ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

HISTORICAL

Scroll of Naska: Sojourn in Egypt
Martin Shapiro
CreateSpace
978-1-4528-2277-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

Though life was drastically different during the times of the Old Testament, the *Scroll of Naska* draws readers into this era by using illustrative details that authenticate the time period. It is the first of four books in a series that introduces the fictional Naska as a contemporary of Joseph.

In general, Joseph's story remains Biblically accurate. Shapiro, a graduate of Harvard Business School and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, lets the story unfold as Naska wrote it on a scroll, found during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. Naska, it turns out, was a bit homophobic and not at all pleased that one of his sons, Dani, was bisexual. Early in the book, Dani leaves secretly to work on a ship and Naska doesn't hear from him for years, but he does learn that Dani has become a sailor.

While on a sailing journey himself, from Tyre to Herakleion, Naska is asked by the ship's captain if he is Dani's father. When Naska replies affirmatively, the captain levels an angry accusation about Dani, "…he has bewitched my brother and they are living together as man and wife…Is this a disease in your family?" The altercation angers and disgusts Naska.

An experience with two of his wives, along with a childhood memory and a confrontation with Dani, serve to illustrate Naska's unfavorable opinion of homosexuality and hint at its basis.

Shapiro provides vividly detailed scenes to draw the reader into life in Naska's time including gritty descriptions of the living conditions: "…a village of round tents, with…debris of all sorts on the ground. The air smelled damp and musty, mixed with the smells of animals and sewage."

Other scenes are easier on the senses such as this one from near the Nile in Egypt, "…the sun was…huge in size and yellow and orange in color. No clouds were in the sky but a slight haze reflected a pink red glow."

Readers who enjoy historical fiction will enjoy this book. Others may not be comfortable with the detailed sexual content and some graphic violence.

Shapiro's chronology can be confusing at times, though an appendix explains the sequence of the book's events. While this is Naska's story to narrate, other characters occasionally play the storytelling role as well. When Shapiro jumps between narrators, it isn't always obvious that the scenes are happening concurrently. Fortunately, it becomes obvious later on, but is a bit jarring at first.

Shapiro weaves interesting subplots into the main story without detracting from the bigger picture. His attention to detail brings the *Scroll of Nask* to life.

Laura Munion