

# Tsur Hadassah

## Background

The Neighbors Path of Tsur Hadassah winds around this growing urban community (4,200 residents to date) and includes two walking trails in the natural environment of the Western Judean Mountains: "Mount Kitron-Geras Ruins" and the "Sansan Ridge with a view towards Wadi Fukin". The 2 trails can be hiked separately or can be combined for a full experience of hiking and education. The trails follow the development of local water sources by the area's inhabitants over the years: "Mount Kitron-Geras Ruins" takes us to ancient water cisterns and cultural heritage sites while the "Sansan Ridge" trail illustrates the recent damage caused to local natural areas, due to insensitive and unbalanced development.

The Neighbors path was developed in cooperation with "Residents for Tsur Hadassah", students and parents from the Hadasim School and a group of environmentally active residents. The "Mt. Kitron-Geras Ruins" trail was supported by the JNF, SPNI and the Antiquities Authority.

Many residents from both Tsur Hadassah and Wadi Fukin are working together to preserve the wadi's shared natural landscape. FoEME conducts joint activities with residents of both communities in order to protect the area, with the aim to prevent additional damage. The Neighbors Path you are now walking tells the story of the good neighborly relations between the residents of the communities, dissimilar in religion and nationality, but joining efforts to protect the natural landscape in which they live, for the benefit of all.

This trail is one of 17 paths or trails that deal with the issue of water and peace building between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian communities that share a common water source. The routes were planned during 2007 in the framework of the "Good Water Neighbors" project in cooperation with community representatives as well as the municipalities

### The goals of the trails are to:

- Raise public awareness of shared water and environment concerns of the communities
- Promote cross border cooperation for solving environmental problems
- Develop the potential for local eco-tourism

The "Good Water Neighbors" project was established in 2001 by "EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" in order to promote local cooperation efforts to protect the shared water and environment between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

**"EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" is a regional environmental organization that works out of 3 offices, Tel Aviv, Amman and Bethlehem to promote cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage.**

• For more information, please visit our website: [www.foeme.org](http://www.foeme.org)

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• Specific information on the neighbors trails: <http://www.foeme.org/publications>

**Guided tours on the Neighbors Trails take place once every three weeks. To sign up, please write to: [info@foeme.org](mailto:info@foeme.org)**



Friends of the Earth Middle East  
ידידי כדור הארץ המזרחית



## Neighbors Path



## Tsur Hadassah



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# The Path's Stations

**1 The Limekiln:** For thousands of years, lime was the most popular material for plastering houses and sealing water cisterns. It was produced in limekilns such as this one. Manufacturing lime is one of the oldest man-made chemical processes and paved the way for early settlement in the region. As important as it was, lime created an environmental problem, caused through the burning process.

**2 The Water Pit (Bell Shape Pit):** Collecting rainwater for use during dry summer months and droughts was imperative for early human settlement in the Judean Mountains. These pits were hewn in the shape of a bell and sealed with lime. Water supply collected in these pits was used for drinking purposes, as well as for irrigation and animals, allowing survival during all seasons.

**3 The Olive Press:** We see here the 'Yam' – a flat round stone onto which olives were placed, and the 'Mamal' – another round stone that was rolled on top of the 'Yam', crushing the olives. The crushed olives were then pressed between slabs of wood, and the oil poured into collection pits. Olive trees were irrigated by winter rains that were collected in terraces for supplying water in the dry season.

**4 The Burial Caves:** Burial caves such as this one were used for burying several generations of one family. The dead were set on shelves inside the cave for one year, until the flesh decomposed, after which the remaining bones were gathered and buried together with his ancestors. A stone with an appropriate inscription then sealed the cave. A stone fence surrounding the burial area as well as a trough found nearby, lends evidence of later use as a goat's pen.



**The Roman Path:** A remaining symbol of the Roman rule that dominated the area 1600 years ago, this transportation network was used for trade, army movement and law enforcement. The main road led from the Ella Valley to Jerusalem, while the smaller path connected Mt. Kitron to the main road. During those times roads were considered a symbol of power- an efficient means for tax collecting.

**"Sansan Ridge with a view towards Wadi Fukin"**  
In the valley below, east of Tsur Hadassa and the Sansan Ridge, is the Palestinian village of Wadi Fukin. The Wadi contains 11 natural springs, used for irrigating the agriculture crops grown here. The Village of Wadi Fukin (population 1200) relies on these springs for its extensive agricultural system that has been used for more than 800 years.

The cluster of springs with its unique distribution system together with the cultural heritage of the village creates this exceptional ecological region of Wadi Fukin.

**5 View of Agricultural Fields:** Here you see a splendid view of Wadi Fukin in all its glory – its fields and irrigation pools, in this ever-green wadi. Here we can also witness the present day threats to the future of Wadi Fukin. Two new communities have developed on either side of the valley - Tsur Hadassa and Beitar-Illit. Massive urban development, especially in Beitar Illit, has disrupted the feeding system of the springs, already drying up two of them. Soil and earth from the building process have been dumped over the slopes, covering much of the area, and occasionally, wastewater from Beitar Illit flows into the fields, rendering them unusable. Continued development is expected to worsen the damage. This unique landscape is being eaten away slowly.  
*for more information, please see:*  
<http://ganim.org/FOEME/index-foeme.htm>

**6 View of the village:** The contrast between Beitar Illit and the wadi is very clear. Reduction of the village's area – due to massive development in Beitar - has forced the residents of Wadi Fukin to build in the valley itself, as opposed to its slopes. The environmental damage that we are witnessing will continue to degrade the wadi and its springs: there are plans to build a highway through the village from the east, and the Separation Barrier from the west, encircling and virtually imprisoning the residents in their homes. These developments all threaten to destroy the wadi and its water sources – delivering a final death blow to the ancient agricultural methods and the cultural heritage on which it is based.

**7 With a view back towards Tsur Hadassah:** Future development plans for Tsur Hadassah also threaten to damage the wadi's drainage basin. Many residents from Tsur Hadassah are active in environmental projects, and together with Friends of the Earth Middle East, are promoting an environmentally sensitive approach for its continued development. The Neighbors Path was created in order to raise awareness, and importance, of the natural environment so close to home.

