

Jacob reader's theater

CHARACTERS: Angel, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, Laban, Rachel, Leah, Voice of God, Jacob's Servant, Laban's Son, Hamor, Shecham, Simeon, Reuben, Benjamin, Dan, Gad, Judah, Levi, Pharaoh

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes per page (approximately)

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Genesis 25-34, 35-37, 42-50

The Birth of Jacob and Esau

ANGEL: Abraham fathered Isaac.

REBEKAH: Isaac was 40 years old when married me, Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel and sister of Laban.

ISAAC: I prayed to the Lord because Rebekah was childless for twenty years.

ANGEL: But while I was pregnant, the children struggled with each other inside of her.

REBEKAH: I wondered why this was happening to me so I inquired of the Lord.

ANGEL: Two nations are in your womb; two people will come from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.

REBEKAH: I gave birth to twins.

ISAAC: The first one came out red-looking, covered with hair like a fur coat, my favorite, and we named him Esau.

REBEKAH: But Jacob, my favorite, came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob.

ANGEL: Isaac was 60 years old when they were born.

Esau Sells His Birthright

ISAAC: When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman.

REBEKAH: But Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home.

JACOB: Once when I, Jacob, was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted.

ESAU: Lett me eat some of that red stew, because I'm exhausted.

JACOB: First sell me your birthright.

ESAU: Look, I'm about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?

JACOB: Swear to me first.

ESAU: I swear the birthright is yours.

JACOB: Here you go; bread and lentil stew to Esau.

ANGEL: As you can see, Esau despised his birthright.

The Stolen Blessing

REBEKAH: When Esau was 40 years old, he took Hittite wives.

ISAAC: They made life bitter for Rebekah and Isaac.

REBEKAH: When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, he called his older son Esau.

Rebekah is obviously eavesdropping on the conversation

ESAU: Here I am, father.

ISAAC: Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. Take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me.

ESAU: Of course, father.

ISAAC: Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die.

REBEKAH: *(stage whispering and motioning to Jacob)* Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, 'Bring me the game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the Lord's presence before I die.'

JACOB: That's bad news for me.

REBEKAH: Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I will make them into a delicious meal for your father—the kind he loves. Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.

JACOB: *(frightened and wary)* Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man with smooth skin. If my father touches me, it will be revealed I am a deceiver and it will bring a curse rather than a blessing on me.

REBEKAH: Let the curse be on me, my son. Just obey me and go get them for me.

JACOB: Ok.

REBEKAH: I made the delicious food Isaac wanted, took Esau's best clothes and had Jacob wear them.

JACOB: Why are you putting the goat skins on my hands and neck?

REBEKAH: So you seem as hairy as Esau. Now take your father the food.

JACOB: My father.

ISAAC: Here I am. Who are you, my son?

JACOB: I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me.

ISAAC: How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?

JACOB: Because the Lord your God worked it out for me.

ISAAC: Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?

JACOB: Yes, I am your son.

ISAAC: The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?

JACOB: I am.

ISAAC: Then let me eat so that I can bless you. Please come closer and kiss me, my son.

JACOB: Ok.

ISAAC: You must be Esau because the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

May God give to you—from the dew of the sky and from the richness of the land—an abundance of grain and new wine.

May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers; may your mother's sons bow down to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.

JACOB: Thank you father.

ISAAC: You may go.

REBEKAH: As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from the hunt.

ESAU: Let my father get up and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me.

ISAAC: Who are you?

ESAU: I am Esau your firstborn son. *(beat)* Why are you trembling uncontrollably?

ISAAC: Who was it then who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came in, and I blessed him. Indeed, he will be blessed!

ESAU: *(loudly and bitterly)* Bless me too, my father!

ISAAC: Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.

ESAU: He is rightly named Jacob because he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing. Haven't you saved a blessing for me?

ISAAC: Look, I have made him a master over you, have given him all of his relatives as his servants, and have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then can I do for you, my son?

ESAU: *(loudly weeping)* Do you only have one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!

ISAAC: Look, your dwelling place will be away from the richness of the land, away from the dew of the sky above.

You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you rebel, you will break his yoke from your neck.

Esau's Anger and Third Wife

REBEKAH: Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him.

ESAU: The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.

REBEKAH: I didn't want Cain and Abel all over again. (to ESAU) Listen, your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides.

JACOB: Until his rage turns away and he forgets what I did to him.

REBEKAH: Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?

JACOB: Alright.

REBEKAH: (to ISAAC) I'm sick of my life because of these Hittite women.

JACOB: I agree. They worship idols and demons.

REBEKAH: They practice sorcery. If Jacob marries a Hittite woman like one of them what good is my life?

ISAAC: We shall send him to your brother Laban to get a wife from there.

REBEKAH: That will be good.

ISAAC: Jacob, marry one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

REBEKAH: May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you so that you become an assembly of peoples.

ISAAC: May God give you and your offspring the blessing of Abraham so that you may possess the land where you live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.

ESAU: I get it now. My father disapproves of the Canaanite women. I'll fix that. I'll marry one of Uncle Ishmael's daughters.

Jacob at Bethel

ANGEL: Jacob left and his first night away from home he had a dream.

JACOB: I saw a stairway set on the ground with its top reaching heaven. God's angels were going up and down on it.

VOICE OF GOD: I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land that you are now sleeping on.

ALL: Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth,

VOICE OF GOD: and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south.

ALL: All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

VOICE OF GOD: Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

JACOB: Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. What an awesome place this is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven.

ANGEL: Early in the morning Jacob took the stone that was near his head and set it up as a marker. He poured oil on top of it

JACOB: I name this place Bethel.

ANGEL: Then Jacob made a vow with three conditions

JACOB: If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey, if He provides me with food to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safely to my father's house,

ANGEL: Those were Jacob's conditions

JACOB: then the Lord will be my God. This stone that I have set up as a marker will be God's house, (*looking toward heaven*) and I will give to You a tenth of all that You give me.

Jacob, his wives and children

ANGEL: Jacob resumed his journey. He stopped at a well where three flocks of sheep were lying, waiting to be watered from this well.

JACOB: My brothers! Where are you from?

SHEPHERDS: We're from Haran.

JACOB: Do you know Laban grandson of Nahor? Is he well?

SHEPHERDS: Yes, and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with his sheep.

JACOB: (*shading his eyes to look at her*) She is an absolute knock out!

RACHEL: As soon as Jacob saw me, his uncle Laban's daughter Rachel, with our sheep he watered the sheep.

JACOB: I am Rebekah's son, your cousin.

RACHEL: I ran and told my father, who then ran out to meet Jacob.

LABAN: (*hugging and kissing his cheeks*) Come to my house. Let me catch you up on the news and all that had happened. You are my own flesh and blood.

RACHEL: After Jacob had stayed a month, Laban asked Jacob.

LABAN: Just because you're my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.

LEAH: Now Laban had two daughters. I was the older one named Leah. Rachel was my younger sister.

RACHEL: Leah had ordinary eyes, but I was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved me.

JACOB: I'll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.

LABAN: Better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay with me.

LEAH: (*jealously*) So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

JACOB: Give me my wife, for my time is completed.

LABAN: Of course. I'll invite all the men of the place to a wedding feast. (*aside to audience*) but I'll substitute my daughter Leah as the bride.

LEAH: Laban gave his slave Zilpah me as her slave.

JACOB: When morning came, there was Leah! (*tp LLL*) What is this you have done to me? Wasn't it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me?

LEAH: (*aside to audience*) Maybe it reminded Jacob of how he and his mother had deceived his father Isaac.

LABAN: It is not the custom in this place to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn. Complete this week of wedding celebration, and we will also give you this younger one in return for working yet another seven years for me.

JACOB: Si I did just that. I finished the week of celebration, and Laban finally gave me Rachel as my wife.

RACHEL: Laban gave me his slave Bilhah

LEAH: (*resentfully*) Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah.

JACOB: I worked for Laban another seven years.

LEAH: When the Lord saw that I was unloved, He opened my womb

RACHEL: But I was unable to conceive. Leah conceived and gave birth to a son.

LEAH: I named him Reuben, because the Lord has seen my affliction; surely my husband will love me now.

JACOB: Reuben sounds like the Hebrew for *he has seen my misery*; the name means *see, a son*.

LEAH: I conceived again, gave birth to a son, I named Simeon.

JACOB: Simeon probably means *one who hears*

LEAH: The Lord heard that I am unloved and has given me this son also.

RACHEL: Leah conceived again, gave birth to another son she named Levi.

LEAH: At last, my husband will become attached to me because I have borne three sons for him.

JACOB: Levi sounds like the Hebrew for *attached*.

RACHEL: Leah conceived again, gave birth to a son she named Judah.

LEAH: This time I will praise the Lord.

JACOB: Judah sounds like the Hebrew for *praise*. Then Leah stopped having children.

RACHEL: I envied my sister. *(to JACOB)* Give me sons, or I will die!

JACOB: *(angry)* Am I in God's place, who has withheld children from you?

RACHEL: Here is my slave Bilhah. Go sleep with her, and she'll bear children for me so that through her I too can build a family

JACOB: Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son Rachel names Dan.

RACHEL: God has vindicated me; yes, He has heard me and given me a son.

JACOB: Bilhah conceived a second son Rachel named Naphtali.

RACHEL: In my wrestlings with God, I have wrestled with my sister and won.

LABAN: When I saw that I had stopped having children, I gave my slave Zilpah to Jacob as a wife.

ZILPAH: I bore Jacob two sons. Leah named one Gad.

LEAH: What good fortune

ZILPAH: And the other Asher.

LEAH: I am happy that the women call me happy.

RACHEL: *(hinting at being upset)* Leah gave birth to a fifth son she named Issachar.

LEAH: God has rewarded me for giving my slave to my husband.

RACHEL: *(exasperated)* Then she had a sixth son she named Zebulun.

LEAH: God has given me a good gift. This time my husband will honor me because I have borne six sons for him.

RACHEL: *(envious)* Later, Leah bore a daughter named Dinah.

JACOB: Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb.

RACHEL: Finally! My Joseph, a son of my own! God has taken away my shame. May the Lord add another son to me.

Jacob's Flocks Multiply

JACOB: *(to LABAN)* Send me on my way so that I can return to my homeland. Give me my wives and my children that I have worked for, and let me go. You know how hard I have worked for you.

LABAN: If I have found favor in your sight, stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. Name your wages, and I will pay them.

JACOB: You know what I have done for you and your herds. For you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The Lord has blessed you because of me. And now, when will I also do something for my own family?

LABAN: What should I give you?

JACOB: You don't need to give me anything. If you do this one thing for me, I will continue to shepherd and keep your flock. Let me go through all your sheep today and remove every sheep that is speckled, spotted, or dark-colored sheep and goats. Such will be my wages.

LABAN: Alright.

JACOB: In the future when you come to check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me. If I have any female goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not black, they will be considered stolen.

LABAN: Good, let it be as you have said. *(aside, whisper)* My sons, quick!

SON: What is it father?

LABAN: Remove the streaked and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats—every one that had any white on it—and every dark-colored one among the lambs, and put a three-day journey between yourselves and Jacob.

RACHEL: After the next breeding season, Jacob separated the lambs and flocks.

LEAH: Jacob became very rich. He had many flocks, male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.

Jacob Separates from Laban

SON: Jacob has taken all that was our father's and has built this wealth from what belonged to our father.

JACOB: I can tell from Laban's face that his attitude toward me was not the same. *(bows head in prayer)*

VOICE OF GOD: Go back to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.

JACOB: (to Rachel and Leah) I can see from your father's face that his attitude toward me is not the same, but the God of my father has been with me.

LEAH: You have worked hard for our father

JACOB: and he has cheated me and changed my wages 10 times. But God has not let him harm me.

RACHEL: True. If he said, 'The spotted sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born spotted.

LEAH: If he said, 'The streaked sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born streaked.

JACOB: God has taken away your father's herds and given them to me. He has told me to get up, leave this land, and return to my native land."

Rachel: Do we have any portion or inheritance in our father's household?

LEAH: Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? For he has sold us and has certainly spent our money.

RACHEL: In fact, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children.

LEAH: So do whatever God has said to you.

JACOB: Saddle the camels and round up the herds. We're off to Canaan.

RACHEL: I'll be right there. (aside to audience) Right after I steal my father's household idols.

LABAN: That sneaky Jacob! Running off with my daughters. Saddle up. We're going after them.

VOICE OF GOD: Watch yourself! Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.

LABAN: What have you done? You have deceived me and taken my daughters away like prisoners of war! Why did you secretly flee from me, deceive me, and not tell me?

JACOB: Ummm ...

LABAN: I would have sent you away with joy and singing, with tambourines and lyres, but you didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters. You have acted foolishly.

JACOB: I was afraid. I thought you would take your daughters from me by force

LABAN: I could do you great harm, but last night the God of your father said to me: 'Watch yourself. Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' Now you have gone off because you long for your father—but why have you stolen my gods?

JACOB: If you find your gods with anyone here, he will not live! Before our relatives, point out anything that is yours and take it.

LEAH: Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

LABAN: Search all the tents starting with Jacob's.

JACOB: They found nothing in any tent.

LEAH: Rachel hid the gods in a saddlebag and sat on them.

RACHEL: Sir, don't be angry that I cannot stand up in your presence; I am having my period.

LEAH: So Laban searched, but could not find the household idols.

JACOB: What is my crime? What is my sin, that you have pursued me? You've searched all my possessions! Have you found anything of yours? Put it here before my relatives and yours, and let them decide between the two of us.

LABAN: I found nothing.

JACOB: I've been with you these 20 years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I did not bring you any of the flock torn by wild beasts; I myself bore the loss.

LABAN: True. I demanded payment for what was stolen by day or by night.

JACOB: The heat consumed me by day and the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. For 20 years I have worked in your household—14 years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks—and you have changed my wages 10 times!

LABAN: Maybe.

JACOB: If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, certainly now you would have sent me off empty-handed. But God has seen my affliction and my hard work, and He issued His verdict last night.

LABAN: The daughters are my daughters; the sons, my sons; and the flocks, my flocks! Everything you see is mine! But let's make a covenant, you and I. Let it be a witness between the two of us.

JACOB: Fine. Here's marker stone. The rest of you make a mound of other stones.

LABAN: This mound, called Mizpah,

JACOB: May the Lord watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight.

LABAN: If you mistreat my daughters or take other wives, though no one is with us, understand that God will be a witness between you and me.

JACOB: Agreed.

LABAN: Mizpah is a witness that I will not pass beyond this mound to you, and you will not pass beyond this mound and this marker to do me harm. The God of Abraham, and the gods of Nahor—the gods of their father—will judge between us.

JACOB: I swear by the Fear of my father Isaac.

LEAH: Jacob offered a sacrifice and invited his relatives to eat a meal.

RACHEL: Laban got up early in the morning, kissed his grandchildren and daughters, and blessed them.

LEAH: Then Laban left to return home.

Preparing to Meet Esau

JACOB: We are getting close to my brother Esau. Go tell him I have been staying with Laban and have been delayed until now.

JACOB'S SERVANT: Yes, sir.

JACOB: Tell him I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves and that I sent this message to inform my lord, to seek his favor.

JACOB'S SERVANT: We went to your brother Esau; he is coming to meet you—and he has 400 men with him.

JACOB: (*greatly afraid and distressed*) Divide our company into two camps. If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the remaining one can escape.

LEAH: Maybe we should pray.

JACOB: God of Abraham and my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me,

VOICE OF GOD: Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper.

JACOB: I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness You have shown Your servant. Indeed, I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. (*begging in fear*) Please rescue me from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children.

VOICE OF GOD: I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.

LEAH: Jacob sent part of what we had as a gift for his brother Esau:

RACHEL: 14 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys.

JACOB: Go on ahead of me, and leave some distance between the herds.

JACOB'S SERVANT: Yes, sir.

JACOB: When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'Who do you belong to? Where are you going? And whose animals are these ahead of you?' then tell him, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau. And look, he is behind us.'

JACOB'S SERVANT: Yes, sir.

JACOB: I want to appease Esau with the gift that is going ahead of me. After that, I can face him, and perhaps he will forgive me.

RACHEL: During the night Jacob got up and took us wives, his two female slaves, and his 11 sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok along with all his possessions.

LEAH: A man wrestled with him until daybreak and dislocated his hip.

ANGEL: Let Me go, for it is daybreak.

JACOB: I will not let You go unless You bless me.

ANGEL: Your name will no longer be Jacob. It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.

JACOB: I have seen God face to face and I have been delivered.

Jacob Meets Esau

JACOB'S SERVANT: Esau is coming with 400 men.

JACOB: Divide the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two female slaves. Put the female slaves and their children first, then Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

LEAH: Jacob went on ahead and bowed to the ground seven times until he approached his brother.

RACHEL: Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

LEAH: Then they wept.

ESAU: Who are these with you?

JACOB: The children God has graciously given your servant.

ZILPAH: Bilhah and I approached him and bowed down.

RACHEL: Then Leah and her children.

LEAH: Last, Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down.

ESAU: "What do you mean by this whole procession I met?"

JACOB: To find favor with you, my lord.

ESAU: I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have.

JACOB: No, please! If I have found favor with you, take this gift from my hand. For indeed, I have seen your face, and it is like seeing God's face, since you have accepted me.

ESAU: Really?

JACOB: Please take my present that was brought to you, because God has been gracious to me and I have everything I need.

ESAU: Alright. Let's move on, and I'll go ahead of you.

JACOB: My lord knows that the children are weak, and I have nursing sheep and cattle. If they are driven hard for one day, the whole herd will die.

ESAU: Fine. I'll go ahead.

JACOB: Your servant will continue on slowly, at a pace suited to the livestock and the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.

ESAU: Let me leave some of my people with you.

JACOB: Why do that? Please indulge me, my lord.

Jacob at Shechem

JACOB: (to HAMOR) Let me purchase a section of the field in front of the city of Shechem to pitch our tents.

HAMOR: I'll sell it for 100 coins.

JACOB: I name this altar I have built "God, the God of Israel."

HAMOR: My son wishes to marry your daughter Dinah. Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. Live with us.

SHECHAM: Grant me this favor, and I'll give you whatever you say. Demand of me a high compensation and gift; I'll give you whatever you ask me. Just give the girl to be my wife!

SIMEON: (aside to audience) No way. He raped our sister and such a thing should not be done.

LEVI: We cannot do this thing because giving our sister to an uncircumcised man is a disgrace to us.

SIMEON: We will agree with you only on this condition: if all your males are circumcised as we are.

LEVI: If you will not be circumcised, then we will take Dinah and go.

SHECHAM: We and all our people agree.

LEAH: On the third day, when they were still in pain, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords, went into the unsuspecting city, and killed every male.

JACOB: You have brought trouble on me, making me odious to the inhabitants of the land. We are few in number; if they unite against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.

SIMEON: Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?

LEVI: No!

VOICE OF GOD: Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.

JACOB: Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. We must get up and go to Bethel.

LEVI: Why?

JACOB: I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.

RACHEL: Here are the foreign gods and earrings.

JACOB: Bury them under the oak tree.

LEVI: When we set out, a terror from God came over the cities around them.

SIMEON: They did not pursue us.

LEVI: Jacob built an altar at Bethel.

JACOB: This is the same place God revealed Himself to me when I fled from Esau.

VOICE OF GOD: Your name is Jacob but you will no longer be named Jacob. Your name will be Israel.

JACOB: Yes, Lord.

VOICE OF GOD: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply.

JACOB: (aside to audience) That's the same command he gave to Noah and his family.

VOICE OF GOD: A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you. I will give to you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac. And I will give the land to your future descendants.

Rachel's Death

RACHEL: I am about to have my second child but my labor is difficult.

MIDWIFE: Don't be afraid, for you have another son.

RACHEL: (with her last, dying breath). Let him be named Ben-oni, son of my sorrow.

JACOB: No, Benjamin, son of my right hand.

MIDWIFE: Rachel died and we went to his father Isaac who 180 years old.

LEVI: Isaac took his last breath and died.

ESAU: Jacob and I buried him.

JACOB: Esau moved away with his wives, sons, daughters, and all the people of his household, as well as his herds, all his livestock.

ESAU: I left because like in the time of Lot and Abraham, our possessions were too many for us to live together.

JACOB: Because of our herds, the land where we stayed could not support them.

ESAU: I lived in the mountains of Seir.

Joseph's Dreams

GAD: (disgusted) That tattletale Joseph has brought a bad report to our father.

LEVI: (jealous) Father loves him the best.

SIMEON: He made him that robe of many colors.

GAD: I hate him.

REUBEN: Did you hear his last dream?

GAD: The one about our sheaves bowing down to his?

REUBEN: Yes. Joseph! Are you really going to reign over us?

SIMEON: Are you really going to rule us?

JOSEPH: I had another dream, and this time the sun, moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to me.

JACOB: What kind of dream is this that you have had? Are your mother and brothers and I going to come and bow down to the ground before you?

REUBEN: Come on brothers, we must pasture the flocks at Shechem.

LEAH: A little later, Jacob sent Joseph to them.

JACOB: Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing, and bring word back to me.

LEAH: But Joseph did not come home.

REUBEN: Father, we found this robe of many colors. Examine it. Is it your son's robe or not?

JACOB: It is my son's robe. But all this blood on it! A vicious animal has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces!

LEAH: Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for Joseph many days.

LEVI: Father, be comforted. You still have 11 sons.

JACOB: (*weeping*) No, I will go down to the grave to my son, mourning.

LEAH: At that time Judah left his brothers and a Canaanite woman.

JUDAH: When I returned home, I had three sons.

Joseph's Brothers in Egypt

JACOB: Why do you keep looking at each other? I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us so that we will live and not die.

SIMEON: Of course, father.

JACOB: Benjamin will stay here (aside to audience) Something might happen to him on the trip.

LEAH: When the brothers returned, they had grain and bad news.

REUBEN: The man who is the lord of the country spoke harshly to us and accused us of spying on the country.

GAD: But we told him that we are honest and not spies.

DAN: We were 12 brothers, sons of the same father.

GAD: One is no longer living, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.

DAN: The man who is the lord of the country said to us, 'This is how I will know if you are honest: Leave one brother with me, take food to relieve the hunger of your households, and go.

JUDAH: He said to bring back our youngest brother so he would know that we are not spies but honest men.

GAD: he promised to give Simeon back and to allow us to trade in Egypt.

JACOB: You have deprived me of my sons. Joseph is gone and Simeon is gone. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything happens to me!

REUBEN: You can kill my two sons if I don't bring him back to you. Put him in my care and I will return him to you.

JACOB: My son will not go down with you, for his brother is dead and he alone is left. If anything happens to him on your journey, you will bring my gray hairs down to Sheol in sorrow.

REUBEN: Father, the famine is severe. We have used up the grain we had brought back from Egypt.

JACOB: Go back and buy us some food.

JUDAH: The man specifically warned us: 'You will not see me again unless your brother is with you.' If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food for you.

JACOB: Benjamin is not going.

JUDAH: If you will not send him, we will not go, for the man said to us, 'You will not see me again unless your brother is with you.'

JACOB: Why did you cause me so much trouble? Why did you tell the man that you had another brother?

LEVI: The man kept asking about us and our family: 'Is your father still alive?'

REUBEN: Do you have another brother?'

GAD: And we answered him accordingly. How could we know that he would say, 'Bring your brother here'?

JUDAH: Send the boy with me. We will be on our way so that we may live and not die—neither we, nor you, nor our children. I will be responsible for him. You can hold me personally accountable!

JACOB: If you do not bring him back, you will be guilty forever.

JUDAH: If we had not wasted time, we could have come back twice by now.

JACOB: If it must be so, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your packs and take them down to the man as a gift.

REUBEN: —some balsam and some honey,

GAD: aromatic gum and resin,

LEVI: pistachios and almonds.

JACOB: Take twice as much money with you. Return the money that was returned to you in the top of your bags.

LEVI: Perhaps it was a mistake.

JACOB: Take your brother also, and go back at once to the man.

JUDAH: May God Almighty cause the man to be merciful to us so that he will release our other brother.

JACOB: And Benjamin. As for me, if I am deprived of my sons, then I am deprived.

LEAH: The men took this gift, double the amount of money, and Benjamin.

JACOB: When they returned, it was with food and good news.

BEN: Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!

JACOB: (*stunned*) That is unbelievable.

BEN: Look at these wagons Joseph had sent to transport all of us to Egypt.

JACOB: Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go to see him before I die.

Jacob Leaves for Egypt

BEN: We set out with all we owned.

JACOB: That night, I offered sacrifices to the God of my father Isaac.

VOICE OF GOD: Jacob, Jacob!

JACOB: Here I am.

VOICE OF GOD: I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you back. Joseph will put his hands on your eyes.

LEVI: The total number of persons belonging to Jacob—his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons—came to 66.

BEN: If you add in Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's sons, the total is 70.

JACOB: Judah, go on ahead to Joseph to prepare for our arrival

BEN: When we arrived at Goshen, Joseph hitched the horses to his chariot and met his father Israel.

REUBEN: He threw his arms around him, and wept for a long time.

JACOB: At last I can die, now that I have seen your face and know you are still alive!

JOSEPH: I will inform Pharaoh, you have arrived. When Pharaoh asks, 'What is your occupation?' you are to say, 'Your servants, both we and our fathers, have raised livestock from our youth until now.'

BEN: Why not say shepherds?

JOSEPH: All shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians.

Pharaoh Welcomes Jacob

JOSEPH: (to PHARAOH) My father and my brothers, with their sheep and cattle and all that they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in the land of Goshen.

Pharaoh: What is your occupation?

SIMEON: Your servants are shepherds.

PHARAOH: (to JOSEPH) Settle your father and brothers in the best part of the land. They can live in the land of Goshen.

JOSEPH: Yes, Pharaoh.

Pharaoh: If you know of any capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.

JOSEPH: This is my father Jacob.

JACOB: The Lord bless you.

Pharaoh: How many years have you lived?

JACOB: My pilgrimage has lasted 130 years. My years have been few and hard, and they have not surpassed the years of my fathers during their pilgrimages.

BEN: Joseph provided our father, us brothers, and all our father's household with food.

Jacob's final years

JACOB: I am now 147 years old. Send for Joseph so I may bless him and his sons before I die.

JOSEPH: Father, I am here,

JACOB: Promise me that you will deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt. When I rest with my fathers, carry me away from Egypt and bury me in their burial place.

JOSEPH: I will do what you have asked.

JACOB: God Almighty appeared to me and blessed me. He said to me, 'I will make you fruitful and numerous; I will make many nations come from you.

JOSEPH: I know. God promised to give Canaan as an eternal possession to your future descendants.

JACOB: Your two sons born to you in the land of Egypt before I came are now mine.

JOSEPH: So Ephraim and Manasseh belong to you just as Reuben and Simeon do

JACOB: Yes. Children born to you after them will be yours and will be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard to their inheritance.

JOSEPH: Here are my sons that God has given me here.

JACOB: I will bless them. I never expected to see your face again, but now God has even let me see your offspring.

JOSEPH: Place your hands on them and bless them, father.

JACOB: May the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—may He bless these boys and may they grow to be numerous within the land

JOSEPH: Father, you have your right hand on Ephraim's head; it should be on Manasseh's because he is the oldest.

JACOB: I know, my son, I know! He too will become a tribe, and he too will be great; nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his offspring will become a populous nation.

LEVI: Then Jacob called his sons and told them what will happen in the days to come.

REUBEN: He told me, Reuben

JACOB: Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength and the firstfruits of my virility, excelling in prominence, excelling in power. 4 Turbulent as water, you will no longer excel, because you got into your father's bed and you defiled it.

LEVI: To Simeon and I he said

JACOB: Your knives are vicious weapons. May I never enter their council; may I never join their assembly. For in their anger they kill men; their anger is cursed, for it is strong, and their fury, for it is cruel!

JUDAH: To me Judah, he said

JACOB: Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a young lion— the scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him.

JUDAH: Thus it was prophesied kings like David and Jesus would come from Judah

JACOB: Zebulun will live by the seashore and will be a harbor for ships

ISSACHAR: To me, Issachar, he said,

JACOB: Issachar is a strong donkey lying down between the saddlebags. He saw that his resting place was good and that the land was pleasant, so he leaned his shoulder to bear a load and became a forced laborer.

DAN: Next father talked about me and one of my most famous offspring - Samson,

JACOB: Dan will judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. He will be a snake by the road,

DAN: a viper beside the path, that bites the horses' heels so that its rider falls backward.

GAD: Gad will be attacked by raiders, but he will attack their heels.

JACOB: Asher's food will be rich, and he will produce royal delicacies. Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns.

JOSEPH: Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine beside a spring; its branches climb over the wall.

JACOB: The archers attacked him, shot at him, and were hostile toward him.

JOSEPH: Yet his bow remained steady, and his strong arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,

JACOB: by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you

JOSEPH: with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, and blessings of the breasts and the womb.

JACOB: May the bounty of the eternal hills rest on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the prince of his brothers.

BENJAMIN: Benjamin is a wolf; he tears his prey. In the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the plunder.

JACOB: I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site.

JOSEPH: Where Abraham and his wife Sarah, Isaac and his wife Rebekah and Leah is buried.

BENJAMIN: Joseph wept and commanded his servants who were physicians to embalm his father.

GAD: It took 40 days to complete this, for embalming takes that long, and the Egyptians mourned for him 70 days.

JOSEPH: If I have found favor with you, please tell Pharaoh that my father made me take an oath, saying,

JACOB: I am about to die. You must bury me there in the tomb that I made for myself in the land of Canaan.

JOSEPH: Now let me go and bury my father. Then I will return.

PHARAOH: Go and bury your father in keeping with your oath.

BENJAMIN: Horses and chariots went up with him; it was a very impressive procession.

JOSEPH: After I buried my father, I returned to Egypt with my brothers.

SIMEON: If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him.

GAD: We should send a message,

SIMEON: Yes. Let's tell him that before father died he gave a command:

GAD: Say this to Joseph: Please forgive your brothers' transgression and their sin—the suffering they caused you.

SIMEON: And please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.

BENJAMIN: Joseph wept when their message came to him.

ALL BROTHERS: *(in unison)* We are your slaves!

JOSEPH: Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your little ones,

BENJAMIN: Joseph comforted them and spoke kindly to them.