



May 29, 1996

Dear Howard,

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed reading your pre-Purim dvar Torah, not only because I figure in it so prominently, but also because, as always, it was so substantive.

This has been a mind- and heart-expanding 3 months. I haven't felt so alive since I first stepped foot on this soil 28 years ago. Looking back I realize that I could not have become what and who I am today had I chosen to remain. In New York I found my own voice. But after reconnecting with the quality of interpersonal life here, after countless encounters, both new and old, I am also saddened by ~~what~~ how isolated I've become, how totally self-protective. Taking risks is the very last thing on my list of life's priorities. Here, in contrast, I make myself vulnerable every day and usually I land on my feet. My students adore me, despite my grammatical errors. I enjoy the commute, despite my dependency on others. I'm growing fond of Tel-Aviv University, despite the pettiness and politics. And for the first time I'm experiencing Israel as she is, without a romantic overlay, without mysticism. In fact, my level of observance has plummeted, and I'll have to do a lot of teshuvah when I get back. Yet Jewishly I have never felt more fulfilled. It is lonely sometimes, without Shmoo and Aryeh, but I needed to do this - and only now do I realize that I needed to do it alone.

See you soon.

David