

Americans in Israel

NEW YORK -- Early in November 33 young Jewish couples met for a weekend in a Catskill mountain hotel to plan a rewarding life for themselves in the wilds of Israel's Arava desert.

Coming from all corners of North America and possessing a wide range of professional backgrounds, the group intends to build a moshav, a cooperative community of family farms, which will grow winter crops for export to Europe. Moshav Edan will arise out of the desert about 55 kilometers south of the Dead Sea.

Though the moshav is communally structured,

it differs from a kibbutz in that each family works its own land and earns its own profits from the soil. For Arnie Allice, a 31 year old grocer from Hamilton, Ontario, this provides room for initiative and the "opportunity to be our own small businessman."

To Dan Woloshen of Maryland, a lawyer for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "Israel itself is the main draw. I feel it's the best place for a Jew to be. But we wanted an environment which is not just Jewish but has an intrinsic meaning and is physically creative" in terms of developing farm land out of desert.

For Eilath DeVlieg, an Israeli married to a city planner from Arizona, Israel "is where I belong. It's a matter of principle to me." Eilath was born and raised on a moshav and for her, it's "a better way of life." Her husband Cliff regards their move as "a great challenge in the pioneering spirit."

One reason why David Boxer, a market researcher for a large Chicago department store, has decided to build his life in Moshav Edan is his desire to bring up his three daughters, aged 10, 12 and 15, in a Jewish environment.

"There is no need for our children to live the rest of their lives with the uncomfortable feeling of living in a gentile society," he says.

The majority of families are scheduled to leave for Israel in March; they will spend six months at an absorption center in the Arava learning Hebrew and the skills needed to become a self-governing agricultural community. By August, 1979, the families are slated to move into prefabricated homes on Moshav Edan and begin to work their fields.

The fledging community already has many of the skills they will need to succeed in making their dream a reality. Some 27 people in the group have farm experience, ranging from a few months to eight years on a kibbutz. One is an agricultural engineer, there are plumbers, electricians, carpenters, metal workers, accountants, and a nurse. Eventually Moshav Edan will grow to a community of 100 families.

Motti Friedman, an Israeli Ministry of Education supervisor, was until recently in charge of recruitment for the moshav. He noted that Israeli authorities were originally pessimistic about recruiting North Americans for the settle-

ment but are now highly pleased with the families that have joined.

Speaking at the summation of the Catskill weekend, Friedman quoted from "Lech L'cha," that week's Torah portion, in which God commands Abraham to go and settle in a new land. Finally, punning on the Hebrew name for the Garden of Eden, Friedman expressed the hope that the settlers would transform their moshav into a "Gan Edan," a Garden of Eden.

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