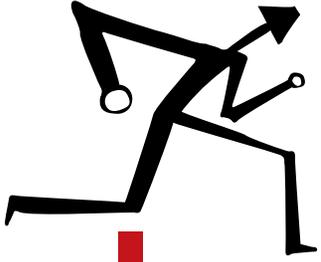
34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said to his father: 'Bless me, even me also, O my father.'

35 And he said: 'Your brother came with guile, and hath taken away your blessing.'

36 And he said: 'Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.' And he said: 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?'

37 And Isaac answered and said to Esau: 'Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him; and what then shall I do for you, my son?'

38 And Esau said to his father: 'Have you but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father.' And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.



39 And Isaac his father answered and said to him: Behold, of the fat places of the earth shall be your dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40 And by your sword Shall you live, and you Shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass when you Shall break loose, that you Shall shake his yoke from off your neck.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart: 'Let the days of mourning for my father be at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.'

42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him: 'Behold, your brother Esau, as touching you, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill you.'

43 Now therefore, my son, hearken to my voice; and arise, flee you to Laban my brother to Haran;

44 and tarry with him a few days, until your brother's fury turn away;

45 until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forget that which you have done to him; then I will send, and fetch you from thence; why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac: 'I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?'

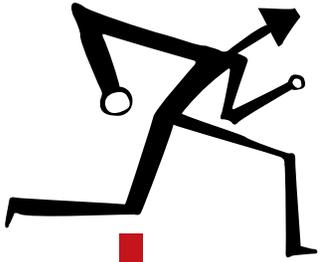
1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'You Shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.'

2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take you a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

3 And God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you mayest be a congregation of peoples;

4 and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you; that you mayest inherit the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.'





5 And Isaac sent away Jacob; and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying: 'You Shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan';

7 and that Jacob hearkened to his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram;

8 and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

9 so Esau went to Ishmael, and took to the wives that he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife. {S}

a. What kind of person is Isaac? (think of five adjectives to describe him)

b. What kind of person is Esau? (make up five adjectives)

c. Why is the blessing so important to Isaac?

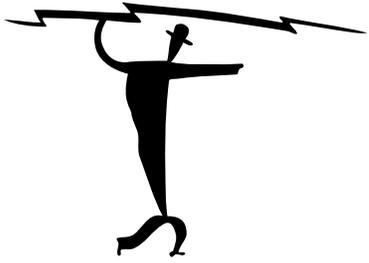
d. Do you think Esau has any regrets by the end of the story?

e. Do you think Isaac has any regrets by the end of the story?



3. The modern Midrash. A Midrash is a story that the rabbis have made up to explain more details about a text to give us more information to help our understanding. Midrash Aggadah are the stories that help us find out more about characters and stories in the Tanach, such as the famous midrash about Abraham smashing the idols, and Midrash Halacha which teaches us about laws.

Set the environment so that it is conducive to a more dramatic reading, and read the following two pieces in as sensitive a manner as possible, or give it to your most able two students to read out loud. The most important objective of this part of the exercise is to ensure that everybody understands what it is about.



Jacob speaks;

“When in the beginning I saw how my father took pleasure in my brother’s skills and in the food he could lay before him, I felt envy sure, but I expressed it as a scorn. I saw my brother as a brute, crude, ear your. I looked down on him, and I came also to look down on my father for favouring him. Dad was pathetic, and Esau was a peasant. My mother fed my sense of superiority; she made me feel I was better than Esau, better than my father, too, and that their closeness was almost ridiculous. Often she made me laugh at them by some way she had, in a gesture or two, of mimicking them.

But though I came to have my airs, my snide and arrogant ways, I always felt in some strange way that I was more like my father than Esau was. It seems crazy. I felt my father and I could have had...I don’t know...something. When my father told the stories, I listened, and I remembered them; Esau only thought them strange. Or fell asleep.

Besides, I always wanted to hunt but my mother wouldn’t let me. I wanted to be doing what Esau was doing, or at least to try it. I admired his strength and skill. I felt inept. I felt like a girl, if you want to know the truth. Sometimes my mother’s chatter would drive me nuts, and then I would see my father and Esau simply sitting together without talking at all, and I would wish for this kind of silence.

Esau, on his side, felt his mother’s rejection:

From the first I felt there must have been something wrong with me. My hair, my hairiness, I don’t know. Never did. Mom doted on her smooth little Jake, gave him the best parts, left me the scraps. Jacob learned to cook; he was very good with his hands, could do fine things with thread and clay. He could make things grow and tend sick ewes and birth the lambs. He was always a good talker, too So I went off alone. Hunting is like that. I grew my beard; I found friends among the Canaanites. They liked me well enough; I liked their girls. Wild girls they were.

I came home to Dad. I’d roast him up some game, and he’d enjoy it. Run his hand through my hair, tell me I was his hunter, and then he’d talk to me about Ishmael, told me how much I was like him, what a great hunter Ishmael had been. He would become sad and quiet. Then he would sleep. I would dream sometimes about my uncle, Ishmael. I felt he was the brother I never had.

Peter Pitzele, *Our Fathers’ Wells* (HarperSanFrancisco:1994), p 169.





4. Creative writing. Invite each of the participants to imagine that they are either Jacob or Esau and it is one month after their father's death. They have to write a diary entry which covers the following issues;

- a. **How do you feel about your mother?**
- b. **How do you feel about your father?**
- c. **How do you feel about your brother?**
- d. **Do you think you made the right decision about the birthright?**
- e. **If you were faced with the same situation again, how might you behave differently?**

5. Performance. Change the environment slightly, dimming the lights or lighting candles and playing a piece of soft classical music. Explain that we are going to hear some of the voices of Esau and Jacob and ask everybody to read out their pieces in turn. Be as supportive as possible and have fun!

6. Conclusion. Ask everybody as a group and ask them to answer in first person (i.e. "I...").

- a. **Jacob - what did you learn from this experience?**
- b. **Esau – what did you learn from this experience?**
- c. **Isaac – what did you learn from this experience?**
- d. **Rebecca – what did you learn from this experience?**

Tell everybody that you are now going to 'de-role', taking off all of the biblical characters they have been wearing and returning to themselves. Take a deep breath, exhale the characters and stretch your fingers and toes.





Activity Three: Dreams, dreams, dreams

Objective: To experiment with a brand new way of learning Torah, and to look at a familiar text from an unfamiliar perspective.

Aims: By the end of this session, participants will be able to competently talk about the story of Joseph and his brothers, including nuances within the text that are not mentioned in the musical...

Time: 60-90 minutes.

*These things are a sixtieth part [of something else]: namely fire, honey, and Sabbath, and sleep and a dream. Fire is one-sixtieth part of Gehinnom. Honey is one-**sixtieth** part of manna. Sabbath is one-sixtieth part of the world to come. Sleep is one-sixtieth a part of death.*

A dream is one-sixtieth part of prophecy.

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 57b

I. Introduction. Discuss;

- i. who had a dream last night?**
- ii. What did you dream about?**
- iii. Have you ever dreamt about anything that has ever come true?**

Now move the discussion on to the subject of warnings.

- iv. Who has ever had to warn their friends not to do something?**
- v. What was it?**
- vi. Did your friends get angry with you?**
- vii. How did it feel?**

2. The First Script Reading. Split people into parts and get everyone to read out the following script;
Genesis Chp. 37



NARRATOR: And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers, being still a lad even with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought evil report of them to their father.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours.

And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak to him in a friendly way.

Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him yet the more.

And he said to them:

JOSEPH: Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

We were binding sheaves in the field, and, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, your sheaves came round about, and bowed down to my sheaf.

NARRATOR: His brothers said to him:

BROTHERS: Shall you reign over us? Shall you have dominion over us?

NARRATOR: They hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said:

JOSEPH: Listen, I have dreamed yet a dream: and the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me.

NARRATOR: And he told it to his father; and to his brothers; and his father told him off, and said:



ISRAEL: What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down to you?

NARRATOR: And his brothers envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind.

And his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

And Israel said to Joseph:

ISRAEL: Don't your brothers feed the flock in Shechem? I will send you to them.

NARRATOR: And he said to him:

JOSEPH: Hineni. Here I am.

NARRATOR: And he said to him:

ISRAEL: Go now, see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flock; and bring me back word.

NARRATOR: So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying:

MAN: What are you looking for?

NARRATOR: And he said:

JOSEPH: I seek my brothers. Tell me, I pray you, where they are feeding the flock.



NARRATOR: And the man said:

MAN: They've gone. I heard them say: "Let us go to Dothan".

NARRATOR: Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dothan.

And they saw him afar off, and before he came near to them, they planned to kill him..

NARRATOR: And they said one to another:

BROTHERS: Look. There's the dreamer.

Let's kill him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say: An evil beast has devoured him. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams.

NARRATOR: And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand; and said:

BROTHERS: Let us not take his life.

NARRATOR: And Reuben said to them:

REUBEN: Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him

NARRATOR: He hoped to save Joseph from their hand and get him back to their father.

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colours that was on him;

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colours that was on him;



and they took him, and cast him into the pit--and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and ladanum, going to carry it down to Egypt.

And Judah said to his brothers:

JUDAH: What will we gain if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.

NARRATOR: And his brothers listened to him.

And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver: And they brought Joseph into Egypt.

And Reuben returned to the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes [out of grief].

And he returned to his brothers, and said:

REUBEN: The child is not there; and as for me, where shall I go?'

NARRATOR: And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood;

and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said:

BROTHERS: This have we found. Know now whether it is your son's coat or not. And he knew it, and said:

NARRATOR: He looks and said:

ISRAEL: It is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.



NARRATOR: And Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said

ISRAEL: I will go down to the grave to my son mourning.

NARRATOR: And his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard.

3. Discussion. *In groups, see if you can find ten questions on the text – these are all things that the text isn't telling us. For example:*

- a. Which brothers were the most forceful in planning to kill Joseph?**
- b. What was Benjamin's reaction when he heard that Joseph was dead?**
- c. What were the Midianite traders wearing?**
- d. Who was sitting with Jacob/Israel when he was told that Joseph died?**
- e. Did any of the brothers feel guilty when they saw the pain they had caused their father?**

4. The second script reading. Reread the entire script and this time, stop and ask the group questions at various points, wherever there is an opportunity for improvisation. If, for example, you want to ask Joseph's reaction at any point, call out 'stop' and ask the group 'What does the voice of Joseph say here? Joseph, how did you feel when you saw your brother's reaction to the first dream?' and get people to respond in the first person.

5. Conclusion: the 4-3-2 exercise. Get everybody in the group, over a space of four minutes, to tell three people two different things they have learned.



Activity Four: Bibliodramatise!

Objective: To create a performance based on the Tanach. This session will build on the previous sessions, looking towards creating a performance which has been drawn out of the work on previous texts.

Aims: By the end of this session, participants will perform a series of plays based on biblical texts of their choosing.

Time: 60-90 minutes.

Preparation:

1. Introduction; physical warm-up. Lead a physical game that will get everybody moving and thinking creatively. A game of stuck-in-the-mud or tag will be fine, or perhaps a miming game that is set in a biblical context. Explain that everybody is now going to prepare their own biblically-based play.

2. Learn the following midrash together:

*“Cain said to Abel his brother” (Genesis 4:8). What Cain said to Abel was: Come and let us divide the world between us. Abel replied: very well. So Cain said: You take cattle, and I will take land.
And it was stipulated between them that neither should have any claim against the other about this division.*

Nevertheless, when Abel proceeded to graze the flock, Cain said: the land you are standing on is mine. Abel replied: The wool you are wearing is mine. “Strip!” said Abel. “Seat!” said Cain. At that, “Cain rose up against his brother” (Genesis 4:8) [The meaning of “rose up!” will be explained in what follows]: Cain proceeded to chase Abel from hill to dale and from dale to hill, until the two grappled. Abel overcame Cain, so that Cain fell underneath Abel. Cain, aware how badly it was going with him, began to plead aloud: Abel my brother, there are only two of us in the world. What are you going to tell our father?...Abel, filled with compassion for his brother, let him go. At once Cain rose up against him and slew him. For the verse “Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (ibid.) implies that at first Cain had been underneath Abel.

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3. Devising Bibliodrama. Each group should choose a different piece of text from the Tanach, ideally no longer than one chapter or twenty verses. Use 45 minutes to prepare a presentation of the scene using all of the members from the group, with the following rule; you are able to add details and dialogue which will help our understanding the story, but you can't completely change the story! If anybody is stuck for ideas, try asking the following questions to get the creative juices flowing;

- a. **What is interesting about the story and why?**
- b. **Which emotions or situations in the story are similar to things I have experienced?**
- c. **Who in the story is similar to somebody I know?**

4. Presentation of the scenes. If you want to really make it theatrical, people could prepare programmes and you could give out some popcorn!

5. Conclusion. Ask everybody to say one new thing that they have discovered as part of this process of living and creating midrash.

Thank you for your participation!

Further Resources

Pitzele, Peter. *Our Father's Wells*. Harpercollins, January 1996.

Pitzele, Peter. *Scripture Windows: Towards a Practice of Bibliodrama*. September 1997, Alef Design Group.

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