

by Hal Applebaum, Mazkir

Dear Garin Har Chalutz members;

Shalom to everyone--its been such a busy six weeks that I let too much time pass between reports--my apologies to all of you. I have started to receive a steady stream of correspondence from many of you, including letters from Nora Persing, Andrea and Jerry Cohen, David Lafontaine, Mordy Burstein, Ehud Rydin and Gary Atkins. Thanks for the mail!! I read every letter to the entire Garin, and we all enjoy your comments and feedback very much. I have answered most of you personally, and I promise that those of you who have not heard from me yet will receive a letter very soon.

I have many things to report, so lets get started. As time passes by, we get a clearer and clearer picture of exactly what is going to take place in the next year or so. I am speaking primarily about the crucial issue: moving to Har Chalutz. Of the ten Garin families who have arrived thus far, we now expect seven of them to move to Har Chalutz next summer: Applebaum, Fine, Lerman, Norton, Milder and Silverman in May, with the Hoffmans (who are expecting a baby in May!) to join us at the end of June. The Friedlanders will be renting a home in Karmiel, as per the instruction of the Jewish Agency, but still intend to move to the site at a future date. Phillip and Yaffa Arieff have decided to move to Nazareth for at least one year while Phil does his internship there. After that, they have indicated that they will weigh their options, with Har Chalutz being a definite possibility. Akiva and Rachel Carlson have also decided to remain in Karmiel for the time being, with no definite decision regarding Har Chalutz at this time. We all hope that the Arieffs and the Carlsons will decide to join us on the mountain as early as possible.

In light of the realization that only seven families appear committed for this summer, we were anxious to hear the results of the October Kinus in the States. I must admit that I was a bit disappointed to hear that only three new families had joined the Garin. On the other hand, we understand that Ryden, Burstein, Lafontaine, Persing, Persing, Atkins, Levine and Stern all plan to be in Israel by the end of the summer at the latest, so we are optimistic that some of these families can be living at the site by the end of the summer. Needless to say, we also hope that other members of the Garin might surprise us and join us here earlier than anticipated!

Nonetheless, we have recognized that it is of the utmost importance to find new families here in Israel. Fortunately, I think that we are going to be very successful in this endeavor. We held an informational meeting in Jerusalem on Oct. 25, and another in Karmiel last night. Both of these meet-

ings were very successful, and we have six or seven families who want to join the Garin, of which two or three might be prepared to move up in May! We have also planned another informational meeting for the Haifa area on December 11, so hopefully we will attract a few more families to that. All of us realize how crucial the issue of recruitment is, so we are really increasing our activities in order to allow us to get to know the potential families, as well as giving them the chance to get to know us. In the next report, I will send a detailed list of our candidate families so that you will know a little more about them.

We have been meeting an average of two to three times a month, discussing, preparing and determining policy direction. The culmination of this work was our first Israel Kinus, which we held over the weekend of Nov. 23-24 in Tsfat! The Kinus was very productive, with all ten families attending, as well as four candidate families. Nezer Menuchim and Vered Halpern from the settlement department sociological unit helped us organize and plan the Kinus, and were with us for the entire weekend as well.

One of the major issues we had to settle was our procedure for candidacy and membership to both the Garin and the Yishuv. We all realized that we had to establish this policy before we would be able to accept new members, and we are all pleased with the policy and procedure we decided on. This procedure was prepared by our absorption committee; we have established a number of committees, including absorption, governing bodies, religious/cultural, housing and public relations. These are all active, functioning committees now, and everyone has started to make valuable contributions of time, thought and effort. I am enclosing with this report an outline of the Kinus program, as well as a review of the discussions and a summary of the policies we have instituted. We would all be most interested in any feedback any of you might have.

Work at the site continues to be a joy to watch--the heavy earthworks at the Moked are 90-95 percent complete. The sewage contractor is already working, and when they are finished, the site will be graded and packed down. This will represent the completion of the heavy earthworks--about three weeks from right now. The Jewish National Fund will then turn its entire attention to the uncompleted middle section of the Kibbutz Lavon-Har Chalutz road. The settlements department of the Jewish Agency is preparing to transfer the final payment needed, and work should begin next week. We remain optimistic that the work on the road will be finished on schedule this coming April. By the way, someone in the settlements department told me that the cost of the Lavon-Har Chalutz road, as well as the heavy earthworks at the Moked is in excess of one million dollars! Remember, that doesn't include the finishing work

at the site, or the price of the caravans. This gives some idea of the commitment of the Jewish Agency to Har Chalutz!

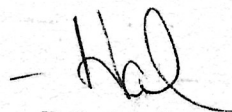
In addition to all that, lets not forget that the Jewish Agency has also provided the Garin with an apartment which we use as an office and moadon, a Ford transit van for the Garin, and a generous expenditure account which has allowed us to purchase thus far a Hebrew/English electric typewriter (which I am using right now), a couple of desks for the office, chairs and other smaller items that we have needed. We have Haim to thank for all of this--it continues to amaze me what he convinces the Jewish Agency to do for us! I think that a word processor and copying machine are the next two items on his list! Needless to say, all of these things will be moved to Har Chalutz and should come in very, very useful for handling our day-to-day affairs on the mountain.

The caravans are in storage at Kibbutz Tuval. We are quite unhappy with several things in the interior layout of both sizes of caravans. I indicated in my last report that we were negotiating changes with the settlements department; they are not particularly happy about our demands, but we will stand firm on the changes we feel are absolutely essential (adequate washer/dryer space and connections). Again, when the final changes are agreed upon, I will send you sketches of the finalized floor plans.

One of the best pieces of news I have saved for last: the National Planning Board finally decided that the Karmiel-Tefen road to be built will be the Eastern alternative passing below Kibbutz Lavon. The Nature Reserves Authority and the Society for the Protection of Nature were very much against this route, but a technical solution was suggested and approved which will hopefully prevent damage to the natural surroundings. Best for us, the new road will make the total distance from Har Chalutz to Karmiel about 14 kilometers (a 10-15 minute ride at most) and will eliminate the ride through Dir-el-Assad. Remember, it is only the decision; the actual construction of this road will be difficult and could take several years. Nonetheless, we now know that the decision to build the road has been taken, and that alone is good news.

That is about all for now. The Kinus report contains more useful information and, as always, if any questions arise from these reports, please feel free to write me, and I will get an answer to you as quickly as possible. Stay in touch and good luck with your Aliyah plans.

Sincerely,



Hal Applebaum, Mazkir
Garin Har Chalutz

MONTHLY REPORT--NOV.-DEC. 1984--GARIN HAR CHALUTZ

By Hal Applebaum, Mazkir

Dear members and friends of Garin Har Chalutz,

Greetings to everyone. Well, it's hard to believe how quickly time is passing by for all of us. We're already into 1985, which we all know will be a very, very big year for Har Chalutz. We are now only five or six months away from our move to the site. We are all very excited as the big day draws near. The Jewish national fund bulldozers are working full speed ahead on the uncompleted middle section of road between Kibbutz Lavon and Har Chalutz. They are making fantastic progress due to the extremely dry winter thus far. I think that through today, January 10, they have missed only two or three days of work due to rain.

The Garin has really taken shape over the last two or three months. I think that the primary reason for this has been the addition of eight candidate families here in Israel, seven of which live here in Karmiel. Their contact with us really gives us a feeling of size and strength! I am going to wait another month or two to give you more details about our candidate families, as I think it is important that we wait until they have been officially accepted as members of the Garin. Suffice it to say that the eight families have an average age of about 34, and among them, ten children! As you can imagine, our get-togethers have become quite a happening! Between the ten families of the Garin who have made Aliyah thus far, the eight candidate families, and the additional three or four Garin families from the States who plan Aliyah in the next six months, I think that the all-important first move to the site in May will be a very successful one.

Chanukkah was a wonderful time for all of us--we had parties on the first night as well as the eighth night. The first night party was held at the Silberman home, and in addition to reciting the traditional blessings and singing songs, we feasted on "sufganiot", the popular Israeli Chanukkah doughnuts. The party on the eighth night combined sufganiot with another popular Chanukkah treat, latkes. The highlight of the evening, without a doubt, was the lighting of a huge Chanukiah on the edge of the cliff at Har Chalutz! We prepared it throughout the day, thanks to Chaim who provided the materials and a large part of the labor. We took large tin cans and filled them with sand, placed huge rags inside and wrapped chicken wire around them, and doused them thoroughly with kerosene. At a prearranged time, while the rest of the Garin sang the blessings outside of the office in Karmiel, we lit the Chanukiah with a torch. It was a fantastic site--all of the valley could see it, and it burned for close to three hours. I am quite certain that this is the beginning of what will be a yearly tradition at Har Chalutz!

Another highlight of Garin life here is our community Shabbat dinner. Once a month, we hold services together, followed by a pot-luck, dairy Shabbat dinner. After dinner we have some type of program, such as a guest speaker, or slides. I hope that at the next dinner we will have singing and folk-dancing as a program. These evenings are an excellent forum for meeting new people who are interested in the Garin, and serve an important function in teaching us how to organize and execute events as a community. As a result of these evenings, we realize how important organization and cooperation are to the success of our community life.

One of the important lessons we are all learning over here is that every individual must make a strong personal commitment to the community that will be known as Har Chalutz. I encourage everyone to remember that we want to build a model community, a community which, despite its free-enterprise economic basis, will nonetheless have an extensive cooperative framework regarding cultural, social and religious life. This always sounds good theoretically, but it can sometimes be difficult putting theory into practice. We were faced, for example, with the issue of whether the preparation, setting up and cleaning up of a community Shabbat dinner (which is for 50 or more people!) should be on a strictly voluntary basis, or whether we should require everyone in the community to participate in the work involved. We came to the conclusion that such work should be distributed equally among everybody. It is important for everyone to remember that this is the direction we are taking over here thus far: a highly cooperative framework in which everyone will be expected to contribute, as opposed to the kind of community where you participate and contribute only if you feel like it. We think that this is the appropriate and desirable direction to go, and we are acting accordingly.

Regarding our move to the site, things look good right now. I would guess that our chances are 99 percent certain that we will move up on schedule in May. The sewage contractor is finishing up at the Moked, and the water and electricity will be taken care of next. The condition of our roads to the site is going to be mediocre at best. The drive to the site from Karmiel will go something like this: from Karmiel, up through Dir-el-Assad, which is very narrow and steep, is 5.4 kilometers. At the top of the village, we turn onto a dirt-gravel road for 1.3 kilometers, where we hook up the paved Tefen road. We take the Tefen road 1.4 kilometers, where we then turn off onto the dirt-gravel road which leads towards Kibbutz Lavon. After 1.2 kilometers on this road, we reach the large intersection where the new road to Har Chalutz begins. This road will also be a dirt-gravel road in the beginning. The total distance from Karmiel to this intersection will be 9.3 kilometers. The new road will be about six kilometers, so the total distance from Karmiel to

Har Chalutz will be about 15.3 kilometers, with over half the distance on unpaved roads. I can assure you that we are doing our utmost to have at least some of these roads paved, but money is tight here, and the future is uncertain on this issue. Likewise, the construction of that new road from Karmiel to the Tefen region, which would avoid Dir-el-Assad and give us a very quick access to Har Chalutz from Karmiel, is uncertain at this point. There are simply too many factors involved that make the construction of this road problematic at this time, and I think that it would be unfair and unrealistic to lead anyone to believe that this road will be built any time soon. For this reason, we are renewing and intensifying our efforts to have the road constructed which would connect us to Mitzpeh Charashim to the east. The settlements department has been quite adamant that they have no intention of building this road out of their budget, but they have promised to push the issue with the proper authorities. We are leaning on them hard, because the connection to Charashim is a very important one: first, it presents an alternate route down to the Akko-Tsfat highway, and second, it would give us the possible option of sending some of our children to day-care at Charashim. The distance between the two settlements is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers, and at the present time, one must drive about 25 kilometers to get there!

We are nearing a decision on which regional council our settlement will belong to, and, despite the difficulty of the drive, I would venture to guess that we will go with Misgav. This is the region that is southwest of Karmiel. We have visited the schools there and were very impressed with both the quality of the educational system as well as the clean, modern facilities. We also see that the Misgav regional council provides excellent services for all the settlements in their jurisdiction. In addition to that, there are four neighboring settlements just to the west of Har Chalutz, Lavon, Kishor, Tuval and Pelech, which belong to the Misgav regional council. We think that, despite the fact that there are not many children at these settlements right now, there will be within the next several years, and we must think towards the future, when both school and after-school activities will be organized together under the auspices of the Misgav regional council. We have also not ruled out using the school system in Karmiel, or possibly the school system which is currently being established at K'far HaV'radim. It is a confusing group of sub-systems here, and our options are literally endless. We are continuing to explore all options, in order to reach the decision which will be the very best one vis-a-vis our children, and ourselves as well.

I finally have some good news to report related to Misrad HaShikun, the Housing Ministry. We finally have received agreement from them officially to plan the first thirty home sites at Har Chalutz, based on one dunam, with dimensions of 27 by 37 meters. (88 feet wide by 121 feet deep) You have no idea what a major break-

through this is for us. For the last year, we have literally been stuck on the issue of the one-dunam housing sites, which was totally against the regulations of Misrad HaShikun for settlements such as ours. We finally gained their approval for one dunam about two months ago, but then they threw another cog in the wheel by insisting that the maximum width of the lots would be 23 meters, about 75 feet. This would have resulted in long, narrow lots of 75 feet by 150 feet. The problem with such lots is that, although one has a nice, large backyard, the width of the lot will "squash" the houses too close together. This will have several negative impacts: first, it would be next to impossible to leave any natural green-space between houses when the bulldozers start to work. We learned this lesson while watching the heavy earthworks at the Moked. Second, our ability to protect maximum views for every house will be severely limited when houses are so close together. We are therefore delighted with this recent development; as crazy as it may sound, that extra four meters on the width of each lot should make a big difference in the finished product at Har Chalutz. Bram, Chaim and I will be meeting with the architect, Baruch Alon, next week, and at that time we will decide where the first thirty homes will be planned for, as well as determining if we want to change the road pattern or site orientation in any area. Once Baruch completes his work, we begin a bureaucratic judging and advisory process which could take two or three months. Hopefully by the end of March, we will complete this process. At that point Misrad HaShikun can begin work on detailed planning for the first thirty home sites (although we are still pressing the settlements department to do this work instead). With a little luck, I think that the earthworks and infrastructure for the first homes in the permanent site can begin by August/September, and families who have been accepted as members of the permanent Yishuv will be able to start building by November/December 1985! This is an optimistic prediction, but I think that it is an achievable timetable.

Over the last two or three months we have also expanded and strengthened our ties to the Reform movement here in Israel. There are many Reform institutions here, among them the headquarters for the World Union of Progressive Judaism in Jerusalem, Hebrew Union College, the U.A.H.C./N.F.T.Y. offices, the Leo Baeck Center in Haifa, the Arava Kibbutzim, Yahel and Lotan, the many congregations throughout the country, and the various youth organizations of the movement, such as Telem Noar and Netzer Olami. We are beginning to realize the importance of strong connections and involvement within the total framework of the movement. Many people here have a real interest and a real desire to see Har Chalutz succeed and be another of the important Reform institutions here. Many of the institutions I


mentioned here have already provided us with help and guidance--we are all most grateful and looking forward to a long, productive relationship.

It has been quite some time since we heard from Garin members in the States. I hope that everyone will take the time to write their comments and criticisms, suggestions and thoughts, regarding the direction and decisions of the Garin here. We are all most interested in knowing what you think, and we will all be happy to further expand on the reasoning and thought process which has led to some of our decisions. More importantly, perhaps we are not looking at things from the same perspective that those of you in the States are, and if a particular decision or policy strikes you as unreasonable or incorrect, it is important for you to let us know why. After all, this should be a process and a dialogue involving all of us, but we need your feedback in order to make this possible.

We had a very pleasant surprise several weeks ago when Zvi Landau showed up in Karmiel! It was terrific to see him, and we were all excited to hear of their plans, as well as get a general report on the Garin in the States. Zvi and I spent an extremely chilly morning up at Har Chalutz, and I am sure that he will be happy to update all of you in the States who want a first-hand picture of conditions in Israel, as well as Har Chalutz. One additional pleasant surprise was learning that Zvi has a sister living at Mitzpeh Tsurit, about 10 kilometers west of Karmiel. Esti and I went to visit them the week after Zvi left, and they shared with us much valuable information about the good and the bad of life on a new settlement.

As the time for moving to the site draws near, we are becoming more and more aware of the responsibility we all have before us. I think that we will be true to the test. We are lucky to have had this period together in Karmiel, for there are many things to be learned about organization and community, and I think that we have all learned many lessons and will hopefully benefit from them. By the time we move up in May, we may not necessarily be a well-oiled machine, but at least the motor will be running and moving in the right direction! Who could ask for more? We hope to hear from you; please write with any comments or questions you have, and we look forward to seeing all of you here in Israel very soon.

B'vracha


Hal Applebaum, Mazkir