



The Central Arava Regional Council Journal
Arvot Newsmagazine

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The Arava Contributes to the World page 7

Learning By Doing! page 10

First Stake in Establishing Ein Yahav page 18



During October I had the privilege of flying to the US with Ezra Ravins, Head of the Regional Council. Our schedule included meetings and presentations about the area to JNF managers and supporters, as well as updates about Zuqim, the newest community in the Central Arava only recently established with the generous assistance of the Sapphire Society, JNF and KKL.

The second part of the trip included participation in the Jewish National Fund Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. I was amazed! We were given the chance to present the area to the open public and participated in some of the discussions ourselves.

First of all, during our presentation of the area, although I recognized some of the faces who had visited the Arava over the last three years, I was very impressed by the extensive knowledge most of the audience showed; general knowledge about the Central Arava and more particular knowledge they had about JNF - KKL projects in the area.

This was the second time I flew overseas. The first was in August 2008 to Australia, when I also had a chance to meet a very active and caring community. I have to say, personally I believe it doesn't and shouldn't be taken for granted.

When I began working for the Council 30 months ago we were considering how best to define or name the Department that had just been created. Resource Development was chosen since today we approach the whole fund raising activity not as a one sided action but as a long term partnership. Well, on my return from the US trip, I am proud to know that we have such supportive partners overseas.

Keren Rotem,
Resource Development
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I was once told at a meeting in the Prime Minister's office "Your area is unattractive to new settlers." Let us be clear: while the Arava region is the most beautiful desert area in Israel, its remoteness and arid climate – only 30 millimeters of rain per year - make for difficult living conditions. Through the summer months we reach 40 degrees Celsius and even higher.

What hasn't been said about global warming? This summer was yet another record breaker, with some days reaching 46 - 48 degrees. During the sowing season in August farmers suffered heat damage in their fields more severe than anyone remembers. Many of the pepper seedlings could not survive the heat. However, we are determined and persistent farmers even when faced with forces of nature.



The Head Of The Council

A final farewell to the first settlers. Within a period of a few months, three of the first settlers in the Central Arava region passed away.

Shai Ben Eliyahu, the first settler to arrive in the Arava, a man of vision whose relentless determination led to the establishment of Ein Yahav, departed this life at the age of 72. In 1959, as a young, brash moshavnik he succeeded to enlist the backing of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion to secure authorization for the founding of Ein Yahav. He later served as head of the Central Arava Regional Council for 9 years and was deeply involved in facilitating the peacetreaty with Jordan in 1994.

Nahum Kaplan, who settled on Ein Yahav in the early 1960's and subsequently

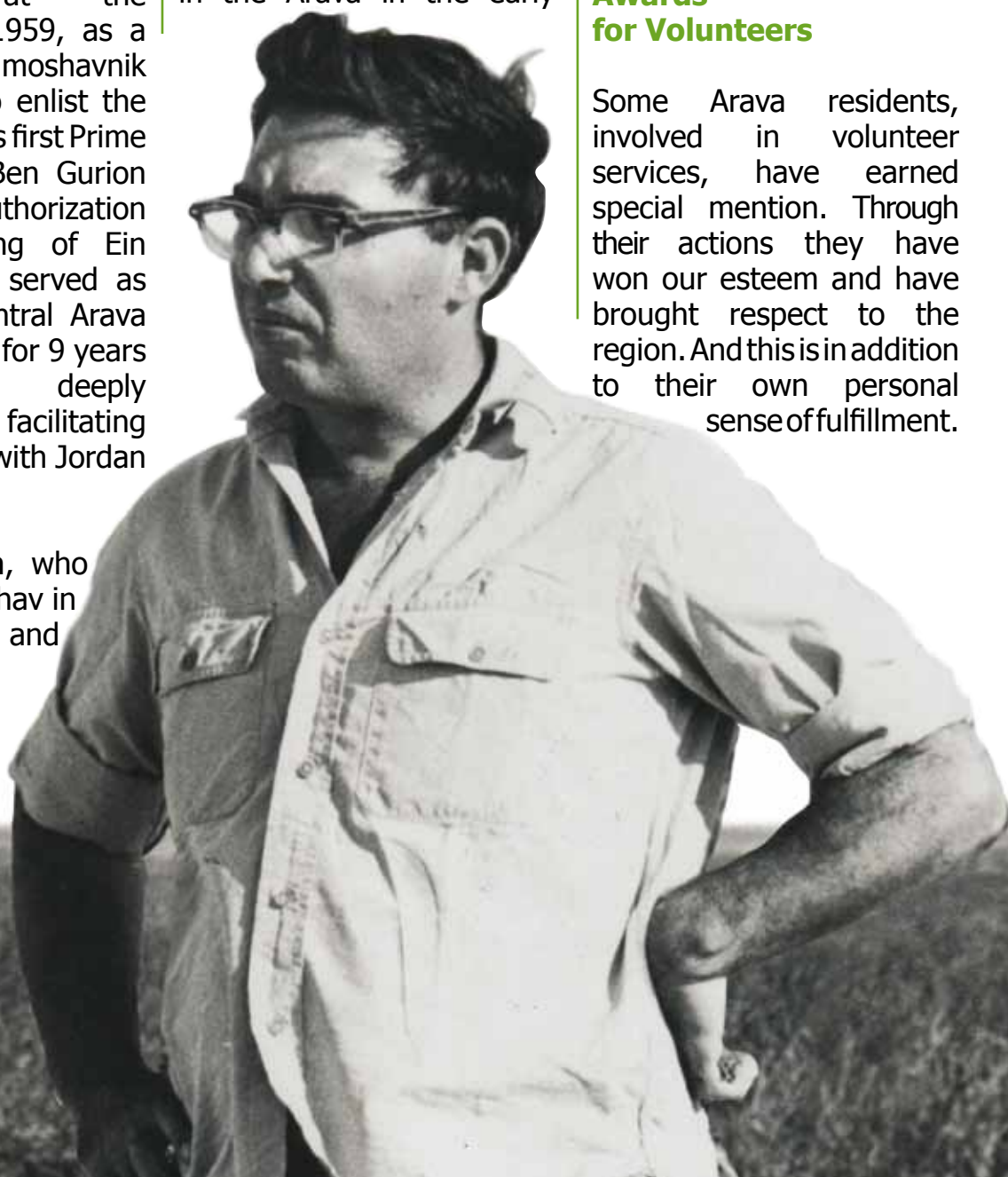
established the farm in Ein Hatzeva, died and was buried in Ein Hatzeva.

Ali el-Missek, from the small Bedouin tribe near Ein Hatzeva, passed away and was buried in the Bedouin cemetery west of the "spring route" on the hills that overlook the Arava valley. Ali arrived in the Arava in the early

1950's and throughout his life he cooperated with the security forces in preventing infiltrators and terrorist attacks against travelers and settlers in the Arava. Ali and his family received protection and appreciation from the country's leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Arik Sharon.

Awards for Volunteers

Some Arava residents, involved in volunteer services, have earned special mention. Through their actions they have won our esteem and have brought respect to the region. And this is in addition to their own personal sense of fulfillment.



*Shai Ben Eliyahu,
early 1960's, Ein Yahav
in the old army camp*



Elad Seker receiving the Presidential Award for Volunteering from the President of Israel Mr. Shimon Peres. Photo by: Yosef Avi Yair Angel.

Elad Seker, Commander of the Arava Rescue Unit, received the Presidential Award for Volunteers. Elad, 40, is married with 3 children and lives on Ein Yahav. He is a volunteer in the Arava Rescue Unit and has commanded the team for the last 7 years. His activities have promoted and strengthened the unit and have increased the feeling of security for tourists in the Arava and anyone who finds himself in a situation of distress or helplessness.

analyze complex situations and to coordinate the rescue with other medical services and search authorities - saves lives. And saving lives is his number one objective. Alongside this rescue work, Elad promotes social activities for youth and army units. The rescue unit under his command participates in humanitarian delegations to disaster-struck areas around the world, and so Elad represents the image of the humane and influential Israeli to the world.

Elad, with his total commitment (even at the expense of his own family and the farm he manages), sets an example of professionalism which knows no limits of time, borders or bureaucratic boundaries. His ability to maintain the unit's volunteers in top form, together with his ability to

Sheva Cohen, the legendary nurse from Ein Yahav, was awarded a shield from the Deputy Minister for Pensioners Affairs, in honor of many years of volunteer work.

Sheva arrived as a qualified nurse in the early 1960's and has been the community nurse ever since. Till this day she accompanies pregnant women on the long drive to the hospital to give birth. Sheva is married and has 4 children, two of whom manage farms in Ein Yahav, and 11 grandchildren.

Alongside her day to day medical work, she also volunteers in the Arava Rescue Unit; and she has joined rescue delegations to assist people after earthquakes in Turkey (1999), Peru (2007) and Haiti (2010).

Sheva Cohen, from Ein Yahav, receiving the Shield from the Deputy Minister. Photo by: Lior Daskal



Arava Leadership Training Program

The Arava Leadership Training Program ("Mechina") in Hatzeva opened its second year with 28 students from all across Israel. The program boasts an extraordinary combination of students: boys and girls, religious and secular as well as seven students from Australia from the I.B.C. program.

Recently, there have been two visits from Knesset Members to the Mechina. **Ze'ev Bielsky**, former Chairman of the Jewish Agency, and **Shaul Mofaz**, former Chief of Staff and Minister of Defense. Each presented his convictions, and a lively discussion followed. The meeting with Mofaz was also joined by Chairman of Partnership 2000 from Australia,



Australian Ambassador planting an Acacia tree in the Mechina.

Ron Finkel, who was on a visit to Israel. Partnership 2000 assists in sponsoring the Mechina project. Every meeting with the Mechina students leaves me with renewed enthusiasm, since the project has instilled the whole Central Arava region with a breath of fresh air. Integration of the students in regional educational projects and their assistance to the community are felt and welcomed.

The Mechina has already earned high regard and we are planning to expand it to 60 students, whose integration into daily life in the Arava will greatly assist the development and strengthening of the area. We are blessed with exceptional volunteering of Zionist youth.

Left: Shaul Mofaz, Ron Finkel and Ezra Ravins at the Mechina.

Right: Bob Friedland during the JNF Parsons Water Fund Board Meeting. Photo by: Keren Rotem.



The Australian Ambassador Ms. **Andrea Faulkner** came to the Central Arava for two days. She lodged in a guest room in Ein Yahav and toured the Arava, visiting Zuqim, Sapir Park, the Peace Road, Yair Station and the Mechina in Hatzeva, where she planted an Acacia tree.

Annual JNF Conference in Atlanta

Keren Rotem and I were fortunate to participate in the annual JNF conference in Atlanta, Georgia in October and to present issues regarding the Center Arava Regional Council. Our intensive trip included a meeting in Baltimore with Sapphire women and meetings in New York with the Nathan Parsons Water Fund and with the professional team



at the JNF offices in New York, followed by the conference in Atlanta. The conference was extremely well organized with plenty of pride and love for Israel. In each of the many meetings we presented the challenges involved in settling the Central Arava and the complex but achievable mission of doubling the Region's population over the next decade.

JNF Canada

During October a Canadian delegation visited and toured the Arava. The delegation from JNF Canada included the President of KKL Canada, **Joe Rabinovitch** and his wife Elaine, the Regional Executive Director of Ontario, **Franklin Simkevitz**, and the KKL Emissary in Canada, **Micky Goldwyn**; and several more.

The delegation visited Zuqim and met with me at the Council offices in Sapir. We then continued via the Peace Road to Yair Station on a tour emphasizing the various KKL Canada projects.

With kind regards,

Ezra Ravins
 Head of the Council
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Above: Ezra Ravins presentation of the Central Arava during the Annual JNF Conference in Atlanta.

Right and Below: Ezra Ravins presenting the Central Arava to the JNF New York Office Staff.

Below: Ezra Ravins and the CEO of JNF USA, Russell Robinson.



Contribution to the World

The Central Arava is one of Israel's leading agricultural districts. The region, with only 3,000 residents, grows about 60% of Israel's fresh vegetable export and 10% of Israel's cut flower export. The industry is based on years of research, conducted under the auspices of the Arava R&D. Some world renowned innovations in agriculture were originated in Israel. Drip irrigation and cherry tomatoes are just two examples. Along side the export of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers, a secondary industry has sprouted: Israeli farmers supply agricultural know-how, equipment and sophisticated techniques to

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areas around the world. Israel has a well established world-wide reputation for expertise especially in the areas of arid climate farming, water resource management, utilizing brackish water, and environmentally friendly pest control. For decades Israeli experts have traveled to third world countries in Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe to share this body of knowledge assist in improving food production to significantly benefit the lives of millions of people.

Arava R&D was already showcased in the 2nd issue of the Arvot Newsmagazine. A number of researchers and Ministry of Agriculture Extension Services advisors who work at Arava R&D

have gained their knowledge through years of experiments in the "Yair" research station. They often are sent for short term missions, usually to third world countries, to conduct courses or oversee agricultural development projects. These missions are organized on behalf of MASHAV - Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, a department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CINADCO - The Centre for International Agricultural Development Cooperation of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Yoram Zvieli, a researcher and advisor for vegetable growers is on the staff of the Arava R&D. He





Yoram Zvieli



Rivka Offenbach in China



arrived in the Central Arava in 1984 immediately after graduating from the Faculty of Agriculture in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At the start of his career he held a position with the JNF (Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel) and was involved in the initial development of Sapir Park as a forester. With the establishment of the Arava R&D he joined as a researcher, and conducted one of the early experiments on Moshav Hatzeva. In 1991 - 1992 Yoram was part of the founding team of Yair Station. Since then he has filled different roles but was always involved with research on vegetable crops.

In 1997 Yoram was sent on a four year mission to Senegal on behalf of CINADCO (Ministry of Agriculture) and MASHAV (Ministry of Foreign

Affairs) to establish a pilot model farm for open field and net house agriculture and effective use of water from the Senegal River. The mission was part of the Agricultural Demonstration and Regional Development Fossil Valley Project. On completing the mission in Senegal, Yoram returned with his family to Israel and to his former position in the Arava R&D. Since 1994 in parallel with his ongoing research and role as agricultural advisor at Yair Station, he began lecturing in AICAT, the Center for Agricultural Training in Sapir and supervising the foreign students with their personal projects.

Another researcher who has been sent abroad is **Rivka Offenbach**. In 1987 Rivka was asked by Yair Guron, Head of the Arava R&D at that time ("Yair" Station is named after him), to come to the Central Arava and assist in developing greenhouse agriculture.

"When I arrived to the area the entire agriculture industry was done in open fields" says Rivka. "Since 1987 I was heavily involved in the development of growing vegetables in greenhouses, promotion and implementation of new technologies, localization of new crops, improving



Eviatar Etiel

efficiency of use of brackish water, climate control and more.”

In the framework of Israel's international aid to third world countries, Rivka was approached by MASHAV and CINADCO and was asked, together with Eviatar Etiel, to teach vegetable growing methods and greenhouse vegetables. In Namibia they delivered a course in advanced irrigation methods, focusing on drip irrigation, to first degree students in agriculture. Some regions of northern China have climate and growing conditions similar to the Arava. The well documented process of desertification endangers vast areas of this region.

Since 1994 Rivka has visited China several times to conduct courses in agriculture and food production.

Eviatar Etiel, an advisor at Yair Station through the Extension Service of the Ministry of Agriculture since 1997, also specializes in vegetable crops. Eviatar's research has been focused on development of the plant's root zone. With the shortage of suitable, arable land, much work has converged on alternate substrates such as coconut chips or sawdust.

These new materials have given rise to better handling of the crop's root zone. "In the R&D we also developed an efficient method of dealing with nematodes, which are very harmful to the crop's roots are very common in tropical countries." Eviatar was sent to Nigeria and to some of the Caribbean Islands to teach local advisors and farmers efficient vegetable growing methods and treatment of nematodes.

On January 19-20 2011, during Tu B'Shvat, the annual international Open Day exhibition will take place at Yair Station.

This year the exhibition is celebrating its 20th anniversary with the participation of Mr. Shimon Peres, President of Israel, Mr. Shalom Simhon, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Efi Shtentzler, Chairman of KKL, Israel. Knesset members and other distinguished guests will also be attending. The event has grown to be the largest agricultural fair in Israel.

During the exhibition Arava R&D will present recent achievements in research both at the station and pilot projects on farmer's fields. In addition, about 150 leading suppliers of agricultural equipment and materials have confirmed their participation. We expect well over 20,000 visitors, local and international, during this two day event.

If you would like to participate in the up-coming 2011 Open Day Exhibition please contact Tal Ortas, Customer Service Coordinator

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Learning By Doing!

The Arava International Center for Agriculture Training (AICAT), located in Sapir in the Central Arava Region, provides both a meeting place and a training center for students from various Asian countries. These students are integrated into the community and agricultural setting that characterizes the Arava and live with local residents, farmers of the Arava. Under a single roof, with a multitude of cultures and shared human attributes, the students receive professional agricultural training and live a unique experience that enables them to discover their capabilities and the means for fulfilling their potential.

The center was established in 1993, at the initiative of Ami Shaham, one of the pioneering Arava settlers, who was the first Head of the Council and who is currently the General Manager of the Arava Drainage Authority. The main objective of AICAT is to offer the trainees from Asian countries unique, high quality professional training as well as practical implementation and a

set of skills through hands-on training together with work in agriculture. More than 4,000 students have graduated from the Arava International Center for Agriculture Training during its 15 years of operation! Over the years the Center has received students from various South East Asian countries, including Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam, Laos and Tibetans from the exile community in India.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed with official institutes in each of these countries, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Universities. Every year the Center receives authorization from the Israeli Inter-Ministerial committee to enroll students from Asian countries.

The Inter - Ministerial committee is comprised of representatives from various Government Ministries – the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Employment and the Treasury.

Various other organizations and groups play a role in the success of the project. These include the Israeli Embassies in the above Asian countries and foreign Embassies in Israel, the Central Arava Regional Council, and the team of lecturers and project supervisors who reside in the Arava.

The farmers, who open their homes and farms to the students fulfill the crucial aim of exposing trainees to our way of life and are central to the success of the program.



AICAT students during the Open Day

"We are learning so many things that we have never ever imagined. Our agriculture in Nepal is not so complicated and not so commercialized. So, there are so many things to learn from the Israel and from the Arava especially." says Dinesh Kafle a 26 years old student from Nepal. "It is very special for us to be in Arava because the agriculture in desert we can't ever imagine this. In such a desert, in such a temperatures, in such a climate, in such an environment, how could Israeli people are growing their crops here. One most important thing that we have learned here is how to work".

The Center provides agricultural know how through practical, in-the-field training at various moshavim (agricultural communities) in the Arava. The duration of the project is 10 months which constitutes a full agricultural season. The students are exposed during their stay



Vietnamese students dancing during the AICAT closing ceremony 2008

on the moshavim to modern agricultural techniques that are much more advanced than those applied in their countries.

The students' job training is conducted on farms from Moshav Idan to Kibbutz Eilat. This year, in the light of the success of last year's trials, we have extended the project to include dairy farming in the kibbutzim of the Southern Arava.

Maturode Sumranpon, Chief of External Relations Section, Ministry of Education in Thailand says: "Each year the number of students wanting to join the project is increasing, and at the moment we have 150 students studying here and for OVEC (Office of the Vocational Education Commissions) this project is considered one of the most successful. The environment and the situations are different so they need to

apply, but one important thing is that they learn how to work systematically from the Israeli people".

The studies take place in classrooms fully equipped with advanced teaching equipment. The lectures are conducted in English, by teachers and project supervisors, all farmers and residents of the Arava.

The curriculum includes economics and finances, agriculture, post-production and post-harvest, aquaculture, vegetable growing, flower growing, plant protection, business methods, and computer competence. In Israel the students are exposed to a different way of thinking from the learning methods applied in their countries. We require them to take an active part in discussions, to ask questions, to propose solutions and to learn in groups.

"In Myanmar teaching is how to use. Arava Region Sapir center, teach how to think!" says **Aung Myint** a 27 years old student towards his graduation from AICAT.

The students participate in an extensive range of local cultural and social activities. They also celebrate their traditional holidays throughout the year, decked out in traditional, colorful costumes, and enjoying their authentic food and special music. In this way the residents of the Arava are also exposed to the unique lifestyles from the students' countries.

At the annual Open Day exhibition, which takes place at the 'Yair' Research and

Development Station, the Asian students present the agricultural methods in their countries by constructing models. At the AICAT booth, set up especially for this event, they play music and give colorful folklore performances.

During the year, in order to enhance their Israeli experience, the students are taken to tourist attractions nationwide including visits to the Galilee, the Golan, Jerusalem, Eilat and the Dead Sea. By the end of their year of study and training, the students have become true ambassadors for the State of Israel, and they take home a multitude of exciting ideas and a burning, ambition to apply these ideas in their

homelands. Over 50% of them continue their studies at university in their countries and achieve highly responsible work positions.

Wirin Anthakhaek a teacher from Mahasarakham College of Agriculture and Technology in Thailand arrived at AICAT in 2002 as a student and for the next 4 consequent years, through 2007, was sent by OVEC as a Thai interpreter. She returned to Thailand in 2007 and continued working for Mahasarakham College as an instructor, based on the knowledge she acquired in the Central Arava. Only 4 months after her return to Thailand she sent us an update about a new tutorial project she initiated. The Thai students

Wirin Anthakhaek guiding Thai students in the 'Arava Farm' project in Thailand.



who are trained in the Arava return home and have to complete an additional and final semester in order to receive their Diploma in Agriculture. This past year, with the guidance of Wirin, the Thai students decided on a joint project, which was managed during their free time after school hours. The project was to establish and manage a profitable farming unit, with crops that suit the Thai market, based on their studies and training in Israel.

“This year is very big different between last year and the year before because they are growing corn in the big area and using DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM. The objective of their project is to have at least 1000 ears corn to the market everyday” says Wirin. “They choose sweet corn to grow in their farm because the demand of corn is very high. I get this idea 3 years ago when I was the second time in the Arava (2004) and being a translator of Economics, Marketing and Financial analysis for Mr. Eyal Poliker and Mrs. Shoshi Monfred. So I talked to my students that we have enough knowledge to run our own farm in Thailand and together we planned to form the ARAVA FARM



Arava Farm in Mahasarakham College of Agriculture and Technology in Thailand.





COMPANY on our return to Thailand and under our college.”

“At that time we didn’t have enough money to carry out the project. We ask for the donation from

Thai employees to get the drip irrigation in Thailand. It was very important for me because we send our students to study and be trained in the advanced farming system in the Arava. The students

return to Thailand with the knowledge and can teach other Thai students and farmers. But we don’t have the technology for them here. We were lucky that Thai employees gave us 150,000 Baht (\$4,411) to build the irrigation system, bought from Netafim Israeli Company.”

The students imported from Israel the drip irrigation system from Netafim.



“The main crop in our farm is sweet corn because in Thailand we have big demand but less supply. We have altogether 12.5 acre, on 4 acre we grow sweet corn using drip irrigation like we learned in Arava and all the rest using sprinkler irrigation. When we use both irrigation systems, sprinkler and drip, we learned that drip is better.

It saves water, fertilizer and labor.

In the corn field students also set 1-3 experiments per crop to have more information in order to develop their farm. I myself as a teacher who is involved in sending students to be trained in advanced agriculture in Israel, could say that this Farm in Mahasarakham College is the best opportunity for Thai students and teachers to learn new and high technology in agriculture from Israel”.

Arava International Center for Agricultural Trainees provides not only an invaluable contribution to the foreign countries and students who attend it but also offers additional workplaces for Arava resident teachers and supplies working hands to the local agricultural

industry. The Center has between 450-500 students annually and we like referring to them as good will ambassadors for Israel.

The future goals of the center include:

- Becoming a national center for all agricultural training in Israel
- Increasing the number of trainees and the number of participating countries
- Developing additional short term programs
- Expanding cooperation with other educational institutions in Israel.

Hanni Arnon,
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*Photos from the Arava Farm, Thailand
by Wirin Anthakhaek.*



The students adapt the knowlegdle that they learnt in the Arava, to what works best for them in their eviroment - such as in organic pest control techniques.



An Interview with a Former AICAT Student

An interview with Sither Tsering a former student from Tibet

Please tell us about yourself and your background

I am Sither Tsering, 31 male, Tibetan living in India as refugee. I am graduated in Bachelor of Commerce from Dharwad city, under the University of Karnataka, southern India, in 2004.

I belong to poor family back ground economically. We are big and joint with 9 siblings for which I am the middle one. My elders had no education opportunities as myself and my younger's do. My mom expired when I was in school. My father is not a professional in agriculture due to the lack of modern education but an experienced farmer in which he gains little income. We earned many things from his vast experience in farming (traditionally). Most of Tibetan refugee wouldn't survive without the help from our exiled Government and from the Indian government. My education was materialized with their support so as my mates and younger Tibetan generations. Their kindness was huge and we always remain their gratitude.

After my degree I had keen interest in management and marketing but when I involved under AICAT agriculture program in 2008, my interest spread more and more emphasize on agro-science, agro-economic and in irrigation systems in Arava. And this is my strong determination in exploring this depth knowledge in these various fields so that I can utilize that knowledge back at home.

What did you know about Israel before you came and what were your expectations?

Honestly, I knew nothing except it is a small country located between Muslim countries in west Asia. I met some Israeli people in India during their personal tour to the country but that didn't help me out to this knowledge.

My expectations was very limited in terms of education but had a feeling to have



a handsome income and to utilize it to support my family or start up a small but smart business. But it all been changed when I begin to realize the modernized way of agriculture I saw in Arava, specially the irrigation technology. Though, it's intense and very expensive but very effective and efficient and more over its smart way to learn the way of life in modern world of agriculture. No doubt about the profits.

How different is the Agriculture in your country to that of Israel's and what will you take back home?

Though, I saw many things different from our traditional way of agriculture practice in southern India than that in Arava. It is absolutely a fine example piece of modern/intensified agriculture in the world with the application of drip irrigation technology. Yet I found its demerits as well. You know action has an equal and opposite reactions. I am sure every farmer here knew about its negatives effects. But the technology, the ideas, the tools, machines, resources are far effective and more efficient than that of our own way of practice in India. Which I think is incomparable.

Please feel free to express your self

My two year experiences in Arava's modernized intense agriculture practice was immeasurable, but also the people I met with had been overwhelming and strong bondage in sharing their point of views. Their knowledge in the specific fields is relatively high which is why I think they keep busy in order to control the untold future risk and damages. But still, such modernized agriculture also leads to certain disadvantages or demerits of its own. Such as affect on environment, social, economics, and to the government.

Since the agriculture practice in Arava emphasize mostly on the productivity and the profits due to the huge investment incur by farmers each season/year. Here the farmers are more focused on profits than of the environmental. I am talking specifically about the use of plastics and nylons we used limitless in green houses and its impact on society in a long run would lead to serious effects.

What impressions have you gained about Israel from your experience in the Arava?

Israel is a country that believes in development,

education and optimistic about the peoples mind in the contribution to the progress of the nation as one. People are very open minded and have deep respect to their rich culture. It is said that, "Nations culture lies in the heart and mind of its people". Very impressive and unique.

Secondly, not only survival after almost extinction of the race of the Jews but overcoming every hardship to the level of one of the most successful country today. You know, this influence us (for the younger Tibetans) to learn from the past and the great history.

Tibet is often compared to the Jewish nation in that Jews lived in exile for 2,000 years before returning to their country and rebuilding the State. Do you think or expect Tibet to be the same?

Optimistically yes, because the Jewish people suffered being in exile for more than 2,000 years. And of course, so as Tibetan at this present time from more than five decades under the Chinese brutal rule. Both nations had hard experiences that can't be forgettable and forgivable. But I only see the difference is of time and people's way of thinking.



During the early years, people are less educated in terms of relationship and the dependable societies as one universe. Moreover, people lack farsightedness and were short sighted for short benefits and profit of once own. I think this could be the basic point that slightly differs from that of the Tibetan present situation being in exile and the Jewish citizens in all over the world in the past.

Traditionally, we believe that almost everything in this world is impermanent, so are we, the citizen of the world. States of one not always remain the same for long. These days, people are more dependent not only within country but within world. There fore, independent of Tibet not only benefits the Tibetan but to the others as well, to the wider perspective. To sum it in short: Jews citizens and the Tibetans are far more similar incase of experiences but less incase of times as time is the key factor that change the stories of different moments.

Sither Tsering

Shortly after the previous issue of the Newmagazine appeared, Shai Ben Eliyahu passed away. This article is dedicated to his memory.

In the early years of statehood the planning, location, and establishment of new settlements was a joint effort of the Jewish Agency's Department of Settlement, the government's Ministries of Agriculture and Defense and always in line with the nation's security needs.

Ein Yahav, the first settlement in the Central Arava Region, was not conceived in the conventional way. On the contrary, Ein Yahav was established based on a whim by two young men who wanted to set up a new settlement in the Negev. The two, **Shai Ben Eliyahu** and **Hagai Porat**, explored the Negev and when they arrived at "En Wahab", a remote and isolated point with no access road or neighboring settlement, they decided that this is where they would found a new settlement.

They approached the settling agencies and the IDF with the idea of establishing a Nahal (young pioneer soldiers) settlement, but the idea

First Stake in Establishing Ein Yahav



was rejected. The Jewish Agency's Department of Settlement did not believe that a settlement could be viable at that location, and the IDF did not attach any importance to the region.

One Friday morning in the summer of 1959, at a weekly meeting of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department in Tel Aviv, Shai made one more attempt to convince Department representatives. They again refused, suggesting that he "go somewhere more normal". Shai was undeterred, but the chairman retorted "Only a letter from God will help."

In his desperation, Shai turned to a friend who was waiting around at the Mapai Party offices in Tel Aviv. They noticed Prime Minister **David Ben Gurion** ending

a meeting. Shai entered the room and asked to speak with him. "What is this about?" asked Ben Gurion. "We would like to establish a settlement in Ein Yahav, but the Jewish Agency and the IDF are not interested. They say we need a letter."

Ben Gurion, who made it his mission to settle the Negev and served as Minister of Defense, reacted with anger: "Who doesn't want to? Has bureaucracy taken over the army too? If they do not want to approve, I will issue a letter."

"When can I receive this letter?" asked Shai.

"What do you mean? Right now!" Ben Gurion banged the table.

Ben Gurion told his driver to rush him and Shai to his office in the central army headquarters. The "Kirya"

was empty as it was Friday afternoon, but fortunately Ben Gurion's secretary was still in her office.

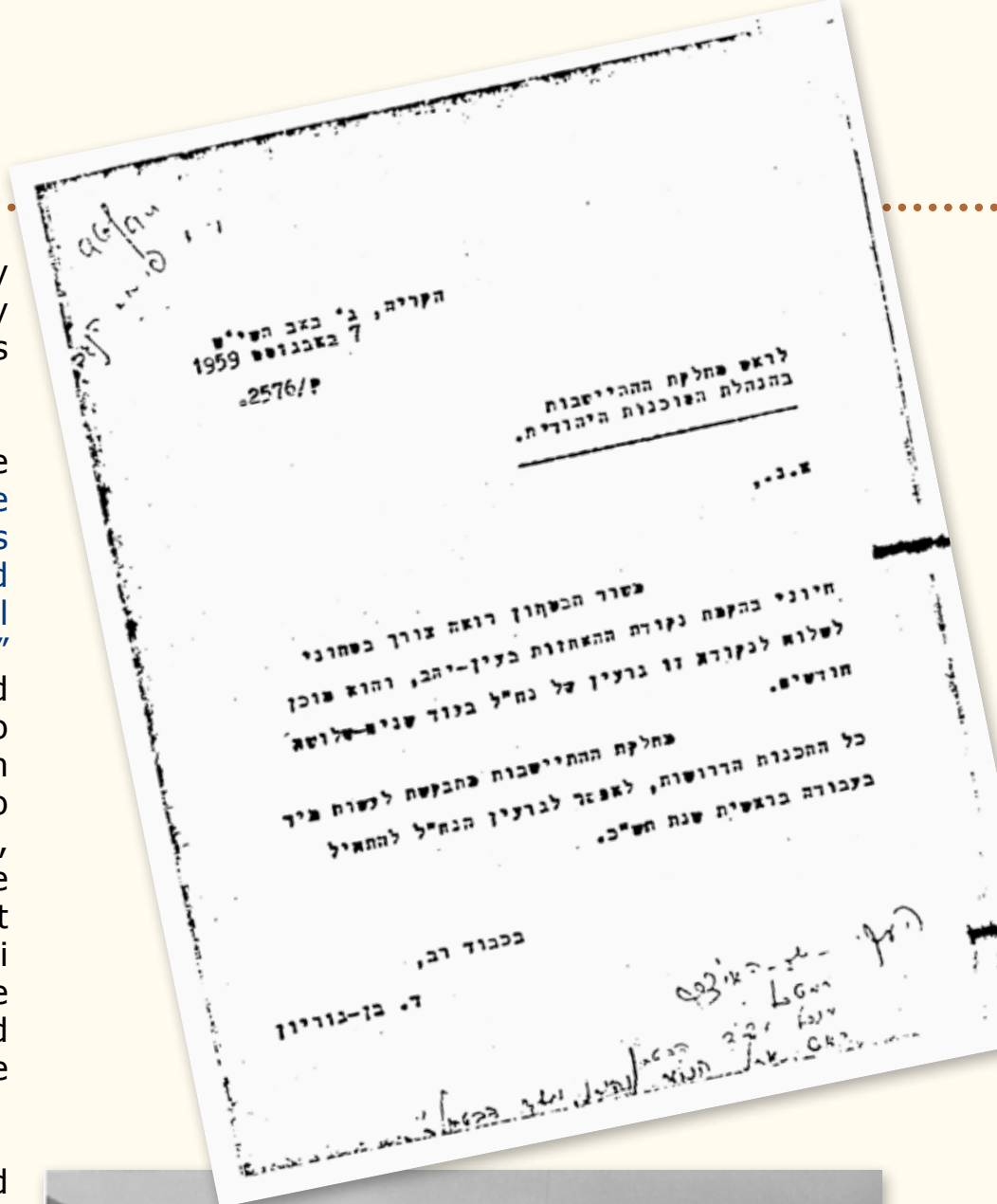
Ben Gurion took a piece of paper, and wrote: "The Ministry of Defense sees a crucial security need in establishing a Nahal Settlement in Ein Yahav." He signed the paper and gave it to his secretary to type up. Shai thanked Ben Gurion and hurried back to the Jewish Agency building, where the meeting of the Department of Settlement was still in progress. Shai gave the urgent letter to the secretary and she passed it to the Chairman in the meeting room.

The Chairman stormed out of the room as if thunderstruck, shouting: "Who is this letter from? How did you get it?" Shai entered the meeting room and asked: "Now write the approval in the protocol." The chairman at first evaded, saying "It will be OK...", but Shai insisted that the decision be entered into the meeting notes.

Thus the initial bureaucratic hurdle was overcome thanks to Shai's "chutzpah" and Ben Gurion's leadership. The path was clear for the establishment of a foothold at Ein Yahav. Many obstacles were still in store

for the two young settlers, and the saga is still being written, but from that point on Ein Yahav became a reality.

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Above: The Genuine letter Ben Gurion wrote for Shai.

Below: Shimon Peres, David Ben Gurion and Shai Ben Eliyahu (far right) during a visit to Ein Yahav in 1962.

Photos courtesy of **Amnon Navon** and the **Ein Yahav Archive**



Arava Open Day 2011 will be held on January 19-20, 2011

2011 is a key year celebrating its 20th anniversary



with the participation of:

President of the State of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Shalom Simhon
Chairman of KKL, Mr. Efi Shtentzler
Knesset members and other distinguished guests

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