

corridor had already begun in April, 1980 (Harris, 1980:215).

By June of 1981 there were already more than 25 Israeli settlements in the Valley (out of sixty settlements in the West Bank), but its total population remained small. This compares with the beginning of 1978 when there were only 2,000 settlers in the whole rift (Harris, 1980:113). Projections for the northern rift envisioned an increase to 3,300 by 1980 and 8,000 by 1995 (ibid.:122).

The fear that the 1981 elections could have brought the Labour Party to power propelled the Jewish Agency Settlement Department to start a nationwide campaign for settlement in the Jordan Valley. Its slogan was "Build your nest in the Jordan Valley." Settlers were offered an introductory working capital, an air conditioned house, a 20-dunum plot, water quotas, credit, agricultural instruction and community services (Ha'aretz, December 12, 1980). In December, also induced by possible loss of power, Sharon's Agriculture Ministry published a Five-Year Plan, 1980-1985, which called for the total cultivation of 300,000 dunums in all occupied territories and the creation of 48 new settlements during the period (Yediot Ahranot, December 22, 1980).

A major problem facing the Jordan Valley Jewish settlements, however, is physical viability and their inability, despite material inducements to attract new members. Part of this failure can be attributed to the sheer environmental harshness of the Valley to which many of the new settlers, despite their zeal, are not accustomed to. But economic miscalculation by the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department also had its share. The early push for creating an agrarian economy almost exclusively based on winter vegetables in order to benefit from the early ripening of fruits backfired when even earlier vegetables from the Arava Valley and Rafah Approaches flooded the market (Goell, 1980:12). A sudden shift,