**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at American University**

**June 2024 Minis Study Group**

**From Rivalry to Redemption in the Hebrew Bible**

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Family relationships in the Hebrew Bible are full of strife and rivalry between brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, or among wives, mothers and concubines. Starting with Cain and Abel, right through to Moses and Aaron, biblical family dynamics include abuse, betrayal, coercion, seduction, and murder. But these stories are more than sordid tabloid headlines--taken together, they also offer a road-map to healing and forgiveness. Join us on this journey from Rivalry to Redemption, to gain new insights into the biblical characters you thought you knew, and maybe even learn something about your own kith and kin.

Besides having access to the listed biblical passages in appropriate translation, there are no other required readings for this course.

Please have available during our study sessions a copy of the Hebrew Bible in translation [JPS is preferred] in hard copy or online. The JPS Hebrew Bible is available for free online at <https://www.sefaria.org/texts>, click on Tanakh; Please view online version on a device other than the one you are using to Zoom our study sessions.

**TOPICS of STUDY:**

Unit 1: My Brother's Keeper: Cain and Abel

Gen. 4

Unit 2: The deeds of the ancestors have an impact upon their descendants:

Abraham, Sarah, and Lot; Sarah and Hagar;

Gen 12-18, 21-22

Unit 3: When is it Rivalry, when is it not? Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Rachel and Leah

Gen 25, 31-33, 35

Unit 4: Num 12: Rivalry and Redemption: From Joseph and his Brothers to Moses and Aaron

Gen 37-45, 50; Ex 3-4; Num 12;

**Questions for Consideration**:

* Does the passage you are reading qualify as rivalry? What elements make you think so?
* Consider the sequence of episodes: Is there a pattern that changes or shifts in the nature of family rivalry in these episodes? Are things getting better or worse? Why do you think so?
* Are there events within episodes of rivalry that radically alter what follows? How do you account for these, if any?

**Further Reading:**

Diane M. Sharon, “Rivalry in Genesis: A New Reading,” *Conservative Judaism*, 53:4, Summer 2001, 19-34.