

# Khirbeit Susa Village Profile

Name of Village: KHIRBEIT SUSA

Name of person doing the survey: Anna P. and Hannah

Date of Survey: March 31st and April 15th, 2005

March 31, 2005 (trying to find information about Khirbeit Susa)  
Bruqin and Kafr Dik: 10 km and 8 km east of the Green Line

Nobody we knew had any information about Khirbeit Susa, the last mysterious place on our map, but most people thought the owners of the land were from Bruqin, so we stopped by the mayor's office unannounced one morning. "We have no idea about Khirbet Susa," they told us, "but the people of Kafr Dik might – it's their land." So we left, jumped in another service taxi towards Kafr Dik, and asked for the city hall. A woman sitting next to us said, "The city hall isn't open now. What do you need?" When we told her we wanted to find out more information about Khirbeit Susa, her face lit up as she exclaimed, "Susia is ours! That's our family's land! You'll come home with me, and we'll show you pictures and tell you about it."

We arrived at Amine's house, drank the customary coffee and tea, and talked with her and her sister-in-law, Nihad. They told us about Khirbeit Susa (or "Susia"), a hill that the family owns a couple kilometers from the village. Khirbeit Susa is the best place for crops in the area, the family told us, and because of this it had a mosque where people used to come and pray when they were sleeping on their land (either in Susia or on one of the surrounding hills). Nobody seemed to know exactly when the mosque stopped being used, but they promised they could show us the land if we came back the following Thursday. Two Thursdays later, we found ourselves on our way to Khirbeit Susa.

April 15, 2005

Khirbeit Susa: 9 km east of the Green Line

Nihad's son Mohammed met us and joyfully showed us to the land. He took us on foot, showing the path that they walk when it's not blocked by soldiers, and the path under the highway that they use when they're not allowed to cross the road.

We reached the land and met Najee'a, a 58 year-old woman (one year older than Israel, we joked), who comes to the land whenever she can. She works in Israel and only comes home every once in a while, but when she does she

loves to sleep near Susia. Fifteen years ago she built a house on the land, and five years ago settlers built a settlement overlooking her house. The small remote hill that is Susia, however, remains untouched. Or almost untouched. Looking inside one of the caves, we found a sound bomb. Mohammed explained that the army comes to look for wanted people who they think are hiding out in caves. The soldiers are scared to go into the caves, so they throw sound bombs and hope people will come out.

Aside from the sound bomb and the distant view of a settlement, Khirbet Susa remains free of the occupation. Many kinds of crops grow on the hill, and the water well fills up every year with the rain and then lasts until the next year's rains. We saw the remnants of the mosque and the houses (inside caves, mostly), probably from hundreds of years ago. Nobody seemed sure when Susia was a permanent dwelling place, but they all insisted it was "min zamaaaan" (a very long time ago), certainly before anyone living, or even their parents or grandparents, were born.

According to Najee'a, the story of the village goes something like this: In the old village of Susia, there was a bride passing through town on her way to her wedding. She was coming from far, possibly Yaffa, and she was going to get married in Aqraba. The night before the wedding she stopped in Susia and slept there. That night, a religious leader in the village slept with her, and in the morning when it was time to go, she refused. The people asked her why, and she just said, "I won't go." The people in Aqraba got word of what had happened, and that night, as the people of Susia were sleeping, the people of Aqraba came and killed everyone in Susia. This was the end of the village, and since then there has been nobody living there. People still pray at the mosque occasionally as individuals, but no longer in groups.

Nobody was certain exactly where the Wall would come. The map itself is somewhat unclear, but it seems that if completed as planned, the Wall will separate Khirbeit Susa from Kafr Dik. Najee'a was unsure and even doubtful about this, but was sure, being someone who works "inside" (inside Israel) that the Israeli "disengagement" plan is to move settlers out of Gaza and into the West Bank. She pointed to the settlement above her house and said, "They'll move in here."