

September 1944

My Dear, Dear Parents!

I'm finding it very difficult to write this letter. When it arrives in your hands, I'll be on my way to an unknown destination. Although it is not the first time that I have to say goodbye to you, the circumstances make this separation one that also means the conclusion of a stage in my and our lives. If I now once again try to thank you for all the love, kindness and patience, for my upbringing and all the good and beautiful things you've enabled me to experience, I'm trying to put something into words that is deep inside me, and goes without saying and you know already, that my attempt must remain feeble.

May God grant that this parting is only for a short time, and that the five of us meet again real soon together with our other loved ones, with everyone in good health.

I am fully aware that the very moment I board the train I'm taking the final step on my way to material proletarianisation and thus bringing to an end a development that began when I departed Westerbork. But let's not forget that this can only be a material proletarianisation, intellectually I will always remain who I am. And this can reassure you that, inevitabilities excepted, I will come through. I have the capacity to shut off myself and my thoughts so completely from the outside world that I'm like the hedgehog who protects himself from hostile surrounds by curling up into a ball. I am also rather frugal, and as much as I like to dress well, I can get by with clothes which are not so good, because in the end all I strive for is 'to have my peace of mind', i.e. that my greatest concern always is to keep my independent mind. I have always been able to learn from everything I've ever experienced, whether it was good or bad. And I hope to be able to gather experience from what is now awaiting me, which I can then use to good effect later, when I move from the passive to the active struggle for our Jewish people. This is the task and the goal that, as I believe, God has set for this life: to help in what way I can that such a tragedy like the one the Jewish people specifically, and indeed all peoples of this earth as well, are currently going through, never happens again. In what way I can do this lies hidden in the lap of the future. For now, our only task is to stick it out and let all that is adverse bounce off, but to store up the good deep inside and wait, and hope that the door opens on freedom.

Faith and hope – courage and willpower they will help us all to endure this time, and enable us to set to work later on.

Now, my dear parents, I'd like to ask one thing of you: do not become discouraged, and do not bury yourselves in weeping and laments. It's not only that you can't change anything that way, but it makes things even more difficult for me. Stay strong, don't say to one another how things could have been, but

Have faith that there will be a reunion  
Place hope in the future  
Have the courage to keep going, and  
Muster the willpower to live for us, your sons

[Hebraic text]

Be strong and resolute  
The future is ours

Thank you!

Leopold

My Dear Parents.

I, too, wish to add a few lines of thanks in this letter. I thank you for all the kindness you have given me. I promise you that I will obey Leopold at all times. Like you and Leopold, I also hope that we will meet again soon.  
Please be thanked again for all that you've done for me.  
With dear kisses from your loving Hans Werner.

*translated by Paul Bowman*