

The Third Seder review

by Mark Pendergrast

The Third Seder: A Haggadah for Yom HaShoah is at the same time an emotionally honest, wrenching and uplifting text, a new ritual to honor Holocaust victims and survivors, and a collection of wonderful songs. (The book comes with or without a CD of the songs, but the sheets of music are included in all books.)

For those of you who do not know Jewish ritual, there are currently two Seder celebrations, one on each night of the Passover holiday, to commemorate and celebrate the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This book offers a detailed, two-hour Third Seder celebration of the liberation of Jews from the concentration camps on Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day. In the Jewish calendar, this is the 27th day of Nisan, which falls on different days of April or May, depending on the year.

The celebration calls for four cups -- one each for 1) spring and new beginnings, 2) liberation and rebirth, 3) remembrance of victims and survivors, and 4) love and peace for all humanity. Six candles and six yellow tulips stand for the six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust, and a flowering branch represents Jewish life before and after the war. Participants eat sunflower and pomegranate seeds to represent rebirth, and coarse brown bread instead of unleavened matzah because, unlike Passover, during the Holocaust there was no matzah available. At the dramatic heart of the Third Seder, the lights are dimmed and each person passes a flame of hope to the candle of a neighbor, until the last person lights the six candles for the six million who died. Finally, all sing "Ani ma'amin" and say Kaddish for all who died.

Although the ritual is solemn, it is also joyful. There are wonderful passages and quotes throughout the book, which is to be read aloud during the ritual. "The month of spring -- the first month, says the Torah: time to begin," Rabbi Arthur Waskow writes. "As the flowers rise up against winter, so together we celebrate the freedom of new births and new beginnings."

The two authors, Irene Lilienheim Angelico and Yehudi Lindeman, have included stories from their own Holocaust family sagas. Angelico's parents, Eugenia Lydia Turkus and Henry Lilienheim, were married by candlelight in Warsaw at the start of the war. Later, they were captured and sent to a series of camps. They were the only ones in their families to survive. The ritual includes quotations from *The Aftermath*, Henry Lilienheim's Holocaust memoir, about his delight in freedom and nature the day of his release from Dachau, as well as his wife Lydia's incredible story of her escape from a death march at war's end.

Yehudi Lindeman, born in 1938, survived in hiding in about fifteen different locations all over Holland. His mother saved him through her foresight and determination and found him again after the war. Lindeman speaks of "the dozens of rescuers who endangered their own lives and that of their families so that I might live."

The Third Seder is destined to become a classic, and perhaps one day it will be incorporated into other holy Jewish texts, along with this new ritual celebration.