

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

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-six years ago.

READER: At this Passover *Seder* we recount the story of Wiktorja Jaworska Sozanska, a Polish Catholic living in Turka, Poland (now Ukraine). Before the war, Turka had a population of 10,000 – half Jewish and half Christian. Among the Jews were the Seiferts, a large family who had lived in Turka for generations. Upon receiving the order that Jews must report to the Sambor ghetto, the Seiferts held a family meeting. Mendel Seifert, whose wife had died in childbirth, lived with his six-year-old daughter, Rozia, and his mother. Before the Jews had to move to the ghetto, Mendel's mother was rounded up in an *aktion* and killed.



Wiktorja Jaworska Sozanska

READER: A group of Jews from Turka had built a bunker in the nearby woods. To stay in the bunker each person had to be able-bodied. Mendel's brother's wife, Fanya, had a wooden leg; her son, Lucien, and Rozia were too young. Mendel agreed to remain behind and enter the ghetto with Fanya, Lucien, and Rozia. Everyone else in the family moved into the bunker.

READER: Because Jews were only allowed to bring one suitcase per person into the ghetto, Mendel began to sell his furniture. When Wiktorja's mother, Anna, along with her two eldest children, came to look at the furniture, she saw Rozia and Lucien. Anna asked Mendel what was going to happen to the children. He said they were going to ghetto – they had nowhere else to go. Anna turned and spoke with her children and said to Mendel, "We will take care of you. You will come with us."

READER: The next night Wiktorija's brother, Mikolaj, took the Seiferts, who were hidden in a hay wagon, to the Jaworski farm. Mikolaj built an underground bunker in the barn where Mendel, Fanya, and the two children hid for the next two years, coming out only on rare occasions. Each day Wiktorija and her family brought food to the Seiferts and carried away their waste. While the Jaworski family had very little, they shared what they had with the Seifert family.

There were several close calls. Wiktorija had given her identity documents to her Jewish neighbor. Wiktorija was denounced and arrested by the Gestapo. Although she was interrogated for days, she never betrayed her neighbor or the Seiferts; Wiktorija was finally released by the Gestapo.

READER: After more than two years of living in an earthen grave, the Seiferts were liberated by the Soviet army. Because of the bravery and kindness of the Jaworski family, Mendel, Fanya, Lucien, and Rozia survived the war. Of the 5,000 Jews of Turka, only forty-seven survived. Everyone in the bunker was denounced and murdered.

TOGETHER: Let the story of Wiktorija Jaworska Sozanska and her 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.

A POSTSCRIPT TO WIKTORIJA'S RESCUE STORY: In November 2008 the JFR reunited Wiktorija with Rozia. The two had not seen each other for 63 years – not since liberation. Wiktorija is in her 80s and lives in Wroclaw, Poland. Rozia lives in Israel. You can see the JFR's awarding-winning reunion documentary that narrates Wiktorija's story on the JFR website – www.jfr.org/reunion2008.

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 or contact us at:

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