

would be cut and dressed on site, with the help of a stone-dresser (dakkak). In general, simple peasants' houses were built of either rough undressed stones (hadjar ham) or of roughly dressed stones (tubzeh). Richer and more elaborate houses were built of coarsely dressed stones (taltish).

The fallah also had to collect rubble stone (djabish), gravel (srara) and earth (samakhah). Lime, which was used as a binding material, was either bought or more often made. The lime (shid) was made by burning soft lime stones (known as yahudi or miz) in air tight-kilns (latton) for 3-6 days and left to cool of in the kiln for another 3-6 days (Cana'an, 1932: 242 and Abu Hani, Interview: 1986).

A cistern (bir) had to be dug on site one year before the construction of the house in order to provide water needed during the construction of the house, and later to provide the inhabitants of the new house with water. In other cases, water was brought to the site from the village spring, either in metal kerosene tins or goat-skin containers (qirab) carried on donkeys.

Once all materials were gathered, the m'allem was called upon to start the construction.

The Construction of the House

The m'allem started his work by marking the foundations, which were either dug by the owner, his sons and brothers, or by the hired labourers brought by the m'allem. Trenches for the foundations were dug as deep as the solid rock strata, which were in most cases near the surface. Before building the foundations, which were made of rubble stone, earth, lime and water, offerings for the demons which were believed to inhabit the place must be made (in order to compensate the spirits for depriving them of their abode). The villagers believed that most underground places were inhabited by supernatural beings, the majority of which were malevolent. The offering was usually a lamb which was slaughtered and its blood let to run in the foundation trenches. Blood was believed to be the abode of the animal spirit. After the offering was made, the