

Hi Everyone,

I am again in foreign countries after a long stay in Israel and this is the beginning of a new "season" of letters.

The idea of writing non-personal letters to a large number of friends was born in my head on December the 15th, 1989. It was the first democratic election day in Chile, after 16 years of Pinoche's dictatorship. I was there, in Santiago, with Haim Nessyahu and Michal Tuchler - my two partners to a long 6-month trip in South America, which we just began. I was so impressed by the events of that historic day that I wanted to share it with many people. I decided to write just one letter with the complete story; I sent it to my parents and asked them to make a copy for Haim's mother, Judith. At her house, which is a center to all our gang, everybody else could read the story. That way - I was able to share our adventures with numerous people.

I labeled that first letter with the title "Journey story, no. 1". I expected to have more strong impressions to share. Indeed there were. Twelve long letters were written during that trip. When Haim and I returned to Israel on June the 11th, 1990, our parents welcomed us in the airport and Judith was holding in her hands a printed book. Those were my 12 letters that she printed into one book. That book was read by many people since, some of them I don't even know. I myself read parts of that book again and again in order to revive the memories from this wonderful period of our life (yes, I can't deny it, I'm hopelessly nostalgic).

When I arrived in LA, last year, I didn't think of doing the same thing. However, very quickly I felt the natural urge of telling the things that happened to me to my friends. Unfortunately, none of them was there. Fortunately, however, the Email was. This way (and excuse me for the cliché) I could feel closer and compensate for the vast geographical distance.

I must admit that I had many hesitations about the continuation of this little tradition, now that my number one reader is so far away, in a distance that nothing can compensate for. But I have made up my mind. I hope that you will enjoy reading those letters and that they will motivate you to write back to me, or, even better, come to visit.

Currently I am in the city of Metz, the capitol of Lorraine (like in "Quiche-Lorraine"), France. I am spending here 3.5 weeks in the local university, as a guest of an old friend from the army (Itai Shafrir), whom I haven't seen for more than 7 years. After the hectic 2.5 months in Israel, I enjoy the peace and quiet here, do my work (but I try not to strain myself too much), listen to the wonderful Israeli CDs that I got for my birthday and read many books, much more than I usually do (I strongly recommend "Yesh Yeladim Zigzag" by David Grossmann). Metz is simply beautiful. It is beautiful in daytime, but at night it is overwhelming. I can't recall many other places in which the buildings, the bridges, the river, the gardens and the squares are being illuminated so beautifully as in Metz. Even when I arrived here at 2AM, 13 long hours after I left my house in Tel-Aviv, carrying 25 kilos on my back and dragging myself across town towards the bed that waited for me - I just had to stop on the bridge and admire the view.

In my free time I did some short travels around: Strasbourg (beautiful, but I couldn't find there anything really special or unique), Luxembourg (beautiful, but not just: it has a very impressive topography which creates wonderful sights) and Belgium: I spent a weekend with friends who live there (Lior Ma'ayan et al) and had a great time in the charming and vivid cities of Brussels and Gent (the capitol of the Flemish part). Not to mention the Leonidas and Godaiva chocolates, the famous sweet gaufre and the not-so-kosher great food that Belgium offers. I also had the dubious pleasure of celebrating here the 14th of July: Metz turned into Beirut and it looked and sounded as though

world war 3 started. Half of the French army landed in front of my house and marched in the streets, while every 3 to 70 year old kid exploded at least 2 kilograms of "kaptsonim", bombs or nuclear rockets. Those who hate Yom Ha-atsma-ut in Israel don't know how grateful they should be.

On Friday I go with Itai to Paris and on Sunday I fly directly to LA. I'm happy for that because I can't stand the heat here any longer (in LA, at least, they have air conditioners), I want to speak again in English and hear Marge, Homer, Lisa and Bart Simpson in their real voices and natural language, I want to stop eating all that French food and start taking off the over-weight, I miss some people in LA and I even miss the routine.

That's all for now. Take care and keep in touch,
Tamir