

'Next Year in Har Halutz'

NEW YORK — "We pledge to support and encourage the establishment in the Galilee of a Jewish pioneering settlement to be located on Har Halutz — a full life-cycle, free enterprise community dedicated to a spiritual and productive life style which will enhance the quality of life for its members and the State of Israel."

With this stirring declaration, 25 Reform Jewish families in a conference at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Camp Eisner in Great Barrington, Mass., this month completed plans to build a settlement — and their lives — in the Land of Israel.

Today Har Halutz is a lonely hilltop lookout post in Israel's central Galilee. Two years from now the flag of Garin Galil — the new home for those American families seeking fulfillment in a totally Jewish environment — will be raised atop the aptly-

named mountain: Halutz is Hebrew for pioneer.

And by the end of the decade, according to Haim Sharrett, son of Israel's former Prime Minister Moshe Sharrett and chief shaliach to the Reform movement in the U.S., it will be a thriving free enterprise settlement of some 350 families.

A desire to enhance the quality of their lives and to raise their children in an atmosphere where Jewish tradition and Reform values are integrated in everyday life is the primary motivation for these families to launch their pioneering venture, according to Mr. Sharrett. On assignment at national UAHHC headquarters for the past two years, he will return to Israel next spring to prepare for the first group of olim.

Most of them have well-established businesses or professional careers. The group includes Jerry Cohen of Natick, Mass., an industrial engineer, and his wife,

Andrea Schwab, a computer programmer, Steve Hoffman of St. Louis, a C.P.A., and his wife, Marilyn, a social worker, and Dr. Joel Miller of Bakersfield, Cal., a periodontist, and his wife, Sarina, a musician.

Garin Galil will be the third Reform Jewish settlement in Israel. In 1977 the movement founded Kibbutz Yabel in the Arava. In July ground was broken for Kibbutz Lotan, also in Israel's desert region.

Nearly 100 families have expressed a desire to join Garin Galil, which will be neither a kibbutz nor a moshav, but a settlement of Reform Jews who have agreed to make Aliyah together.

"Their livelihood is the choice and responsibility of each in-

dividual family," says Sharrett. "They will follow independent, separate careers in business and the professions. But they will live together as families in a friendly neighborhood."

By the time the first families arrive at the absorption centers in Carmiel or Tiberias late in 1984 for five months of intensive Hebrew language courses and indoctrination, the infrastructure and temporary dwelling units for 30 families will have been prepared at Garin Galil. There will be a kindergarten on the site (older children will attend schools in adjacent communities) and a supermarket, laundry and coffee shop staffed by the new immigrants.

Though modest in comparison with American standards — the typical temporary homes will have 500 square feet and contain two bedrooms — they should provide adequately for the needs of the settlers while they are engaged in building their permanent dwellings.

The Jewish Agency, according to Sharrett, will provide each family with a plot of land just under a quarter of an acre and will grant mortgages of \$27,800 at

favorable interest rates. This would cover the cost of an 850 square foot home. The typical three-bedroom wood home envisioned by the gain, Sharrett indicated, occupies 1,300 square feet and will cost approximately \$43,000 under the "do it yourself" plan projected for most of the residents.

With the aid of some local professionals and the full-time attention of the settlers, such a home can be built in six months, Mr. Sharrett says. The same wooden home can be built by local contractors for \$54,000, while models in concrete are in the \$72-\$84,000 price range.

Earning a livelihood, of course, is of prime concern. Thus Mr. Sharrett encourages each potential immigrant to undertake at least one pilot trip to Israel to visit the site and investigate employment opportunities.

Persons interested in obtaining more information about Garin Galil or Kibbutz Yabel or Kibbutz Lotan, may contact Haim Sharrett at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 838 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10021 telephone (212) 249-0100.