

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-five years ago.

READER: At this Passover *Seder* we recount the story of Wladyslaw Misiuna, a Polish Righteous Gentile, who saved the lives of five young, Jewish women.

READER: In June 1943, as the Germans were liquidating smaller ghettos, a group of Jews was sent from the Sandomierz ghetto to Radom. Included in this group were Sara Marmurek and Rachela Micmacher. The women were taken to the Szkolna slave labor camp where they worked as slave laborers in an Austrian-owned armaments factory. It was there that they met Wladyslaw Misiuna. Wladyslaw was appalled by the way the Germans were treating Jews.

The Austrian owner of the armaments factory raised rabbits as a hobby and as a source of fur and food for the German army. Wladyslaw supervised the rabbit farm, which was located on the grounds of the armaments factory. Wladyslaw thought if he asked for several Jewish women to help him with the rabbits, he could perhaps take them out of the harsh, brutal, and often lethal working conditions in the armaments factory.

READER: Sara Marmurek, Rachela Micmacher, and three other young women were assigned to the rabbit farm. Despite the risk to his life, Wladyslaw provided Sara and the other women with food, clothing, medicine, and the will to live. When Rachela contracted a severe skin infection and was on the verge of no longer being able to work – a death sentence – Wladyslaw infected himself so that he could get medicine, which he shared with Rachela. He wrote them poems as a way to cheer them up and to instill in them the need to survive. Wladyslaw later recalled, "These young Jewish women and I lived like a family."



Wladyslaw Misiuna

READER: When the Szkolna camp was liquidated on July 25, 1944, Wladyslaw was in the field collecting grass for the rabbits. When he returned to the rabbit farm, he learned that all the Jews from the Szkolna camp, including the five young women, were sent by train to Auschwitz, arriving in August 1944. By then most of the Jews arriving in Auschwitz were immediately sent to the gas chambers. These five young women had been protected and fed by Wladyslaw for more than a year and were in relatively good condition when they arrived in Auschwitz. They all survived selection and were admitted into the camp. On November 12, 1944, the five women were transferred to the Ober-Altstadt slave labor camp, a sub-camp of Gross-Rosen, in Germany.

READER: Not long after the Szkolna camp was liquidated, Wladyslaw was denounced to the Germans. The SS arrested him and took him to the same lice-infested wooden horse barracks in which the Jewish slave laborers had lived. Though he was scheduled to be executed, Wladyslaw managed to escape. He remained in hiding until Radom was liberated on January 16, 1945.

READER: In early May 1945, Sara, Rachela, and the others were liberated by the Soviet army. All five of the young women survived, thanks in large part to the help, support, and hope that Wladyslaw provided. Wladyslaw is in his 90s and lives in Warsaw, Poland.

TOGETHER: Let the story of Wladyslaw Misiuna inspire us to do right when faced with evil.

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

READER: Let us honor rescuers like Wladyslaw Misiuna by learning from his deeds and dedicating ourselves anew to fulfilling the traditional Jewish commandment to be responsible for the safety and well-being of our neighbors.

READER: 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 each 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.

A POSTSCRIPT TO WLADYSLAW MISIUNA'S RESCUE STORY

Wladyslaw and Sara were reunited at the JFR's 2010 dinner. They had not seen each other since 1945. The documentary retelling their story can be viewed on the JFR website – www.jfr.org/reunion2010.

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 *hakarot hatov*, the searching out and recognition of goodness. The JFR honors and supports Righteous Gentiles, non-Jews, Christians and Muslims, who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. The Foundation provides monthly support to some 300 aged and needy rescuers in 20 countries. Through its national education program, the Foundation also preserves the legacy of the Righteous and educates teachers and students about the history of the Holocaust.

In the past twenty-seven years, the JFR has distributed more than \$40 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 Wladyslaw Misiuna please visit our website at www.jfr.org or contact us at the address listed below.

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