



Hannah Olsen

One word that comes to mind when asked to describe the Bedouin neighborhood in Taibeh is family. From the first moment I arrived I saw how the family truly is central to their lives here and how the entire community is one big family. Everyone is involved in each other's lives and wants the best for one another. Each adult treats every child as if he or she was their own and every child respects each adult member of the community. You can see the importance of family and how much they truly love and care for one another just in their desire to spend time with one another. Every time we visited one family's home, other members of the community would be coming in and out, offering to help and checking in on one another. One of my favorite moments during my stay with the Bedouin people was on our second night. I was able to participate in the baking of the most delicious cookies. I was amazed at just how communal this event was. Women and girls of all ages were there and would take turns mixing the dough, spreading the chocolate and rolling the cookies into their spiral shapes. They then carried the 3 large cookie filled trays over to another house to bake them. I loved this moment because at least 3 generations were working together, laughing, and socializing. I felt that I really did experience their culture in this moment; I was able to see how the whole community works together and how vital family is to them.

The Bedouin people also willingly welcome you into their lives. I felt part of this extended family from the very beginning. The first night we arrived, despite the late hour (10pm), a fabulous dinner was prepared for us where I ate more than I had in weeks. After dinner we were welcomed into different homes to spend the night. I was touched to see that the Bedouin people willingly and happily gave up their beds in order that my friends and I had a comfortable place to sleep. This was another strong impression I had of the Bedouin people: they give freely and with joy, no matter who you are and even if there is a language barrier. Every family we visited

always brought out a fresh pot of tea and some kind of delicious treat for us and made me feel like I was home. Everyone person we met was selfless, always putting us and our needs above their own. Even though many could speak little or no English they would try their best to communicate with us. They were so excited to use the few English words they did know! I wish I knew Arabic so I could have extended the same excitement to them. The Bedouin people loved opening their homes to us and showing us what their culture was like. I see such a love of each other and their heritage, and such pride in who they are and who they are becoming. .

Their hospitality and genuine interest in us deeply impacted me. I honestly knew little to nothing of the Bedouin people before coming here but I was able to glean so much from my time with them because they have such a strong love of their people and culture and desire to share it. I was only able to spend 3 days with the Bedouin people but in my short time here I witnessed how much love they have to offer each other and others. I saw how important their culture is to them and how much they desire to share it. I have been all over the world and have experienced many different cultures but I have never felt so welcomed and so much genuine kindness as I have here. I honestly wish I could have spent more time with these people! .

Hannah Olsen  
34 Sterling Lane  
Haverhill, Ma 01835  
USA