

Born to Win

The Anger of God

by Ronald L. Dart

Does God get angry? We know he does. Everybody's heard about "the wrath of God". But, you know, I think it's fair to say a lot of people don't see what God has to be all that angry about. When they read the scriptures about the wrath of God, they may shiver a little but they *really don't understand*. They either think of God as an *irascible* tyrant or they just don't believe he's really all that angry.

Between the movies *The Ten Commandments* and *The Prince of Egypt*, everybody knows how the death of the firstborn in Egypt was the means God used to finally force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. But someone asked me recently on one of our internet forums, "Why did God have to kill the firstborn of Egypt just to get the Israelites out of there? After all, he's God, isn't he? Couldn't he have found a *better way* to do it than that? The kids hadn't done anything, had they?" Well, no, they hadn't. And so it might be important to understand what actually happened—to understand what the basis of the anger of God might be. The movie-makers were troubled by it. It's obvious by the way in which they try to make sense out of it, in a way, by having Pharaoh pronounce his own judgement upon himself—which really doesn't match the Bible. So, why don't we try to understand what's going on here.

The relevant scriptures in question are back at the beginning of the Book of Exodus. This is the story of how the children of Israel had gone down into Egypt—just a few of them in number—and had increased in great numbers, and were finally made slaves by the Egyptians. In Exodus 1, verse 7:

Exodus 1

AKJV

⁷ And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

⁹ And he said to his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

The specter of this—you know, a group of people in the land who are now beginning to outnumber you and who are stronger than you are—was *frightening*. They could easily lose control of the country. He said:

Exodus 1

AKJV

¹⁰ Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falls out any war, they join also to our enemies, and fight against us [*and guess where we'd be in that circumstance*], and so get them up out of the land.

¹¹ Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. [*They made slaves out of them.*] And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

It was, I guess, the law of unintended consequences that, for some reason, affliction makes people stronger, not weaker.

Exodus 1

AKJV

¹³ And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor:

¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.

You know, for us all these years later, this is just so many words on paper. I'm sorry, I lack the powers of description to impress upon your mind what this was like. To get a grip on it, you'd almost have to read a book like *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. It's a description of Nazi use of slave labor in World War II. You know, how can you imagine what it's like to sleep on a board all night long; to get up in the morning with every bone in your body aching, with your feet so sore you can hardly walk on them—bleeding, perhaps, from the previous day's exertions—with poor and ill-fitting shoes; and to get up in the morning and go on out to work on those sore feet, on those aching bodies, knowing that you have to do it...because if you *don't* do it, they will *dispose of you*. And to have to do this on one-half-liter or so of thin soup and just a few grams of bread—to have to do that on this small handful of bread and a little bit of soup, in pain, for fear of death, *changes people terribly*. And remember, these were not just people kept like the Nazis did for four, five, six, seven years; these people were kept in slavery generation after generation after generation.

We live so well—I mean, the *poorest* of us live so well—that we can't grasp the degradation and death that is inseparable from this kind of slavery. We have *no idea* of the *dehumanizing* effect of it—not only on the slaves, but also on the masters. It turns the slaves into animals and the masters into monsters. We cannot grasp the diminution of human life, even to the extent of *infanticide*, because the king of Egypt, when he saw this wasn't working:

Exodus 1

AKJV

¹⁵ [...] spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:

¹⁶ And he said, When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them on the stools; if it be a son, then you shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

It was Pharaoh's intent to kill *fully half* of the newborn babies among all the Israelites, and the boys in particular. It was no big deal. The slaves weren't human, anyway, to the Egyptians. To them it was like putting a bunch of unwanted kittens in a sack and throwing them in the river to let them drown. Now, note this well: Pharaoh was not merely killing the firstborn of the Israelites (hearkening back to our original question of, "Why did God take the life of the firstborn of the Egyptians?"). Pharaoh was not merely killing the firstborn; he was killing *all* of the boys.

Exodus 1

AKJV

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

¹⁸ And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, Why have you done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? ¹⁹ And the midwives [*craftily*] said to Pharaoh,

Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in to them.

And I imagine, in many cases, that was true. Some of them were working in the fields when the baby came.

Exodus 1

AKJV

²⁰ Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

And finally...you'll find this in Exodus 1, verse 22, and you may have overlooked this if you've ever been a Bible reader before.

Exodus 1

AKJV

²² And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.

Had you ever noticed that *all the Egyptians* were involved in this atrocity? No one could say, "My hands are clean." No one could say, "Well, I wasn't involved in that." *All of them* were in it. Note well, also, it was not just the firstborn of the Israelites that died; it was *all* the males and *all* the Egyptians were involved in it. None of them could say, "Well, I really didn't know what was going on." They couldn't miss it when people would grab a newborn Hebrew male child by the feet and swing him around and fling him into the river to the crocodiles. It was kind of hard to miss. In Exodus 2, verse 1:

Exodus 2

AKJV

¹ And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

² And the woman conceived, and bore a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months [*because she wanted to keep him*].

³ And when she could not longer hide him [*I suppose it would be hard to hide a child like that.*], she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch [*kind of waterproofed it*], and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

So she kind of obeyed the law. All the males had to be thrown in the river, so she put him in the river... she just put him in *a basket* in the river.

Exodus 2

AKJV

⁴ And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

⁵ And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

⁶ And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

And if she had done what her father said, she would have thrown that baby in the water right there. But she didn't. And as a result of her taking the child from the water, she saved alive the *very instrument* of God's judgement.

So why should God get all that mad at the Egyptians? I mean, after all, all they were doing is grabbing hundreds of little boy babies by the legs and giving them a big heave into the river where they could be eaten by crocodiles. What's that to get mad about? You know, the fact that we don't understand the wrath of God is a measure, I think, of how *cheap* life has become for us.

Consider, for example, a medical procedure that's now practiced commonly in this country and is, at this moment, perfectly legal. When a woman is late in her pregnancy—I mean all the way to the last week of it—and wants to terminate the pregnancy, they do a procedure (I think it's called dilation and curettage). You probably have heard it called “partial-birth abortion”. It's a big political issue. The baby is turned and delivered feet first. And when only the head is still in the birth canal (because, *just technically*, the baby has not been born yet if it's not gotten out of the birth canal and taken its first breath) the doctor punctures the base of the skull with an instrument, inserts a suction tube, and sucks out the contents—killing the fetus.

When this was being debated in the Senate—when they were trying to get a law through to prohibit this—one senator asked two other senators, “What happens if the baby slips out before the doctor is able to do the procedure, and is actually out of the womb and alive? Can the doctor still kill it?” Well, it's a logical question. The purpose of the whole procedure in the first place is to get rid of an unwanted child. So, can they go ahead and get rid of it if it just accidentally slips out instead of the four-inches difference it's still inside. The reply was caught on C-SPAN, but later expunged from the Congressional Record. The reply was, “Well, I suppose that would be a decision for the woman and the doctor to make.” Now, how does this differ from what Pharaoh wanted the Hebrew midwives to do? He wanted them to kill all the newborns of Israel as soon as they came out on the birth-stool. In other words, the woman gets on a kind of a stool, in position to give birth to the child. As soon as the little baby comes out, as soon as they see it's a boy, they whack its head on the leg of the birth-stool or upon a rock beneath it and kill it—just as soon as it's born, before it really gets a foothold in life. How does this differ from partial-birth abortion?

Now, can you begin to understand why God—who can see *all of this*; who can see all of the worst of this (and you and I have no idea of what goes on behind closed doors on this sort of thing)—can you understand why God might be angry? I think you can. The next question, though, is, “But why take it out on the children?” Well, there are two important things to remember. One: God can raise the dead. No death is final to God. And the second thing to remember is that God is a God of *justice*. Every plague that descended upon Egypt was just. Every one of them corresponded in some symbolic way to the treatment of the slaves in Egypt, all the way down to the death of the firstborn. People often ask, “Well, yeah, but didn't God harden Pharaoh's heart?” Well, yes, he did. But Pharaoh's heart was hard in the first place. The only way God softened Pharaoh's heart was with a plague. All God had to do to harden his heart was to *remove the plague*. And that's how God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And he did this because justice had to be done. Without justice, repentance doesn't mean anything. Without justice, there is no such thing as mercy. Without justice, there is only evil continually.

The death of the firstborn of Egypt was not *merely* to deliver the Israelites. The lady who asked me this question is right; it could have been done another way. But that would have dismissed the deaths of thousands, *tens of thousands* of Israelite babies drowned in the Nile. Did it ever occur to you that the reason why... When you watch the movie *The Ten Commandments* and you see Moses go up to the river and Aaron stick his staff in the river and see the blood begin to spread out across the river, remember this: The reason he turned the river to blood was because it had been the instrument for the killing of all those Israelite babies. Year after year, generation after generation, thousands of Israelite children were drowned in that river. So Moses turned it to blood and gave the Egyptians blood to drink.

Yeah, the idea of vengeance does make me shudder. But you have to understand: vengeance is the central value of justice. And, in fact, we *ought to* shudder. I don't know if you've ever thought about this but it occurred to me as I was looking at this that. You know, years gone by, we practiced slavery in this country. We practiced the great *evil* of slavery for many years. It was tolerated by many people, practiced by other people. How many soldiers do you suppose died, North and South, at the Battle of Gettysburg alone? I don't even know those numbers, but the numbers of brothers who were killed in the Civil War

mounts up into a huge mountain of grief for families. How many slaves do you think died on slave ships crossing from Africa, who were thrown over the side on the way? You do understand, don't you, that not merely the question of the slavery but the number of slaves who were killed in the process of getting them to market *dwarfs* the Holocaust in Nazi Germany in World War II. Far more than that were killed in the slave trade.

And I wonder, sometimes, if we have any idea of what we spared ourselves in this country by putting *an end* to slavery. Because slavery changed us. It changed us all in important ways. It didn't merely afflict the slaves; it also afflicted the people who held them as slaves. And one wonders to what extent our own Civil War—which didn't make any sense at all, which is staggering—the more you learn about it, the more you are left with this incredible confusion about why in the world did something like this have to happen. One wonders if it was a judgement from the Almighty God upon us for holding these people in slavery *all those years*—a judgement just like the judgement of God upon Egypt. You see, justice would have required God to act sooner or later on this thing. Because as a people we were behaving unjustly and God can't allow that sort of thing to stand without taking some kind of action eventually. Somewhere, somehow, sometime, somewhere down the road, the price has got to be paid. For Egypt, it took a long time, but when it finally came it was truly, truly bitter.

As we approach the end time, the wrath of God is going to loom larger and larger across our landscape, and there will be fools who just can't understand what it is that God is mad about.

A long time ago, the prophet Jeremiah was standing in the gate of the temple, and the word of God came to him while he was standing there and told him to proclaim a word to all the people who were coming and going through the gates. He said:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

³ Thus said the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Problem was, their ways *needed* amending. He said a little later:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

⁸ Behold, you trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

⁹ Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not;

¹⁰ And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered [*safe*] to do all these abominations?

What do you mean "safe"? Well, there was a common belief among those people: "This is the temple of God. Nothing bad can happen here. God is here. This is God's place and we're safe here." You come here and you say, "We're safe." Huh. You're safe to do all these abominations?

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

¹¹ Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, said the LORD.

¹² But go you now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

They'd forgotten that Shiloh was the place before, and Shiloh had been brought *level with the ground*. He said, "I'm not going to save you because you are in this house." He says in verse 14:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

¹⁴ Therefore will I do to this house, which is called by my name, wherein you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

¹⁵ And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

¹⁶ Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear you.

"I'm through with it!"

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

¹⁷ See you not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸ The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

¹⁹ Do they provoke me to anger? said the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

Wait a minute, now. Why is this such a big deal? Why is it that God says:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

²⁰ [...] Behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out on this place, on man, and on beast, and on the trees of the field, and on the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

Now, it sounds like God's making a big deal. You know, a person can say, "Well, I can see where God might be disappointed a little bit, but wrathful? Over them following some little pagan custom like baking cakes to the Queen of Heaven?" Well, if that were all, maybe you could make a case for that. But the problem is, that's not all. In verse 29, he says:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

²⁹ Cut off your hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

His wrath had come upon a *whole generation*. Why?

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

³⁰ For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, said the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

And that's bad. But also:

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

³¹ [...] they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. *[It never came into **my** mind, he says.]*

They didn't just make a few cakes to the Queen of Heaven—some little hot cross buns or some other quaint custom. They *burned their sons and their daughters in the fire* as a part of a religious act.

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

³² Therefore, behold, the days come, said the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: [...]

Do you know what this is? This is *Gehenna*. Gehenna: the place and the Greek term that's called "hell".

Jeremiah 7

AKJV

³² [...] for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

³³ And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. *[Nobody shall run them off.]*

Why is all this happening? Why is God angry? In the end, it all came down on the children. And we have come to the place in the modern society where the wanton destruction of 45 million potential citizens of the United States is just no big deal. For a long time, they did the same thing with the aborted children that the Israelites did with their children—they burned them. Who knows how many generations of kids were sent up the smokestacks of incinerators as just so much medical waste. They don't do that anymore. Nowadays, they cut them into parts and sell them. They're sold to pharmaceutical companies and used for medical research. Last November, Mona Charen wrote in an editorial:

For its buyers, [a certain company] offers "the highest quality, most affordable, freshest tissue prepared to your specifications and delivered in the quantities you need, when you need it." Eyes and ears go for \$75, [...]

Mona Charen - Body Parts for Sale

The little tiny eyeballs of a fetus go for \$75.

[...] and brains for \$999.

Mona Charen - Body Parts for Sale

You knock off the dollar, I guess, to keep it more like a bargain under the \$1,000 mark.

An "intact trunk" fetches \$500, a whole liver \$150.

And all kinds of the little things like the thymus and the pancreas and the lungs and so forth, and spinal cords, are all sold with price tags on them. There's a law in this country, by the way, that prohibits the sale of these things.

To evade the law's prohibition, body-parts dealers like [this company] offer to lease space in the abortion clinic to "perform the harvesting," as well as to "offset [the] clinic's overhead." [The company] further boasted, "Our daily average case volume exceeds 1500 and we serve clinics across the United States."

Mona Charen - *Body Parts for Sale*

And I the only one that thinks about the Holocaust when I read this? They harvested all the clothes and shoes of all the people they were sending to the gas chambers, you know. They even pulled their gold teeth and shaved off their hair for mattress filling, you know. I wonder what the price list was for a pair of children's shoes or a mattress full of Jewish hair or an ounce of gold from Jewish teeth.

One of the things that bothered me most about this was the statement, "We offer the highest-quality, the most affordable, the freshest tissue." You realize what this means? It means that they've got to be right there—that the fetus, when it comes out, has got to immediately be taken and cut and dismembered into pieces. And the tissue has to be preserved carefully so that when it gets to the pharmaceutical company, so when it gets to the medical research team, it's still *very fresh*. The problem is that, increasingly, these fetuses that they're doing this with are beyond 30 weeks. They are viable. They have beating hearts. And sometimes when they're out, they're still moving. And so, just what are they doing when they "harvest" the little lungs, the little brains, and the little spinal cord, and the little eyeballs?

When God was angry with Israel for burning their children to the gods in Tophet, what was it, do you suppose, that made him angry? Do you really think it was the *religious* aspect of child sacrifice that made it so bad before God? Do you think it would have been okay if they had just disposed of the infants for economic or personal reasons? I don't think any of us really believe that. And I think we are beginning to understand *why God might be angry*.

As I did my work preparing for this, I came to realize that it seems that all the sins of mankind ultimately fall on the heads of the little children. It is the little ones, it is the helpless ones that suffer at the end of the road of sin. And maybe that goes a distance in explaining why Jesus had to be born as a baby—why he had to come into the world *completely, totally vulnerable*. Because even as a child, you know, he suffered persecution. Herod tried to kill him, he and his family fled to Egypt to escape, and dozens or hundreds of little boys died around Bethlehem.

Is it any wonder that the wrath of God might be kindled because of the way men treat little children? It's no wonder to me. Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart, and you were *born to win*.