

# Bein Hazemanim under siege

## JERUSALEM REPORT

Over here in *Eretz Yisrael* immediately on *Motzoei Tisha B'Av* there's usually a burst of activity. An hour or two after the fast goes out *bochurim* begin arriving home from their yeshivas around the country. Clearly identifiable by the sudden appearance of cases and hat boxes, clambering off buses, they certainly make their presence felt! The next day, *minyanim* in shul are packed, standing room only, resembling more a railway station than a place of worship, as friends greet each other after a long absence!

The day following Tisha B'Av, couldn't be more different to Tisha B'Av itself. At this time of year, temperatures can reach the mid-30s centigrade, so of course on Tisha B'Av the streets are quiet, other than people going to and from shul. The next day's a complete contrast, buses racing, shops busy and people going here and there. Within a day or two tourists start arriving, the airport reporting peak activity, and so, too, the restaurants and takeaways, packed with American speakers!

This year, of course, it was quite different, with mounting tension as ene-



**A Jerusalem supermarket well-stocked for Rosh Hashanah with honey, honey cake, dates, wine and pomegranates.**

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mies on Israel's borders threatened action, especially on Tisha B'Av itself. At the *Kosel*, always well attended on Tisha B'Av, when the day passed relatively peacefully, the atmosphere was electric, not seen since the 1991 Gulf War. As the fast went out there was dancing and singing – "*Ani Maanim*" and "*Acheinu Kol Beis Yisrael*" – in unison, not only in the plaza in front of the *Kosel*, but all the way back to the opposite side.

So *bein hazemanim* arrived, *bochurim* putting in more hours learning than usual, Torah providing our real protection. We were also reminded, as during *zeman*, only to listen to the news enough to know what was going on for one's protection; to do more would be the cause of *bittul Torah*. *Kollelim* also requested their *talmidim* to continue coming in as usual, attending *sefer* as usual for a few more days.

No surprise this year that the north of the country – that's north of Tiveria – remained largely out of bounds, hotels, guest houses and *tzimmerim* – holiday chalets – in that part of the country losing out on what would usually be peak season. Many lost a year's *parnassah*.

As usual during *bein hazemanim*, families were seen all over packing up cars – owned or hired – and heading off to a holiday destination. Often, this means swapping apartments with family or friends in another part of the country, so for the same cost as staying at home it's a break for everyone. For yeshiva *bochurim*, a favourite pastime includes cycling and hiking, this time asked to be extra careful wherever they went.

So, *bein hazemanim* came to an end, its conclusion marked as every year by *tefillas Yom Kippur Kotton* on *erev Rosh Chodesh Ellul*. It's the best attended one of the year, since everyone's at home at the end of the holiday period and of course Rosh Hashanah is in sight. This year it was particularly well attended due to the security situation.

In shul now, *Birchas Kohanim* – here *kohanim* recite it every day – has taken on a new dimension, the *tzibbur* anxious for their *bracha* – '*Yevarechchah Hashem v'Yishmarechchah*' – and afterwards of course it's the sound of the *shofar*. You may well hear it again in the evening when the boys assemble for *Maariv*, one of their favourite pastimes being to pick it up and attempt a few blasts. The sound you'll hear will unlikely arouse you to *teshuva*!

Let the year and its blessings begin!

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