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Your servant,
 Arieh ben Leah Korn



Shulamit Rabinovitch

These letters were written by Shulamit Rabinovitch and her husband from the Kovno Ghetto. They were grandchildren of Rabbi Yitzhak Elchanan Spektor and devoted communal workers in Kovno before and during the war. The letters were addressed to their sons in the United States. We stand in awe of the ethical sensitivity of this couple: The wife takes pride in the fact that her husband did not take advantage of his position to show favoritism to the members of his own family. We also note the date as D-Day.

June 6, 1944

My dear, fortunate sons!

We sense the end is near. It will not be long before they finish us off. On one hand it is good, on the other hand very bad, to die right now. Good that we have lived to see the end come; and bad to die now, a moment before the redemption.

Actually it is not difficult for me to die, or for Papa either. What is very hard, infinitely hard, is the fact that your young brother Shmuel will die when we do. And he is such a wonderful boy. Even under the most brutal conditions he developed into a fine human being; perhaps with less formal education, but with so much humane feeling and refinement, that it would be truly worthwhile for him to remain alive. How few of those who suffered this treatment retained the human image! The struggle for existence is hard and everyone wants to live, to save himself; the law of the jungle is dominant: "Save yourself if you can."

But you may be very proud of your father. He is among those who never took advantage of his public office, never put Shmuel or me ahead of the other sufferers for whom he was responsible. How we wish you could have some knowledge about these past three painful years. I hope that some will survive and that you will receive some word about our sufferings and our dying. It is now in its fourth year and the end is approaching. It didn't really pay for us to hold out and suffer so long and then not to survive. Were *they* the righteous ones (if there is such a thing), those who were first to go? For years we learned so much,

suffered so much. We could teach others so very much, and it is too bad that it all comes to nothing, along with us. Were we to be rescued, we could dry up the oceans, and demonstrate with how little a person can get along! If I could only bequeath you the ability to get along with little and the ability to do everything for yourself, then you, being free, could never be unhappy.

I have already written you several letters with various dates and have left them for you at a number of locations. I doubt, however, whether you will receive them.

Our greatest consolation and good fortune is that you are not here. But, dear children, don't take foolish things to heart. Be happy, contented people; be good human beings and loyal sons of your oppressed nation. Never abandon your land or your people. Fight for freedom and social justice. Be just and honest; and under normal conditions this is so easy! We speak of you very often, and you are our consolation. Whenever Muka gets very depressed, he says: "Mama, how I'd like to see Amos and Nioma again."

There is still a remnant left here of your friends, boys as well as girls. They mention you often with affection and with ungrudging envy. Know how to appreciate your good fortune and use it not for yourselves alone but for others both near and distant. Lighten the life of your grandfather, grandmother, aunts, and uncles who have also survived. And don't mourn for us with tears and words, but rather with deeds. We were not useless here; in any way we could we tried to make things easier for those around us. I am leaving the world with almost a clear conscience. I lived my life. I have no complaints to anyone. It is a matter of fate; I believe in *besbert*, that things are destined. But why Muka? That is our greatest sorrow. I regret that I cannot communicate to you everything we have experienced. You will probably know something; but whatever you will ever hear and know, the reality is a thousand times more horrible and more painful. Words don't exist to tell it; no colors exist with which to represent it.

I hope you are under the influence of your grandfather, grandmother, and Aunt Jennie. Obey them and be good people. Too young you have become orphans. But better to be orphans there than to be with father

and mother here. I kiss you very me, whoever may be there. After as no one knows about us. We years now.

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and mother here. I kiss you very warmly. Kiss and greet all those near to
me, whoever may be there. After all, I know nothing about anyone, just
as no one knows about us. We have been buried alive here for three
years now.

Your mother