



## ***Hakehila Haglilit***

# **Land as a symbol of the dispute Between the two peoples**

Monday, May 26, 2008

*As part of a series of meetings initiated by the "Sikkuy in Misgav" group, residents of the region met with Arab landowners whose lands have been expropriated*

On Friday, a second meeting was held in "The Neighbor's Grass" series of meetings initiated by the "Sikkuy in Misgav" group. The meeting topic was "Land - My Land" and it focused on the issue of lands in the state, in general, and in the Galilee, in particular. More than 20 residents of the region participated.

The tour was led by Itzik Gershuni from Sikkuy in Misgav. After observing a view of the Netofa Valley, the participants descended to the Safuri hill (Zippori today) and met with some of the village elders whose lands were expropriated and who were forced to move to Kafr Manda. The encounter and hearing the story of their hard and frustrating lives illustrated how difficult and hopeless the reality on the ground is for them.

The group then visited the "Peace Tent" of Omar A'ida from the village of Arabeh, and received a warm reception that included traditional food and folklore stories. The tour concluded with a meeting with Mohammed Ghanaim, the former mayor of Sakhnin, whose family's land was expropriated in the 1990s for construction of the Bedouin neighborhood in the Salameh village. He told a Kafkaesque story of bureaucracy that engendered much frustration and despair.

A conversation ensued about the significance of the state's control of land. Such questions arose as: Why is the control of land important to both sides? What power does it provide beyond economic power? And what is the psychological aspect involved in granting and denying land? The success of the meeting was dampened by the fact that representatives of long-time Misgav residents, who were invited to present the establishment's perspective on Judaizing the Galilee, did not respond or attend.

"Sikkuy in Misgav" notes that the tour was an introduction to a discussion that will be held next month in the framework of the "Discussion and Conversation Encounters" with representatives of the Planning Administration and a social psychologist.