

A Thought for Shabbat

Rabbi Leah Lewis

Shabbat Shalom

Friday, December 16, 2011
20 Kislev 5772



With twelve sons and a daughter, Jacob's house was bound to be filled with the blessings and the challenges that come with siblings. In this week's Torah portion, *Vayeshev*, the siblings take issue with their brother, Joseph. He was the happy recipient of the famous coat of many colors because, as the Torah teaches, he was Jacob's favorite son:

Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age, and he made him an ornamented tunic. (Genesis 37:3)

The recent *Time* magazine cover article about parental favoritism among children cited a study at UC Davis that indicates a full 70 percent of fathers and 65 percent of mothers exhibit preferential behaviors for one child over another. "It's hard wired into our species," Jeffrey Kluger, the author of the article states.

Whether or not you believe that favoritism is hard wired, there is no denying its impact on children. As parents, relatives and friends, Judaism challenges us to acknowledge and nurture the special gifts in every human being. We are all of worth and we are all unique. We are all created *b'tzelem* Elohim, in the image of God.