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SPECIAL INTERVIEW

A NEW REFORM VILLAGE IN ISRAEL

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Aug. 16 (JTA) -- A new Reform village on a mountain top in the Galilee is in the process of being formed, according to Haim Sharett, the chief shaliach (emissary) of the kibbutz movement to Reform Judaism in the United States.

He said that 50 families are already prepared to form the garin (nucleus) of the village that will be called Har Chalutz. Within the next year about 20 families are expected to move to Israel and stay in absorption centers in preparation for their settling in Har Chalutz. The first settlers are expected to arrive and live in temporary houses in the village in the center of Galilee at the beginning of 1985, Sharett said.

Har Chalutz village will be the third Reform settlement in Israel. The earlier two, Lotan and Yahel, were established in the last few years. Sharett, a member of Kibbutz Hamadia in the Beit Shean valley and son of the late Premier and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, said the new village is planned to accommodate up to 400 families and married couples.

A Free Enterprise Community

"Har Chalutz will be a free enterprise community and not a kibbutz," Sharett stressed during an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "As such, each family will be responsible for its own income. The livelihood of members of Har Chalutz will be based on outside work, in the near-by cities, towns and moshavim."

The site of the village is about an hour's drive from Haifa and only 15 minutes' drive from the growing city of Camiel, noted Sharett who initiated the project and personally located the mountain site for the village.

"In addition," he said, "the village will be located near the Tefen Industrial Park, a source for jobs for many of the professional would-be settlers, among them chemists, doctors, engineers, builders and students." The park is about 15 minutes' drive from Har Chalutz. The children of the village are expected to attend school in Camiel.

At the beginning, the residents of the village will live in temporary houses -- each about 500-square feet -- that will be provided by the Jewish Agency, Sharett said. For the construction of permanent housing the residents will receive a mortgage of \$27,800 from the Israel government at very convenient terms that would enable them to build an 850-square foot home for each family. Those interested in larger and more elaborate homes will be able to build them at their own expense, Sharett said.

Recruiting Efforts In High Gear

He noted that Har Chalutz will have a Reform synagogue and the "atmosphere" of life in the village will be in line with the ideas of the Reform movement. He said that although he sees himself as a "secular" Jew, he has learned "to respect" the ideology of Reform Judaism.

"We are in the midst of organizing and preparing for this exciting project of Har Chalutz," Sharett said. He added that the recruiting efforts for the village are in high gear and that he will continue to be associated with the project upon his return to Israel next April after having served as shaliach for the last three years.