

## SPOTLIGHT

THE FATHER was a cabinet minister and later prime minister. The son is a renegade kibbutznik.

"Our family has had its share of politics," says Haim, whose father changed the family name from Sher-tok to Sharett when he became Israel's first foreign minister.

"We suffered our trauma," Haim reflects. "None of us kids wanted to prow the political jungle. But we grew up involved in our country — taught to love every Jew because he's a Jew. I'm still a very involved person, but I've found a different way."

At age 52, the late Moshe Sharett was in the British internment camp at Latrun, along with most of the *yishuv* leadership. Haim at 52 volunteered for reserve duty in Lebanon, Yossi Sarid-style, to help the withdrawal. He is also on the point of quitting Kibbutz Hamadiva after 33 years — to turn a stony Galilee mountain into the Reform Movement's first free-enterprise community.

Haim Sharett and the Reform Movement?  
 "My upbringing was totally secular," he says, "but a few years ago, when the United Kibbutz Movement appointed me its *shaliah* in the United States for the Reform (UAHC), I found good people inside a movement of strength and vitality."

"I haven't started believing in God, but I respect and admire the Reform way of life. I'm happy to join them in Friday night prayers — but on Saturdays, I work in my garden or go hiking, as I always have."

Few people who know Sharett are surprised at his change in direction. He has acquired for himself a reputation as a mild eccentric — or "*meshuggge*," as he puts it. This clearly pleases him "because you can get away with far more once people accept that you're a little *meshugg-*

# Reform in Galilee

Perennial pioneer Haim Sharett saw a dream realized last month — the beginnings of a free-enterprise Reform settlement on a Galilee mountaintop. WENDY ELLIMAN reports.



have a Galilee settlement, too. "I rushed back to Ra'anana Weitz and demanded that the movement be allocated a Galilee hill, where new immigrants could build themselves a community. My dream was for a hilltop in the very centre of the Galilee, from where you could see both the Mediterranean and the Kinnetet."

HAR HALUTZ, a 750-metre hill north of Carmiel, was one of three available sites. A jumble of thistles, thorns and massive limestone boulders, everything about it was right for Sharett — from its view of the two seas to its name, which means pioneer mountain.

Then 48, Sharett saw nothing ambitious in starting again from the beginning. "I have lots of time ahead," he said. "I'm programmed to live until at least 90. My two grandmothers reached 92, and my mother's father died at 90."

And the other grandfather, first Bilu pioneer Ya'acov Sertok? "That was a bit of a slip-up," concedes Sharett. "He died in his 50s. But he had asthma and smoked heavily."

It was not until Sharett's second year in the U.S. that the Har Halutz site was finally made over to the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

"The site is precious," says Sharett. "There aren't many places left in the Galilee where it's possible to build a viable settlement, and people had to be convinced that the World Union — with only two young kibbutzim behind it — was serious about building a community, and capable of pushing it through."

Once the approval was given, Sharett threw himself into the realization of his vision. By the third year of his *shilhut*, he was totally involved in recruiting members for Har Halutz.

in that it isn't a kibbutz, moshav, village or town. The degree to which it will be cooperative or private is still undecided.

For former Americans Bob and Benita Smallman, this new type of community represents the end of a three-year search. The Smallmans were among the 15 families and four singles who came to Israel 11 years ago to live in Yarnit.

"Very few of us are still in Israel," says Bob Smallman, 57. "The withdrawal from Yarnit was too traumatic. Benita and I were just marking time until we found something as exciting. We think we've found it at Har Halutz."

The Smallmans are considerably older than most of the settlers, who are in their 20s and 30s. But Sharett clearly includes himself when he declares, "Age doesn't matter if the spirit is there."

LIFE ON Har Halutz will be rugged for a while. The roads are going down, but they are still unpaved. Families will live in trailer-homes — luxurious compared to the days of the early pioneers, but still makeshift for the windy hilltop — with a store, offices, kindergarten and clinic also in temporary dwellings.

Most of the settlers, like Esti Applebaum, who teaches aerobics at the Carmiel community centre, will continue working in the surrounding towns. But ultimately Har Halutz plans to develop cooperative enterprises of its own.

Most important of these is the adjacent Tourist Mountain — a rock-strewn barren hill which is to be turned into a seminar and recreation centre to attract the 1,000 Reform youngsters who come to Israel each year.

About 75 per cent of Har Halutz's planned 200 families will come from abroad — mainly the U.S., says Sharett. The Jewish Agency has

manage a conventional arrival into the world. The only survivor of childbirth, he weighed in at 900gm. at birth, and spent his first weeks fighting for life from the inside of an incubator.

"They started calling me Haim then," he says. "When Haim Arlosoroff was murdered five days after I was born, the name acquired double significance."

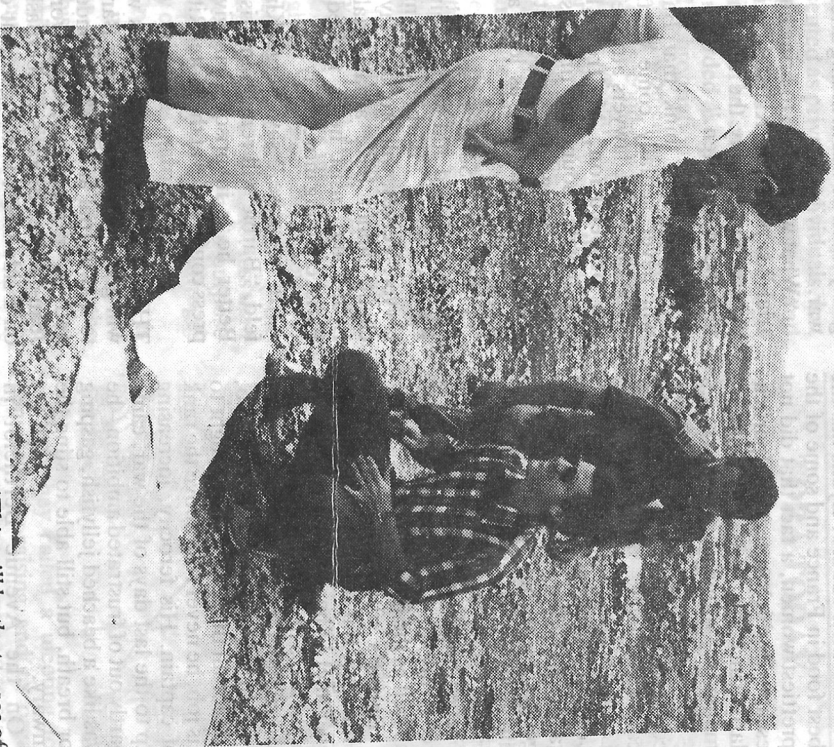
IT WAS TAKEN for granted in the Sharett household that the children would all settle on a kibbutz. The elder son, Ya'acov, later to become a journalist, was a founding member of Kibbutz Hazerim. Daughter Yael joined Kibbutz Tsor'a.

Haim spent a year in the Bronx High School of Science, while his father led the 1947 struggle for a Jewish state in the UN, then studied for three years at Tel Aviv's Tichon Hadash. After his Nahal army service, he arrived at Hamadaya on the 10th anniversary of the Bet She'an kibbutz, and stayed.

But fish ponds and date orchards did not occupy the new kibbutznik for long. Years before industry on kibbutz became a norm, Sharett founded and ran two factories: Inbar for fibreglass products and Snapir for plastics. Snapir was soon exporting 60 percent of its production to the U.S. It collapsed following the recession after the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

"That was the beginning of my second life," says Sharett. "With the demands of the factory gone, I began skiing and horseback riding. And I began my love affair with the Galilee."

Fired by the *mitzvim* project, Sharett went to the Jewish Agency's Rural Settlement Department with a



(Above) Haim Sharett at the Har Halutz site. 'This will be the terrace of my future home.' (Below) Sharett and settlement secretary Hal Applebaum (squatting) with Richard Hirsch on the mountaintop overlooking Carmiel.

(Photographs by Yitzhak Rogow)

plan for a hilltop community of new immigrants. "Send me to the States and I'll bring you the people," he told then department head, Ramanan Weitz.

There was no budget. "But the next year, everything came together for me quite unexpectedly. In 1981 I

was appointed shaliah to the Reform by the United Kibbutz Movement, mainly to recruit in the U.S. for the two World Union for Progressive Judaism kibbutzim, Yabel and Lotan in the Arava."

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Baum, 29, of USCASQSD, Alabamas, is the *gavin* secretary. He remembers dropping in New York with his headquarters in New York with his Israeli-born wife, Esti, on his way to Israel with a youth group. Sharett buttonholed him in the corridor and bullied the couple into attending Har Halutz's first mini-convention.

The Applebaums were the first to stand up and declare themselves as Har Halutz settlers. The pre-fab housing was moved "up to the mountain" on June 26. The 20 families will occupy the site by August.

All are new olim - or at least mixed Israeli-immigrant marriages - and most were recruited in the States by Sharett. They began arriving in Israel last summer and waited at the Carmiel Absorption Centre while the site was being prepared.

The settlement they are planning to build is experimental in many ways. For one, it has yet to decide how it will express its brand of Judaism.

"What I'd like to see on this mountain," says Hal Applebaum, one of the few settlers actually to come out of the Reform Movement, "is a community that examines its Jewish roots and heritage and makes decisions about its lifestyle based on that knowledge - as individuals, as families and as a group. But my Jewish background isn't extensive enough to make those kinds of decisions, and we're leaning heavily on the movement in Israel to guide us."

While the Reform Movement embraces pluralism of expression, comments Sharett, pluralism as a philosophy isn't enough when you want to develop the character of a community.

Har Halutz is experimental, too,

goals: settling the Galilee and integrating new immigrants.

Jewish Agency funds have been spent on temporary housing and searching out light industries for Har Halutz. The government contribution is for infrastructure, development and permanent housing loans through the "Build Your Own Home" plan.

Sharett's replacement in New York as the Reform Movement's *shaliah* at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is Dediti Levinsohn, who is the man to talk to for those interested in joining Har Halutz.

THE SETTLERS will be putting their own funds into building permanent homes on Har Halutz and developing the Tourist Mountain. Arza, the Association of Reform Zionists of America, is heavily subsidizing further recruitment in the U.S., and further support from the Reform Movement for specific projects is likely.

"But you can have all that and still have nothing," says Sharett. "What you can't do without is the people who will love the project and make it succeed. Without them, there's no point in even beginning."

Sharett himself is at a turning point. His initials are chalked on to a hefty rock on the summit of Har Halutz, from where he can see both the Mediterranean and the Kineret, and where he wants to build his home. But Devorah, his wife of 28 years, and their four unmarried daughters are happy at home on Hamadaya.

"I don't know what we'll decide," he says. "I just know there's still much to be done on the mountain."