

Overlooked But Not Forgotten

By Zoey Fisher

The waves lapped against the wooden planks of the *Jorn Finne*, as the moon guided its way through the darkness. Not a sound could be heard for miles except for the that of electric nerves. Five Jewish families lay huddled beneath the boat's deck, blind to their fate. Steered by a weathered fisherman, the boat was just minutes away from the shores of Sweden and safety for its precious cargo.

Surviving the Holocaust required risk, danger, sacrifice, and often luck. Something that is often overlooked, but should not be forgotten is the assistance from the non-Jews that enabled so many to survive. Yad Vashem honors their heroism in the Righteous Among the Nations. One account of this courageousness is that of the Danish people.

Refusing to be bystanders to the atrocities of the Nazis, Denmark was the only European country to save all of its Jews, while all the other occupied countries turned a blind eye. Over the span of three weeks, in 1943, this clandestine operation succeeded in rescuing 7,200 Jews from certain death. This underground rescue smuggled Jews in fishing boats from Denmark to the shores of Sweden. Every Danish citizen, from the King in his palace to the working fishermen on the docks, played an equal role in saving the lives of Denmark's Jews.

The noble salvation by the Danes should stand as a beacon of light and hope, and guide the people of today to refuse to be bystanders to the injustices that many people in our modern world face. The lesson of the Danish people teaches us that we should never turn our backs on humankind. We must protect our brothers, sisters, neighbors, and most importantly fellow humans. Standing by silently while others are tyrannized is the same as if we ourselves are the oppressors. From bullying in schools to bigotry within governments, defying subjugation is not only courageous but decent and moral. Just as the Danish people treated the Jews as Danish citizens and fellow humans, we too must be cognizant that we are Americans first and not Jews, Muslims, Christians, or any other religious or racial group.

The Danes stayed true to their value of goodness and righteousness at the risk of their own peril. From the fisherman who drove the boat, to the family who fed the Jews, to the King who ignored the Nazis, everyone's role, no matter how big or small, is what made the operation a success. 7,200 lives saved. It seems so insignificant compared to the six million lives lost. Yet the Talmud reminds us that, *"Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world."* (Sanhedrin 4) The heroic deeds of the Danish people uphold this Talmudic message that no human life is more worthy than another. No matter what race, religion, or nationality, we are humans above all else.