

m'alleh was paid one Palestinian lira per day (the equivalent of one pound sterling). People who helped in the construction did not receive gifts or payments but enjoyed the feast that went on for hours in the evening. The owners of the house and members of his family did not join in eating, but stood aside, helping and serving the people. Women, men and children joined in singing and clapping, celebrating the completion of the house (Fig.4.52). Before leaving the site, every one congratulated the proprietor and his family for the new house and wished them prosperity under the roof of the new house. Often members of the extended family would present the owner of the house with gifts (nqout) which were often new clothes. The owner and his family would thank every one for their help and promise to be present at the next 'auneh (communal help).

The Evil Eye (El-Hasad)

To protect the new house from the harm of the evil or envious eye, a blue stone, a horse shoe, garlic peels or egg shell were hung on the keystone of the entrance door. The name of God or the name of the Prophet Mohammad were often inscribed on the keystone of the door.

Before entering the new house by stepping over the door threshold, the name of God must be mentioned. Some people carried a green branch, preferably a olive branch, in their hand as they entered the new house. In a few cases, a sheikh was invited the first evening to recite the Quran in order to bless the new house. A white flag was sometimes stuck on the roof to bring good luck and prosperity.

Finally, the new house was also believed to bring either good or bad luck for its inhabitants. This was symbolized by the house threshold: "the threshold of this house has been good (or bad) for us" ('atabet el beit mniha 'aleina), goes the old saying of the fallaheen.