

Genesis Bible Study 22

Life is Not Fair

taken from

***Salvation for the Social Order: For Those Who Haven't Read the Bible
and for Those Who Think Religion is Merely a Private Matter***

by Philip E. Friesen

Reading: Genesis 39

Principal Question: How does Joseph always manage to survive?

Main Point: Joseph trusts God, and God is with him.

Discussion

1. Read the story. What questions do you have?
2. What reasons can you think of that would motivate the master's wife to pursue a sexual relationship with Joseph?
3. What benefits might Joseph receive if he obeys her order?
4. What risks does Joseph face if he obeys her order?¹
5. What reasons does Joseph give for refusing?²
6. Besides Potiphar, what other relationship of trust is important to Joseph?

¹ Imagine she is unhappy with his sexual performance, then what? Imagine this affair goes on and on...?

² Remember that trust is the foundation and the measure of relationship, as we observe in the Abraham story.

Interpretive Notes

Imagine how differently Joseph was brought up compared with his brothers. When the first four sons were born, Jacob was busy getting rich and fighting with his uncle and cousins (Genesis 30:25-33). Jacob probably had little time for the sons of the wife whom he never wanted. As the first wife, Leah should have been the head wife, but Jacob loved Rachel, and gave this honor to Rachel. The young boys soon learned that Jacob did not love their mother, even though he performed his required duties towards her. They helplessly watched while Leah battled against Rachel to get the love she wanted from Jacob. Imagine the ambivalence they must have felt towards their father.

By contrast, when Joseph was born, there was no doubt that his father loved his mother. Imagine how secure Joseph felt. In addition Jacob was no longer busy getting rich. The older sons were required to care for the animals, while Jacob could spend time with his favorite son.

Imagine the education Joseph received from his father. Since Jacob trusted Joseph with overseeing the other brothers and managing business affairs, it is no surprise that Joseph became a confident and competent manager. Jacob's spiritual maturity also was beneficial to his new son. By now Jacob was not the liar and cheater he had been. Bitter experience had taught Jacob the cost of dishonesty.

Jacob trusted God, and because God was in charge of Jacob's life, Jacob had become a different man. It is no surprise that Joseph grew up to be so trustworthy. Yes, he was intolerably arrogant towards his brothers, but as the story progress, the God of Jacob will also be his teacher, and teach him the humility he needs for leadership, as you will soon discover.