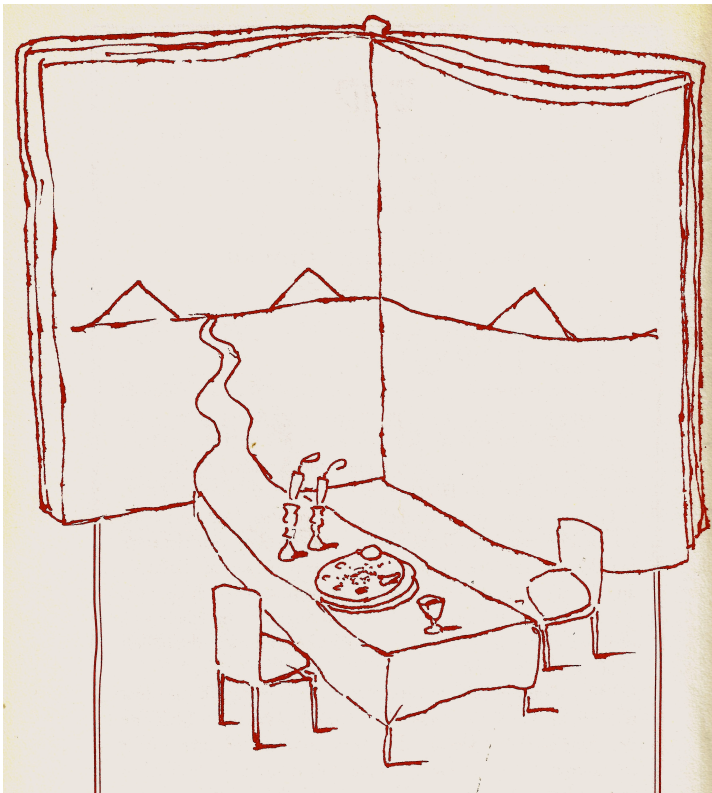


Excerpts from Introductions to 7 Family Seders by Sid Perloe, ז"ל

Compiled by Paulette Jellinek, pre-Pesach, 5783/ 2023.

The following consists of many excerpts from the opening remarks by Sid Perloe, ז"ל at seven of our Seders between 1992 and 2020. Because I selected the excerpts for their relatedness, there are some redundancies as well as omissions. Sid was an outstanding writer, so please note that any flaws in the writing are due to a few edits that I made and to my construction of sentences in a few cases, from Sid's notes. Please also note that I used brackets to indicate words that I inserted to serve as transitions or explanations. So you can see why I plan to submit one or two of Sid's Intros. *in their entirety*, next Pesach 5784! But, meanwhile, I hope the following compilation will be coherent, meaningful and of interest to you.



This drawing [by Mark Podwal, in *A Passover Haggadah as Commented Upon by Eli Wiesel*] represents a key goal of our Seders: to create a personal link between ourselves and the Israelites who were liberated from Egypt over 3000 years ago, as well as to Jewish communities along the road between them and us.

[And] more than just an attempt to teleport ourselves into events that took place more than 3000 years ago, the picture represents the actual cultural evolution that was present at each step along the path from our Seder table back to our liberation from slavery in Egypt.

[And] besides trying to understand and connect with what our people experienced in the Exodus, we also try to understand and connect with the experiences of our people along the way—in their times of liberation and celebration, as well as their repeated persecution, exile and immigration,— and especially in the recent past, the Shoah, and the establishment of Israel as an independent nation.

We also use the Passover story to help us understand — and experience the reverberations — of the oppression of *others*, of all people who have been or are still enslaved, to nurture empathy, compassion as well as commitment to the dignity and well-being of the weak and vulnerable. People, we never met or could ever have met, and whose names we do not even know — but by our actions in the Seder we become one with them. Eli Wiesel wrote that Passover is a cry against indifference; a cry for compassion. Rabbi Shai Held connected this part of the Seder to a “central project of the Torah:” . . . “to turn memory into empathy and moral responsibility.”

[Regarding the Haggadah’s telling] the story of how our people came into being while we were oppressed as slaves in Egypt: Really, our common, shared experience of oppression and suffering, induced the labor pains of our birth as a people. Moses was brought up as an Egyptian nobleman, but knew he was the child of an Israelite slave. He was at the top of Egyptian society but saw the suffering of the Israelite slaves at the bottom of the society. In spite of the contrast between the two poles of Egyptian societies, Moses recognized that his fate was linked to the other Israelites. It was in this moment of recognition that the Jewish people was born. Before that, they were merely an extended, somewhat dysfunctional family, who literally had lived under the same circumstances. After Moses, we knew that even when we lived under different circumstances, at different times and places, we were still a people. Jewish history has repeatedly taught this lesson many times. The Seder is an instrument that helps us remember the lesson.

Our Haggadah is not just a symbol of the persistence of the Jewish people in the face of hostility from many ethnic and national groups, but also, along with the thousands of other Haggadah versions, one of the most important reasons that the Jewish people have been able to reach this day.

[The theme of Redemption is discussed in one of Sid’s Introductions that will be presented next Pesach. But in conclusion for now, a poetic quote from Sid’s 1992 Introduction:] Pesach comes at a time of the year when the earth itself echoes the theme of the redemption of spring out of the despair of winter.

[And finally, *my* wishes for everyone to not only get out of *Egypt*, “but to leave Egypt behind,” — meaning, in the additional words from the *T’ruah* organization, “letting go of the patterns that don’t serve us. Disentangling from the systems that rob us of our humanity. . . that keep us from transforming our world —” I also hope that approaching our Seders with renewed curiosity, life and meaning will help us continue to build and deepen our connections, understanding, empathy, compassion and commitment.]