

## HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

*The following should be read after singing Dayyenu.*

**READER:** Throughout the year, we remember how despots have sought the exile and annihilation of the Jewish people. At *Pesach*, we tell of Pharaoh. At *Hanukkah*, of Antiochus. At *Purim*, of Haman. At *Yom HaShoah*, of Hitler. We speak of past oppressors, hoping that through awareness we may prevent future tyrants from attaining power.

But we also give thanks for those in every generation who came forward to lead our people out of the darkness. We recognize heroic rescuers from every generation, hoping that the memory of their strength will fortify us if confronted with similar evil.

**READER:** We remember Moses, who, with both vision and courage, led his people from slavery to freedom. We remember the Maccabees, whose strength and determination saved the Temple and Jewish life in the Land of Israel. We remember Esther, who interceded to save fellow Jews from destruction.

While we commemorate the heroes of the past, we also remember modern heroes who saved Jews from the Holocaust.

**TOGETHER:** During this dark time, there were those who had the courage to care – non-Jews who risked their lives, and often the lives of their families, to save Jews from death. Just as we tell of Moses leading our people to freedom, at our *Seder* we also tell of contemporary heroes and how they led Jews to their freedom more than sixty-five years ago.

**READER:** At this Passover *Seder* we recount the story of Jerzy Bielecki, a Polish political prisoner in Auschwitz. Jerzy was in the first transport of prisoners sent to Auschwitz in June 1940. While imprisoned, Jerzy met and fell in love with Cyla Cybulska, a Jewish inmate.

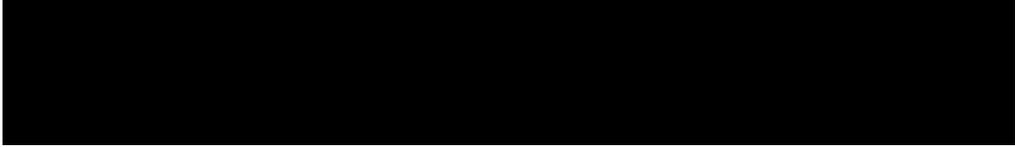
**READER:** During the winter of 1944, Jerzy decided to attempt an escape from Auschwitz. He begged Cyla to join him. Cyla's parents and brothers, who had also been deported to Auschwitz, had already been murdered. Although she initially did not take Jerzy seriously, she eventually



*Jerzy Bielecki*

agreed. Over several months Jerzy made the necessary arrangements by securing food, documents, clothing, shoes for Cyla, and an SS uniform for himself.

**READER:** On July 21, 1944, Jerzy, dressed in the stolen SS uniform, arrived in the laundry room where Cyla worked. He told the SS woman in charge that he was summoning Cyla for interrogation. As they approached the guard house, an SS guard stopped them. Jerzy showed him a stolen pass authorizing one guard and one prisoner to return to a nearby work farm. The guard let them go. At this point, Jerzy and Cyla had passed the guarded area of the camp. They were still in grave danger – they both had camp numbers tattooed on their arms that would have easily identified them as Auschwitz escapees.



**READER:** They walked for ten nights, hiding in the fields during the day. During this time, Jerzy reconnected with his brother Leszek, a member of the Polish underground. Jerzy found Cyla a permanent hiding place with a Polish family and then joined his brother in the underground. Jerzy and Cyla lost contact, and when the war ended each assumed that the other was dead. Cyla married a Holocaust survivor and came to the United States. Jerzy also married and remained in Poland.

**READER:** Because of the bravery and ingenuity of Jerzy Bielecki, Cyla Cybulska was able to survive the war.

**TOGETHER:** Let the story of Jerzy Bielecki inspire us to do right when faced with evil.

**READER:** How can we pass this spirit on to future generations?

**READER:** First, let us honor rescuers like Jerzy by learning from their deeds and dedicating ourselves anew to fulfilling the traditional Jewish commandment to be responsible for the safety and well-being of our neighbors.

**READER:** Second, let us also honor these rescuers by dedicating ourselves to assisting those among them who need our help. As Jews, we must ensure that these heroes live out their remaining years in dignity – with adequate food, medicine, and housing. We have the ability to make an enormous difference in their lives.

**READER:** Tonight, let us commit to learning the stories of these righteous men and women who saved thousands of our people from death. Let us also commit to making these stories a part of our *Seder*. As we recall those who rose up against us in every generation, let us also remember those who stood apart from the evil. On this night of Passover, we recall Shifra and Puah, the two Egyptian midwives who defied Pharaoh's edict to drown the male children of Israel in the Nile. We recall the daughter of Pharaoh who violated her father's decree to drown the infants and who reached out to save Moses. Just as we remember and praise these first rescuers of Jewish children, let us ensure that the stories of those non-Jews who rescued Jewish children and adults during the Holocaust are remembered and passed down to our children and our children's children.

**A POSTSCRIPT TO JERZY'S RESCUE STORY:** In 1983, Cyla learned that Jerzy was still alive and traveled from her home in the United States to Poland to be reunited with him. Jerzy greeted her with 39 red roses, one for each year they were apart. Cyla and Jerzy saw each other fifteen more times until Cyla died in February 2005. Jerzy died in October 2011 at the age of 90.

*For more information about the work of the The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous or to learn more about other rescuers we support, please visit our website at [www.jfr.org](http://www.jfr.org) or contact us at:*

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