

VPRS-NEA-84-094
PREV 7. 20:54/094
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ISRAEL

GUSH EMUNIM ESTABLISHES GALILEE SETTLEMENT

Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 22 Apr 84 p 11

[Article by Menahem Horowitz: "Gush Emunim Settles in the Galilee; Ten Years after Establishing Gush Emunim, First Settlement Is Founded inside Green Line--Mitzpe Netofa North of Golani Road Junction"]

[Text] Over 10 years ago a group of Gush Etzyon members gathered to discuss the new way of Religious Zionism. In time the group was joined by thousands of members, who gave birth to the settlement movement in Judaea and Samaria. In Gush Emunim's Supplement 1 it was stated: "The purpose is to bring about a great awakening movement among the people of Israel in order to fulfill the entire Zionist vision, recognizing that the vision stems from the patrimony of Israel and the roots of Judaism, and its beginning is the full redemption of the people of Israel and the entire nation." The Galilee was not mentioned in this supplement. Most of the early settlers turned, as was mentioned, to Judaea and Samaria, and one still recalls the days of Sebastia, Alon Moreh and Qedumim.

Ten years have gone by, and unlike the settlement in Judaea and Samaria which still makes the headlines in Israel and abroad, the Amana movement of Gush Emunim has now established its first settlement inside the green line. The name is Mitzpe Netofa, situated north of the Golani road junction on the road to Mount Turan. Next to it is an outlook point overlooking Netofa Valley, and around it are forests.

In the meantime the settlement only has seven families, all members of Amana, but they have many ideological supporters in the religious sector in Israel, who consider settling the Galilee and Judaizing it a priority and disagree with Jewish settling of Judaea and Samaria among and near Arab communities.

The Tor, Edre'i, Barkay and Lichtbraun families, then, are the spearhead of the Amana settlers in the Galilee. In a short ceremony, the families and the other settlers of Mitzpe Netofa were given the small prefabs and plots of land nearby from the last two groups of NAHAL belonging to the religious kibbutzim of Yohay and Nehushta. Thus the area was in effect handed over to the new settlers. Tuvya Barkay (36) who lives in Mitzpe

Netofa with his wife, Hana, and their three children knew from the start that the only place he would go is the Galilee. "The Galilee is my love, really a dream," he says. "Yes, I had many opportunities to live in Judaea and Samaria, but I preferred the Galilee." Tuvya is responsible for the ongoing operation of the generator and other technical items in Mitzpe Netofa. Every day he goes through Arab villages in the Lower and Western Galilee to the plant where he works. "What is this, Lebanon?" he exclaims. "Why should I be afraid of traveling through Arab villages? Here is another reason for more and more families to come to Netofa and to other outposts in the Galilee." His 12 year old daughter has begun to make friends with the children of the nearby Kibbutz Lavi, as have the children of the other settlers and the settlers themselves, who receive a great deal of help from the established communities in the area. Some members of the nearby communities have turned to Amana and asked to be admitted to Netofa. But without sufficient budget and support on the part of the interior ministry and the settlement division of the Jewish Agency, this has not been approved. Only now three more families are joining--Schliachtar, Navon and Grin. But according to Brakha Tor, the secretary of the settlement, the lack of funds stops the development of the outpost. Thus, for example, the settlement was promised only 15 additional prefabs, while twice as many were requested by families who wanted to settle in Netofa. "We have no bomb shelters," she adds. "There is no access road and the only phone has been disconnected for a week."

But the ideal is not affected by the disconnection and isolation, or by the technical difficulties. "My order of priorities prevents me from going to settle in Judaea and Samaria," declares Matityahu Schliachter. "There are 1 million Arabs there. We have to integrate with them, not conquer them. I do not accept this ideology, and we provide information to all those who identify with Amana and Gush Etzyon in order to draw settlers to the Galilee." Schliachter had come here with his family from Jerusalem. Tuvya is more reserved in his opposition to settling Judaea and Samaria. He says: "No movement wanted to settle Judaea and Samaria. It was the most important thing at the time and this is why all energy and resources were directed there." Brakha Tor says: "I like it in the Galilee, and besides, I do not agree to a Jewish presence in Judaea and Samaria as it is done now, in the middle of Arab centers of population." Matityahu believes that as more settlers come to Netofa one will be able to discuss industrial and tourist projects to be established in the area."

As for the Arab neighbors, the attitude is positive from the start: The members of the outpost do not speak about hostile Arab population, but how to become closer with the local Arabs and cooperate with them out of mutual respect. Yitzhaq Edray, who has arrived here with his wife, Yehudit, and his two sons from Kiryat Shemona, was appointed security coordinator of the outpost. The news about possible attacks on outposts worries him, but he says that relations with the local Arabs are good.

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