

Hi everyone,

I returned to LA less than 6 weeks ago and it felt like coming back home. It is very strange, having such feelings for a place other than Israel, but it turns out that the "home chip" up in the head is very easy to reprogram.

LA in the summer is a very cool place. When I say "cool" I mean that the weather is warm and nice, many people wear shorts and sandals, the beaches and pools take a more central place in the schedule and there are festive events such as the Hollywood Bowl: every summer, the LA-Philharmonic moves from The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion to the huge amphitheater in Hollywood (under the famous sign) and hosts also other orchestras and jazz, folk & rock performers. I enjoyed a wonderful Brazilian concert (although the Brazilian gang of UCLA students with whom I went were less impressed) and a classical concert. The summer will end with Beethoven's 9th symphony. Even if the sound is not of first class, the whole event of having a picnic before and listening to music under the stars in the pleasant Hollywood nights is most enjoyable.

Returning from Israel and France to the US, I found again how easy life can be and why Americans keep thinking "is this country great or what?". So many things can be done by phone, prices are usually fair or even low, the service in most places is so efficient and fast, and sometimes is even very pleasant (like in the UCLA medical center where I went for a general physical check-up: "Good morning, Mr. Tassa, my name is Dr. John Fitzgerald. How may I help you. . . ? Certainly... No problem... My pleasure... Have a nice day, Mr. Tassa"). Do not think that one cannot lose his mind also here, due to the strict rigidity of the Americans, annoying bureaucracy or even just tons of junk mail, but overall it is so very convenient here.

In the last month I had the pleasure of having here Eitan Tadmor, my good friend, spiritual guide and (sometimes) headache, as well as Anne Gelb - a PhD student of Prof. David Gottlieb from Brown university (in Providence, near Boston) who returned for a couple of months to UCLA where she was an undergrad student. We spent together a very good time and I got to know some new places in LA: for instance, "Ed Debevic's" - a restaurant in Melrose avenue where the waiters dream of acting and meanwhile making crazy acts to entertain the guests. Despite being substantially older than the rest of the crowd, I really loved and enjoyed the wild and liberated ambiance.

On Tuesday I returned with Anne from Laramie, Wyoming, where we spent the Rosh Hashana weekend with her family. Anne's family moved in 1979 to Laramie since her father was appointed a law professor at the university there, fell in love with the place and stayed there. The state of Wyoming is big, but, together with Alaska, is the least populated among the 50 states. The usual scenery in its south-eastern part, where the town of Laramie is, is vast plains, huge ranches, cows, cowboys, and clear beautiful big sky. It is located high in the Rockies and accommodates some of the more beautiful and unspoiled landscapes in the US. It was very strange to find in this place a small, but proud, close-together and warm Jewish community.

For the first time in my life I did several things: I went to a football game (The Wyoming Cowboys Vs. some losers from Texas who suffered 5 touchdowns, each accompanied by a cannon shoot and overwhelming cheers from the local fans), played pool - billiard (in a dark and smoky bar, for the right atmosphere), ate a buffalo-burger (no kidding) and served as an assistant-rabbi! I helped Ed, Anne's youngest brother who conducted the Rosh Hashana service, correcting his Hebrew when reading the Torah. Ed, a talented and wise young man, conducted the service very skillfully and gave a thought-provoking sermon about the difficulties and the importance of being Jews in such a remote and small place. Just to emphasize the difficulties - the service took place in a small Episcopal church: a screen

hid the cross on the window and, within minutes after the service ended, all the Christian symbols were restored and the room transformed back from a synagogue to a church!

I will conclude here. Please make note of my new office phone number, 310-8254201. The home phone number remains the same.

Shana Tova and Gmar Hatima Tova,  
Tamir