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Correspondence of Bracha Fuld (Berlin, 1926 - Tel Aviv, 1946) in the Netzorg Family Papers Collection at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

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University of Michigan Library

Introduction

A considerable number of women had left their mark in the Jewish community's struggle for independence in British Mandate Palestine. The most famous example is probably Hannah Senesh (1921-1944), who left Hungary for British Mandate Palestine in 1939. Others, like Bracha Fuld (1926-1946), remain relatively unknown. Who was Bracha Fuld? Why was she important? The goal of this paper is to familiarize the audience with the history of Bracha Fuld and to share our preliminary assessment of her correspondence housed in the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library.¹



FIGURE 1. Bracha Fuld, circa 1946. In: *Davar*, March 27, 1946

Bracha Fuld was born in Berlin on December 26, 1926 and arrived in British Palestine in the summer of 1939, at age twelve. Her mother Charlotte (also known as Lotte) arrived in British Palestine a couple of months before Bracha. Both had spent about one year in London before moving to Palestine. Bracha's older sister, Petra, born in 1923, arrived in the United States in September 1938, at the age of fifteen. Their father, Lothar, who was very patriotic, served in the German army during World War I. He apparently committed suicide a couple of days after *Kristallnacht* (the wave of violent anti-Jewish attacks that took place on November 9 and 10, 1938 in Germany).² Lotte's mother (Bracha's grandmother) settled in British Palestine in 1934.

¹ We should thank Olga Virakhovskaya, Archivist at Bentley Historical Library, for encouraging us to engage with the Netzorg Family Papers.

² Lothar Fuld was born on July 27, 1886 and died on November 20, 1938 (according to correspondence between Petra with Sari Gal, Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 12).



FIGURE 2. Lotte Fuld (Bracha's mother)
In: Miriam Dee, "The Story of Bracha Fuld", *The Jewish Woman*, Nov. 1946, page.4.
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 2, Newspaper clippings.
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



FIGURE 3. Bracha (left) with her father Lothar and sister Petra, circa 1930.
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 35, Petra and Bracha Fuld.
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Bracha's original name was Barbara, but it was changed to Bracha (a less Diasporic name) when she arrived in Palestine. Bracha became a member of the *Palmach* (the elite fighting

force of the *Haganah*, the underground army of the Jewish community in British Mandate Palestine). She was killed on March 26, 1946, during what was later called Wingate Night, an operation designed to assist illegal Jewish immigrants on the vessel *Wingate* to disembark on the coast of Tel Aviv.³

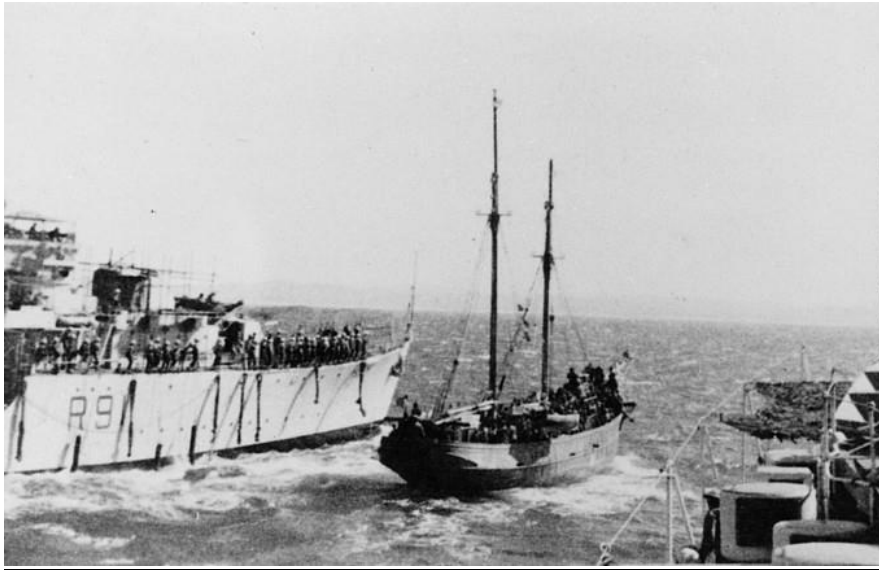


FIGURE 4. The “Wingate” surrounded by British Destroyers.
Source: http://www.palyam.org/English/Hahapala/hf/hf_Wingate.
Consulted April 8, 2018.

The vessel sailed from the small island of Palestrina, Italy, (not far from Venice), carrying 238 *ma'apilim* (Jews who immigrated illegally to Palestine during British control in the 1930s and 1940s). The plan was for this vessel to rendezvous with the vessel “Tel Hai” and transfer her passengers to that vessel. That rendezvous did not occur, and the *Wingate*, sailing on a very rough sea, continued on her route to Palestine (Ben-Tzur, date of publication not provided).

The illegal ship *Wingate* was seized by the British at sea, and the operation was canceled. In one of the few clashes between the British and the *Palmach*, Fuld was killed. As pointed out by researchers like Nir Mann (2011) and others, she immediately came to symbolize female fighters in the campaign for independence. Some months after Bracha was killed, another ship of illegal Jewish immigrants was named after her.⁴ The famous Israeli poet Natan Alterman, for example, wrote poems dedicated to Bracha in his column *ha-Ṭur ha-shevi'i* (later published in his book *Yir ha-Yonah*). Kurt Singer (1951) included Bracha among the “greatest women spies” in the world (because of her supposed affair with a British officer), and Sari Gal (1995) wrote a kind of historical novel about her (in Hebrew).⁵

³ This vessel was named in honor of the British Major, Orde Charles Wingate, who, while on tour of duty in Palestine during the years of the riots of 1936-1939, helped the Yishuv (Jewish community) in defending itself against Arab groups.

⁴ About the vessel *Bracha Fuld* see Yarkoni (51-52).

⁵ The Netzorg Family Papers Collection contains drafts of English translations of some chapters of Sari Gal's book (in box 2, folder *Bracha Fuld*, Biographical, 1982-2012 and undated).



FIGURE 5. News of Bracha's death in Tel Aviv's Hebrew press. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 2, Newspaper clippings. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

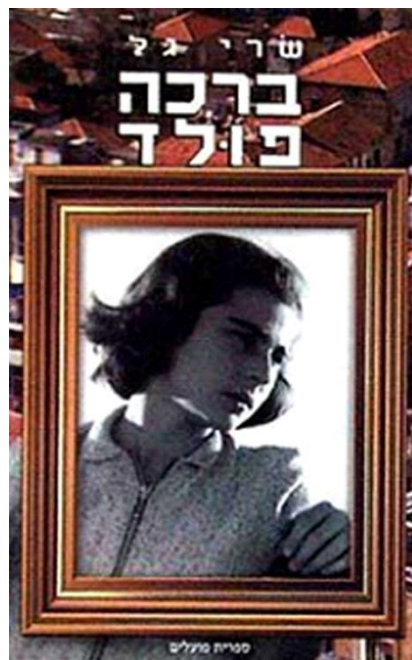


FIGURE 6. Cover of *Berakhah Fuld* (1999), by Sari Gal.

It is worth pointing out that both Kurt Singer and Sari Gal tend to transit between fiction and reality. These authors usually do not mention their sources and deliberately fill gaps without documented evidence. Therefore, both can be read as a kind of historical fiction. Sari Gal had access to some of the letters Bracha and her mother wrote, but does not mention them in an academic fashion. A more scholarly portrait of Bracha Fuld appears in an article written by Judith Baumel in 2004 (in Hebrew). None of these writers, however, had full access to the correspondence written by Bracha Fuld and her mother, housed at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library since 2012.

The correspondence of Bracha Fuld

Let us now turn our attention to Bracha's correspondence. The letters she exchanged with her sister Petra are housed in the Bentley Historical Library, which is one of the twenty-two campus libraries in the University of Michigan system. The Bentley Historical Library "collects the materials for and promotes the study of the histories of two great, intertwined institutions, the State of Michigan and the University of Michigan" (Bentley Library's website).⁶



FIGURE 7. Bentley Historical Library (April 2018)

We visited the Bentley Library to prepare this AJL conference paper, which offers just a brief overview of the materials related to Bracha Fuld that are housed there. These materials are part of the Netzorg Family Papers, a collection that includes thirty linear feet of materials distributed in thirty-seven boxes of which boxes one and two contain the Fuld Family Papers series. The collection also contains hundreds of pictures of the Fuld family, including many pictures of Bracha (visual material series, box 35). The collection was donated by David M. Netzorg in 2011. David is the son of Bracha's sister, Petra. Petra and her husband Jock Netzorg owned the Cellar Book Shop, a bookshop located at 18090 Wyoming Avenue in Detroit, Michigan, which specialized in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. They supplied books for the University of Michigan Library and many other universities in the United States. Jock Netzorg's father,

⁶ <http://bentley.umich.edu/>

Morton Isadore Netzorg, was a University of Michigan alumnus who for decades lived in the Philippines with his wife Katherine.⁷

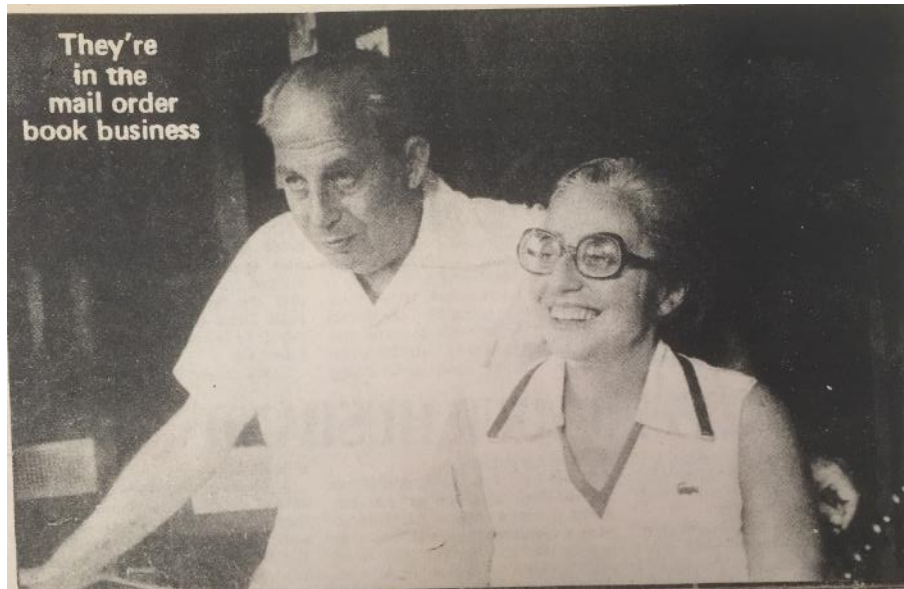


FIGURE 8. Jock Netzorg and Petra Fuld Netzorg, circa 1976.

In: *Mr. & Ms. Magazine*, May 11, 1976, page 71.

Netzorg Family Papers, Box 37.

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library



FIGURE 9. Box number one, Fuld family correspondence, Bentley Historical Library

Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

⁷ More information is located in the finding aid available at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-2012143?view=text>.

Box number one contains part of the Fuld Family Papers (shown above). The folders are divided by month and year, starting with 1937 and finishing with 1959. Sometimes, more than one month is combined in the same folder. In addition, sometimes there is one folder for the entire year. Between 1937 and March 1946, there are twenty-six folders. Each folder contains an average of approximately fifteen letters, so we calculate that there may be around four hundred letters written during the period Bracha was alive.⁸

Lotte Fuld, mother of Bracha and Petra, wrote the majority of these 400 letters. Almost all of the letters were sent to Petra, who moved from Berlin to the United States in 1938 and settled in Detroit before 1944. Therefore, on one hand, we have Bracha, her mother Lotte, and her grandmother, all living in Palestine, and on the other hand, Petra in the United States. We have the letters Petra received, but we do not have the letters sent by Petra to the family in Palestine (at least not those letters sent during the period in which Bracha was alive). Some of the letters are written in German, some in English. Sometimes the language switches in the middle of the letter. Some letters are typed, others handwritten.

It is worth mentioning that the letters not only tell us about the Fuld family, but also contain vivid descriptions of life in Tel Aviv in the 1940s. These letters are therefore an important document for researchers of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community of Palestine prior to the founding of the State of Israel. There are also many linguistic aspects worth studying in the correspondence. The few letters written in Europe are documents about Jewish life on that continent on the eve of World War II.

As previously mentioned, Lotte Fuld (Bracha's mother) wrote the majority of the letters. Sometimes, however, Bracha and her grandmother also participated.⁹ We see it for example in two letters written in English, from May 16, 1942 and September 5, 1942, and in one letter in German, from July 7, 1942, where Bracha added just one line. She usually used her nickname "Babs" to sign the letters.

⁸ The Netzorg Family Papers collection is briefly described at the series and subseries level, and a possible project would be to describe it at the folder level, or even at the item level. It would be, however, a huge undertaking. Instead, a more modest task would be to describe, at the item level, the few letters written by Bracha.

⁹ Lotte resided in Israel until around 1960, then moved to California. She was born around 1907 died in 1968. Petra Fuld died in 2008.

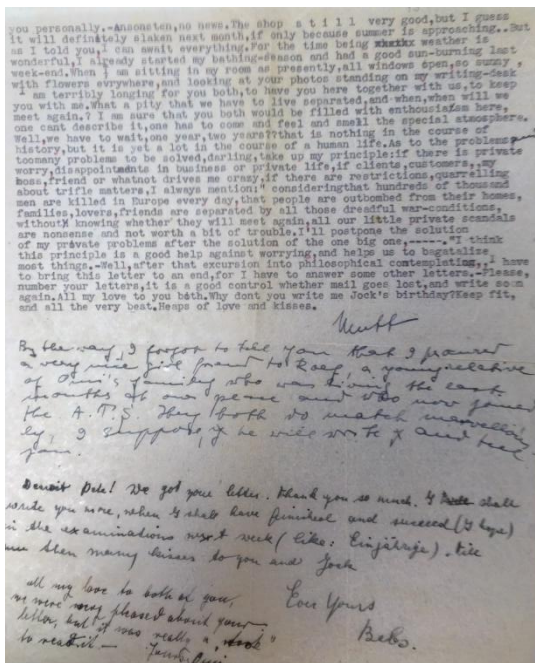


FIGURE 10. Letter by Lotte and Bracha Fuld from May 16, 1942. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

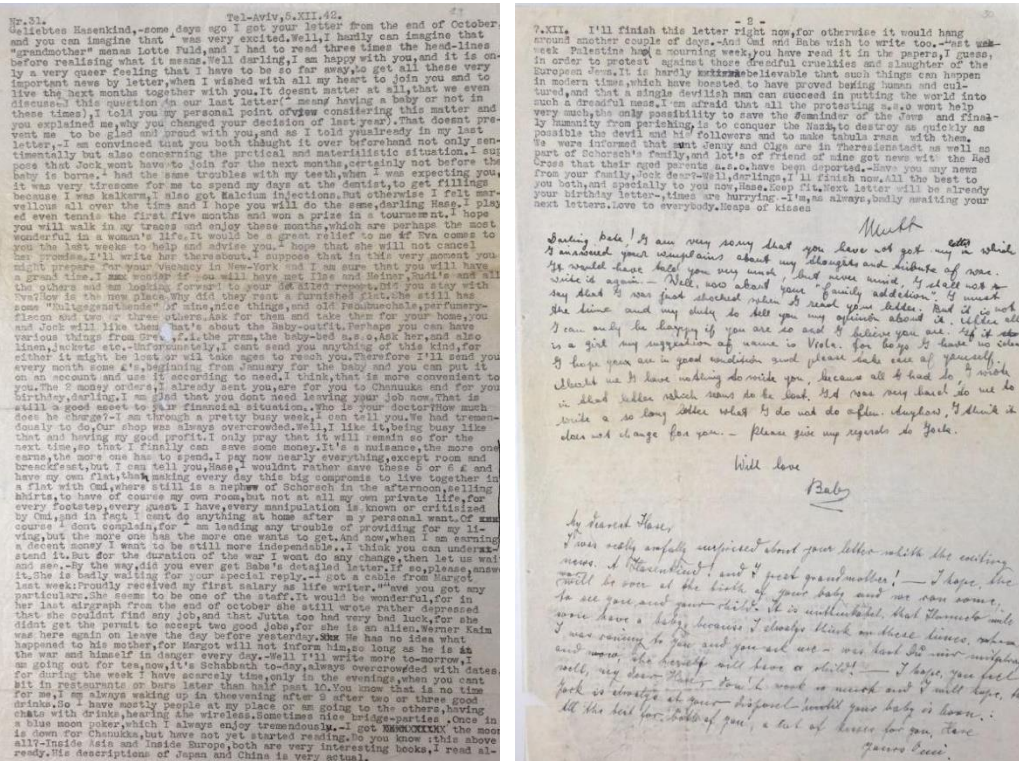


FIGURE 11. Letter #31, by Lotte and Bracha Fuld, from September 5, 1942. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

17

Tel-Aviv 23. 7. 42

Liebstes Floechen!

Diesen Namen hast Du sicher schon lange nicht mehr gehoert, aber mir ist er eben so eingefallen. Ich schreibe Dir in Deutsh weil ich Dir einiges zu sagen habe was ich in English nicht so gut kann. Ich werde sicher viele Fehler machen, denn Deutshschreiben bin ich nicht mehr gewohnt, aber da Du Hebraeish nicht verstehst muss es eben so gehen. - Mich hat ziemlich erstaunt oder vielmehr geaergert, was Du ueber mich und meinen Ansichten ueber den Krieg geshrieben hast. Ich glaube dass Du entweder nicht verstanden hast oder nicht verstehen wolltest, was ich sagte, denn ich weiss eben so gut wie Du was Krieg ist und was dieser Krieg fuer uns, besonders fuer uns Juden, bedeutet und was unsere Pfllicht in diesem Krieg ist um unsere Zukunft als Juden, wenn ueberhaupt von Zukunft die Rede sein darf, was wir doch alle hoffen, ich auch nach unseren Ideen, Zielen und Forderungen gestalten zu koennen. Und von wegen "erst 16 Jahre" wie Du schreibst, Du kannst Dir doch vorstellen, dass die zionistisch-idealistiche Jugend in Palestina nicht warten kann bis sie graue Haare bekommt um sich dann erst eine politische Meinung, hinsichtlich unserer Lage hier, zu bilden. Du wirst verstehen, dass ich mich garnicht einem solchen Urteil ueber den Krieg hergeben kann, da dieser Krieg auch unse- rer ist und da unsere Zukunft mit dem Ende des Krieges in unge- meiner Naeheliegt. Also ich hoffe Du siehst ein dass Du Dich ge- irrt hast. Wenn ich es wagen darf Dir zu entgegenen, da ich ja erst fast 16 bin, moechte ich Dir sagen dass Du Dich irrst wenn Du meinst dass dieser Krieg kein Krieg der Ideale ist. Ich denke er ist es, denn es besteht die grosse Frage: Welcher der Lebens- oder-Regierungsformen haelt sich laenger und an welche konnte sich die Menschliche Gesellschaft anpassen ohne ihre Werte zu verlieren, Demokraty oder Fashismus. Und da man sich auf eine Seite schlagen muss, wenn auch keine ganz zusagt, so waehlt man die, die den ei- genen Idealen am naechsten steht. Der Sieg unserer, d.h. der anti- fashistischen Seite bringt uns einige Schritte naeher unserem Zie- le. So kaempfen wir und geben unsere Leute, um diesen Sieg zu Gunsten der Alliierten herbei zu fuehren! Doch genug davon. - Ich war 6 Wochen auf dem Land und gehe in einigen Tagen noch mal. Zur Arbeit, dies ist unser Kriegsdienst. Ich bin jetzt in die Un- terprima veretzt und habe noch 2 Jahre bis zum Abitur. Was nach- her sein wird weiss ich nicht. Meine Zukunft liegt in den Haenden unserer Zukunft hier und wird sich aus den Zeiten ergeben. Alles andere hat Dir doch sicher Mutt schon geshrieben. Ich wuerde mich freuen wenn Du mir diesen Brief persoehnlich beantworten wuerdest und in Deutsh, da mir dies in English shwer fallen wuerde. Ich hoffe, dass Du Zeit finden wirst!! Gruesse Jock vielmals. Ich bitte ihn um Endshuldigung dass ich Deutsh shrieb. Falls es ihn intere- siert, uebersetze es ihm.

Herzliche Grüsse und Küsse
Bely

FIGURE 12. Letter by Lotte Fuld with Bracha Fuld's inscription, July 7, 1942.
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1942
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

The collection also contains letters in German written entirely by Bracha prior to her arrival in Palestine. For example, two letters from Berlin (October 17 and November 17, 1938) and one letter from Lausanne (December 14, 1938):

Berlin d. 17. 10. 38 15

Bracha

Mein geliebter kleiner Floh!

Bin ich nicht reizend, dass ich Dir wieder schreibe, trotzdem ich auf meinen letzten Brief noch keine Antwort habe? Eigentlich ist es ja völlig egoistisch, denn er kann sich jetzt erst erreichen lassen. Na also, es ist ja egal. - Für mich hat der Winter schon begonnen, trotzdem es erst Ende Oktober ist. Ich gehe nämlich morgen Ski ins Gebirge laufen. Im Sportpark. Heute habe ich deine Karten eingekauft und manchmal die doppelten genommen und außerdem habe ich mir aus deinem Doppelmärchenalbum ein paar doppelte genommen. Ist doch nicht schlimm? Ich wünsche mir zum Geburtstag ein Album und fange noch einmal richtig an. Gestern war ich im Kino: "a year of Oxford in Deutschland" aus Amerika mit Robert Taylor. Es war merkwürdig! Hier, das heißt Müll und ich gehen heute im Müll zum Geburtstag. Sie sind endauernd, weil du nicht mehr kommen kannst und hast mir eine sehr gute sehr persönliche für dich gegeben. Schreibe doch bitte mal an die. Ich habe bei Schwabers Geburtstag, da haben sich Julia und Lisa rumgedrückt. Ich habe bei mir gedacht, die können froh sein, die sind kein anderer!! Aber ich hier keine Anfälle bekommen! Gestern setzte sich Lisa an das Grammophon, spielte andauernd Karol Sennel. Ich habe vielleicht noch nie geliebt und bekam sedimentale Umwandlungen. Ich was da mal guckte im was soll ich auch in solchen Fällen anderes tun! - Eben kommen Müll und ich von Müll. Sie hast geheult und hast mir eine

Kauwurst

FIGURE 13. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Berlin, October 17, 1938. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Berlin, den 17.11.1938 17

My dearest good sister, *beaut*

I thank you very much for your nice long letter. It was such a fun to read it. I am very angry, that I have not my letter from you at home, so I can't answer your questions. I am now living with Tietz. It is very funny. I am very glad that I can have Joachim the whole day. We play table-tennis or we play gramophone. The last week our school was not open. Have you read the new-papers? Now my English letter is ready.

Na. Das war eine Arbeit. Also ich wohne bei Tietz und fühle mich dort sehr wohl. Ich bin mit Joachim den ganzen Tag zusammen. Wie geht es bei Dir in der Schule? Kommst Du gut mit? Ist es leicht oder schwer? Jeden Tag warten wir, dass die Schule aufgemacht wird. Morgen ist wieder richtige Schule. Ich freue mich sehr darauf. Dein Schreibtisch ist völlig leer. Meine Sachen sind in dem Wäscheschrank von Dir drin. Ich bekomme ein neues Markenalbum. Alwine hat mir einen prima Pullover gestrickt. In diesen Brief kann ich dir leider keinen Antwortsschein mitreinlegen, weil es keine mehr im Augenblick gibt. Was machen die Domnauers? Die beiden Kleinen vermissen wohl die Omi sehr was? Schicke mir doch mal ein Bild von Steven. Vati ist jetzt ist gerade hier und unterhält sich mit Frau Tietz. Wir jagen uns immer die neuen Zeitungen von Frau Tietz u.s.w. Es ist nichts für uns drin. Schreitet Deine Kindererziehung fort, oder lässt Du Dich von Ronny und Steven klein kriegen? Hast Du Deine Schulprüfung gut bestanden? Bist Du in der obersten Klasse aufgenommen worden? Joachim wird ja jetzt auch weggehen. Zu Thomas. Der und Joachim lassen Dich grüßen. Tante Margot ist ja schrecklich nervös geworden. Jetzt ist Vati wieder weg und rast weiter. Er hat ja auch eine Menge zu tun. Kann ich mit logisch vorstellen. Gehst Du oft ins Kino oder reicht das Geld dazu nicht? Ich kann ja nicht mehr in den Film gehen! Ich bin neugierig, ob Omi gut in P. ankommt. Ist eigentlich Onkel Schorsch mit uns verwandt? Ich wurde ~~MI~~ nämlich danach gefragt. Ich glaube ja. Ich kann mir denken,

FIGURE 14. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Berlin, December 11, 1938.
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

ERB

Lausanne le 14. 12. 38

Bracha

Mein lieber Floh,

es war nicht nett von mir dich so lange Zeit auf eine Nachricht zu warten zu lassen. Ganz besonders in solch einer Zeit. Was ist nicht alles in dieser Zeit vorgekommen. Du darfst, seitdem ich keinen Brief bekommen habe, davon sein ich dir übrigens herzlichst danke, habe ich die ganze Zeit an Dich gedacht. Wenn Du einmal Zeit hast, so schreibe mir doch bitte ganz genau und ausführlich, was alles geschehen ist, seit meiner Abreise. Ich denke, dass Deine Mutti mit Dir in Kontakt war? Ist sie zurückgefahren? Dass, mit Deinem Vater, hat mich unendlich aufgeregt. Ich, diese Schweinebande. Entschuldige bitte diesen Ausdruck, aber ich finde wirklich keinen anderen. Du weißt gar nicht, wie ich mit Dir Deine Pläne teilte. Wenn ich ich Dir auch nicht mündlich mitteilen kann, so hoffe ich, doch, dass Du mich auch so verstehst. Vielleicht ist es aber besser für Deinen lieben Papi, dass es war ein alles zu ausführlich. Floh, ich würde Dir gerne helfen, aber es ist zu weit weg von hier. Schreibe mir alles was Du denkst und tust, und ich werde Dich dann nicht so lange auf Antwort warten lassen. Hör mal, schreibe mir doch bitte die Adresse von Deiner Mutti und Kärtel, da meine Eltern doch auch in London sind. Vielleicht können sie sich dann mal sehen. Auch wenn Du einen Post draucht, frage nur meinen Papi, er wird Dir schon wichtig antworten. Hoffentlich gefällt es Dir in London. Es ist bestimmt nicht so, wie Du es Dir gedacht hast, aber scheint ja sehr viel Mut zu haben, und dann wird es schon gehen. Brauchst Du irgend etwas? Soll ich Dir was schicken. Was gedenkst Du zu tun? Ich meine, suchst Du Dir eine Stellung? Mach nicht Zweifel und ~~so~~ bewahre Deine Gesundheit, denn das ist das Beste, was der Mensch hat.

FIGURE 15. Letter by Bracha Fuld from Lausanne, December 12, 1938.
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1938
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

In the following letter, from October 1939, Bracha writes sentences in German, Hebrew, and Arabic in what seems to be a translation exercise.

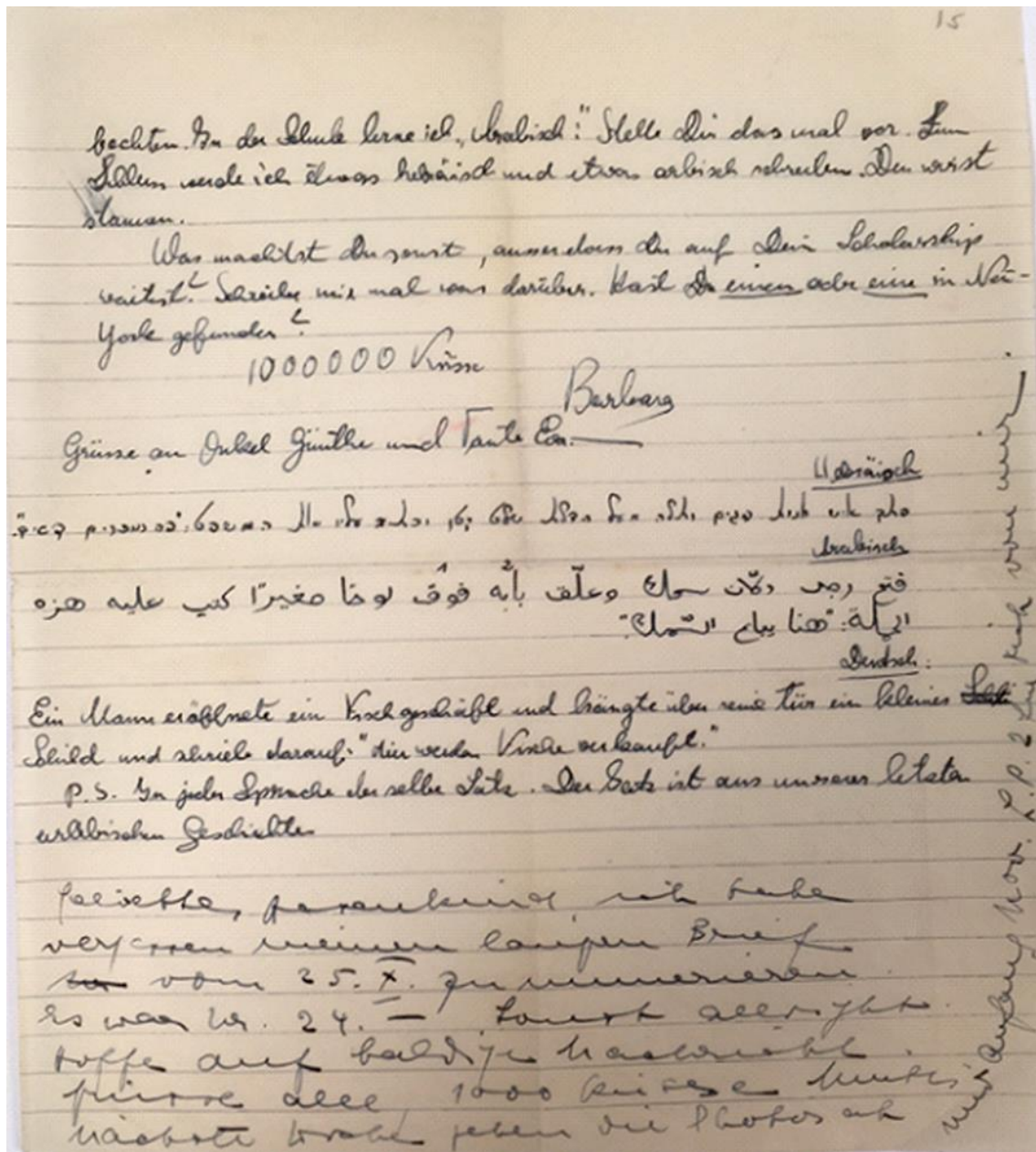


FIGURE 16. Letter by Bracha Fuld and other family members, October 1939. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1939 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

In the following letter, from 1941, Bracha writes sentences in German and Hebrew. In the Hebrew sentence, she explains that now Hebrew is her preferred language. Bracha's grandmother apparently wrote the second part of the letter.

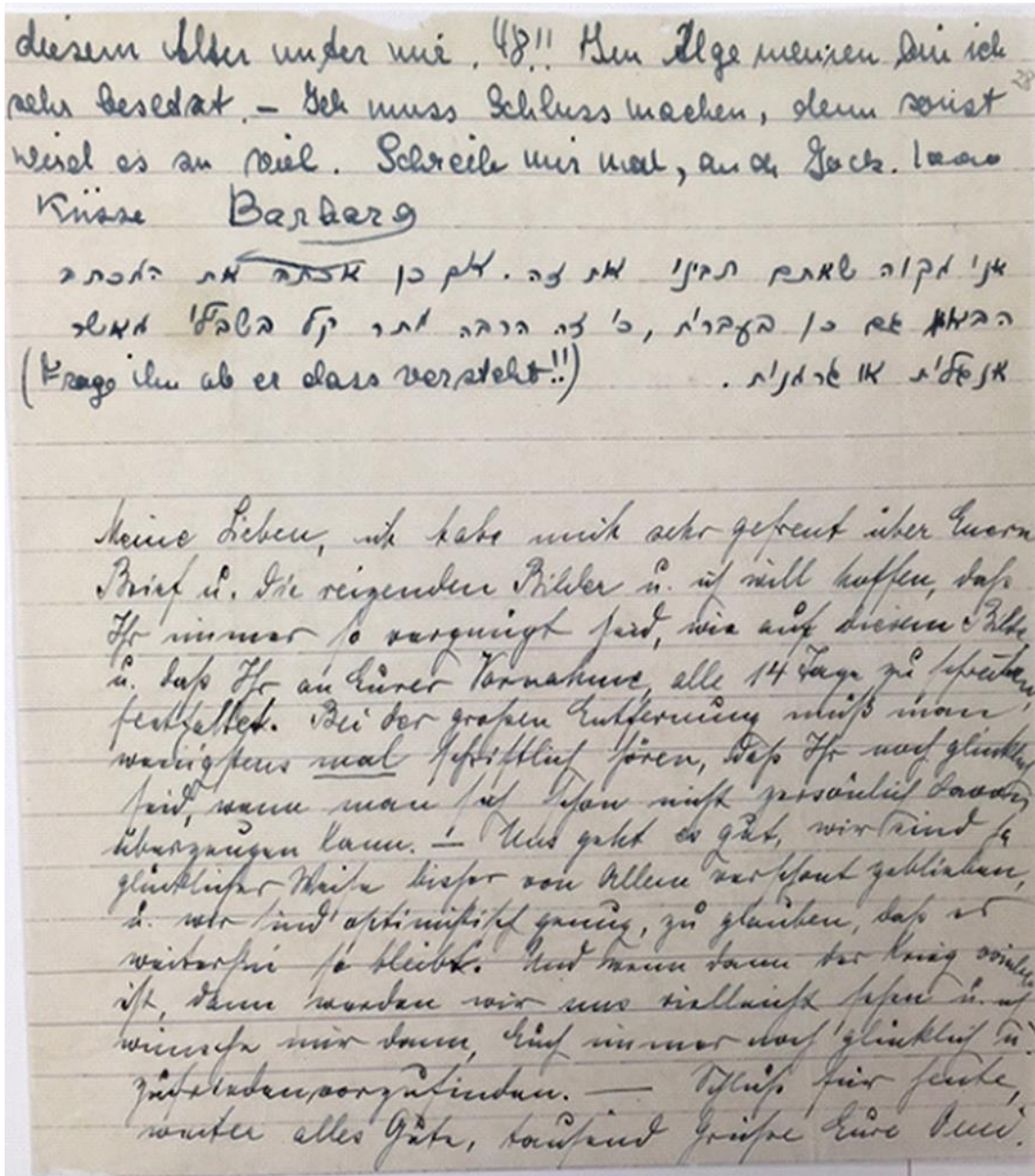


FIGURE 17. Letter by Bracha Fuld and her grandmother [?], 1941. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Let us take a closer look at this letter, written by Bracha on December 22, 1941.

31
Tel-Aviv 22, 12.41

Dearling Pede!

As well as you have written me a fine birthday letter, I shall say doo. I think I must not tell you all those words, which are written usually in such letters I wish you all those I can wish for your birthday, health, happiness, etc. I shall hope that you will celebrate it together with Gock!! It is very funny to think about you as a married sister. But gradual it will become a place, in my mind. I shall not ask you anything about your life at Jackson. You already told me which I had thought I had to know. I can't really imagine life at this town, Tel-Aviv too is not so big, but life is going on like the "New-York". Telephone is ringing more than in "Amsterdam". I would like to show you one washbasin. Everybody cries, "Just like the Riviera". I do not know the Riviera but I think in spite of it that they are right. —

You have asked me some questions in your last letter which I had liked to answer. Firstly about coming to America. Finally we are in war with Japan and I think that there is not any occasion to get over. And secondly the main reason: I think that you should know already that I shall not leave Palestine!! According to this you should not even try to arrange something, though I know that it would not be so easily done. About "future dreams" I cannot tell you much, because I myself do not know much about this. I have two years till finishing school. Preliminary I am working in my own

"BUND". (I do not know how you would call it in English). When finished school I shall ~~leave~~ leave the town for a year and shall work agricultural work. What will be after that I cannot imagine & read. My Bund will show me the right way. — The birthday present I got already (before the time) a bicycle!!!! I know that you would still ride on it, but I still do. It is just a nice present, ~~it is not~~ isn't it? You see about "hard things" I don't write (Ich bin nicht Philosoph). To day I have my last Chanuka holiday. To morrow — school! It is awful. English Grammar, Physics, Mathematics for instance do not enter my mind. I cannot do anything for it. — I think I have written enough! Bleib gesund. Much love to Gock. Many birthday kisses

Ever Yours
Babs.

FIGURE 18. Letter by Bracha Fuld from December 22, 1941
Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941
Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

In this letter (December 22, 1941), Bracha thanks Petra for her birthday letter, and takes the opportunity to wish Petra happy birthday as well. Bracha was then about to turn fifteen years old. She shows enthusiasm for the fact that her sister got married. Bracha always expressed interest in her brother-in-law, Jock Netzorg. From the letter we learn that at that point Petra Fuld was living in Jackson, Michigan, a city located around seventy miles west of Detroit. Bracha says that although Tel Aviv is not a big town, life there “is going on like at New York. Telephone is ringing more than in ‘Reichsstrasse 4’.”¹⁰ I would like to show our seashore. Everybody cries: ‘Just like the Riviera’. I do not know the Riviera but I think in spite of it that they are right”. In the following paragraph, Bracha discusses the possibility of going to America. She explains to her sister that she is not going there: “I think that you should know already that I shall not leave Palestine!!” On the verso, she tells the following: “I have two years till finishing school. Preliminary I am working in our ‘BUND’, (I do not know how you would call it in English). When I finished school, I shall leave the town for a year and shall work agricultural work. What will be after that I cannot imagine now. The Bund will show me the right way.” It is worth noticing Bracha’s use of the German word “Bund”. Most probably, she is not referring to the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*, the famous secular Jewish socialist party, because the Bund was opposed to the Zionist movement. She may just be using the German word for “group” or “league,” without any special connotations in mind. On the other hand, her use of the word *bund* may be implicitly referring to a social and ideological environment that had led her to enlist in the Palmach in 1944.¹¹ Bracha apparently is hiding something from both her family as well as from British authorities who could potentially read her letters. A letter written by her mother Lotte to Petra five days later (Dec. 27, 1941) supports this hypothesis.

¹⁰ This is where they lived in Berlin (according to correspondence between Petra with Sari Gal, Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box #12).

¹¹ According to Baumel (135), Bracha Fuld enlisted in the Palmach in 1944 after completing her high school studies.

Tel-Aviv, 27.12.41.

petra Darling---I just got the news by the wireless, that the Clipper-communications have been resumed and I hasten to write you immediately, hoping that this letter will reach you in time for your birthday. I sent you already two letters by ordinary mail, Nr. 13 on the 10th Dec. and Nr. 14 on the 22nd Dec, with some snap shots included. But I doubt, whether they will reach you at all. Darling, I wish you again and again all the best, keep fit and healthy in every respect, dont loose your matter-of-fact balance and your vitality as well as your optimism, whatever may happen. I wish you all the very best wick one can wish for one's beloved child and I want so badly, that it will no more last too long, that we can celebrate your birthday together. I can hardly believe that it is your nineteenth ~~birthday~~ birthday! I am glad that you will pass it together with Jock in your cosy flat and I hope that it may not be disturbed by any harm or bad news from Jocks family. You can imagine how I am thinking dayly of you and how upset I am about ~~very~~ news concerning Manila. I sincerely hope, (at your family, Jock dear, will come through without being hurt anyhow and that they may stand this ordeal. What times! There is now really scarcely a single place in the world which doesnt participate in misery and sorrow. Even Hawai, for me always the incarnation of peace-life full of moon-light dances with no other problems than how to spend life in the most convenient, enjoyable way, is now in the midst of horrors. How is the mood over-there? How is business-life. I suppose there must be a boom in special lines. Also in yours? Have you to be enlisted at once? Or when? How are all your dispositions? I beg you instantly to write me detailed and as often as lately, for now more than ever one have to keep up communications. In my last letter of the 22nd Dec. I confirmed your letter dated the 16 th Novemver. Did you get the raise of the fixed salary and you a steady place in the company, Petra darling, or is everything overpassed by the recent events? I suppose, not. - Did Eva visit you? I have no news from her since her last cable from New-York from the beginning of November. They have been moving to Los Angeles just in the right moment! To have black out and air-raid alarms in a town with 60 and more floors must be no pleasure at all, considering that in smaller towns with less traffic and night-life, it is sometimes a mess or depressing. - Yesterday night we heard Churchill from Washington, the wireless transmission was marvelous, quite distinctly, and I think it was a stirring event for everybody of us to experience that there are not distances anymore in technical condition and no hindrance for will-power I include the same snap-shots, I send you already with my last ordinary-mail-letters, please send the other ones then to Eva and one to Rudi. - The first time in my life that I have photos taken with my glasses. But I am no more vain. Do you always wear your glasses, Hase? - Yesterday was Babs' 15th birthday, nearly in the same age you went alone to the States. But she has grown up enormously, being not alwas easy to treat, you know her, she is always capricious, sometimes full of pepp and charming with you and sometimes detached, taciturn and full of opposition. I always thought that I have a good knowledge of human soul and not a too bad way to treat somebody psychologically. But as to Babs I dont always succeed. I dont worry too much therefore, for I know that this age is always a very precarious one and the relation to one's mother, even if one is on the most friendly and confidential ~~xxx~~ term, together, is subdued in special periods of development to many up and downs. She considers me as a "non-Bund-member" and therefore as somebody who doesnt understand its goal and its efforts thereto from the bottom of my heart. She is not yet mature enough to realize that this is not a question of membership or generation.

For the time being she mostly makes a mistery of her meetings, discussions and lectures, she scarcely answers my questions and talks only superficially about the themes. I suppose she is still somehow afraid that I might be opposed in anyway to her, for she is still in that extreme period, where she cant bear any critical I dont mind. Everything has to take its time. But sometimes, Pete darling, I am longing terribly for you, it would be so wonderful, if we could be together, now, as you are a "grown up women". Well, let us hope that ~~all these wishes will be realized~~ ^{all these wishes will be realized} ~~soonest~~ ^{soonest}. I have to finish this letter for over weight, but I'll write again.

FIGURE 19. Letter by Lotte Fuld from December 27, 1941
 Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box number 1, folder 1941
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Lotte writes,

I always thought that I have a good knowledge of human soul and not a too bad way to treat somebody psychologically. But as to Babs I don't always succeed. I don't worry too much therefore, for I know that this age is always a very precarious one and the relation to one's mother, even if one is on the most friendly and confidential term together, is subdued in special periods of development to many up and downs. She considers me as a 'non-Bund-member' and therefore as somebody who doesn't understand its goal and efforts thereto

from the bottom of my heart. She is not yet mature enough to realize that this is not a question of membership or generation. For the time being she mostly makes a mystery of her meetings, discussions and lectures, she scarcely answers my questions and talks only superficially about the themes.

Further research perhaps will show (or not) that Bracha eventually informed her mother about her underground military activity.



FIGURE 20. Bracha and her mother Lotte Fuld, probably in Tel Aviv, January 1943. Netzorg Family Papers Collection, box 35, Petra and Bracha Fuld, 1920s-early 1940s. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library

Concluding remarks

Although there are currently five streets named after Bracha Fuld in the State of Israel, her truly fascinating story is still a little-known chapter, either in Israel or abroad. One may feel sadness over Bracha's untimely death and the great sacrifice she made to help her fellow Jews in their struggle to reach a new home in the ancient land of their ancestors. Within this sadness, however, one can find comfort in the fact that we are able to hear her voice and passion coming from the letters she wrote. These letters have not yet been studied in depth, and could shed new light on Israel's pre-state years, in general, and on Bracha Fuld's history in particular. We hope to keep researching the Fuld family correspondence housed at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, and we invite students, scholars, and librarians to join us.

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