

Appendix F

Moshav Argaman

Argaman, half a kilometer to the West, and built on the hills almost literally on top of Zbeidat, is not only one of those rare Herut settlements in the Jordan Valley, but also one of the very first Jewish settlements to be established in the West Bank (1968). While it was the adopted policy of the Labour Alignment (following the Alon Plan) to establish a permanent, agriculturally-based cordon of Israeli colonies between the river and the populated hilly areas of the West Bank, the Likud coalition later spearheaded by its Gush Emunim allies attempted to entrench themselves in the Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah hills. Argaman was the exception to this rule.

Both its ideological composition and the harsh living conditions in the Jordan Valley contributed to Argaman's continued non-viability as a settlement.

In 1968 it was established as a Nahal (military outpost) named after two Israeli soldiers killed in clashes with Palestinian guerrillas across the Jordan River.

From the status of a military outpost Argaman was elevated to a civilian settlement in 1971, the second such settlement in the Jordan Valley. It became a collective moshav (moshav shitufi a form intermediate between Kibbutz and cooperative settlement). Menahem Begin (then MK) and General Ezer Weizman officiated at the ceremony in which the Jewish Agency gave the settlers 2000 dunums, out of which only 600 dunums at the time were cultivated (100 dunums by the drip method).⁽¹⁾ The crops included onions, winter tomatoes, and eggplants (for export to England).

Although experts from the Technion and the Volcani Institute gave continued agricultural advice to Argaman farmers the settlement failed to attract a substantial number of farmers, with only 20 people (including 7 couples) venturing to stay. By 1972 the cultivated land had contracted to 350 dunums (half of what Argaman started with). An Israeli journalist had the following impression of the place at the time: