

Dear everyone,

Right now, those of you who are in Israel are probably sitting around the dinner table and dip apples in honey. Here, it is still the year 5755 for six more hours. I'll be greeting the new year at my new neighbors' from the fourth floor - Eitan, Nava, Tali and Michal Tadmor (Eitan, my advisor from Tel Aviv, is spending this year at UCLA). Being familiar with the superb gastronomical talent of Nava - I am looking forward to a delicious, as well as enjoyable evening.

On March the 24<sup>th</sup>, a week before I came to Israel, I wrote to you as follows: "It's a beautiful Friday afternoon: the sky is clear, the sun is bright, it becomes quiet and peaceful here at the university as people start vanishing into a long weekend, and - I have just finished grading the finals in my course and I won't have to deal with students at all until 2:00PM on Thursday, September the 28th, when I'll start my next year's course!". When I wrote that, September the 28th looked to me years away in the future. Now, when I look back on March the 24th, it looks to me like years ago in the past. Indeed, these last 6 months were so full and so intense for me (3 continents, 8 countries, 7 languages, zillion miles...) that it's no wonder that months look like years. Thinking about it, this feeling of mine seems to contradict Albert Einstein's theory, demonstrated by the famous Twin Paradox, which asserts that time goes by in a slower rate for moving bodies; for I am sure that if I could duplicate myself on March the 24th and leave my twin here in LA, his perception of this period would be much shorter than mine. And there's an idea for a paper. . .

Anyway, long or short - it was a great summer. The last "event" in the program of this summer was the visit of Dafna and Avital ("who is Avital? and where did we hear the name Dafna?" some of you may wonder. Since "kol Israel haverim ze la-ze" I assume that you all know each other). Avital flew from Israel to Seattle to visit Dafna and they went on a trip in Dafna's new car along the states of Washington, Oregon and California, LA being the south-most point in their trip. Their 3 day weekend here was great, if not huge. It could have been even huger if they didn't insist on bringing with them the cold weather of Seattle, but Venice beach is fun even in cloudy days. LA, one of the cities with the worst image in the US, proved again to be not-so-bad, even in the eyes of someone from Seattle, one of the cities with the best images in the US.

In the last evening, we went to The Improv - perhaps the most famous comedy club ("more than 10 million jokes told") where everyone appeared before becoming famous, and also after. It was a Monday evening; we weren't asked to pay the usual \$8 entrance fee nor to purchase the usual minimum of 2 drinks. Soon we found out that it was kind-of-amateur night because the comedians were mediocre, if not worse. We did laugh or smile occasionally, but overall and especially compared to my previous visits to this great club - it was bad. After one of the worst comedians finished his pathetic act in front of a nearly empty house, we agreed to stay for only one more act. And who do you think was the next comedian to pass inches from our table and get on stage? Jerry Seinfeld!!! The star and the creator of the number 1 show on TV!!! Needless to say that he didn't have to do much to make us laugh and feel rewarded. And, in fact, he didn't! His act was reluctant and awkward and he recycled many jokes that I knew from his TV show. But Seinfeld is like pizza - even when he's bad he is still pretty good.

And now the summer is over and it is officially the fall. How can you tell that it is fall in LA? Is there "nah-li-eli" and "ha-tsav" like in Israel? Or maybe beautiful foliage like in New England? Perhaps you see more umbrellas and long jackets in the streets? No, no and no. The temperatures may have dropped from hot to warm and the morning haze is thicker, but basically there are no real fall signs here. But you can tell it's fall by the crowds of students in Westwood village and in UCLA which were much emptier in the summer, by the relocating of the LA-Philharmonic concerts from the open Hollywood Bowl back to the closed Dorothy Chandler pavilion, from the beginning of the different

sport league seasons as well as that of the new TV season (and finding, at last, who shot Mr. Burns in The Simpsons).

So, I wish you all, once again, that it will be a beginning of a good and happy year. Shana Tova ve-Gmar Hatima Tova,

Tamir