

**LETTER TO THE SURVIVOR MITZVAH PROJECT  
FROM HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR MANYA KEMEROVA FROM BELARUS**

*"I am Mariya Kemerova from Belarussia. Greetings my dear American friends. Hearing from you tells me that in distant America, someone remembers me, a person practically from another dimension.*

*Running from the enemy we left behind our comfortable dwellings, left our photos and all our belongings, and about this sorrow nobody ever speaks: we left behind our old people, who met all pleas to leave with refusals since "who would touch them, old people?"*

*But of course they did touch them, they burned them alive.*

*So parents grabbed their children and fled. Our lives were spared but our roots were destroyed. Nothing was left of the Jewish community. Not a memory, no language, no holidays, no schools, no synagogues, and above all no old people, the roots, who could raise the young ones, like mother earth feeds offshoots and leaves.*

*But these shoots and leaves now had to begin from nothing. And this "nothing" did not remember its G-d, because it didn't even know its own language, and so it did not know how to pray. And there was no one to teach, no one to guide. Nothing.*

*That is why our correspondence is dear to me personally, my dear American friends. You are my roots.*

*I save all the letters that I have received from you and often reread them. You see, from my past, I have only one thing, just one photograph: my grandfather and grandmother on my father's side.*

*It is all that remains for me of my life from before the war, although I don't know a thing about them, who they were, where they lived, what they did, how they laughed, and about what and whom they cried over.*

*I will bring this conversation with you to a close. I don't write, I simply speak with you about whatever comes into my head. Be happy, my dear ones.*

*Mariya"*