

Bein Hazmanim in Yerushalayim

JERUSALEM REFLECTIONS

This year, Tisha B'Av as a *nidche* fast was pushed off until *Yom Rishon* (Sunday). However, the feeling of the impending fast permeated the atmosphere well beforehand. Usually, over here Shabbos afternoons means streets packed with parents, children and buggies – quite a congestion. This Shabbos, however – *erev taanis* – with temperatures reaching 33c and above, the streets were deserted.

Normally, late Shabbos afternoon, the *minyanim* assemble for *Mincha* and afterwards parents gather their children on the way home for *seudah shlishis*. This Shabbos, however, everything took place earlier, finishing well before *shekiah*. With doors to the *mirpeset* (balcony) and windows wide open – and otherwise all quiet outside – the sound of *zemirot* drifted up and down between apartments, and one could join in with the neighbours! The *zemirot* were different this time, rather a somber '*Ani Ma'amim*,' or '*Rachem*'. One felt even more the need to join in.

After *shekiah* – from north Jerusalem we can actually see the sun set on the horizon – we waited patiently as the sky darkened and for *Bein Ha'shemashos* to turn into night. We recited '*Baruch Hamavdil*', changed our clothes and shoes, and went to shul. There's no need for a shul car park over here or a car to get there as most people have a number of

shuls within a few minutes' walk. So, Tishah B'Av arrived.

After the fast, it didn't take long for the atmosphere to change, felt most of all when the *bocherim* arrived home – *yeshiva ketana* boys from nearby and *yeshiva gedola* boys usually from further afield. The journey home this time took longer than usual as the buses were packed – baggage, hat boxes and more – not a spare space to be found. It was standing room only!

If not made already, holiday plans are hatched – revolving around where and when one's *yeshiva* would be making its camps – and then the family makes its own plans. Left with doubt where to go? You could choose from the many activities advertised on posters which appear straight away on billboards. Their adverts also fill the pages of the abundant free magazines which come through the door. You could choose from north to south of the country – geographical wonders, historical sites and of course the *Mekomos Hakedoshim*!

A firm favourite is the *Yam HaGadol* (Mediterranean) with its golden beaches. Not all beaches are 'kosher'. However, those permitted for the frum community stated on notices which appear separately. A popular destination is Bat Yam, about an hour by bus from Jerusalem. It'll cost you about 40 shekels a person *holuch v'chozur* (both ways

travel), although if you have a car and can get there on your own, entrance is actually free. Each particular beach has a name: Bat Yam called "*Shiras Hayam*". Its name also appears on street signs in English – it's called 'Sea Poem' beach – the person in charge of signs at the municipality obviously not having opened a *Tanach* since his youth!

Hiking is also popular, on one of the many well-known trails in the National Parks. They're graded for difficulty: an inexperienced hiker is well advised to keep away from one for experienced ones if you value your life! Wherever you go, be sure to take plenty of water, as temperatures in the north of the country can reach 40c. Many parks also include a *nachal* – a fresh water stream – formed from a waterfall or from water coming up from underground. You can cool off in its waters, and take a dip, too, if there's a pool. Why not? After all, it's a land with streams of water, coming forth in valley and mountain!

After three weeks of activity we were left exhausted. Bochurim still needed to be fitted out – they have a sharp eye for the best deals – and for the girls it's school supplies. As every year, the surest sign of getting back to normal was when we gathered for the *Yom Kippur Koton* prayer, *erev Rosh Chodesh Ellul*. We need the sound of the *shofar* to wake us up!

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Street posters offering all types of activities and outings for Bein Hazmanim

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