

LOCKET

Under similar circumstances to Marta Goren, Dita Gurlitz received a locket that symbolized parting, identity and family all at once, but for her and her family a different fate awaited, and so the pendant assumed a unique meaning. Sarah and Yechiel Gurlitz of Bedzin, Poland, brought Dita, their only daughter, then six, to a Polish friend. Sensing that they would not return to see their daughter, they left her with a locket containing a picture of her and them, along with a letter she was to read when she was older.

My beloved little girl, more precious than anything,

When I gave birth to you, my beloved, I never thought that after six-and-a-half years I would be forced to write you a letter like this. I saw you last on your sixth birthday, on 13 December 1943. I was under the illusion that I'd see you again before we left, but now I know that will not happen. I don't want to endanger you. We are traveling Monday and today is Friday evening [...] I take with me your lovely image, as you were in our home, your cute childish voice, the scent of your pure body, the pace of your breathing, your smile and your cry; I take with me the vast fear and terror that a mother's heart is not capable of forgetting for even one moment... remember well your honored grandmothers and grandfathers, your aunts and uncles and the whole family. Guard the memories of us all please, do not blame us. As for me, your mother, forgive me, forgive me my dear child for giving birth to you. My intention was to bring you into the world in your community and live your life, and if things turned out differently, it is not our fault; therefore I plead, my dear little and only chick, do not blame us. Try to be good like your father and forefathers, love your substitute parents and their family, who will certainly tell you about us. I want you to value how much they are sacrificing of themselves of their own will. Another thing I want you to know, is that your mother stood tall, despite all the humiliations that befell us from our enemies, and if she is to die, she will die without condemnation, without crying, rather a smile will cross her lips in scorn of her hangmen.

I grasp you to my heart, kiss you passionately, and bless you with all the strength of a mother's heart and love. Your mother.³

To her great fortune, Dita's parents survived, and they all made Aliyah.

Both Marta's pendant and Dita's locket symbolize separation and connection, and take on distinctive meanings that range between the personal and the familial, as well as their natural identity and a new identity the girls were forced to assume while hidden with their rescuer families.



Dita Gerlitz – Locket, Yad Vashem Archives