

The latest version of the Saluki Standard defines very well, in my opinion, the variation of the Saluki breed as being one of its main characteristics.

The desert bred variety in the Israeli desert is unique in type, performance and health and will be presented in this article, based on the presentation at the World Congress of Sighthounds held on 10/5/2002 in Belgium.

The Middle East is the original home of the Saluki. It is well documented that the first Salukis in the UK arrived from the Middle East. The "Amherista" Salukis were founded on Salukis brought from Egypt by Florence Amherst in 1897.

The "Sarona Salukis" were brought from Syria by Brigadier Lance in the early 20s, as were the "Nablus Salukis" which arrived in England from British-ruled Palestine with Miss Mitchell who served as a nurse in the Nablus hospital.

The Palestine Kennel Club (PKC) was established in 1939 by Professor Rudolfina and Dr Rudolf Menzel and their friends. An immigrants from Nazi Austria, the Menzels arrived in Palestine with their Boxers. She was a well known cynologist and a unique personality, and she laid the foundation for the dog hobby in Palestine and later in the state of Israel.

The 4th show of the PKC was held in Jerusalem at the Y.M.C.A. grounds on the 19th of June 1942, under the patronage of Lady MacMichel, wife of the British Supreme Commissioner. Four registered Salukis were shown, one of them in the veteran class.

The next show was held in Haifa, on the 23rd of October 1943, under the patronage of Brigadier General I C Cameron, in aid of the British Red Cross. The Salukis shown there were from different kennels - "Beit Habar" and "Transjordania". We also know the "Propatria" kennel from those years.

The few photographs that I have managed to collect from those years show the same type of dogs that arrived in the UK, elegant, feathered coat, all known colours.

Sheikh Suliman El Huzeil was one of the most outstanding of the Bedouin leaders in the Israeli Negev desert in the 50s and 60s.

His tribe, "El Huzeil", lived a bit north of Beer-Sheva where the Bedouin city of Rahat is located today. He was a colourful man known especially for his pure Arabian horses, hunting Salukis, and more than 30 wives....It was difficult to count his offsprings. One of his wives was a blue eyed Danish girl who converted to Islam.

Sheikh Suliman was well connected, and during the 50s, despite the closed border he got some royal Salukis from Jordan. Some of the dogs he bred were gifted to Israeli police and army officers and they were shown in the IKC shows.

The Israel Sighthound Club (ISC) was established in 1968. Only 2 breeds of sighthounds were represented in Israel at that time. The Turkuman Afghans that arrived with the famous herbalist, Juliette de Barcaly Levy, and the local Salukis, mostly from El Huzeil, but some came from Jordan and some from Persia (Iran of today). The most famous of them was a black well feathered dog called Mobi.

Hoki was one of the first local Champions of the breed, bred from the Persian Mobi and the El Huzeil's Rina. A strongly feathered dog that was also a champion in high jump.

The year 1967 was the turning point for the Israeli Salukis. The Sinai desert was occupied in the swift Six Days War, and a new era began for us, Salukis lovers. Most of the Israelis, including my friends and I, fell in love with this desert terrain. The magic of Sinai is the breathless combination of high granite mountains, majestic canyons, peaceful beaches and for us, sighthound enthusiasts, there were Salukis! plenty of Salukis. With every camel caravan that moved along the trails there were a few Salukis.. We travelled often to Sinai, until its return to Egypt in 1982..

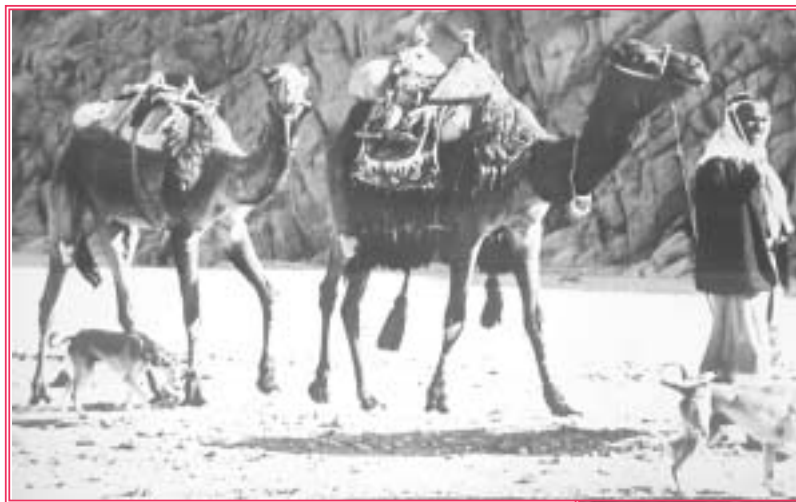
Igal Sella was the one who travelled most as he worked as a guide in the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel. He made a lot of contacts among the Bedouins, especially among the Tarabin tribe.

Thanks to his contacts he received his first bitch, called Ruach (wind in Hebrew).

The first litter in his " Tarabin" kennel was born in 1970, sired by Lobo El Huzeil out of Ruach. Igal acquired many Salukis from the Tarabin Bedouins but he also returned to them numerous puppies born in his kennel in Bustan Hagalil. Igal was not the only one who got Salukis

Desert Bred Salukis in Israel

Dr Zafra Sirik



Top three pictures
Salukis in Sinai 1969
(photo-Eli Chen)

Bottom two pictures
Salukis from Propatria kennel
in the forties

from Sinai, the Israeli Bedouins also exchanged dogs with the Sinai Bedouins and used them in their breeding.

Thanks to Igal's initiative the Salukis were allowed to participate in an official hunt in order to cull the gazelle population in the north of the country during 1973. One of the best hunters and coursers was Tarabin Salag, owned by Aviva Neeman, the ISC's secretary in those days.

The Sinai Salukis were a bit different from the few European imports to Israel in those days. They were stronger, somewhat coarser, and usually short coated. They had endurance and stamina and very good hunting qualities.

The few European and Scandinavian judges who came to judge in our shows increased the discussion around this variety and led the way to the ISC's decision to split the breed into Salukis and Sloughis in 1974.

We have to bear in mind that during the early 70s Sloughis were not as common as they are today in Europe, and now we can look back on this decision with a bit of forgiving criticism.

The IKC breeding regulations allow the registration of only two breeds born in desert origin- the Dog of Canaan and the Saluki.

The 70s were the golden time for the Israeli Salukis. They were attractive to many people, numerous Israelis who worked in Sinai got themselves a Saluki, new breeders joined, the entry in shows grew and many Salukis participated in the coursing organised by the ISC.

The decline of the Salukis took place in the late 80s and the beginning of the 90s. The fact that Igal Sella stopped breeding had a great influence on the activities of the breed. Igal found it more and more difficult to let the Salukis perform their hunting skills due to legal restrictions and a shortage of open spaces.

New registrations in 1976 were 27 Salukis and 18 Sloughis but in 1986 there were only 21 Salukis and no Sloughis. During 1994-1996 there was no registration of any litter and real decline in show entries for the breed was noted.

In 1997 when I was elected to the chairman of the ISC, I puzzled myself with the mystery of where all the beautiful Salukis had gone. I decided to conduct a mini survey. We went south several times, met the Bedouin Saluki breeders and looked around. What we found was quite amazing.

