

(Received 4/3/69).

Robben Island Gaol,
P.O. Robben Island.

5th February, 1969.

Mr Benjamin Pogrand,
P.O. Box 1138,
Johannesburg.

My dearest Benjie,

Thank you for your letter of 27th December written, partly, as you admit, to religiously keep your promise to write soon made in your letter of 18th December. It is always a pleasure to hear from you even if you write merely to tell me that no rain has fallen in Joh'burg for months.

And thank you a lot for Mrs Taylor's letter. It is the more poignant because of what you have told me about her. What can one say, Benjie, on such occasions? Is it good to attempt to bandage every wound? Aren't some wounds a private concern: what they term umvaniediwa in Xhosa ("That which I feel alone"); the type which we nurse like some secret disease?

Thank you for the books: they'll keep me fully occupied. As you know I have no urgent studies this year and I have learnt to appreciate Lord Wolston's references to a "purposeless" freedom. I am, however, studying Nederlands - a year's course - with the Maxwell Instituut of Utrecht. Theo Kloppenberg about whom I told you in 1963 - he's Dutch - has arranged for me to take the course. He is now back in Holland; was banned in Durban.

When I wrote to you I had not yet received the dictionary. I have now. It, and the American Judaism Reader. Thank you immensely for both. Without sounding like Oliver Twist, may I ask you for more books by Jewish authors - particularly Malamud, Golden and others. Only don't send me anything by Leon Uris. I have become allergic to him.

You will have met Veronica by now and will have learnt why we required the extra twelve rands. It was a pleasure having them here, Benjie, and I thank you sincerely for all you are doing.

One point I couldn't understand in your letter, though. You say you have written to the O.C. to ask if it is "necessary to send money like this for meals". Do you mean is it necessary for Veronica and the kids to pay for their meals or do you mean the account could be sent to you after the visit? If it is the necessity for paying that you are questioning then you must direct your question to the Minister of Justice. That is one of the stipulations he made. And I am glad he did, Benjie. I feel happier knowing that Veronica and the children pay for their meals. And so does she: ask her.

I have written to the O.C. requesting permission to open a Savings Account at the local Post Office. Ten Rands a month will be quite sufficient. As I said in my last letter you could send that straight to the post office.

It relieved me to note that your attitude to your case was quite relaxed. I had written to assure Nell Marquard that the Jew boy who's been through his bris milo and Bar Mitzvah shouldn't mind a year at Pretoria Central - at least not now!

I am also relieved to know that there has been a bust up between you and Norma. In a way I prayed for it. I don't see why you should get yourself a house-broken mare. You're young enough to house-break and tame your own wild mare. No "hand-me-downs" Benjie!!

It is good to know you are writing again. Certainly, most certainly I'll be glad to get your articles on "Talking it Over". I should like you to pin these fellows down on their conception of heaven. Is it a geographical locality? If not what is it? If not, where was Christ from then? Where did he return to? Pin them down to concrete, unambiguous categorical statements! I'll look forward to that. Let them reconcile the historical Jewish Jesus with the eternal Christ in unmythical language. It's time they did!

Incidentally, I have been hearing from Arthur Blaxall,^f of late, and he has sent me some very interesting and enlightened publications of the World Congress of Faiths.

My mother and my sister-in-law should be visiting me some time in April if all goes well. It's something to look forward to.

About the purchases at Stuttafords that I wrote you of I have received no word up to now. I shall make inquiries and will be pleased if you do the same. Also I asked Eulalie Stott to get me an electric iron, sloop pail and a bath. I gave the list to Veronica, I also gave her some old trousers of mine I wanted you to have altered as you'd done with the new ones.

I'll write again. For the present, Benjie, best wishes.
And love to Jenny.

Affectionately, Bob.

Did you say you sent me some Hemingway books? Sorry I didn't receive them. Could you try again?

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