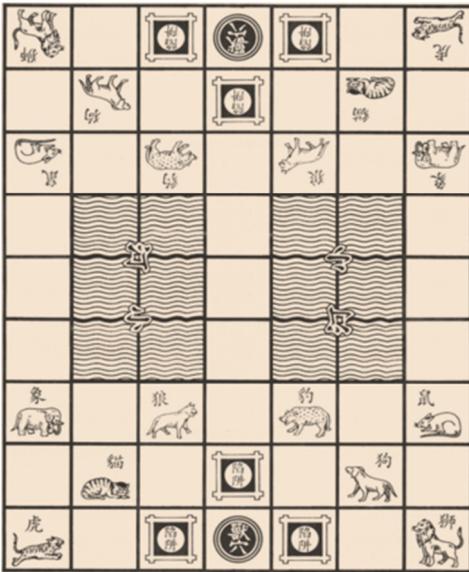


FOLLOW THE ANTS

The picture shows a simple type of Animal Chess that I played as a kid.



In the chess game, it seems logical and expected that bigger and more powerful animals get to kill the smaller and less powerful – the elephant kills the lion, the lion kills the tiger, the tiger kills the wolf and fox, the wolf and fox kill the cat and the cat kills the rat ...

However, as the predator-and-prey chain goes around, the smallest of them (i.e., the rat) becomes the “most powerful” to be qualified to kill the elephant.

In the real world, it seems possible that the small rat has the capability to kill a giant elephant if the rat manages to get into elephant’s trunk. It also

seems possible that a rat can kill the elephant by transmitting a fatal disease with a good bite.

It is well-nigh possible for a seemingly small and powerless to defeat a big and powerful. The story of David vs. Goliath and the beatitude on “Blessed are the weak ...” tell us that things don’t always work out the way of natural expectation.

We humans may have a feeling of superiority that we are the smartest in the kingdom of living things and we can take for granted to do as we wish against the plants and animals that we depend on for survival. Unfortunately, while we do as we like to subjugate the “voiceless” plants and animals, humans do end up as the crushed victims of invisible toxins, germs and viruses that have their sources in the “powerless and subjugated” inhabitants of the living kingdom.

We humans may be too proud for our own good. Despite our special position in God's creation, we can temper our superiority complex by taking note of what we can learn from the tiny ants that we are wont to despise and trample under our feet:

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.” (Prov.6:6-11)

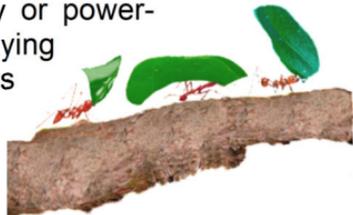
The New American Commentary remarks that “the ants are models of diligence in that they work tirelessly in spite of having no taskmaster to goad them on, and they prepare for the winter in spite of having no administration to lay out economic plans. Wisdom literature often examines the natural world for moral lessons.”

No doubt Genesis 1:26-28 tells us that human life was at the peak of God's creative order, created in His own image, and clothed with authority to subdue the earth and rule over the animals. The connection between humans and the rest of creation was a sanctified relationship with the members at peace with and serving one another. Analogously, I think of a manager having dominion (a special responsibility) over his dependents; the former takes care of the latter and the latter serve the former with both in a mutually blessed correlation, with no enmity to scuttle a perfect order. Unfortunately, after the Fall, “to subdue and rule” in practice has taken on the perverse shade of “managing with power to suppress and boss around”. This has fractured a delicate and coherent order.

When things have already gone very bad among people in hostile relationships in the world, it is hard to fathom the possibility of a recovery to a sanctified order. If it is “impossible” on the macro global scale, how is it easier on a smaller scale concerning a sanctified order of relationships in an office or in a home?

Just like in the Animal Chess, each member of the animal kingdom does not have unfettered power, or safety against being despatched, irrespective of its perceived physical size or intimidating strength. The big cat (tiger) can “oppress” the small cat, but it will in turn be “oppressed” by another big cat (lion); and even the biggest in size (the elephant) can have its turn of fearing being swarmed by the insignificant and despised “lowly” rats.

In an ant colony, there is no single power-hungry or power-holding ant. Even the queen just does her duty of laying eggs with no commanding authority. The worker ants work hard by their own initiatives on what they must do. They have no need for a leader to bark orders, and there is no slave driver on their backs.



The behaviour of ants has been studied extensively by zoologists. The fact that this tiny creature (no less God's creation) is praised twice in the Bible (Prov. 6:6 & 30:25) gives us pause to think about the lessons we can glean from it, such as:

- Its industry
- Its complex social economy
- The great teamwork among groups of ants with different functions, without a leader
- Its persistence in dealing with challenges
- It has no worry about having not enough provision for survival (God is its provider!)

Maybe you can think of more.

As what the wise king Solomon wrote, "Go to the ant ... consider its ways and be wise!" (Prov. 6:6)