

Notables Flock to Israel While Many Others Await End of Hostilities in Mideast

While tourism to Israel has slowed considerably compared with the same period last year, there are nonetheless thousands of visitors currently in Israel who have chosen to remain there or come during the present time.

The country continues to have open access to incoming and outgoing visitors, mainly thanks to the uninterrupted flights of El Al Israel Airlines. Consequently, those tourists who were in Israel when the hostilities broke could leave the country with little delay if they wished.

On the other hand, a number of famous visitors have been going to Israel precisely at this time to show their support. Among these are New York Philharmonic Orchestra conductor Zubin Mehta, comedian Jackie Mason, author and Nobel Peace Prize winner Eli Wiesel and Israeli actors Haim Topol and Mike Burstyn, both of whom were performing on Broadway.

"My place is in Israel. I feel best here," says Zubin Mehta. "I am pleased that I am here anytime, especially now. I just couldn't be anywhere else now. Thirty years ago the people of Israel adopted me, so where else could I be?" he asked.

Besides 400 young students from Yeshiva University currently in Israel, there are several dignitaries from the Scandinavian countries also visiting Israel, and the country is also awaiting the arrival of support missions from Italy, France and England.

Israel's courageous compliance with U.S. demands that the country not retaliate against the recent Iraqi missile attacks has generated considerable support for the country. "We have received thousands of calls both in the U.S. and in Israel, of people asking what they can do to show support for Israel. And, though we are not dissuading people from going at this time, we are definitely telling them, 'Get your bags ready and come to visit as soon after the war as you can!'" said Raphael Farber, Israel's Consul and Tourism Commissioner for North America. "Our past experience with previous wars has shown us that once hostilities are



"Nothing can stop my love for Israel and I am glad I am here right now," said Conductor Zubin Mehta when meeting Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir (R) and Minister of Tourism, Gideon Patt (L). Mehta arrived in Israel at the onset of the present hostilities.

over, there is a tremendous surge of interest in the Middle East and in Israel in particular, and tourists and visitors come in great numbers. We are expecting to have the same reaction this time as well."

Jackie Mason in Tel Aviv Challenges Saddam Hussein

"Now that I'm here, it's just about over. I've never lost a war, so not to worry!" That was Jackie Mason's message to the Israeli people, to Saddam Hussein and the world as he arrived in Tel Aviv and was hosted in a reception for visiting personalities and foreign journalists given by Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat.

When the sirens sounded and the party moved to a sealed floor at the Tel Aviv Hilton, Broadway audiences would have stood in line to hear the banter of Mason with conductor Zubin Mehta, stage star Mike Burstyn and the ever sharp Mayor Lahat.

Mazon Awards Grants to Hunger Agencies

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger announced grants of \$550,000 to 72 agencies involved in helping the hungry and homeless in the U.S. and abroad.

Announcing the new allocations, which are made semi-annually, Lee H. Javitch, chairman of Mazon, said the funds would go to emergency food assistance programs, food banks, advocacy groups for the poor, international hunger relief projects and multi-service organizations that provide food, shelter and counseling. The grant recipients include Jewish, Christian and non-sectarian agencies.

Mazon, founded five years ago, is now one of the largest privately-supported groups in the United States helping to relieve hunger and poverty. Its grants in 1990 totaled \$1,100,000.

Mazon's income comes primarily from a self-imposed "tax" paid by Jewish families amounting to 3 percent of the cost of joyous events such as weddings

"This trip is costing a fortune!" bewailed Mason, who had taken time off from his sell-out stage performance on Broadway. "But it's worth it! Hussein had better not threaten me, because I've survived the streets of New York," he said. He assured everyone that this was a "great time to be Jewish and because we have lived and survived on humor, that's why the Jewish comedian today, as always, can entertain and teach every audience.

"We can't take things too heavily," said the Rabbi-comedian Broadway star. "We must share our humor and strength to survive and enjoy." And, he predicted, "it is time for an end to wars. The Arabs are not our enemies. We'll make peace with them, too."

In the meantime, Mason gave a warning to Hussein, "Quit now or get ready to pay the bill!" meaning the fortune Mason is repeatedly losing while sharing his special, hilarious outlook on life with the people of Israel.

and bar mitzvahs. More than 600 synagogues across the country have enrolled as Mazon "partners," encouraging their member families to contribute to Mazon in this way.

Included in the current list of grant recipients are:

- Women's Lunch Place of Boston, Mass. which serves breakfast and lunch and other necessities to homeless women and children.

- South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods, which sponsors a feeding program in black townships throughout South Africa.

- Neighbors Together Corporation in Brooklyn, N.Y., which operates a soup kitchen that serves 250 persons a day and conducts advocacy programs on their behalf.

- Food and Friends of Washington, D.C., which delivers hot meals daily to homebound AIDS patients.

- Jewish Family Service of Northern Middlesex County, See Mazon page 23

Pat Boone to be Spokesman For Tourism to Israel

According to the Israel Ministry of Tourism, singer Pat Boone will become the official spokesman for a campaign to attract some 60 million Evangelical Christians in the United States to visit Israel.

Ads featuring the entertainer and born-again Christian created by agency Biederman, Kelly & Shaffer, will be aired on Christian radio stations and will appear in Christian magazines in North America. The commercials are scheduled to air on various stations including USA Radio Network, Christian Broadcasting Network, Salem Communications Corporation, International Broadcasting Network, Branches Communications and also the Pat Boone Show.

"Pat Boone has been an ardent supporter of Israel and has made many pilgrimages to Israel in the past. We hope to begin with the campaign immediately following the cessation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf," said Raphael Farber, Israel's Consul and Tourism Commissioner for North America. "Since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, tourism to Israel of American Jews has dropped by 50 percent while the decline among Evangelical Christians has been only 35 percent," said Farber. "Because the Evangelical movement has always supported us, we think it is now time for us to support their efforts in promoting pilgrimage to the Holy Land."

This is not the first time that Israeli Ministry of Tourism has aimed an advertising campaign at Evangelical Christians but it is the first time a well-known personality has been used as a spokesperson. Farber acknowledged that a similar advertising campaign targeting American Jews and using a well-known Jewish figure was in the planning stages.

One of the two 60-second radio commercials opens with Boone singing a few bars from the song "Exodus" and with Boone revealing the little known fact that he wrote the song. "When I wrote 'Exodus,' it was more than just another song to me," he says in the commercial. "I was writing about a very special place, Israel, the Land of the Bible." In both commercials he encourages listeners to obtain a free kit on travel to Israel, including "a colorful Christian pilgrimage map" by calling 1-800-456-BIBLE.

Farber noted that the Ministry of Tourism's winter advertisement budget of \$250,000 is being allocated for the campaign and said that if the campaign is successful, more money will be provided so that it could run through the year. "We can assume that a combination of peace and Pat Boone will create a very special message which will encourage Christians to visit the Holy Land," said Farber.

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