

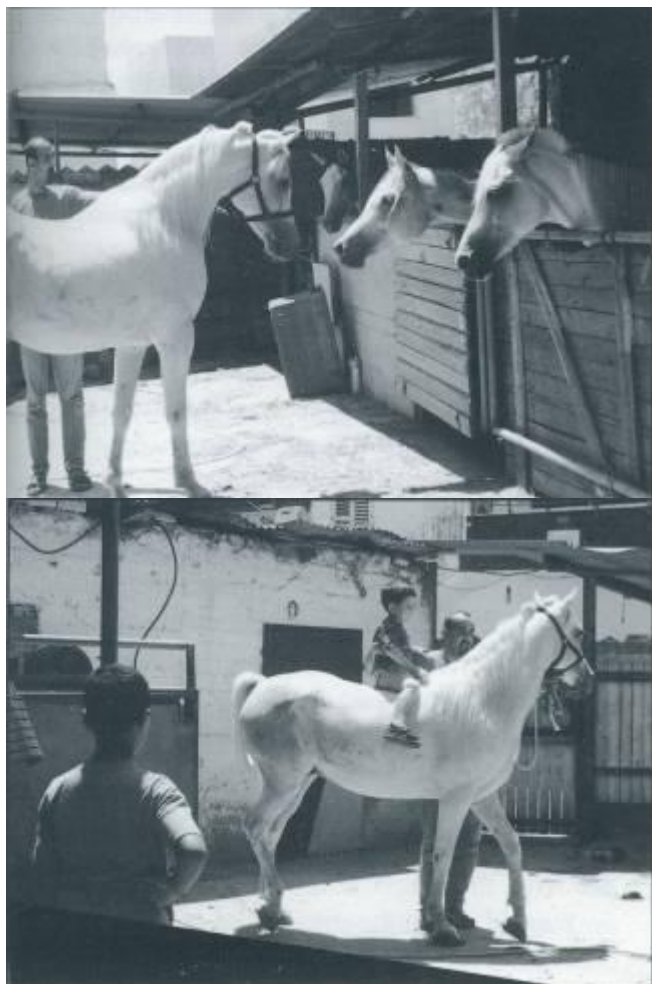
# Travels: Israel, Sinai, Palestine Part 2

Gail Goodman



Nasser Darawshe, Igal Sella, and Igal's grandson, Itamar in the courtyard of Rashid's house.

The details are fading as the days pass...the ride from Nazareth to Kfar Iksaal is lost. All I can remember is that Rashid Darawshe's house was in what seemed to be the middle of the village and as we entered the drive leading to the metal gate of the courtyard, buildings rose on both sides. The drive was



Top: Rashid's Arabian Stallion and Mares.  
Bottom: Rashid's Son and Igal Sella watch as Nasser holds Itamar on the stallion.

gray cobblestones, spotlessly clean. We parked outside the gate, behind a horse trailer, and entered a well-shaded patio area with tables and chairs arranged as though guests had momentarily vacated them. Rashid's soft-spoken wife, Um Ali, greeted us and immediately began to prepare a steady stream of refreshment: cold drinks, coffee, tea, fresh fruit. The watermelon was simply delicious, as was everything. She never sat with us, only served us.

The house was large and seemed to be built over part of one of the livestock areas. Livestock was kept in two compounds, at opposite ends of the house. Rashid's Arabians were kept in the front area. There were three exquisite mares, each with a foal, and an equally stunning stallion in the front, an extension of the patio where guests sat. The dispositions of all of the horses,



The sheep in the cool stable area under their house.

particularly the stallion, were wonderful. Maybe being so near to people all the time helps make them so

tractable. The stallion was so gentle that Nasser could put Igal Sella's grandson, Itamar, on his back, right there in the tiny paddock surrounded by his mares, and the horse behaved perfectly.

We walked down a connecting alley, and under the house was a spacious, cool, clean pen of equally clean fat tailed sheep. They were beautiful. We entered another stable area with another Arabian horse, belonging to a relative, apparently. There were two pointer pups and two Saluqis, each chained to a doghouse. All the dogs were ecstatic to see people...and jumped and barked and wagged their tails. The Saluqis were father and son, peas in a pod. They were tall, leggy, lightly built, red-gold feathered hounds. They were a Persian, Sinai, Israeli blend. Though it was terribly hot, when we came in, they were lying inside the doghouses. Once turned loose in the paddock, they ran straight for the shade. I asked if they could be brought to the patio area, since it was cooler there, so that I could measure them.

These Saluqis were wonderfully well behaved and easily handled, even by me, a complete stranger. Since these were the first Arab Saluqis I was measuring, their temperaments were really impressive. Later in the day, when they were turned loose in the patio area, they made straight for the partially open entrance gate and took off at top speed for a tour of the village. Rashid said that everyone knew they were his, so it was not a problem.

Before Rashid returned from work, however, Gideon Raski arrived. Gideon was my contact for the northern region of Israel and he was an old friend of Igal Sella, as well as an acquaintance of the Darawashe family. Gideon is a horseman and also an internationally licensed Arabian horse judge. Many generations of his family have lived in Rosh Pina, a small city in this region. So, first Igal Sella left because Itamar had had a long day already and needed to return home, then Nasser had to leave to prepare for his trip to the States. This left Gideon and me to sit in the shade, eat fruit, and talk about some of his memories of hounds and horses. His memories will follow this travelogue.

When Rashid arrived, he and Gideon had lots of catching up to do, and laughed quite a bit over this and that. Gideon speaks fluent Arabic. Attention turned to me and Rashid mentioned the photo of me and my Saluqis and the ASA Suki cup which my son had taken...I guess it's my "signature photo", if there is such a thing. I had sent the Darawashe family photos of my Saluqis while I was planning my trip. My feeling was that Arab men would take "a woman" a bit more seriously if they knew she had good dogs...and though my Saluqis may not be popular with show folks, there has never been a hunter, East or West, who has not recognized their quality as coursing hounds. Since all Saluqis in the Middle East are coursing hounds, I either sent photos before I arrived, or showed the men my photo albums once I entered the tent or the courtyard. I am sure this helped, in a general sense, as well as in specific instances, which I'll recount.

Both Rashid and his son commented on the wonderful photograph, referring to it as "the one with the prize, the dog with the long neck", and how did we get such a picture...and so began our conversation. I don't remember exactly the context when I turned the tape recorder on, my taping was sporadic, unfortunately, but, nevertheless some interesting comments were captured. The photo album must have been open to Klelah, who is golden and feathered and very like the Negev Salukis Gideon had told me about [his full commentary will follow].

*Gideon:* These are the kind I was talking about in the Negev.....these are from the Negev, not Sinai. They chase gazelle.

*Gail:* Yours?

*Rashid:* No, mine don't catch gazelles. I'll have trouble with the Nature Reserve Authority....but mine run strongly, very strongly.....

*Gail:* From who do yours come from?

*Rashid:* From Abu Rkaiek in Tel Shevah.

*Gail:* They are Bedouin Saliqis?

*Gideon:* These are the kind I was talking about [now referring to Rashid's Saluqis]....

*Rashid:* This is the desert dog....Bedouin Salukis.....Saluki no sloughi. This is a Saluki....

*Gail:* Who taught you this "saluki-sloughi"?

*Rashid:* Igal Sella.....

*Gail:* And what do the Bedouin say?

[laughter and dialog between the men in Arabic, which I couldn't understand]

*Gideon:* They're all *salag*....it's not relevant.... listen a minute. All the dogs, which they call them *salag*, they are from the desert, from Sinai and from the Negev...

*Rashid:* Even the greyhound is *salag*.



Rishan, nearly 3 years old. Persian, Sinai, Eraeli blended pedigree.

*Gail:* Yes, I am learning this. It's very important.

*Rashid:*...very important.

*Gideon:* Yes....these Saluki and Sloughi.....they call them all *salag*.

*Rashid:* Yes,...then we differentiated, these with hair on the ears, Saluki, those without, Sloughi....

*Gideon:*....hair on the tail, I don't know....

*Gail:* This is a difference they make in Europe.

*Rashid:* With the Bedouin, they all work, all are *salag*....and they hunt with them.

*Gideon:* Something else I want to tell you

about the *salag*. Usually the Bedouin never leave the dog get in the house except the *salag*. The *salag* they leave him to lie on the bed and they don't say anything. The other dog they threw him away.

These dogs and the other dogs, they eat dead meat, they don't care. But maybe they do not collect the bad smell like the other dogs. Maybe, I think, that's why they let them get in the houses....you can see in the tent, you can see the *salag* dog lie on the cushions, on the rugs....they never leave other dogs get into their house.

*Rashid:* The strongest dog for hunting is the half greyhound, half Saluki...half and half....that's my experience.

The greyhound has delicate feet and legs....he is easily injured. The Saluki has strong

feet and legs....

*Gideon:* Salukis also get injured....at my place it's rocks, even the Saluki that's born in the area, sometimes they sprain their legs, twist....in the Galil....in the Negev I never saw it [injuries].



Rishan with his yearling son, Kalsooun.

[We discuss my Salukis for awhile....looking at the albums. Rashid asks about American open-field-coursing and I explain that generally a gallery walks to flush the hares for the three dogs on the line that will be slipped for the course. He finds it very interesting that three dogs are slipped and says that's the way they do it for horse races. Apparently for religious reasons it is not permitted to bet on a two horse race but if the owners of two horses wager on the outcome while inviting a third party to also race but not put into the pot, and the winner, regardless of which horse wins, gets the pot, it is permitted.]

*Rashid:* Once we went out with Igal Sella, 1978, 1980, something like that, to Kibbutz Shamir, when they planted the eucalyptus trees there.....we went to chase the gazelles out of there. They made Igal a court case....he took all the responsibility on himself, I only went with him. The Nature Reserve did it....we only chased them out, we didn't catch any because in the mountains it's very difficult, in the mountains the gazelle is stronger than the Saluki....they only ran after them, nothing more.

Igal took all the responsibility.....that was fine. They asked us, what are you doing here....we said, we're just here to pass the time.....but it was a beautiful day.

Around here we chase hares for pleasure, nothing more than that. Just to watch. It's much more enjoyable than a gun....much more enjoyable than a gun....but here, in Israel, they don't let us with their laws....it is forbidden for one animal to kill another but it's ok if a gun kills a thousand animals.

*Gail:* True? It's true?

*Rashid:* Yes.....the gun wounds an animal, sometimes it doesn't kill it, but, after a kilometer, the animal dies and nobody benefits from this....if the dog doesn't catch the prey, he doesn't catch it....either yes, or no....

*Gideon:* And yours, they catch hares easily?

*Rashid:* The Saluki catches hares easily....

*Gail:* When do you go out to hunt?

*Rashid:* I rarely go out to hunt....I only let the dogs run after the horses as I ride. It's a great pleasure. Other dogs, they don't have the endurance and the desire to go the whole day....the Saluki, the whole day, it doesn't bother them.....only give them a little water, let them lie in some water and they can continue as if totally fresh. Other dogs don't have the endurance. They can't hold up.

I go out once every two weeks, maybe every ten days.

*Gail:* How long do your dogs live?

*Rashid:* I'm breeding Salukis since 1974....all this time I have Salukis, from 1974 until today. All this time I have Salukis.

My Salukis die from old age....from 15 to 17 years old....but they can't hunt at that age, but they live.

I had a bitch from Igal Sella, Lula.....she was beautiful, without hair, really beautiful, smooth....she was very good, red.....I have from her bloodline daughters, in Sandalay....pure Saluki....the bitch is about seven years old and her pups one year and two months....

*Gail:* There were three pups in the litter mine came from. Maybe our dogs were littermates.

*Rashid:* It could be, it could be.....it's a small world.....she had a white pup, white, white....a very small world.

[Looking through *Sighthound Review* they came to a photo of an Irish wolfhound and ask about it....]

*Gail:* An Irish wolfhound or Scottish deerhound.....the Bedouin don't accept this....

*Rashid:* No, they won't accept this.....this is not *salag*.....not *salag*.

*Gail:* 100% not *salag*.

*Rashid:* [continuing to leaf through the magazine].... not *salag*. I had a friend with a male whippet, very strong in the orchards but he would run 500 meters and that was it....if he caught it good, if he didn't, he stopped and stood there. [continues to leaf through the magazine] This is Russian.....it's insane [all the hair]....



My Salukis, they're good guard dogs.....they're excellent....from the bed I hear them bark. If they're barking at a dog, I tell them "shhh", and that's that, "shhh" from the bed, I don't open the window, they are quiet.

[The men continue to look through the magazine. The pharaoh hound catches their attention and there is some discussion that someone brought one from the USA, it cost a fortune, and barked incessantly and was a pest. They commented on the way the dogs were stacked in the ads...]

*Rashid:* What do they want to see, the head?

*Gail:* It's for beauty....

*Rashid:* Beauty.....to see the neck, the shoulder, like we do with the horses....

*Gail:* Yes, exactly like halter class....

*Gideon:* But the dogs, they also hold them by the tail....

[For some reason, this comment was very funny and all laughed. As they came to photos of heavily feathered Salukis, the comment was made that the Bedouin in Sinai don't like this.]

*Rashid:* No, they don't like it.....it collects stickers....

*Gail:* But they said it was not purebred if it had too much hair on the body....

*Rashid:* Yes? They like smooth...

*Gideon:* Are there a lot of Salukis around here?

*Rashid:* Around here and in plenty of places, they don't understand these dogs....in Jenin, we gave them to a young man who understands these dogs and will take good care of them.....I don't sell them.....there they teach them in the fields and hunt with them. They teach them to hunt with the lamp....they hunt gazelles this way. The dog runs straight towards the reflection in the gazelle's eyes and catches it. They're very strong, my dogs.

*Gail:* Well, you can be sure that's interesting to me....

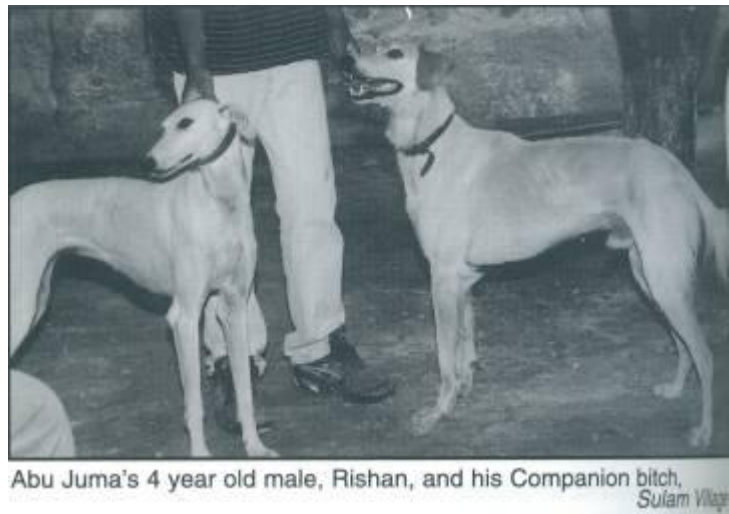
*Rashid:* If you want, I'll take you hunting....on Saturday....

*Gail:* Oh, on Saturday I have to go to the Negev....

*Rashid:* You're going to the Negev? I have a good friend there....I'll call him straightaway....he has my dogs.

[And so was made the superb contact with Achmed Abu Rkaiek in Tel Shevah, where there were excellent Saluqis, everywhere. Rashid also looked through some of the picture survey cards; his comments will be reported in a future part of this series.]

Since Gideon knew my purpose was to see as many local Saluqis as possible, he asked Rashid were there other hounds in the vicinity. Rashid knew of some hounds in the village of Sulam, not too far from Iksaal, and he called the breeder, Mustafa Abu Juma, to see if it was all right for us to visit. It was ok, so, we said good-bye, with hopes of returning in the near future, and thank yous for the pleasant afternoon. We drove through beautiful, fertile agricultural lands, the enormous vista a seeming contradiction to the tiny area Israel actually covers on the map. As we reached the area of Sulam, which



Abu Juma's 4 year old male, Rishan, and his Companion bitch, Sulam Village

is adjacent to a kibbutz, anybody who has ever coursed would just take a deep breath as the fields rolled before us.....perfect coursing country, simply perfect....certainly there would be Saluqis here! And there were, and they were beautiful.

We found the house of Abu Juma with no problem though there seem to be no street signs in any of the villages. Gideon would ask anyone we met, old or young, about the family we were sent to visit, and they seemed to give adequate directions. Everyone seemed to be known to everyone. The other amazing thing was how Gideon maneuvered his huge GMC double rear wheeled pick-up truck through the narrow, winding streets of the villages without hitting anything, even when he parked.

Many family members, men, grandparents, sons, grandchildren and relatives or friends were sitting in the front yard, around a table with coffee cups and fruit on it, enjoying each others company when we arrived. A beautiful feathered male Saluki was being led around by one of the children. Sunset was near and it had already been a long day.....it was unfortunate that I was so



Landscape around the village of Sulam



Abu Juma's Puppy bitch.

Sulam

tired because this was a source of enormous information, which I could barely tap. I am sure this happens to many, many travelers...sensory overload. I did my best and this is a place I must return to because not only were the Saluqis gorgeous and in immaculate condition, Abu Juma had the twinkle in his eye of a real authority. It gnaws at me that I missed so much. I was too tired to even turn the tape recorder on, so only my impressions remain.

Gideon made the introductions in Arabic while everyone watched me. The four year old Saluki, Rishan, simply took my breath away he was such a lovely hound, so I was immediately involved, going over him and then measuring him. His background was local Israeli and Arab breeding, according to Abu Juma, who seemed very pleased that I appreciated Rishan, which tired as I was, was clearly apparent. He told me that he has had Saluqis since the 1940s, when, as a young man, he took all the money he had and spent it on a Saluqi. They sleep by his bed and he loves them. At this point his son came down the stairs



Playing around

Sulam village

carrying an exquisite, toasted ivory colored bitch....she simply took my breath away. The male was delighted to see her and they danced around and I clicked away with my camera. When they calmed down, the family instructed the boy holding the bitch how to pose her, and I was coached when to take the pictures.....everyone seemed interested that the hounds look their best. (Unfortunately, none of my pictures do them justice.) Next a puppy bitch was carried down, also in sparkling condition. From what I could understand, she was a blended pedigree of western, Sinai, and Beersheva area breeding. The quality and condition of these three Saluqis was outstanding.

The bitches were carried back into the house but

the dog was allowed to remain in the courtyard with everyone. He was mellow tempered and a sturdy, muscular hound. I asked Abu Juma's son if he ran well and the young man responded, "If he didn't, my father wouldn't keep him." The dog had a second thigh like a ball of steel he was so hard. Abu Juma had watched as I measured Rishan. When the dog's ears were relaxed, like almost every dog of any running breed that I've measured, the distance between the ears is about four inches. When something caught Rishan's attention, up went his ears on top of his head, and with a smile, Abu Juma directed me to re-measure the distance between his ears, to my chagrin and his amusement. I had to say that the measurements were not precise, just a general feel for the dog in numbers.

Though I can't remember much of our conversation, I do remember that I was invited to return to go coursing....with that same twinkle in his eye, Abu Juma said, "Let's go....you, me, and Rashid....Saturday....we'll watch the Saluqis run". How I wish....An interesting comment was made by Abu Juma's son who said that his father had told him purebred Salukis have golden eyes. When I asked Abu Juma what he liked to see in a Saluki, he wanted the front to be broad and the whole palm to fit between the hipbones. He wanted to see a broad hock and the tail should reach the spire of the pelvis, even better if it reaches the spine. Feeling Rishan's huge second thigh, I commented on this and Abu Juma said this was crucial, the broader the better.

The topline must not be flat and the feet must be knuckled up. He likes to see moderate angulation and a Saluki must not be thin. The one complaint he has about Rishan is that no matter how much he feeds him, Rishan does not gain weight: "People will think I am a miser and don't feed my dog". He said a dog also needs flesh to run well. There were no ribs showing on his bitches; their bodies were smooth and rounded with muscle and flesh. Rishan did not feel thin to my touch, but he was obviously lacking in flesh in his owner's opinion.

It had been a very long day, so, after a few hours and a list of other Saluqi owners in the region was made for the next day, we took our leave of Mustafa Abu Juma and his family. As we pulled away from the house, Gideon commented that in all his years he had never met an Arab who had cared so well for his dogs....he had never seen dogs carried in and out of the house, nor had he seen them in such exquisite condition. He said he had "learned something". It was very clear to me that I had missed a great deal and that Mustafa Abu Juma is a person with valuable memories, information, and the twinkle in his

eye foretells delightful tales. As we drove towards Rosh Pina, Gideon told me about the region, the Israeli Arabian Horse Society, and over dinner, where we had the most delicious hybrid fowl, a goose-duck cross, he told me the story of the ancient Bedouin and his ancient mare, that almost brought both of us to tears.

During the early morning hours, Gideon worked in his orchards picking the fruit that ripens



Rishan and his running mate.

Sulam



Rishan, Abu Juma's male.



in August, so though I was fresh and ready to go at 10 o'clock, he had been up since 4 am. Though a man of enormous energy, as we drove towards the village of Sandalay, I could see that this extra "touring" was wearing on him. I had hoped to visit both Sandalay and the Druze village of Dalyat Al Carmel, but I could see that would be impossible. Not being willing to drive in Israel was a real handicap, but, I did want to remain among the living, which would not have happened with me behind the wheel in Israeli traffic. So, we made our way to Sandalay, a beautiful, whitewashed clean and prosperous village near the border with Palestine. The village is named Sandalay after all the sandalwood trees and all the people in the village are named Omary because they are all the descendants of the four Omary brothers, who originally settled there long ago.

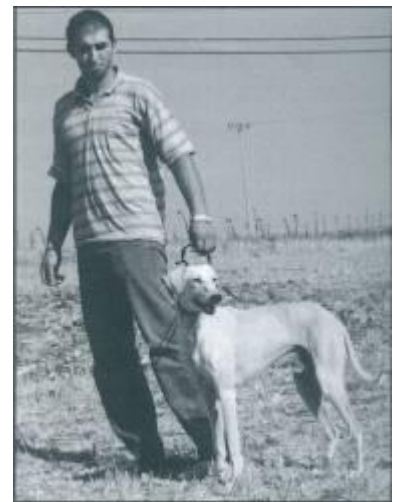


Entering the village of Sandalay



The Omary family, their Arabian colt, and Gideon Raski Sandalay

As we entered the village we met an older man walking, and Gideon exchanged greetings and read the names off the list that Abu Juma had dictated as people who had Saluqis. The old man obviously offered to direct Gideon to the house of one particular family, and he got in



Nijim with his owner Mohammed Omary Sandalay

the truck to ride along with us. We found the house, a spacious dwelling with a stall in the back courtyard with an Arabian colt in it. We pulled into the driveway at the back, walked around to the front and climbed the stairway to the door, which was answered by an extremely beautiful woman with her equally beautiful daughter standing behind her. We were ushered in to a western style sitting room, the first I had seen during my travels. The room was bright with blue velvet sofas lining the walls.

Gideon explained why we were there and read her the list of names; she began to call people on her cellular phone to see who was home and who still had Saluqis. Her son came in and shortly thereafter her husband. We drank coffee and ate cakes and Gideon chatted away with the family.

It turns out that one of the sons lives in Sacramento, California, and both he and the younger son have e-mail addresses. The younger son is studying computer programming. I showed the people *Sighthound Review* to give them some idea of the "sport of purebred dogs" in the USA, because they were amazed that I would come so far particularly to see Saluqis. At this point a young man who owned a Saluqi walked in and joined us. He told us that he had had two Saluqis but one died. He



Nijim, named after a bedouin warrior, 5 years old, received from Abu Juma in Sulam.



now has a five-year-old dog from Abu Juma. After more chat we went out for Gideon to take a good look at the Arabian colt in the courtyard and then both young men got into the truck and directed us to the home of Mohammed Omary, owner of the Saluqi.

We arrived at Mohammed's home and he ran up the drive to the sheep pens and came back leading a wonderful cream smooth dog named Nijim, star, after a famous Bedouin warrior. The owner was delighted to have the dog photographed and measured and told me that every year he gets his shots and his license. Nijim is an excellent coursing dog, according to Mohammed, catches rabbits and partridge with no trouble and is a tough dog, beating a local rottweiler in his latest exploit. Despite his toughness, he had the same even temperament that all the Salukis I'd seen so far displayed, he didn't object in any way to having his tail measured or to showing his bite, which was perfectly level with tarter free teeth. When turned loose he took off like a bullet to run to the street and mark everything standing, but was back in a few minutes, following his owner who was carrying a big plate of chicken bones and fat, which he fed to Nijim one piece at a time. Nijim stood on his hind legs to receive the food, which amused the men very much. Mohammed didn't know Nijim's pedigree other than the year of his birth and that he was bred by Abu Juma. He was very interested in the idea of having Nijim registered and receiving "papers" for him.

The son of the family with the colt knew a man on the West Bank with Salukis, so we said goodbye and thank you to Mohammed and headed to the border....the Palestinian Authority on one side, Israel on the other. The border was about a mile from Sandalay, but it was a "real" border crossing with soldiers and armored vehicles parked on both sides. Palestinians and Israelis were dutifully searching cars and questioning passengers. Rather tattered Palestinian and Israeli flags fluttered above the concrete barricades which funneled traffic. What appeared to be years of blown paper and debris plastered the border fences, very much as it does the fences in the orthodox Jewish neighborhood where my niece lives in Jerusalem. Both areas look filthy. We were waved through and drove towards the shops where the man who had the Saluqis worked.

The man and his friend came out and were very excited that someone wanted to talk dogs, but their dogs were in a village some distance from the shop, could we come back tomorrow? Unfortunately I could not. They wanted to see photos of my dogs and told me they had bought a borzoi once, from an Israeli girl, but it was useless as a coursing hound. They hunted in the day and by lamping. They had photos of their dogs, too, and were anxious to share them, and I'm sure they had tons of stories, but Gideon was very tired and it was a long way back to Rosh Pina, where he had more work to do with his sheep and goats.

We dropped our guide off and headed back to Rosh Pina through the Galil, passing the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) and magnificent vistas of plowed, fallow, and planted fields as we drove through rocky gorges lined with pine and eucalyptus. It is such a beautiful region of Israel, hardly showing any signs of the overcrowding that every Israeli mentions. Bedouin were seen in several fields with flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. The animals were grazing stubble in areas that had been harvested of their main crops. Some of the cattle looked well fleshed, others looked thin. Some of the Bedouin were sitting in their pick-up trucks, watching their herds. The sheep were almost invisible they blended so well with the stubble.



Bedouin sheep blend into the stubble of the Israel valley

We stopped at an Arab restaurant by a gasoline station owned by "fellahim", farm

Arabs. Gideon liked this restaurant particularly for its specialty of meat and rice, but the salads were also excellent as was the stuffed squash. We had Macabi beer and, altogether, it was a delicious meal, looking out onto a valley that seemed to roll on forever under an open sky. It was gorgeous.

We arrived back in Rosh Pina at almost sunset and had to get hay for Gideon's horses. We drove up the road to the sheep and goat pen. The farm is 1000 dunams sitting on a rocky promontory. Gideon has 100 head of goats and sheep, all clean and beautifully fleshed; they are used for milk and meat. No one uses the wool anymore, so, it is burned, which seems bizarre, but there is no commercial demand for natural wool; everyone uses synthetic thread. Gideon spoke with the Bedouin farm workers who were readying the goats for milking while I took a last few photos before dark.

There was an old, long-coated chocolate dog, which barked at us from among the herd, and two parti-colored, long-coated youngsters chained in the corner of the pen. The youngsters were a maranaridgeback accidental cross, which no one could possibly guess. They looked like typical Anatolian shepherds. Gideon did not trust them with the kids so he planned on finding them homes. They were handsome dogs.

We returned to Gideon's house then went next door and sat on the patio of his daughter's new house, a large, prefabricated building on a concrete foundation. The house was constructed in the USA and shipped in sections to Israel, where an American company does the actual on-site assembly and other necessary construction. The night was clear with a strong, cool breeze and the continual rustle of leaves from the thick vegetation of Rosh Pina. The stars were bright and there were no sounds of urban living to impinge upon the peace except for the large troop-carrying helicopters with flashing lights, flying into Israel from the border area of Lebanon, only 20 kilometers to the north. Oblivious to the sounds of war, Gideon's mares munched their hay, just feet from the patio, where they could hear the conversation and we could hear their hooves stamp and their tails swoosh as the last helicopter passed and the silent night closed around the house.

### **Talking with Gideon Raski, August 2-4, 1999**

Gideon began to share his experiences while we were waiting for Rashid Darawshe to return home. My tape begins with the question:

*Which tribe?*

Ezayhel, they used the dogs for hunting....they were between Beersheva and Arad, to the north....today it's a very big tribe....now they are in the town, Rahat...I knew the big sheikh, he passed away a few years ago. He used the Saluqi, not the Saluqi from Sinai, the Saluki with the long hair on the ears and tail.

I, in 1956 or 57, went to hunt with them together and it was very nice....

*What did you hunt?*

Gazelle....with Salukis.....they had two dogs and a bitch and we used horses, too. They surrounded the gazelle, when they know where they are, then the dogs run after them and make them tired. So, then the gazelles stand, they don't move because they lost their strength....

*About how long did they run, do you remember?*

I can't say it because in the beginning we were about ten riders and we surrounded them from far away, and they start to come from one side to the other until they see that they are surrounded and then the dogs run after them and they stand.

One of the dogs tried to bite the gazelle and the owner told him not to bite and he stood there and barked, the others they just lay down and held the gazelle there.

And I saw them... then we went one night to hunt rabbits....in the night they go, they say it's very nice in the night to see also, it was March or April....the temperature? Look... it's hot in the daytime but very cold at nighttime....like Sinai.



Gideon with Israeli trail reders and Negev Bedouin Sheikhs. A week long ride, then a Bedouin feast, 1986.

*It wasn't cold...it was hot!*

When...in the night? So, you have no luck....Anyway....the dogs run very fast, it take maybe a minute, they catch the rabbit and they wait, they don't bring it....like the other one we use it for hunting birds....pointers....they bring it back which the Saluqi never. I had a Saluqi a long time but he never did it....he ran after them, but when I shoot, I use the pointer, not the Saluqi.

My Saluqi I like to watch run....he was a very nice dog. He was thirteen years old when he died, I think. Also, I get him from the Bedouin in the Negev. Salman

Hezayhel, he was the one I know. Sometimes people were coming from Saudia through Jordan, they come, sometimes they bring hashish and bring drugs and he ordered they bring him Saluqis, and all day they bring him Saluqis from Jordan and from Saudi. He was a very interesting man and when he get the two dogs, I was there, and he told me that they have some puppies from them. The other Saluqis I know were from Sde Boker and I'm not sure if they keep them pure. Hezayhel was keeping them pure.

*How do you know that?*

Because I was there. I saw the dogs there....in the Zayhel place, all the dogs that I saw were purebred and they keep them that way.

*What did they look like?*



Negev Bedouin Salukis possibly 1960's



Negev Bedouin Salukis, 1960's

They weren't the same as the Sinai Saluqi. They were yellow color like Sinai....the tail was with hair, curled, and the ears hair and on the breast and they never had a mark on the nose like the Sinai dogs. The ones in Sde Boker and also the ones in Salman Hezahel's place....yes, they're purebred from this kind of Saluqis.

Look, you can see also the conformation of the body, the front legs very, very strong, and you see the muscles on them and the breast very wide and strong, which you don't see it in other dogs... and they



were very skinny [he means racy] when you see....like the English dogs, what you call them, the English dogs....the greyhounds....also you can see very, very deep breast and very narrow body. This kind of Saluqi they are the same, which means they can run fast and run far.

Yep, that's what I know about them....which I saw them. To see Bedouin dogs, you have to be a good friend of them to see what they have. I never took pictures, nobody ever took pictures. I have no patience for it, just memories.



Yekutiel Aaharon, 1969 in the Negev with a Bedouin Saluki.

I know less about dogs than I know about horses more. Dogs, I don't really love them, I use them but I don't really like them. I use the hunt dogs, the pointers...we went to hunt wild boar with dogs.

*Wild boar...in Israel?*



Gideon could not remember whether this is Lobo, but it is a Bedouin Saluki.

Oh, we have a lot in Israel, you never heard? The wild boar I think is the wildest animal that I know.

*That's what everybody says...even the Greeks said this...*

I don't know the Greeks but I know we met them and we hunt them. The dogs? The boar takes them off in the bush...the dogs never catch them. Pointers, the real hunters mix the dogs, they bring them from Hungary, the vizsla, many kinds of pointer, the French pointer....the point is, the dog has to be very small.

Why? Because if not the pig catch him with the teeth, sharp like a razor...many, many dogs, they cut them and they make from the tail a cut until they're dead. So, the small dog, he run away and he never will be hurt...I think I lost maybe ten or twenty dogs like this, at the time when we bring them to go after the smell and then when they fight. They want to fight and the pig just makes with his head like this [shakes his head]... so... we use the dogs.

I use the dogs as shepherds...we use the marana and the German shepherd. They [German shepherds] are not good, you can never trust them. They, the marana is an Italian dog which I had, they never did anything [bad] with the sheep. As a guard dog...one thing...if you have a very strong and sharp dog, he will bite everybody. You don't want a dog that will bite everybody, you only want a dog that will

bite somebody that comes to touch the herds. We have Turkish dogs, Akbash and Karabash dogs, that's what I look for...for my work.

*You said that Lobo lived with you...what was he like?*

Lobo was one of the best dogs that I had. He lived about twelve years. He had excellent endurance and he was very sensitive and good...he didn't bite anybody, never, just scared people.

*And what do you remember that he*



Negev Saluki, 1960's

photo's: M. Van Grevenbroek

*looked like?*

He looked like a good Saluqi dog...he looked like Abu Juma's male but he was a little taller...he had a little wider head, a long neck, good shoulder and good muscles on the shoulder and behind, and he was skinny...always...skinny. The people thought we don't feed him but my daughter used to ride him; she would sit on his back. He had a good temperament.

But, sometimes when we went to feed the horses, he said, you're crazy, I don't go, and he went back...it happened quite a lot...but he could work, he could catch rabbits by himself in three minutes.

What else you want to know?

*About the horses?*

You know, the horses here in Israel and Palestine...I was born here, my father was born here, my grandmother was born here, all in Rosh Pina. My grandfather came from Russia when he was eighteen years old, in 1871; he came to Sfat, then Rosh Pina and we live here.

My grandfather liked horses. In the beginning he was very, very poor. All the people were very poor but he went to South Africa and he worked there a few years and he made good money. He came back and bought a lot of land and one of the first things he bought was a horse from Damascus.

In this time a dunam of land you could buy for one Turkish gold pound. This horse...he paid for...he told me...500 gold pounds Turkish. You can buy 1000 dunams of land. I don't remember this mare but I remember her granddaughter.

*Why did the mare cost so much?*

When you lived in this time, the people who had good horses, they didn't sell them and if you go to buy a horse, if you want to buy all of a horse, the whole horse, in this time you have to pay a lot of money and that's what he did. He didn't want to buy a horse with a partner ["shares" in the horse], he wanted to buy it alone.

*Where did he get the horse?*

Damascus. To buy a horse in the old time, it was very difficult...here in the area because there weren't too many horses...good horses, everybody keep them and never sold them. So he went to Damascus and he waited there many months...he looked and asked and that's what he get. And he get the lineage he liked and he bought her. And I remember her granddaughter.



Veera, local Israeli Arabian, unpapered, 1960's.

*Who did he breed the mare to?*

It was a very difficult thing because most of the good horses were with the gypsies.

*Who?*

The gypsies. There was a special tribe of gypsies who keep the stallions.

*Sleb? Saluba? Lady Anne writes about them...*

No, no...look, they were a special tribe...they spoke Arabic. They were a special tribe in all the Middle East which they keep the stallions. They herd stallions and they make a circle during all the year, going from one place to the other, and they breed the mares.

Now they have to bring papers, at least five generations of paper...and the papers are good, and they get signs of five *sheikhim* or five mayors of towns that they know this mare and five generations before. And that was the proof it was *asil*, five generations...

*That's what it should be today...*

Yeah, OK, but the point is more that the people in this time needed each other more...today, I don't think so. Today everybody look first of all about the money.

Anyway, that was about the stallions. And, the Turkish government also had stallions, then, the English government, after 1917.

*So they stood the stud horses until 1948?*

They stood the stud horses; this was the process...yes. Do you know, I was a boy...I knew most of them...the kids wait when they put up the tent...I knew the people and I knew the horses. There were the donkeys there and mules and two or three studs. And, they use the stallions if they are good, and they make races. They don't race like a race track...I remember every year, we went to see which horses would come...but, sometimes horses die and they bring another...normally they bring them from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Nejd. I think these were the places mostly they bring them from...mostly they were gray, and the head was white.

*And what were the horses like?*

They decided, what I remember, they don't care what the distance was, you can say 10 kilometer, 1 kilometer, 2 kilometer, they don't care...so, OK, and most of the time they win...

*Against your horse? Their stallions would race against anybody's horse?*

Usually they won. First of all they were very good riders and they made money from them. They knew if it was a very good horse, people come to breed their mares and in this time a good breeding was 10 or 12 Palestinian pounds. At this time you could buy a part of a horse for this amount; it was a good price.

Most of the horses what I knew were partners...24 shares...you could buy one share, two shares because you had no more money. It was a very complicated thing to know how you do it. There were special people who know it. It could take 20 years before you get a filly. Only the fillies were counted...the colts belong to the one who owns the mare.

If you sit with the Bedouin you can hear stories about how they fight...and he gave his sister for the filly and he give...you know...things which...

*True?*

True. Yeah...yeah.

*Well, they don't think much of women.*

Don't be narrow...narrow. You can find it; not in this time...the people, they love horses but they used to be slaughtered [in raids]...but then the Bedouin thought that a real man, he needed a horse tied near the tent, with the saddle on, ready for anything. Now you can't find it...

*You can still find a camel, though...I saw it in Sinai, tied with the saddle on...*

Yeah, in Sinai you can see it, not one, you can see a lot...yeah, ready to ride...that's the best, I remember...yeah...when I was a child, horses were transportation.

At this point, Gideon told me the history of the *asil*



Bedouin war mare, saddled and ready, early 1900's Photo: Carl Raswan



Ayn Fortaga, Sinai, the camels of Anex one saddled and ready. July, 1999



Arabian bloodstock in the region under the British mandate and how, when the British left in 1948 the horses which were not taken by the Arab soldiers from Nablous and east Jordan were shot by the British and the tack was blown up with TNT because they did not believe the Arabs would take proper care of the horses and they didn't want anything to go to the Jewish military because they would use it.

*Who killed these horses? The British? So the Arabs wouldn't have them and the Jews wouldn't have them?*

That's exactly what they think...some people think that...

*Who thinks that?*

The English government! That's why they did it...they killed the horses and they exploded all the equipment...not the stables, the equipment, the saddles and all that...destroyed it and that's it. Some of the saddles we find during the war, and some of the [stolen] horses we find...  
*I don't understand...why did they do this? They just didn't want to leave it? That's true or it's just a story?*

Look, I never will tell you stories that are not true. That's what happened.

*The best horses in the Middle East that they could find and then they killed them?*

Yes...so that's what happened to that bloodstock. You asked me about it and that's what happened.

The writing of Lady Anne Blunt came up and Gideon commented:

Yes, I read it...she tells stories which they tell her...they tell her stories which she want to hear...but she did do good for horses...she did the best thing. She bought many horses, good horses, and she made good breeding from them...so that was the start of the typey Arabian horse that everybody followed.

The Arabian horse is very strong and very big...my mare is 15.2 hands which is very big and her grandfather almost 16 hands. If you want to ride you need good conformation...strong legs, strong things. And usually if the horse has good conformation, he will be good...if you want to ride you need good conformation. We know it for sure.

Why? Because every movement of a horse is from nature...so every movement which you want from a horse, he did in the nature. And if he did it good it means it was true and good horse...now you have just to know to ask it to do things which he knows how to do it and he will do everything that you want. He lie down, he stand, he change legs, everything he did it alone in the nature but he has to do it when you want it. And that's all the thing...and if it is a good conformation horse it will be a good ride horse and a good work horse, and everything.



Gideon Raski on his Arabian mare competing in a relay event at an Israeli horse show.



Carl Raswan's classic photo captures an image once common, now all but vanished from the deserts of the Middle East.

*It's a good idea...they say the same about dogs...*

It's not only a good idea, it's my experience. You find a horse with not good legs, and the neck is not right, and the back not right, and it will be crazy...because it cannot do what you want it to.

I'll end this section with the story of the Bedouin and his mare. Gideon told me this story twice, once in the restaurant and then again, as we were driving, so that I could tape it, and just hear him tell it again.

In 1967, after the Six Day War, in Gaza, in that area...they knew I was interested in horses...somebody told me that they knew somebody who has a very, very, very special horse...mare...  
*When you say somebody told you, you mean a Bedouin?*

Sure, all the Bedouin because I worked with Bedouins there...and then somebody else and somebody else and everybody told me about the same mare...and I said, OK, I want to see her. They said it's very difficult. They promised me to arrange a meeting between me and the owner of the mare.

So, one day they told me, OK, he will be someplace and we have to go there. I took my jeep and I drive there and I wait. Sinai is desert, no shade, no nothing, just sun, very strong sun...we wait, maybe three, four hours. All the time they say, "He will come, he will come, don't worry". Then, I saw a piece of dust very far away...slowly, slowly it came near...and I saw the shape of the horse and the rider and I remember I looked through the binoculars and I saw the rider which rides very, very, very slowly and the reins on the horse are loose. Usually the Bedouin, when the rider holds the reins loose, it means he looks for peace, he is not coming to fight. Otherwise, you can see it, when the horses are not ready, they seem easy, it means he doesn't want to make troubles and he doesn't want to have troubles. That's the signal in the desert, when they see somebody riding with loose reins, it means peace.

So, he rides slowly, slowly, easy, easy and after half an hour he saw us...maybe he saw us before, but he saw the jeep and he was sure that's the people he was coming to meet and he just put the reins a little bit, collect them a little bit, you know, and this horse became like electric...everything in the horse moved inside...it changed the picture maybe a hundred and eighty degrees...it looked something else at all. So nice movement which we know is the true Arabian.

So, he came near...and when he came near, I saw the mare and she was very, very, very old and the rider as well...old, old things. And the man he got down from the mare and her color was black but she lost a lot of hair so you could see the skin, but she looked in good shape, he fed her good, and she was the nicest horse that I see in my life...Arabian...nice, nice...everything was perfect but old, old, old. Usually the teeth are straight in a horse, but in the time, they become bent away from the mouth like a dog's mouth...that means you can know the horse's age when you see it. She had her teeth completely bent, she was so old.

And I asked him if he wanted to cover her with my stallion.

*She never had any foals?*

No...he say he don't believe anybody...he don't believe that they are enough good for this mare so he never bred her. And I know that she will never be in foal, but I say, OK, maybe, so nice horse, so I say look, if she will be a filly, it's yours, if it's a male colt, I will take it and I will pay you money, how much you want. I will bring the horse here, everything. He said, no way, no way, no way...he was afraid I would take the horse but I promised him nobody would take the horse and I gave him a paper that it is his horse and nobody will touch her...so, he rode away. And that's the story.

*That's a beautiful story. Is that one of your sweetest memories?*

Look, it was a nice time there. But, I was really surprised to see somebody who keeps the mare so well, even the skin, because they don't believe in cleaning the horse, they believe...they wash them but never clean with the brush...and sometimes it makes damage to the skin. They wash them some, but, when they wash them they don't have enough water, so the horse has to be very healthy to keep his skin good.

Our talk concluded with the final exchange:

Today, the first reason people have the horses and the Saluqis is money. People think they can make money off them. The second reason is to show themselves...

*The people?*

Yeah, and that's it.