

Tchenstochov, March 28, 1943

To my dear brothers-in-law Mr. Ari (may his candle burn) and Mr. Nachum Menashe (may his candle burn!!).....

I am writing a letter to you in the form of a report, not knowing if it will ever reach you, because we are closed off from the outside world; we are fenced in with wires in a work camp in a corner of the city. I only wish that after the war, if G-D wills it, should these writings come into your hands through whomever it may be, you will make known what happened to our family, their fate and their sad end; how they perished sanctifying G-d's name, just because they called themselves Jews. I and your beloved brother Hersch (may his candle burn) Nachum Menashe knew me well as the faithful husband of your sister Ilhanah Rivkah, as a devoted member of your family. Your parents were my parents, and your whole family is dear to me.

As of this day I and Hersch are, thank G-d, together

believe, because we are living through tragic times. We are completely powerless; we are being shot daily like dogs (may G-d have mercy on us). People are being murdered every day; casualties are mounting. For nothing Jews are being killed without law or trial. Oh! Creator of the World, have mercy on the saved remnant! Every minute we are in danger and great terror, unsure of our lives. Every moment is a frightening experience. I write with great fear, because we are not allowed to stay in our rooms. To describe everything a letter would not be enough, but rather a whole book would be needed, a fat volume, and it would be impossible to write it or to find someone who would be able to hide it. But I want to make clear to you where the bones of your dear ones disappeared, so that you will be able in your lifetime to avenge our young, innocent human blood, spilled only because we call ourselves Jews, a true sanctification of G-D's name. . .The sad misfortune of the deportation and murder of Jews began in Poland on the day before Tisha B'Av, 1942. It started in Warsaw. The Jews were told they were being sent east for work, and they believed it and went like sheep, without resistance; but later their fate became known, because several men were able to escape and revealed the pure truth, the whole secret. We were duped in a treacherous way. This is the story in

general. Now I will devote myself to what happened to our own family, how we went to Tchenstochow from Plock. We had been in Tchenstochow for two years and already established ourselves. . . until the cruel, evil wrath poured over us from heaven the 28th of September, 1942, Monday the first day of Chol haMoed Succoth. About 5000 men daily were packed into cattle cars like animals. At once they left forever their homes and their possessions of many years. they said good-bye to one another as if they were going to execution, G-d forbid, with tears in their eyes, their hearts full of pain, doubting if they would ever see each other again. . . The police ordered us to go out to the street. There was a great deal of crying. The moaning was beyond imagination.

How bitter our hearts were when we parted from our beloved women. My dear and esteemed wife, Ilhana Rivkah, the good soul, my devoted one, my heart, who wanted to sacrifice herself for me, and I for her. Such a selfless woman is seldom to be found. How tragic was our parting from each other; and from my dear sister, your sister-in-law, Renia Rachel, Hersch's wife--intelligent, humble, a paragon of a woman. . . until her disappearance with her two-year-old child Itzchak'l Israllek, who was a phenomenon. He could have grown up to be a great person in Israel. He was wise beyond his years; he spoke like a

grown-up, with an extraordinary command of language. He was beautiful like the sun in the sky. . . a gifted child, a future genius. Already he knew the Aleph-Beth.) He had a very pleasant personality, like his mother. Whoever looked at this child could not take his eyes off him and bought him a gift. Such a talented soul lost. I regret all the losses, but especially of this child, who was as dear to me as if he were my own. From such a child the world would have gained great benefit; he was one in a thousand; Such a dear child had your brother Hersch and my sister Renia Rachel. I am writing all this with tears, not with ink. How can one forget such a great soul? All our dear ones were torn away by the roots in the bloom of their lives. Our fathers and mothers, our dear . . . sisters and brothers were taken away, robbed from us; our souls were shattered. The question is, why? for what? How did we transgress to deserve such an end? May G-d have mercy on us, all murdered, a whole people done away with. . . We are defenseless; anyone can point a gun at us and shoot us without mercy. When we were deported we did not know where we were being sent. We were told we were going to labor camps. Who could imagine to what purpose? But unfortunately, a few people, survivors from the same hell where they were sent, came back to Tchenstochow and told

us the real truth of what happened to the deported Jews and our hair stood on end with horror. They were sent to Treblinka, near the city of Malkinia, a Camp in a forest. There they were taken and made to undress completely naked, driven with sticks into the huge rooms, where signs reading "Your Jewish State" cynically decorated the walls. They were told that they were going to be bathed. They left their bundles of clothing in the first room and were driven into a second room. After they entered the air was expelled from the room and gas was piped in. The floor was electrified and everything was burned to ashes. The floor opened up automatically to dispose of the ashes and a . . . covered the ashes. The women's hair was cut first so it could be used for their captors' purposes. The people died with "Shema Israel" on their lips like true heroes. Within fifteen minutes the bodies had disappeared without a trace. This is what we were told by all who came back from there. . . One percent were left to clean up, to sort and straighten out the clothing, and to gather the money. There was a thousand kilograms of gold and whole sacks of diamonds, because everyone took along the best they possessed believing they were going to work. This is how everything fell into the Nazis' hands. Every garment was examined, everything of value was stolen. All this we found out

after it had taken place. If the Jews had known they were being sent to certain death, no one would have moved from his place; he would have let himself be shot on the spot rather than let himself be carried away to be burned at the stake in the prepared hells. In Poland there were three such hells. Treblinka, Belsen, and Auschwitz. There Jews from all over Europe were brought, from Paris as well as from Belgrade, and they were finished off there. It is being said that gypsies also were killed in these places. Jews from foreign countries came with whole suitcases in . . . railway cars. They did not realize until they had been traveling for a few days that they were going to their deaths. If they had known, they would not have come dressed in their best. . . . They were all mixed together in this cauldron--doctors, . . . lawyers, and other educated intellectuals--and no one wanted to believe that they, the nation of culture and civilization, would meet such a fate, because in the history of the world there has never been such barbarity. Unfortunately, they glorify themselves with their own. . . .

Now I will tell you what happened to the rest of the family. Your beloved mother-in-law and your sister Rose with her young daughter were all in Warsaw at the same time, and from there they were sent away. Shmul Simcha,

our . . . , one and of his daughters, Sala, likewise were torn from each other. She is in Cracow. My beloved father Reb Moshe Mordechai and mother, . . . as well as my brother Pinchas and his wife and son Abraham Michal and sister Esther with her husband Hersh Lichtmen and also my youngest beloved sister Ilanah Antrie, were with them in Parisha until this happened, and must have met the same fate as we did. Four (?) weeks later my youngest brother Shlomo Joseph (may his candle burn) . . . is as of today in . . . near Lodz. . . , and he is in great misery. . . He suffers a great deal ; may G-d have mercy on him, because he deserves it.

. . . Your brother Fishel is in Russia and your sister Bhima with her husband Moshe Itzhak Braun and your brother-in-law Leibthe Lichtenstein are in Siberia. Your father-in-law passed away in Skernowitz with great honor. . . Today we would say he died in luxury. (?)

Those who are in Russia will surely survive the war.

Whether what I write will reach you, I do not know, but I am doing it to make myself feel better, to relieve a little the burden from my heart, and to let the world know what happened to us, how the times of Messiah were described exactly but a thousand times worse. There are Jews who live with Aryan papers; they will also surely

live through the war. and we, 5 percent at present surviving, are still under sentence of death. (?) Therefore, dear and beloved brothers-in-law, . . . Arie Motel and Nachum Menashe, to you I turn in the name of all our beloved family members who have perished. Avenge our young Jewish blood, our young souls that cry out. Remember us and say Kaddish; see to it that Mishnayot is heard, and put up monuments for your parents, sister, brother, children, etc. Nachem Menashe, you are a hero, a man of iron determination. (?) The souls are crying out, "G-d take revenge for the spilled blood of your servants."

It is even a greater heartache since no sign of their graves remained. The dear souls should not be forgotten. The day of mourning should be every Hoshana Rabbo, every year.

I write just like Moses our Teacher finished the writing of the Sefer-Torah. He wrote with tears when he had to write about himself. . . "in the eyes of all Israel." Remember us all your lives. To immortalize us say. *Yis.gadal U'yichiddash Shmei Raboh*

This is the wish of your brother-in-law Leibish Ben Moshe Mordecai.

P.S.: Our brother Tovia is as of today in a . . .; no letters are arriving from him. I enclose all our