FRIENDSHIP IN THE GHETTO, THE FOREST, AND BEYOND: A STORY OF TWO YIDDISH POETS

Presented by

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THE YIDDISH LITERARY GROUP “YOUNG VILNA”
IN THE FRONT ROW: SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (CENTER)
AND AVROHOM SUTZKEVER (SECOND FROM RIGHT)
VILNA: A CENTER OF HEBREW AND YIDDISH PUBLISHING
VILNA GHETTO, 1941-1943
SHMERKE AND SUTZKEVER IN THE VILNA GHETTO, JULY 1943
Hymn of Youth

Our song is filled with grieving,  
Bold our step, we march along,  
Though the toe the gateway’s watching,  
Youth comes storming with their song:

Young are they, are they  
whose age won’t bind them,  
Years don’t really mean a thing,  
Elders also, also, also, can be children  
In a newer, freer spring.

Those who roam upon the highways,  
Those whose step with hope is strong,  
From the ghetto youth salutes them  
And their greetings send along.

Young are they...

We remember all our tyrants,  
We remember all our friends,  
And we pledge that in the future  
Our past and present blend.

Young are they...

So we’re girding our muscles,  
In our ranks we’re planting steel,  
Where a blacksmith, builder marches,  
We will join them with our zeal!

Young are they...

This song written by S. Kacerginski (see note about author in *Fringing*), was dedicated to the children’s and youth club in the Vilno ghetto. Composer is Bayse Rubin who is believed to have survived the war.
SUTZKEVER, “UNDER YOUR STARRY HEAVEN”

Under Your Starry Heaven
Under your white starry heaven
Offer me your pale white hand.
All my words are flowing teardrops,
I would place them in your hand.
Gone the luster from their brightness,
Seen through morbid cellar view —
And I no longer have my own space
To reflect them back to you.

My devoted God I offer
Everything that I possess,
As the fire that I suffer
Fills each fiery day I pass.
Only in the holes and cellars
With deadly rest my days I share.
I run higher — over spire
Searching where are you, oh where?

I am chased by phantom beings
Stairs and courtyards goad me too.
There I hang a broken bowstring -
And I sing once more to you:
Under your white starry heaven
Offer me your pale white hand.
All my words are flowing teardrops,
I would place them in your hand.
SORTING BOOKS FOR THE “PAPER BRIGADE”
PASSING THE GATE TO THE VILNA GHETTO
THE POETS AS PARTISANS

Shmerke

Sutzkever
SUTZKEVER IN FRONT OF THE RUINS OF THE YIVO BUILDING
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ABRAHAM SUTZKEVER, ISRAEL ZELIGMAN, AND GERSHON ABRAMOVITSH, WITH A WAGON OF RECOVERED MATERIALS AND OBJECTS, JULY 1944
THE MATERIALS ARE SORTED, JULY 1944. SITTING ON RIGHT: ABBA KOVNER (COMMANDER OF THE UNITED PARTISAN ORGANIZATION OF THE VILNA Ghetto), IN CENTER: ABRAHAM SUTZKEVER
SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI WITH RESCUED ART AND NEWSPAPERS
SUTZKEVER’S SUITCASE FOR TRANSPORTING DOCUMENTS OUT OF SOVIET LITHUANIA
(IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL)
FROM LEFT: SHMERKE, SUTZKEVER, YITZHAK ZUCKERMAN (LEADER OF WARSAW Ghetto Uprising), AND CHAIM GRADE (POET AND NOVELIST FROM YOUNG VILNA).

WARSAW, 1946
Abraham Sutzkever (in Israel)
SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (IN BUENOS AIRES)
כזאי, עמידה בצורתו, ועמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורתו, עמידה בצורות.