

Appendix i



Issy's letter (translated) to his Mother
from Durban – 14 years old

Durban, 3 June 1904

DEAREST MOTHER, live happily as well my dear sister, live happily too. Dear Mother and sister, as far as our health is concerned, I am able to write to you, that we are praise (thank) G-d well, and please G-d, none the worse to hear from you.

Dear Mother, eight days ago, we received a long letter from you, and we have answered, with a card. And now we will answer that letter fully.

Dear Mother, now you have no cause for worry anymore. I am thank G-d well and I had no trouble getting off the boat.

I was let down the boat easily. They did not even ask me if I had any money.

They only asked me who I was going to. But I could not answer so I asked one Englishman to speak for me.

This much English I managed to learn on the ship I asked him thus: "I can't speak; you speak for me." This is how it is so he spoke for me, and said that I could not speak [English] and that I was going to a brother. So they gave me a 6XCX3 [official letter] saying that I may go off the ship. So I immediately fastened the basket with the rope; and I took it to where they let down all the baskets.

And my lovely coat – if you remember it – I left hanging where I was sleeping.

And they let us all down in a small boat.

The small boat takes everybody to the shore. This small boat is called a tug.

Because the big ship does not go the shore, the small boat takes all the

passengers to the shore.

Before I arrived in Durban I thought that Bere-Leib would come on to the ship to take me off.

But I had a letter [from him] before I reached Durban – in East London (also a port). And furthermore, he wrote that he would not be able to come on to the ship – as one is not allowed to go onto the ship.

I was not worried, because he said that as soon as I reached the shore – I would find them there. However, when I got off, I could not see any of them. However, the same Christian gentleman, who spoke for me before, told me that he would take me to Bere-Leib. We both started going – and there we saw Bere-Leib with Pessa-Chayin waiting to meet me. And as soon as we saw each other we kissed warmly. And I kissed him several times for you and Peslen. We sat in a Ricksha – that is, a *izwoschik* (a man who drives a horse and cart) and we were on our way – and now I was in Africa. And immediately on the second day he had already made me into an “Afrikaner” a pair of yellow shoes and short trousers, and long socks and a straw hat. And this is South Africa! In one minute you become...

[frayed paper – illegible]

I have thus managed everything and I do not have to show money.

Dear Mother, you worried for nothing everybody telling you all sorts of stories.

Dear Mother, please do not worry anymore. Everything will come right one day.

Meishel should only come out of the army and everything will be well.

Here, everything thank G-d is not too bad. One makes a living, even if one does not make fortunes.

Now dear Mother what you asked me to write about, that is, how it was on the boat with my luggage... I had no losses – not even a *grossen's* worth. I bought a small basket in London and put everything I had with me in it, for daily use. Before I went on the ship, I had no idea what a ship would be like.

It was not like a house and not at all how I imagined... should a strong wind blow, the ship rocks strongly and everything on the tables falls off. But this is nothing. The first two days are the worst – when one brings up everything. Afterwards there is no problem anymore. I had a bad passage from Bremmon to London – these were *chazershe* boats – but luckily it was only for two days. The ships that go from London to Africa are big and on the inside resemble palaces. The floors are covered. The food is very good – it is served several times a day – and you can choose

what you want. The things that I took with me are not very useful. I did not take enough shirts with. The *Gatkes* are not needed.

Dear Mother, all the things that you gave me to eat on the boat were all good. The *Imberlach* were out of this world [*Antik*]. And you know (your daughter) Pesel – she made a *kratzle* [party] with a few *Imberlach*.

You gave me 20 and I found 16. This is not nice [“Es is mees” – “phe” – “chaloshes”] if you gave me 20 and I found 4 missing I did not count on having so many, so I was not short. Dear Mother, a fortnight ago, I wrote that if you get a good buyer you should sell; but now I have changed my mind and you must not sell. Let it remain as *eindeinkung* [token of remembrance]. And the half ... let it be left. But, dear Mother you should not worry about anything whatever. I have left at home, keep it. I have no more to write. Remain well my mother and sister.

From,
me

Israel Ben Lazer

I would like to greet my uncle Laven and Shneier and Shorelin – they should be well and also greet my aunt Eten and Havnen Chana, Yosin and my Skavrone and Sheine-Yentel and Afreilin Chizer – Long should they live. And greet Aunty Shorrel and her children. Furthermore, I send greetings to Laifen and Itzel – they should only be well.

Also I send greetings to Mendel and his wife and son and they should only be well. I also greet Yentlin and Chana Soren and they should only be well. And I greet all acquaintances [*bekante*]. Ask Leibken to please write to me. And I greet Yankelen and Feifkein. A hearty mazeltov to Yankelen. I also greet Havlen and her son. I also greet Aunt Basel and Chaim Osherin and Dobrin and the children.

I greet Mordechai Malish – and everybody and Belin and all my acquaintances.

From me

Israel Ben Lazer

Dear sister Pesil,

You asked me to write... I will write.

On the boat they really [*takeh*] gave me *Fettere kneidlach*, like at home.

And in... I have really not felt [lonely], because there were other boys like myself.

My dear sister. It is very late. Be well, from me

Israel Ben Lazer

The Unlikely Forester

You are a very big *naserke*. You ate up 4 *imberlach* which mommy gave to me. Mommy gave me 20, and I only found 16. Who else could have eaten them? ... well, this time (alright),

But, let it not happen again. I have no more to write. Be well. From your dear brother

Israel Ben Lazer