

A festive time

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ACCORDING to the Hebrew calendar and Nature's harvest cycle, the year begins in autumn. "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness," sang the psalmist, praising the season of autumn in ancient Israel.

Discerning visitors to modern Israel are full of praise too for autumn. It is a time when the festive atmosphere of the Yom-tovim pervades the land. A time when the summer heat subsides and the weather turns delightfully balmy.

Autumn is a time of change when the clouds puff in the skies, the rains have not yet arrived, and, compared to Northern Europe's chilly mists, a summery interlude prevails.

Autumn also brings a fall in the cost of accommodation and air fares. Hotel reservation clerks, overworked in the summer, now find they have more free time and more free space.

Traditionally, the summer months of July-August have always registered the heaviest volume of visitor traffic to Israel. The March-April Passover season ranked second. In recent years, however, the autumn months have been catching up, as more and more travellers recognise the advantages of the "in-between" season.

Visitors discover that the major holidays—Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succot—take on added dimensions and renewed meaning in their original land. Jewish New Year is celebrated in its most evocative locale, whether one joins those who congregate in houses of worship or flock to the countryside for their Rosh Hashana holiday.

Yom Kippur's day of solemn reverence is marked by a hushed total standstill throughout the country. Succot ushers in a burgeoning of Succah booths and decorative greenery on thousands of apartment balconies.

Simchat Torah brings the joyous, colourful *hakofot* processions, the most impressive of which takes place in Jerusalem where singing and dancing throngs rejoice with the Torah-carriers at the Western Wall.

The latest biannual guide to hotel prices published by the Israel Hotel Association indicates that hotel rooms, between November 15 and March 15, will be 10 per cent cheaper this year, excepting, of course, those hotels in Eilat, Tiberias and the Dead Sea region which have a winter



Pre-Succot "market" outside a Tel Aviv synagogue

season and operate separately.

Judging by the recent upsurge in tourist volume to Israel, autumn offers a better chance of obtaining the accommodation of one's choice.

Israel's beaches remain favoured swimming grounds well into autumn, often until mid-November when the *yoreh*, the first rain of the new year, usually appears. The Mediterranean is calmer in autumn, making for better swimming, boating, and rod and reel fishing.

Autumn customarily signals the start of the cultural season. This year will be particularly eventful as celebrations begin

for the 30th anniversary of the State. Receptions and garden parties, to which tourists will be invited, are scheduled to be hosted by the mayors of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa in late September.

An expanded programme of folklore entertainment, entitled Hava Nagila 77, will also be presented. Many additional special festivities are planned by cultural institutions in honour of Israel's third decade.

The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the world's finest symphonic ensembles, and certainly one of the hardest working, will return from abroad to open the autumn season with an Isaac Stern concert. Other soloists to appear are Pinchas Zukerman, who will conduct for the first time, Itzhak Perlman, Sylvia Marcovici, Leonard Rose, and André Watts.

Another energetic and talented performing group, the Bat-sheva Dance Company, opens its season on October 10 and will present several new productions by top American and European choreographers.

Bat-Dor, Israel's other internationally-renowned dance group, celebrates its tenth birthday this autumn with a rich programme of productions, in which numerous choreographers and dancers from abroad will participate.

The prospect of autumn in Israel attracts tourists of another sort who arrive in huge flights. Storks, herons, and cranes fly in from Europe to sojourn in the land for a few weeks before continuing their migrations south. But other winged travellers, wild ducks, kingfishers, robins, and wagtails are more appreciative of Israel's hospitable accommodation.

They stay on until spring.

at your service

The 4 star
Grand Beach Hotel



The 5 star
Pal Hotel

