



Office of the
Minister of Tourism

20 August 2006
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Dear Rabbi,

While 2006 was destined to be tourism's best year ever, we have indications that despite the events of recent weeks, we will end the year with a near record number of visitors. Thus I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you the State of Israel's appreciation of the significant strength of travel to Israel from the United States that continued in July and August despite the crisis. It was a moving and heartwarming demonstration of the bonds that unite our two countries.

As soon as the ceasefire went into effect on August 14, inhabitants of northern Israel were able to emerge from shelters and return to their homes. We understand that the people of southern Lebanon are returning to their homes as well. The Israel Defense Forces are gradually pulling out of southern Lebanon and are handing over their positions for the first time to the Lebanese army, whose troops will shortly be bolstered by the arrival of a U.N.-sponsored International Peacekeeping force.

While the tourism industry in northern Israel has suffered five very hard weeks, Israelis and overseas tourists are, as I write, returning to the hotels, resorts and tourist attractions of the Galilee and the Haifa region. Indeed, my family and I will be vacationing this weekend in the Galilee too.

We are working towards a new dawn. We in Israel look forward to welcoming you very soon to our special and unique land.

Shalom,

Isaac Herzog
Minister of Tourism