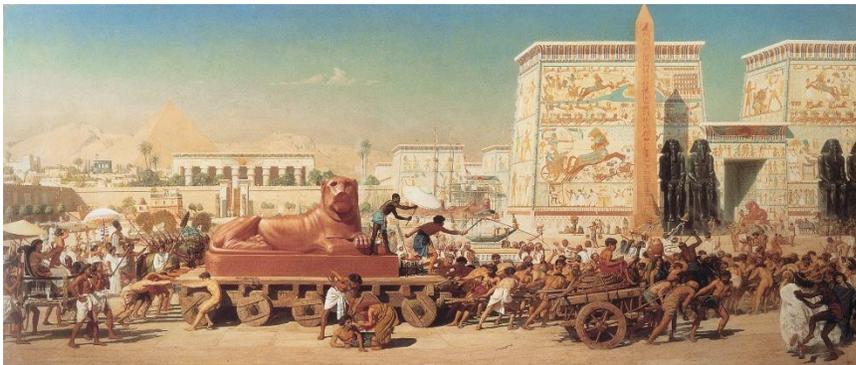


WALKING LIKE AN EGYPTIAN
A Devotional Meditation from
Exodus 1:22, 3:7-10; Psalm 116:15; Jeremiah 16:16-19;
Matthew 6:10; Revelation 6:9-11
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Does time really heal all wounds? Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the pain of deep wounds becomes less acute over time. Whether the wounds are inflicted on individuals, or on entire people groups, the memory of the pain wanes as the outrages of ages past recede into the shadows of history.

This explains how we can make light of what our ancestors considered horrible oppression and atrocity. A quick survey of history bears this out – and also reveals that the victims in one generation often become the oppressors in another generation. If we follow this chain of oppression through the ages, eventually we come to ancient Egypt, the splendid world empire whose monuments and treasures have survived five thousand years of civilizational drift and erosion.



Israel In Egypt, Sir Edward Poynter, 1867. ([Guildhall Art Gallery, London, via Wikimedia Commons.](#))

this empire practiced what we call genocide while dealing with what might be considered their “Hebrew problem.” The Bible tells us the covenant family of Israel had multiplied so much during their centuries in Egypt that the regime embarked on a policy of systematic population control. That’s the dispassionate bureaucratic description of what we read in Exodus:

Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.” (Exodus 1:22 TLV)

We don’t like to bring up the images this invokes – images of infant Hebrew boys thrown to the crocodiles, or Hebrew girls pried from their parents’ arms so they can become domestic servants in palatial Egyptian homes – or perform other services not mentioned in polite society. Such is the fate of people who become nothing more than commodities in the eyes of their overlords.

A generation of Israelites struggled to survive under this regime that sought to remove their identity as a people. Then, just when it seemed a savior in Pharaoh’s court would take charge and bring relief, Moses disqualified himself and was exiled. Another

A splendid empire indeed, but like all empires, Egypt was built on the blood of slaves. We forget that part when we marvel at King Tut’s tomb, or puzzle over the hieroglyphics and stylized artwork on the ancient monuments of Luxor. The dazzling displays obscure the record that

generation struggled as God worked on Moses' heart, and only when he was ready could the Lord finally commission him to do what he had been born to do. That's the conversation God and Moses had at the Burning Bush. We read the account heedless of the fact that Moses was 80 years old at the time. To put it in perspective, Moses' meeting with God on Mount Sinai was as far removed in time from his miraculous salvation from Pharaoh's crocodiles as the Holocaust is distant from us in this generation.

It was enough time for Moses' people to cry out for deliverance, and for the evil of Egypt to reach the point of irrevocable judgment. God said so Himself:

Then *ADONAI* said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their slave masters, for I know their pains. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them up out of that land into a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey, into the place of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Now behold, the cry of *Bnei-Yisrael* has come to Me. Moreover I have seen the oppression that the Egyptians have inflicted on them. Come now, I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people *Bnei-Yisrael* out from Egypt." (Exodus 3:7-10 TLV)

If God really intended to deliver His people, He certainly took his time going about it. Surely that thought crossed the minds of the mothers and fathers weeping by the Nile for their lost children. For that matter, it surely occurred to the exiles of Judah by the waters of Babylon, and to the Jewish deportees on the platform at Auschwitz. It probably also occurred to Christian martyrs from the Roman arenas to the streets of Rwanda, the gulags of Soviet Russia, the internment camps of Communist China, and the bazaars of Kabul. Their voices echo through time to the very end, just as John tells us:

When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those slaughtered for the sake of the word of God and for the witness they had. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "O Sovereign Master, holy and true, how long before You judge those who dwell on the earth and avenge our blood?" Then a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants was complete—their brothers and sisters who were to be killed as they had been. (Revelation 6:9-11 TLV)

This is the God about Whom it is written, "Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones." (Psalm 116:15 NASB). This God does not move when we expect or demand it. All we have are His promises that everything will be accomplished in time.

One of those necessary accomplishments is weaning His people away from the veneer of polite civilization that hides an ugly core of bloodthirsty aggression tempered with callous neglect. That's what happened in Moses' day. Within 80 years, his people ceased praying and wishing that Egypt would once again return to its roots and let them live there in peace. Their adopted national home transformed in a short time from a welcoming place where they were blessed and honored to a toxic environment where survival was questionable. Only then did they remember that God had something better in store for them, and only then did they begin asking Him to bring it into their reality – or, more accurately, to bring them into His reality.

This is the pattern God's people have endured since the day He called our father Abraham out of his pagan homeland in Ur of the Chaldeans. Jeremiah spoke of it even as Israel's last independent kingdom was succumbing to the Chaldeans of Babylon:

"Behold, I will send for many fishers," says *ADONAI*, "and they will fish for them. After that, I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down from every mountain and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. (Jeremiah 16:16 TLV)

This is the context in which Yeshua called His disciples fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). They, and we after them, seek out the people of God, calling them into His promises. But the people of God have a hard time understanding exactly what that means. That's why the gentle fishers are followed by the ruthless hunters. The result of their work is to help us understand there is no refuge here among the nations of the earth, but only in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Which is clear from what Jeremiah wrote immediately after that part about fishers and hunters:

For My eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes. First I will repay them double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have profaned My land, and they have filled My possession with the carcasses of their vile things and their abominations."

ADONAI, my strength, my stronghold, my refuge in the day of affliction,
to You will the nations come from the ends of the earth and say:

"Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, futility and useless things."

Jeremiah 16:17-19 TLV

There it is. Yes, judgment comes to the hunters: the wicked oppressors, persecutors, and makers of genocide. That much we understand. What we do not understand is why they are necessary. They teach us that instead of praying for God to make Egypt nice again, we should learn what it means to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).