

Andrey Zeigarnik

Home in a Desert

2017

When I used to be in Israel as a tourist, I noticed visually interesting places with seemingly poor people living in a desert. These were Beduins. For many years, I has been dreaming of coming again and making photos, although it wasn't obvious how to approach them. Last year I found that Beduins have not only their strange settlements but also have villages. I also found that some Jews also build farms and villages in the desert, and it became interesting to compare.

There were things in common: homes in the Judaeen Desert, sheep and donkeys, an interest in building residential space for visitors, and an interest in continuing long-standing traditions.

There were, of course, differences too. To see Abdallah (the Beduin), I paid to him, and then he was nice and hospitable, and showed his homes and two families: in the village and in the desert. He talked about the desert, calling it 'home'.

Ari (the Jew) said that he never takes money from people who want to see him. I visited him twice and he was also hospitable and likable. He confessed that it had taken time for him to stop considering the imaginary borders around his place in the desert. Residential spaces were a little bit different: the Abdallah's variant was a huge tent with beds and carpets. Ari's boutique hotel was under construction. Abdallah didn't seem to be interested in planting trees, and Ari, on the contrary, seemed to have a huge passion for it. Other things are seen on the photographs that are divided into two parts.

The Beduin



There are many old cars near the Bedouin village. Perhaps they were stolen some time ago, or they are simply ruined by time and driving in the desert.



When I asked Abdallah to show his home, he understood that I mean either his house in the village or in the "tent camp" in the desert. But he did not understand why it's so interesting. Instead, he was eager to show me interesting places in the Judean desert. By then, I already had a good idea of what I could see in the desert.



Abdallah really wanted to show the Transjordanian police station that was captured by Israelis during the Six Day War in 1967. The territory in which it is located is dispute. In fact, both Palestinians and Israelis appear here without fear. Both bring tourists to this place. Sometimes ruins of this ugly building are used as a discotheque.



The Palestinian authorities have put these "houses" for the poor and thereby marked their rights to this territory. In fact, no Arab wants to live in a Bedouin village, certainly not in houses like these.



Neighboring Arabic village.



Abdallah's daughter.





Abdallah car is in excellent condition. It successfully passes all tests when necessary.





This is a kitchen.





One of the two Abdallah's wives and two of the four children. A younger wife, who lives in a "tent camp", helps the older one if necessary.











Another home, another family.







Abdallah's younger son.



Some people believe that, according to an 1858 Ottoman law, which is claimed to be still applied, all lands are considered "state land" unless proven otherwise. If a plot of land is "abandoned" or left uncultivated for three successive years, it becomes state land that can then be appropriated by the Israeli government and allocated to settlers or other uses. A few years ago, Europeans sympathizing with Arabs planted these trees that no one needs here.



The "hotel".



Beddings that are seen in the window are used by residents of the “hotel”, tourists that visit this place.



A hotel room.





Kitchen for use by tourists.





Neighboring Bedouin village

The Jew



Ari and his companion decided to build a settlement of two families with a large territory for fruit and olive trees, a farm, and a comfortable boutique hotel for workshops and conferences. Ari was born in Texas and his friend is originally from Paris.



His friend's home under construction.





Round-wall synagogue under construction. It is built by Arabs and volunteers from Germany. Arabs are happy that they have this job.



Boutique hotel under construction.















A neighboring settlement of orthodox Jews.





Ari's home before he married





A road to Jerusalem.