

## The Third Seder

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On May 24<sup>th</sup>, a beautiful sunny spring afternoon in Montreal, my dear friend Irene Angelico invited me to Temple Emmanu-El – Beth Shalom to a book-launch which was presented in the format of a Passover Seder. Irene's newly produced Haggada had just been published and she was signing copies. I knew that this event was important for her (after all, authors usually consider their own work important) and I imagined she had perhaps created a more attractive, better illustrated, altogether more artistic Haggada than the one we had read together at the Seder my wife and I attended at their house earlier this year. Perhaps it would be illustrated with her own artwork, photos, graphics or contain novel typographic elements.

But when I opened the book at the start of the event, I made a sudden discovery. It seemed that Irene had inserted into the book her own family members and ancestors: survivors of the Holocaust but especially its victims. All at once I understood: this 'Third Seder' was about the Shoah.

In the beginning it was thus:

“When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go!  
Oppressed so hard, they could not stand,  
Let my people go!  
Yes, the Lord says: go down, (go down),  
Moses, (Moses),  
Way down in Egypt's land,  
Tell ol' Pharaoh, to let my people go!”

But in the twentieth century, long after the Egyptians, the Jewish people fell into the hands of a much more evil, bloody, and terrifying enemy: the Nazis. And the Lord freed the remnant of the Jewish people from the flames of the crematoria, the survivors of the Shoah; and this is what we read out loud on the night of the third Seder. We celebrate the survivors and mourn those who were murdered. We celebrate the latest liberation of the Jewish people, a people born to freedom, and we tell the story to our children so it may never be forgotten what happened and how it happened - and so the people of Israel may never again lose their freedom.

This is the meaning of the Third Seder; this is what this new Haggada is about – this work that has been created by Irene Lilienheim Angelico and her co-author Yehudi Linderman, and published by Montreal’s Véhicule Press. I felt honoured to be a participant in this ceremony with other elderly Jewish survivors. Once I understood what this was all about, I felt a frisson of excitement at the poignant beauty and brilliance of this project – and I was happy that my first impressions of the innate humanity of this very friendly, natural and open couple, Irene and her husband, were not disappointed.

I believe this Third Seder is an initiative of momentous importance and one that should take wing and reach beyond the confines of the Jewish community of Montreal. It should reach and take root as a new tradition everywhere where there are people who live as thinking human beings worthy of the name. News of this should reach all the most popular newspapers and other media in the world, especially in our days, when racism, anti-Semitism, and Holocaust denial are once again on the rise in many parts of the world.