

LESSON 2: RESOURCE 7

Destan and Lime Balla



“All of us villagers were Muslims. We were sheltering God’s children under our Besa.”

I was born in 1910. In 1943, at the time of Ramadan, seventeen people from Tirana came to our village of Shengjergji. They were all escaping from the Germans. At first I didn’t know they were Jews. We divided them amongst the villagers. We took in three brothers by the name of Lazar.

We were poor - we didn’t even have a dining table - but we never allowed them to pay for the food or shelter. I went into the forest to chop wood and haul water. We grew vegetables in our garden so we all had plenty to eat. The Jews were sheltered in our village for fifteen months. We dressed them all as farmers, like us.

Even the local police knew that the villagers were sheltering Jews. I remember they spoke many different languages.

In December of 1944 the Jews left for Priština, where a nephew of ours, who was a partisan, helped them. After that we lost all contact with the Lazar brothers. It was not until 1990, forty-five years later, that Sollomon and Mordehaj Lazar made contact with us from Israel.

On October 4, 1992, Yad Vashem recognized Destan Balla and his wife, Lime Balla, as Righteous Among the Nations.

Story as told by Lime Balla

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