

## PAWNS OF REDEMPTION A Devotional Meditation from

Exodus 6:2-9:35; Ezekiel 28:25-29:21; Matthew 6:5-13; 24:6; Luke 21:28;  
John 13:21-30; Romans 9:27-28; Revelation 11:15

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January 1, 2022

Is there a reason to grow alarmed at every crisis-laden headline? Honestly, each worrisome headline gives me more reason to recall our Messiah's exhortation that wars and rumors of war will be our constant companions in these latter days, and when we see them, to look up because our redemption is that much closer. It also helps to realize that a 24/7 news cycle requires an endless drumbeat of fearful news to sell advertising and influence the masses in a preferred direction.

Another helpful element is playing chess and other strategy games. Success in such contests depends on anticipating the opponent's goals and likely moves, and that requires understanding the opponent's motivation and way of thinking. If I know what my opponents intend, then it might be possible to bend their intentions to my advantage. A little bit of misdirection may be just the thing to strengthen their resolve to do precisely what they want to do, but to do it in a way that leaves them exposed to my counterstroke. That's why chess has been a game of kings



*Man Playing Chess. Photo by [Jarmoluk on PIXNIO.com](https://www.pixnio.com).*

and diplomats for centuries, and why the dance of nations can be considered a great chess match. Masters of the game triumph not by overwhelming their opponents with massive force, but by allowing their opponents to walk boldly into their own doom.

Do you realize that we have learned this from our Creator? It is the beauty and the peril of being made in His image, with free will to think for ourselves. We can use that free will to obey Him and follow His instructions, or we can choose to disregard those instructions and suffer the consequences. Mothers know what that means. They give their children instructions based on lessons from their own experience. The children can obey and enjoy the fruit of their obedience, or disobey and open themselves to their own hard learning experience. What makes it all the more maddening for the children is that mothers usually know what choice they will make, so when the inevitable happens, the children see that mother really does know best.

With this in mind, consider those difficult questions about whether God really is all good and all powerful. If He is all good, why would He do something so terrible as afflict Egypt with all those horrendous plagues? If He is all powerful, why wouldn't He just extract

His people Israel from bondage in a less painful way? For that matter, why would He allow them to be enslaved in the first place? It seems like God is just looking for some excuse to press the smite button and smack down Pharaoh and anyone else who disagrees with His outrageous demands – demands which, by the way, involve removing Egypt's labor force, and with it the basis of their economy, their social structure, and their ability to project power. Think of what that means to the international order. All the good that Egypt was doing by upholding civilization in a barbaric ancient world would be undone by God's outrageous demand to let His people go.

But there is another perspective. The Hebrews knew the good Egypt had done. They experienced it themselves, and had contributed much of that good over the two centuries they sojourned there. Then a new administration came to power, and the Hebrews suddenly became a national liability rather than the backbone of the nation's values and power. That's when the good life became a life of oppression, filled with national policies designed to entice the Hebrews to participate in their own destruction by mandated birth control, and then escalating to genocide by forced labor when the enticements ceased having the intended effect.

The Bible says they groaned because of their slavery, but it doesn't say they stopped praying, "God bless Egypt, and God bless Pharaoh." The deliverance they sought may well have been Egypt's return to the values of the good old days, rather than extraction from a situation that was good in appearance, but that caused them to drift away as a people from allegiance to the God Who made them a people in the first place. That is especially perilous for the Covenant Nation of Israel the Almighty had established as His vehicle of redemption for all nations.

In a sense, human history is a chess match between the Creator and Redeemer of humanity, and the Adversary who wants to destroy us all. The Adversary's victory does not necessarily require God's Covenant People to be destroyed; it's enough that they forget who they are, and Whose divine destiny they are walking out. It can be as easy as enticing them to turn their attention away from the Kingdom of Heaven God is establishing on earth, and expend all their energy on making the fallen kingdoms of this world into the best representation of goodness they can devise. In that sense, a heartfelt prayer of "God bless Egypt" could be the opposite of, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's goal, of course, is that the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Messiah. To get there, our Creator must play this game of chess not only with the enemy of our souls, but with us as well. We see what He does with Pharaoh, the tyrant king of Egypt and pawn of our Adversary. God says He will harden Pharaoh's heart. That sounds difficult to our ears until we realize God is simply encouraging Pharaoh to do what he has already decided, just as Messiah Yeshua encouraged His betrayer to do quickly what he intended to do.

Pharaoh's intent was to demonstrate his own power and glory by keeping the Hebrews under his thumb in defiance of this foreign God. In truth, Pharaoh's Creator knows his motivations and goals, and knows what he will do to achieve those goals. God would actually be violating His own principles if He forced Pharaoh to change his mind. Instead, He allows Pharaoh to continue on the destructive course he himself has chosen, taking

his nation with him to inevitable doom. The outcome had been determined long before, when Pharaoh and his fathers chose to turn away from the counsel of their Hebrew subjects and embark on a path that didn't require the constant reminder that the Hebrews' God had a different way of doing things than the gods of their own devising that reflected the Egypt of their imagination.

And how did the Almighty play chess with the Hebrews? The same way He does with us today: He invites them to come into His Kingdom, and then remakes them from the inside out into loyal subjects of that Kingdom. Often that means allowing the things we have trusted and built up in our own wisdom and strength to crumble of their own weight.

He did so in Egypt; what person in their right mind would have stayed in the ruined shell of an empire that remained after the Ten Plagues? But many did, and that's the sad irony. One would think that a rational person would choose the things of God after He shows Himself so powerful and faithful to those He is redeeming, but this is the same God Who says only a remnant will be saved. To those being saved, His glory and power is evident as they become acquainted with their own shortcomings and shortsightedness. Such people witness the transformation of their inner desert into the Tabernacle of the Living God as they follow His tender leading toward life. To those not yet in that place, His glory and power is evident in the mighty hand and outstretched arm by which the consequences of their choices are visited on the idols of their minds.

This is what happens when we play chess with the Master. As fallen human beings, we are pawns of our own destruction, playing a game we are doomed to lose. The question is whether we realize we are going to lose. If we don't realize it, then we are in peril of our lives. If we do realize it, and continue to defy the inevitable, then we are in peril of our souls. Our best option is to come to terms with the Master quickly and become pawns of His redemption.