

# THE JEWISH FOUNDATION *for the righteous*

"WHOEVER SAVES A SINGLE LIFE IS AS IF ONE SAVES THE ENTIRE WORLD."—TALMUD

## HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

*The following should be read after singing Dayenu.*

**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.

**READER:** 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 years ago.



*Leonidas, Panayotis, and Despo Giortsas*

**READER:** At this Passover *Seder* we recount the story of the Giortsas family from Greece and their rescue of three Jewish men from Palestine who had volunteered to serve in the British army. In June 1941, Aron Yerushalmi, Moshe Weinbaum, and Asher Schwartz were captured in Greece by the Germans and put on a train bound for Germany from which they managed to escape.

**READER:** The men fled from village to village searching for food and shelter. Being Jews, they received little assistance until they met Panayotis Giortsas and his father, Leonidas, who approached the men and said, "We do not care whether you are English or Jewish, our duty is to help you."

**READER:** From that day on they took the three young Jewish men under their roof and provided them with food, clothing, and

weapons. During the day the men hid in the mountains and at night they stayed with Panayotis and his parents, sleeping on the floor since there were no beds. When the Germans, escorted by Greek police, suddenly arrived in search of the British soldiers who had escaped from the train, Panayotis' father and uncle, the priest of the village, moved the three men to a church in the hills. Panayotis kept watch all the time and brought them food each day.

**READER:** Leonidas procured false identity cards for Aron, Moshe, and Asher and accompanied them to Athens where they were hidden in the home of a relative. When Aron and Asher were captured, Panayotis went to Athens for Moshe and took him back to the village. In August 1942, Moshe was arrested by the Italians and sent to a camp. Panayotis still managed to bring food to Moshe. They all survived the war.

**TOGETHER:** Let the story of Panayotis Giortsas and his family 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 these rescuers 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.

*For more information about the work of the The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous  
or to learn more about other rescuers we support, like Panayotis Giortsas,  
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