

January 22, Panevezys [circa 1920]

My dear daughter Yehudeske, your husband and children, live happily, with good fortune, all of your lives:

Auntie and I are feeling somewhat better now, though until your money and the package arrived before Shavuous things were so bad that they couldn't have gotten any worse. Now we're able to live just as other people through the support of our own children, not of strangers. Auntie and I sit down to eat and raise our hands in thanks to the Living One for you, for your good hearts and pray that He'll pay you back a thousand fold for every dollar. I understand that you are not rich, that's why I don't ask you to send any packages. I ask only that you send your address and the addresses of all of my children so I can write back to them. Ask them all to write to me immediately, tell me about their health and children, how earning a living goes, everything... And send the letter on to my son Simcha. I've not seen one drop of ink from my daughter Shayne's pen. That's the nature of a murderess - not to know what's become of her parents throughout a war; a character like that is rare, one in a world! I'm very anxious because I haven't received any mail from my children for such a long time.

There's nothing else really to write about. Be healthy Yehudeske, your husband and children. May the Living One grant all of your wishes. That's what your father desires for you from deep in his heart. Y.A.

August, Panevezys [circa 1920]

My dear son Simcha, your wife and child Itinke, may all my dear children live happily:

I've received your letter with much joy. I and my wife feel as usual for elderly people, yet thanks to the Lord, from the time you, my children, have sent me money my health has been improving. Auntie's health, though, is poor. She's very weak from so many years of suffering hunger, and there's no way to help her.

As for your suggestion that I come to America - how can one travel with a sick person? Or leave her here when we don't even know what's become of some of her children, where they may be? To uproot her into strange surroundings - only a real wretch would do that. I *would* like to at least have a look with my own eyes, to see how my children live in America, but what can I do? The Living One probably won't allow me to travel, but if I could, believe me, I wouldn't hesitate to accept your invitation. I'd be there on wings to see the whole of your existence. Here we're isolated and lonely.

Of my son Eliohu, I don't know anything either. He fled Dveletz in Katerinslaver province. I had two letters from him a year ago. Before Rosh Hashanah there was big pogrom in Veletz. They killed upwards of 200 Jews. I heard that he, thank God, escaped somehow and fled Dveletz with his wife

and children to Shamarve, and, since there's no mail from there, I don't know what's happening. It's been more than a year now.

I beg you, all of my children, not to abandon me; continue your support, for it's fated this way. With the first money you sent I turned pale - I never imagined it would be so much. I'll pray to the Living One to help you all in your businesses so that you can help your old father.

May you have many long years with much pleasure throughout your life. My dear son, write to the address I send you. It will, with the Almighty's help, certainly arrive...

August 7, Panevezys [circa 1920]

My dear son Reuven, your wife and children, live happily, have satisfaction from the children all of your life:

Auntie's and my health is as usual for the elderly. No big news from me. Everything is available here, but very expensive. I wrote you in a letter three weeks ago that I received your package with all seven items. I wrote which things I received, and now I write you that yesterday I received the \$35 which you and my son Simcha sent together. May the Living One repay you with health and livelihood and *naches* from your children.

I did some sewing on the coat - it was too long and too wide. It cost me 30 which today has become 300. I don't want to forget now, and I must remind myself each minute, with each garment I wear, that I arrived naked and barefoot. The slippers and the warmers were made to order. Already the people around here are jealous. They say "You have children in America." I go about just like others, not hungry, not in rags - all this thanks to the Living One who helps you to support us old folks.

I think of my son Eliohe; I don't know what's happening with him, if I'll live to see him again. Life in Russia is great hunger, hunger so great that people are falling like flies and I don't know where to write him, to see him, to rescue him. This is my whole life here - Praise God - it's not like him [Eliohe]; he would have said something, said he's okay.

I do have support from my own son now, not from strangers, so I live normally, like everyone else. I will, with the Almighty's help, soon send out photos to all my children. Now I can show my face to my children - I haven't wanted you to see it until now. It would have been too painful to reveal what had become of your poor old father. Now, thanks to the Living One, it can be done and we thank Him for what He's done in the past and will do in the future.

Nothing else to write. My son, give everyone this letter and make sure my son Simcha sees it. Y.A.

March 19, Panevezys [circa 1921]

My dearest Shprintze, your husband Yankev and your dear children. Be happy throughout your lives, take pleasure in your children:

Darling Shprintze, I received your letter with so much joy! May the Living One see to it that you have a joy like the one you brought us, from your own children some day. I thank the Almighty for you.

There's been a great improvement in my health; for the first time in a year I've felt like a human being and like going out among people. A thanks to the Almighty and to you for enriching my elderly years. Auntie's health is very bad. She can barely move around. Help came to us too late. I received \$35 from the children - exactly according to the rate of exchange for the dollar, and the same for the two packages. I wrote a receipt immediately and put it in the mail.

Your letter gave me great joy, for you do not abandon your old father as long as he's fated to live... Of my son Eliohu, Praise God, it's been two years now since he and his family fled Katerinslaver province, and two years before Rosh Hashanah, that I had a proper greeting from him in which he said he'd left Veletz for Shamuine, and from there I've had no letters since there's no mail now between Russia and Lithuania. If you perhaps have a greeting for me from him it would bring me great joy.

Dear children, if you could send me some shirts, and Auntie a dress or two, some kind of a shawl. She stays in the house even when she'd like to step out a little. What she has to wear isn't fit to write about. You certainly can't imagine what it's been like to shop. One never knows from day to day how much the price of a given item will increase. Things are dangerous. You have to have the Tsar's permission just to make a little bit of a living.

[The remainder of this letter is lost.]

[Written some time after 1920...]

My dear daughter Yehudeske, with your beloved husband and dear little children. May you raise them well and have great satisfaction from them all of your life:

Dear daughter Yehudeske, the Almighty has chosen you to tell all the others of the great joy your letter brought me, the letter which told me that all of my children are healthy and that my beloved son Simcha purchased three stores for \$32,000 - that added to my health! - then the decision you wrote me about, of all of my children to send me \$20 a month. That's enough for me to live quite well. The Almighty will repay you for supporting elderly isolated folk so that they don't have to approach strangers. He'll repay you with great satisfaction for the rest of your lives with prosperous business ventures, with

the blessings of your old father. And when I receive the money and packages of which you wrote, I'll reply immediately each month with a receipt.

Soon you will, God willing, get the photographs I've had made. For Auntie's part, she's weak, she can't walk and it's very hard. I've taken six photos so that all of you will have one of them. To my dear daughter Hannah, I'll send one tomorrow. To my daughter Shayne I'm not sending any photos. Since she doesn't want to know about me, I don't want to know about her either. If she thinks it's right not to write to her old father of Menachem's [presumably Abraham Bromberg, b.1900] marriage - the greatest delight to a grandfather who lives to see a grandchild married - then I don't need to send a photo to her. I hope that her children will take care of her in the years which the Living One grants her.

One doesn't live in two worlds, and the human being is like a shadow. Time flies by, summer and winter, puff, the year's gone. This is the way all of our lives are. One year flies by a little better, the next a little worse. It's all a dream.

The dollar changes every day - it's worth 50 marks, and then increases to 100 marks - the market changes daily - and when the dollar goes up the price of everything else doubles. It's excessive; so much for all kinds of material.

No more news. Be well all of you. All the best in the New Year.

Your father, Y.A.

[Written some time after 1920...]

Dear son, my beloved son Simcha, your wife and child, may you live happily all of your life:

My dear son Simcha, God is repaying you with the three stores you've purchased. Yehudeske wrote me about it. May they work out well, bring happiness all of your life. And let's hope you receive my photo. You'll see your father...with his children's help, has prospered. May the Almighty provide you with all that's good. Yehudeske, Shprintze and Hannah together sent me \$25. First thing I did was to go to all the banks... In Poland, in Warsaw, they won't accept it (American money); these Polish banks - they're crazy. All they send back are some Polish marks which we might as well throw to the winds.

I write you that you should be careful where you write me. Write only to the address I put on the letter itself. That will be useful in all situations; it's our bank in Panevezys, a suitable place. And I thank you again and again my dear son that all of you together have decided to send me something each month. The \$20 will be enough to live well, in the best fashion.

Nothing more to write. Be healthy and successful in the New Year.

Your father, Y.A.

Sunday, the 26th, Panevezys [circa 1921]

My dear son Reuven, with your wife and children, live happily with them your whole life, have *naches* from the children:

I received your letter, it was a great pleasure. A pleasure to hear that your health was good. Auntie and my health is as usual for elderly folk. Though I'm not that much better than I was, I've gotten six photos of myself made and will send them out right away; five of them are for all of my children in America.

I don't know what's happening to my son Eliohe, Praise God, where he is, what's going on with him. My soul is with you my children, wherever you are.

Regarding what you've written in the letter of July 24th, that a week before that you sent \$35 - I haven't received it yet. A week ago I received a letter from Yehudeske in which she told me that all of my dear children decided to send me \$20 a month, and that you've already sent \$20. I haven't received that either, but if you send something, it arrives unless you send it to Libau or Poland where they're burning Polish marks and Russian rubles. If you can, send your money to the New York bank whose address I send you.

Reuven, you are my youngest son. It's not so long ago that you left me, and you haven't forgotten me. I ask you about the plan which you were chosen to carry out, to send me \$20 monthly. It's the right thing to do. You should take charge of the money, collect it, keep it safely until it's time to send it, and upon receiving it each month I'll send you a receipt immediately. I ask you my son to take this task upon yourself - it will be a great mitzvah for you to sustain your weak old parents. The Living One will repay you all of your life with health, livelihood and satisfaction from your children.

Nothing more to write. Be well, all of you in the coming year. Give this letter to my other dear children.

From me, your father, Y.A.

January 22, Panevezys [circa 1921]

My dear son Reuven, your wife and children, live happily dear son:

I received the \$55 thanks to the Living One, so Auntie and I are in good health and we have dealt with the hunger. Otherwise, for the time being I've got a job.

You, dear children, your good deeds are fated to go down in the record book of souls for saving the old from death-dealing hunger. The Almighty will repay you with all the good things you desire. I beg you now, my son, Auntie and I don't have clothes to wear. It's the truth, I can scarcely tell you, torn rag on torn rag, and nothing to hold them together... I beg you, send even old ones, as long as they show up; fulfill the blessing of clothing the naked. Pack-

ages arrive here daily from people's children and other relatives, packages of clothes. The Almighty will help you in carrying out the commandment to clothe the naked.

And I beg you, dear son, to greet my brother Simcha for me, and his family. Tell him to write and let me know how he is, about his business and family. I ask you, my dear son Reuven, as soon as you receive this letter write me about your wife and children, about how your livelihood goes. When I receive a letter from my children it gives me enormous satisfaction, even though these good things are happening far away.

Nothing else to write about. Be healthy, all of you.

From your father, Y.A.

[Written some time after 1920...]

My dear daughter Yehudeske, your husband and your little children, may you rear your little ones with great joy:

We thank you for not forgetting to write us often. Your letters, my darling, come more often than anyone's. You continue to keep us in mind. I didn't write you a receipt for the \$24, but I wrote to my daughter Hannah immediately upon receiving it. I hadn't realized that you and Shprintze sent the money together. Why I have no mail from my daughter Hannah I don't understand - just the money in an envelope. She used to write me often, but now it's over five months since I've heard from her. I don't know what to make of it. God knows what's going on with them, how they make a living. Why don't you write me about your sisters-in-law, if they've come, if they have work.

Things are going well for us, except for the high cost of things. The cost of labor: a man who plows or scythes costs no less than 20 a day; a pood of beans, 12p.; a pood of wheat kernels costs 30p.; a sack of cucumbers, 10p. Everything is dangerously expensive.

I'm sending my son Simcha the address of a bank which has a branch in Panevezys. I'm acquainted with the man in charge and he's said that he will give me dollars and not marks. The other banks will give up no dollars, only marks and they calculate how not to exchange the dollar at a legitimate level, but at a far lower one. I've forgotten to ask my son Reuven to *immediately* write down the address of the bank and send it to my son Simcha.

Nothing more to write. Be well all of you, my children, and thank the Living One for carrying me out of the Russian darkness of blood and hunger. Every day I thank him for showing His mercy to my children, for sparing their lives. I pray that He will continue to show His mercy to you all.

From your father, Y.A.