

Letter dated February 10, 1959.

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Dear Thelma:

I can not answer all those questions you asked in your letter. When I left for America you were 15 months old and when you came here you were almost 9 years old. During those 7 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  years I had no contact with the family. I knew nothing that was happening to you all. Not even if you were alive. You should know about them ( the relatives in Zhitomir. SM. ) more than I do.

Meske, mamma's youngest sister, was not yet married when I left.

Sheindel was a very beautiful woman. She was married ~~x~~ when I was still in Zhitomir. Her husband's name was Avrohom Birenboim. He was a very good worker (at what?) and was making a nice living. He died of some sickness and not from hunger.

About the rest ( of the relatives ) I do not know. I do know that many of them were " alive with hunger ". ( starving ? ).

No, my father did not write music. One of his accomplishments was the creation of a 400 year calendar, and I did the decorations for the printer. But it (the calendar) was burned when our home burned.

My brother Hershel was singing ( in the choir? ) with a great Chasen, (cantor) and he therefore knows music.

I was studying in the shul until I was 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  years. I then began traveling to the smaller vilages tutoring the children. This continued until I entered the Army November 29 1896. I was released from the army October 8, 1900. ~~IX~~ I was married march 15, 1901. Sam was born January 4-th 1902. At the time I was earning 1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  rubbles a week, working in a candy factory. I left that job and ~~was~~ to work in a hardware store ( as a bookkeeper ). I was earning a decent living but I had to escape the Russo-Japanese war, and I went to Austria to avoid the recall into the army. I was in Lemberg, Austria 7 months. Mamma was pregnant at the time, with Dverkele. Mamma wrote to me that if I dont come home she would not have the baby. That she would just die. Disregardig the danger to my life because of the desertion, I came right back. When the baby was born I stood by mothers side holding her hand.

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For about 4 months after the baby's birth I could not find a job, and all we had to live on was mamma's earnings as a cigarette maker. This was the time that we really lived with hunger. ( Starved. )

On september 10 1905, after 4 months of real starvation, I found a job. This was a very good job, and it was the last job for me in Russia. I began as as a simple helper, but within a few months I was the head ( manager ) of the bussiness. The owner of the store, Nochem Edelman, did not love the shoe bussiness. He was a constant gambler. His wife, who was named Thelma, did love the store, and she had complete confidence in me. She believed that I was a " Holy Man" . Four years later she became very sick and she asked me to pray to God for her recovery. But she could not recover. She contracted the disease from him, (her husband). Mamma was present at the time this woman was being prepared for burrial, and mamma said that the body was rotted completely with large sore holes that had to be plugged up with torn up bed sheets. She got it all from him.

Before her death ( on a Friday evening ) she sent for me. She took my hand and asked me to be the guardian of her children. Then she gave up her soul. ( The neshomo. )

After her death, her husband and the children moved away to Kiev, and I was left to struggle with the store. They drew out a lot of operating money from the store during her long illness, and the husband promised to replaced it all when they left the city, but he did not keep his word. I kept the store going for another 4 years, using my own credit, but I could see no future in this. I then called the owner in from Kiev, and the store was sold in August of 1913.

Because I made a promise to uncle Harry to wait for aunt Essie and their children, who were also going to the US at that time, my journey was delayed till May of 1914, and we arrived in New York June 10th 1914.

Your father Gershon.