

## 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 seventy years ago.

**READER:** At this Passover Seder we recount the story of Paulina Plaksej, a Righteous Gentile from Poland.


**READER:** When the Germans occupied Kalusz, Poland (now Ukraine), in the summer of 1941, they murdered the town's Jewish intellectuals, orphaning many children. A young Jewish girl approached Paulina Plaksej and her mother, Bronislawa, begging for food. Paulina and her mother felt sympathy for the child and gave her hot soup. The next day the girl returned with more children. Paulina and her mother fed them. They could not stand by as children suffered. At the end of 1941, the Jews of Kalusz were forced into the ghetto. Paulina and her father, Zacharias, acted as couriers, smuggling notes in and out of the ghetto. As a result, Jews trusted the Plaksej family. They knew that if they were able to escape from the ghetto through the sewers, they could seek the family's help.

**READER:** The first family to escape from the ghetto was Sara, Solomon, and their son, Imek. They temporarily hid at Paulina's house. When it became too dangerous for them to stay there, Zacharias found a safer place for them to hide. He brought Sara, Solomon, and Imek to a trusted friend who was already hiding Jews in an earthen bunker beneath his barn. Later, another Jewish woman, Rozia, escaped from the ghetto and sought out the Plaksej family. They also brought her to the farmer's bunker. Paulina regularly brought food and supplies for the Jews in hiding. Sara, Solomon, Imek, and Rozia, along with thirteen other Jews, stayed in this bunker for more than a year. To this day, the identity of the farmer is not known.



*Paulina Plaksej*

**READER:** Miriam, another inhabitant of the ghetto, learned that the Germans planned to liquidate the ghetto. Miriam got word to Zacharias begging him to save her two-year-old daughter, Maja. Zacharias contacted Miriam's former nanny and arranged for her to come rescue Maja. The nanny brought a horse and cart, and the Jewish police helped smuggle the little girl out of the ghetto. The nanny told her neighbors that this little girl was her daughter who had just returned from living with her grandparents.



**READER:** Miriam was in one of the last groups of Jews to be deported to Auschwitz from the ghetto. As her group was marched to the train, Miriam took off her armband and joined the crowds in the street. She went straight to the Plaksej house asking for help. They hid her in their wardrobe for months. Zacharias obtained forged papers for her and took her to another village where she would not be recognized as a Jew. There she was picked up as a Polish Catholic and sent to a German farm as a forced laborer. After the war, she returned to the nanny's house, picked up her daughter, and reunited with her husband. Due to the efforts of Paulina and her family, all of the Jews they helped survived the war. Paulina Plaksej is in her 90s and lives in Krakow.

**TOGETHER:** Let the story of Paulina Plaksej 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 Paulina Plaksej by learning from her 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. 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 Jews 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.

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**About the JFR** – The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR) was established in 1986 by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis to fulfill the traditional Jewish commitment to *hakarat hatov*, the searching out and recognition of goodness. The JFR honors and supports Righteous Gentiles, non-Jews, who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. The Foundation provides monthly support to more than 350 aged and needy rescuers in 20 countries. Through its national education program, the Foundation preserves the legacy of the Righteous and educates teachers and students about the history of the Holocaust. In the past twenty-six years, the JFR has distributed more than \$39 million to aged and needy rescuers. We must continue to thank and support these extraordinary individuals who were the lone lights in the darkness.

In sharing the stories of the Righteous, we strive not only to honor their place in history, but also to stress the importance of their example for these times. These men and women remind us that in the midst of unspeakable evil, each human being has the capacity to act humanely and to make a difference, a lesson that is often eclipsed by the legacy of hatred, brutality, and suffering that dominates contemplation of the Holocaust.

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

305 SEVENTH AVENUE, 19TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001-6008  
212.727.9955 FAX: 212.727.9956 JFR@JFR.ORG WWW.JFR.ORG WWW.JFR.ORG/BLOG