



NESS TZIONA, SEPTEMBER 21, 1941

Hanna Szenes

It's the eve of Rosh Hashanah. Two years have already passed since I left home. Two years away from my mother, my home; from my brother I've been away three years; and I've lived two years in the Land. If I could, I would write a few words to my mother. I have so much to tell her. It's hard to know what I'd talk to her about were we to meet now. I would tell her about these years, about my dreams, my plans, my anxieties. I would tell her how I felt yesterday: I was so desperately depressed that I cried. I felt I was faced with two possibilities: to seek personal happiness and shut my eyes to all faults in my surroundings, or else to invest my efforts in the difficult and devastating war for the things I deem good and proper.

But I don't think the decision is up to me. I feel that hidden traits within me will determine my course, even though all the hardship and suffering it will entail are clear to me. But I wonder whether I have the strength and the ability to achieve what I want. I also wonder if what I want will be the right thing?

Dear God, if You've kindled a fire in my heart, allow me to burn that which should be burned in my house - the House of Israel. And as You've given me an all-seeing eye, and an all-hearing ear, give me, as well, the strength to scourge, to caress, to uplift. And grant that these words be not empty phrases but a credo for my life. Toward what am I aiming? Toward all that which is best in the world, and of which there is a spark within me.

I wouldn't talk about all this with mother. But perhaps even if I said nothing, she would understand. Here I'm among strangers. They don't know me, don't understand me. Nor do I know them. I sometimes think I'm lacking in sensitivity and feeling. I don't love anyone. As a matter of fact, I like everyone and look for the good in people, and if I find it, I like and respect them to a certain extent. But this doesn't count. I've really only loved mother, my brother, grandmother, and the memory of my father.

Here I love only the land. But it's far too big, too vast to return my love – and besides, this is not a living love.

Perhaps subconsciously I love myself – but not the way others love themselves. For other things take precedents on my scale of values – which is why people call me an *idealist*. I find this ridiculous. Even if I wanted to, I could not be different than I am. I couldn't possibly live without looking for that which seems right to me, without attempting to make the things that are right attainable. And this is certainly not to my credit. It's all a part of my nature.

So much for myself. Now what can I say about the world around me – the world that is virtually destroying itself? Or about the tens of thousands of people perishing daily? How shall I grieve for them on the eve of Rosh Hashanah?



**"דעותנו", במה לשיח חינוכי רעיוני
מזכירות "הנוער הציוני העולמית" - ישראל
"Deothenu", a Forum for educational and ideological dialogue
Mazkirut Hanoar Hatzioni Haolamit – Israel**

About the suffering, the pain, the injustice... what can I say, and to whom? He knows – thus there is nothing for me to say on this solemn evening.

Do I believe in God? I don't know. For me He is more a symbol and expression of the moral forces in which I believe. Despite everything, I believe the world was created for good and that there is nothing on earth so evil that a ray of light can't seep through, or a pinch of good can't be seen.

These are just words. But life will speak for itself; it will justify itself. I know my words are those of one who knows very little about the suffering and evil in the world. My road still lies ahead...

I'm entirely alone, independent, responsible only to myself. Presently that's what's good about life.