

Rahma Yeruham women's group, *Arab-West Report*, February 2017

We met at Savaria Zanon's hospitality tent in Rahma for dinner and common conversation. Savaria and her daughter Fatma hosted us, about 22 women and more little kids, half of us from Yeruham and half of us from Rahma.



After food was handed out, we had an introduction round and each woman told about herself, her family and what she does. We talked about Tu Bishvat, new year for trees in the Jewish tradition, a holiday that celebrates our connection to the ground and the land of Israel, and about the habit to hold a "Seder" (a festive meal) with symbolic foods and reading passages. Debbie mentioned that Tu Bishvat is also the holiday of pilgrimage to the ground of Yeruham (Shvat 1951)

and read a beautiful segment of A.D Gordon about our connection to the nature: "And you opened your eyes that day, human, and you glimpsed straight into nature's eyes and you saw your picture in it. And you knew that you returned to yourself, for if you ignore nature, you ignore yourself...".

Layla told how difficult it is to disconnect from the ground in the Bedouin tradition, because the ground is their soul.

In Islam, similar to Judaism, it is told that God created the human from the ground, then added flesh and skin, and then the soul; With his death, the human goes back to the ground.

Shani and Yael introduced their new shared project for Yeruham and Rahma: A vegetable garden, sort of an urban farm or "food forest", in which there will be both fruit trees and vegetable beds. Each family will be able to get a garden bed or a part of it and grow the season's vegetables in it, take them home and also make a similar vegetable bed near their home. There will be separate days for women and kids and for families (man and women together) from Yeruham and Rahma.

An interesting conversation developed around recipes with different vegetables and the participants' past (childhood memories) and present experience in growing vegetables. From there we drifted off to a conversation about the bedouins and jews' change of lifestyle and distancing from the nature. We talked about today's children, who focus on cell phones and forget how to play with each other outside, in the nature. The women from Rahma told how the bedouin women used to shepherd the herds with a small teapot and hard cakes that they used to bake on coals and eat with za'atar (hyssop spice) and olive oil.

Another conversation developed about women's singing that's disappearing amongst the Bedouins- special holiday songs of the women, bread making songs, wedding songs.

Reporter: Debbie