

# A Possible New Page for the Passover Haggadah

By Drew G. Kopf

The Passover Haggadah says: "Whoever enlarges on the telling of the Exodus is praiseworthy."

With that in mind, let us focus for a few minutes on what might be regarded as rock-bottom basics of the Holiday of Passover.

First, a question: Did the Avos (our Forefathers) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob observe the Sabbath?

We can safely say they did in some form or other. They were aware that the L-rd had rested on the seventh day so we can feel comfortable in presuming that the observance of the Sabbath was a part of their life.

How about Passover? Did the Avos observe Passover?

They did not.

But, they knew about the 400 years of slavery that would be coming.

We know this from the Book of Genesis of Chapter 15 Verse 13:

"And He (the L-rd) said to Abram, 'You shall surely know that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they (the people of that foreign land that is not theirs) will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years.'"

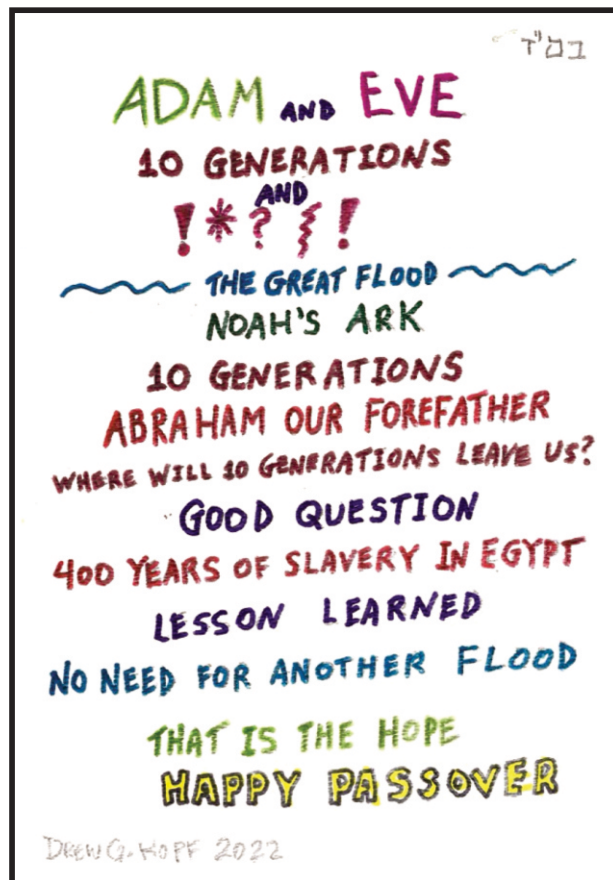
So, having the descendants of the Covenantal Community become and remain enslaved for 400 years was clearly in the long range plan of the Almighty.

We understand that the experience of generations of slavery was intended to help the Jewish People from then and onward to appreciate their freedom and to, thereby and therefore, live their lives in ways that would be respectful of the importance of life and, in doing so, that they, the Jewish People going forward would serve as a light unto the other nations (peoples) of the world.

But, the question that does not appear to ever get asked is, "If the Sabbath was sufficient for the Avos (our Forefathers), why did the L-rd feel it was necessary to take the descendants of the Covenantal Community down such an arduous and painful path as being enslaved for 400 years?"

A possible answer begins with remembering that man was created with freedom of will. All the other animals do what they do and that is all they do. A man or a woman can do whatever he or she wants to do no matter the appropriateness or inappropriateness of what they may be doing. That is and has been true since the days of Adam and Eve.

In the accompanying chart we see Adam and Eve and they are followed by 10 Generations and, then, a line that is made up of an exclamation point, an asterisk, a question mark, a lightning bolt, and another exclamation point, which is to represent all the horrible and shocking stuff that the people of those 10 generations did that so disappointed and enraged the Almighty that He decided to



start all over again with Noah and his family by causing the Great Flood that killed all living things on land saving only those aboard Noah's Ark; and there is a line in the chart for that as well.

Ten generations after Noah comes Abraham our Forefather and that is followed by the question "Where will 10 generations leave us?"

The L-rd was apparently not convinced that what happened before might not happen again; i.e. that, without some kind of solid anchoring mechanism, mankind might devolve into the exact same "naughtiness" that was demonstrated by the generations from Adam and Eve to Noah, which brought about the need for the Great Flood.

Ten generations is a long time. To people in the time of Abraham our Forefather the story of the Great Flood was still huge. Every living thing that was land based had been drowned in the Great Flood. Nowadays the Great Flood is referred to as the Flood and is more of a quaint Bible Story than a report of a "Breaking News Item" that was as real as real could ever get. As "Great" as the Great Flood was, its greatness has been diminished by time.

We are thinking that that is probably why the Almighty got the idea to have the later descendants of Abraham's original Covenantal Community experience something that would draw a proverbial line in the sand for generations yet to come (including our own generations even thousands of years later) as a kind of renewable launch pad from which each individual (every one of us including us today) would be able to renew his or her personal commitment to the values and agenda items

worthy of those for which we were all created and by which it is hoped we would all opt to live.

Please know that we remember that the L-rd promised in the Book of Genesis Chapter 9 Verse 11:

"And I will establish My covenant with you, and never again will all flesh be cut off by the flood waters, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."

So, we really do not need to worry.

But, we can see that the Almighty knew that with Mankind's freedom of will at work all the time, He, the Almighty, in all His amazing greatness, could never really know what Mankind might come up with. So, the Almighty's idea of 400 years of slavery and the annual celebration of the Passover Holiday and the related Pilgrimages of Shavuot and Sukkos can be seen as a kind of insurance policy with periodic payments made in the form of observing and celebrating each one of these Holy Days as we are all about to do at this year's Passover Seder.

Jews around the world tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt to remind ourselves annually that our people were enslaved in a land not our own. The classical Ashkenazi Haggadah says it straight out:

"In every generation, we are obligated to see ourselves as though we personally came out of Egypt."

We are directed to try and feel what it must have been like to escape from slavery to freedom. The telling of the Passover story is a statement that all instances of oppression and unjust restraint needs to be brought to an end.

We even include the song Avadeem HaYeeNu ("We Were Slaves in Egypt") towards the end of the Seder to tell ourselves and our youngsters that this is not just a "Bible Story" to be thought of as "nice" but really just for fun. But, rather, that this is serious stuff. In the theater, we call this "Method Acting," which is how an actor tries to "dig deeper" to explore their hidden and their very personal depths of feeling on the matter at hand. And that goes a long way to show us just how unsure the Almighty must have been in his belief that Mankind would keep itself on the straight and narrow path of righteousness.

We wish you a Happy Passover and we offer you the option of adding the attached chart and these observations as to why Passover was instituted in the first place as a new page in your Haggadah and, thereby, as a way to "enlarge on the telling of the Exodus" as the Haggadah encourages us to do.

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*Editors Note: To see Mr. Kopf's series of Sedrah paintings, perfect for a personalized Bar and Bat Mitzvah gift visit his website at the following website address:*

*<http://www.echelonartgallery.com/artists/dgk/paintings/jewish/>*