

December, 2008

Dear family, friends, colleagues, and strangers who've opened someone else's mail by mistake,

We hope this letter finds you happy, healthy, and enjoying a restful and restorative holiday season with loved ones. As long as John keeps writing holiday letters, he's determined to use that opening line forever. It's pretty good, right? Tempting as it is to send a single-sentence update this year—"Ayelet is **pregnant!**"—I will elaborate and illustrate to add value to the product. Also, please note the careful and tasteful use of **bold print** to help you review important points.

Attentive readers will have inferred, correctly, that we are expecting a baby. At long last, we reached a point in our personal and professional lives when creating a little version of ourselves seemed a smart and feasible way to make the world a better place. Since **June 19, 2008** (see Exhibit A), we have been calling the **baby-boy-to-be** "Blasty." Why? As you no doubt recall from high school biology class, the mass of 70-100 cells that cluster together prior to implantation is referred to as a "**blastocyst**." This begins to form about 5 days after conception and continues nearly until the time that a home pregnancy test registers positive. So what better nickname than **Blasty**? We will probably (OK, definitely) choose another name for the actual child. We're working on a short list of names and will make a final selection after the birth. Suggestions are welcome—keep in mind Blasty's **stunning good looks** as of week 20 (see Exhibit B).

The due date for Blasty's departure from the womb is **February 22, 2009**. This is not without controversy, however, as we believe that we can identify the date of conception more accurately than the rough estimate provided by medical personnel. We place the due date about 5-6 days later. And speaking of rough estimates, don't even get me started about the **bogus counting system** that's used to indicate how many weeks a pregnancy has progressed. One popular system credits two weeks of pregnancy even before the moment of conception. Heck, by that measure you can call me two weeks pregnant!

Using this conventional yet deeply flawed system, photos show **Ayelet at "29 weeks"** (see Exhibit C) and **John at "28 weeks"** (Exhibit D).



Exhibit A: Positive home pregnancy test on Thurs, 6/19/08. This result was later confirmed by a competent professional paid to analyze urine.



Exhibit B: Blasty at about 20 weeks. Note the powerful appendages and large, claw-like hands. We believe Blasty may grow up to be an NFL quarterback, or a bird of prey.

(over)



Exhibit C: Ayelet at 29 weeks pregnant, showing appropriate weight gain and looking good!



Exhibit D: John at week 28 of sympathetic pregnancy, with sympathetic weight gain of 30 lbs.

*In other news, we each made one good year's worth of progress in our careers since last year at this time. Though our scholarly works have not appeared on **best-seller lists**, a search of the PsychINFO database this morning shows that John's articles have been cited 630 times by other authors, and Ayelet's have been cited 709 times. It's a shame that we cannot redeem these citations for **cash or prizes!** Following her third-year departmental review, Ayelet received very supportive feedback from her senior colleagues at Penn and her contract has been renewed for the full tenure track. Ayelet also completed her required clinical training and will be taking exams for **licensure as a professional psychologist** soon. If all goes well, she will be allowed to call herself a "psychologist" according to state and federal law. Interestingly, it is John who is paid by the state (New Jersey) for his teaching, scholarship, and service, but he is not required to obtain a governmental seal of approval to go about his business.*

*This year, with our encouragement and support, the **Philadelphia Phillies** won the World Series.*

*Our families are doing well, and our nieces have become endearingly verbal. **Maya**, nearly 4 years old, is fond of saying "**Aunt Ayelet and Uncle John are the best!**" [note: check accuracy before printing and mailing holiday letter]. **Bella**, 20 months old, does not yet say this, but everyone knows she's thinking it.*

We hope that you and your loved ones have a joyful holiday season and a wonderful new year.

Wishing you all the very best,

Ayelet & John

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