

that normalization with Saudi Arabia is definitely possible, according to his personal

“The Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is a young man, we know his past

is possible. There is indeed a new era of

month.

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JERUSALEM REFLECTIONS

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From Pesach to Shavuos

Over here in Jerusalem, as everywhere else, the journey from Pesach to Shavuos took seven weeks. It began with the week after Pesach – the last week of *Bein Hazmanim* – which each year decidedly belongs to the *yeshiva bochurim*.

For *yeshiva ketana* boys, the centre of attraction is the *Iggud* trip – the organization for *Bnei Yeshiva* – providing a virtual twenty-four hour day of activity usually in the north of the country. Bearing rucksacks, walking shoes, and swimwear, they arrive at a central location in each *shechuna* (district), armed with a letter from parents granting permission, since they are under eighteen. They’re greeted by a long line of busses, engines roaring, ready to set off. Finally, the food is loaded on, the latecomers arrive, and they’re off! The driver can be seen saying *Tefillas Haderech* with trepidation and great *kavanah*!

Heading north – it’s the most popular part of the country – attractions along the way invariably include an amusement park, water park, *kayakim* and *Chammei Tiveria* (Tiveria Hot Springs). Finally, in the early hours of the next morning they return home, relieved parents waiting up for them. At a cost of 100 *shekels* (£22) per person – subsidized – its good value.

For *yeshiva gedolah talmidim*, the week also belongs to them. However, in their case it works differently, and

they organise their own adventure. Again, it’s in the north of the country; one option to rent a *tzimmer* – a holiday home – for a few days, likely on one of the *moshavim* up there. It’ll be equipped with a small pool, jacuzzi, snooker table and more, set in beautiful surroundings. A good hike will also be on the itinerary, easier after Pesach than Sukkos as the summer heat is not yet with us.

Its soon after Yom Tov that the arrangements are finalised, and the group assembles. It’s organized well – an army quartermaster would be proud – one brings food, another drinks, one’s mother cooks something and another something else. The next contact they have with parents is to inform them that they have arrived and are already in the pool! At a rental of 1,500 *shekels* (about £325) per night – expensive for a family – when divided between ten boys and ten beds it works out reasonable.

So, *Bein Hazmanim* eventually came to an end, *talmidim* returning to *yeshiva* and *kollel yungeleit* filling their places in shul, seats hardly left long enough to get cold. Of course, it’s summer time – the clocks went forward about ten days before Pesach – sunset now at about 7:40pm. It brings with it long Shabbos afternoons, replacing the Friday nights of winter, each rewarding in their time.

Before long *Pesach Sheni* arrived,



Wine from the Shemita year graces the Yom Tov table.



A Jerusalem bakery flowing with cheesecake;



A tour company offers transport to Meron on Lag B'Omer

then *Lag B'Omer*, over here virtually a *Yom Tov*, the multitudes converging on Meron as usual from all parts of the country, leaving towns noticeably emptier. We can’t forget the tragedy of two years ago, engraved in our hearts, also the poorly organised proceedings of last year. But this year was different. Well organised in advance, with detailed instructions and timetables appearing in the national press, the day proved to be a *Kiddush Hashem*. Run by *Chareidi* ushers with police taking only a back seat, its hats off to Chief of Operations, Yossi Deutsch. We look forward to the same next year.

So, the Yom Tov of Shavuos arrived, flowers blooming, cheese cake flowing, and *Erw Tavshilin* on the table. But here in *Eretz Yisrael* there was another cause for *simcha*: wine from the *Shmittah* year. Whilst grape juice with *Kedushas Shevi'is* was already available for Sukkos, wine – obviously taking longer to produce – only recently was ready to consume. It comes in a few varieties – most popular being dry and sweet red – purchased not from usual shops, but from selected private locations. At the cost of about two-thirds of usual wine, and beautifully fresh, it added *simcha* to the Yom Tov table; another reason why this night was different from all other nights!

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