

Hi everyone,

I have been "promoted" at work. Two weeks ago all the professors were asked to report to the secretaries whether they want to teach a graduate course next year. A graduate course is a course for graduate students, that is, students who got their first degree (B.Sc.) and continue their studies towards the Ph.D. (in mathematics, in the states, there is no 2nd degree in between). I, for instance, taught in the first quarter the undergraduate course in Linear Algebra and was supposed to teach in the next quarter an undergraduate course in calculus. Anyway - I looked over the list of graduate courses and chose a course that looked good for me (PDE - for those of you who must know). I went to my "sponsor" here, Prof. Stanly Osher, to ask him some questions about the content of the course and the background of the students. After about 5 minutes of talking, in which he kept saying to me "Oh, that's the course for you; you'll love it", he suddenly said: "You know that you're gonna teach that course in the next quarter". I said, surprised, "Well, no. Next quarter I teach an undergraduate course". So he said: "Oh no, forget about the other course. I want you to teach this graduate course". When I demanded to know what's going on, he said that the professor who had to teach that course (Prof. Anderson) is leaving the university to IBM, and that I am the most convenient and natural choice. Naturally, he didn't share that thought neither with me, nor with the secretaries or anyone else. When I kept the surprised look on my face he said: "Hey! I thought you'd be grateful!". Anyway, that affair is now known in the corridors of the math building as "The Anderson Shift", or, as I prefer to call it, "The Anderson-Tassa Shift".

Indeed, teaching an advanced course for more serious students will be much better than teaching boring elementary stuff for a bunch of empty heads (the undergraduate students here are nice but very weak).

On Thursday, "ner sheni", I had an extremely long long-distance phone call with Haim's house, where the main occasion in Hanuka in Israel takes place every year. For those among you who don't know Haim and the tradition that was established by his legendary mother, Judith, I'll just say that many of the gang which revolves around our school-class meet there every "ner rishon" of Hanuka. This year the meeting was postponed by one day to "ner sheni" since it was exactly 20 years after we met for the first time (our class, "kita dalet 3" in Gretz school in Tel Aviv, began its career on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1973). It was just great speaking with so many old friends in the old country. Since I'm usually very sentimental, I was very happy that I didn't feel "blue" about being away. The main reason must be the fantastic "ner rishon" party that we had in our building with the Israeli tenants. They are all very nice, though not very young (all are UCLA faculty members), and we had a lovely evening to remember. It was so good that this Wednesday ("ner shemini") we invite some of them to our house for a sequel. There's only one thing which bothers me - can you explain to me, what's the big problem in making the doughnuts as good as in Israel? Is it so much to ask?

Hanuka Sameach,  
Tamir