

Barfiliya



Barfiliya - Ramla Subdistrict

Barfiliya was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Ramla subdistrict, located approximately 10.5 km east of al-Ramla at an average elevation of about 200 meters. It stood on the edge of a wadi in the eastern part of the central coastal plain, close to the western foothills of the Ramallah highlands.

The official 1931 Census of Palestine recorded 544 inhabitants, while the 1944/45 statistics recorded 730. The village lands totaled 7,134 dunums. Israeli occupation forces captured Barfiliya during the second phase of Operation Dani in July 1948. Sources differ over the exact day: one account places the attack on 14 July, while

another records an advance on 15–16 July, with contemporary reporting confirming heavy fighting around the village on 16 July.

Location of Barfiliya

Barfiliya stood on the edge of a wadi in the eastern part of the central coastal plain, in the transition zone between the plain and the western foothills of the Ramallah highlands.

A secondary road connected the village with the main road leading toward al-Ramla and other urban centers, while additional roads and tracks linked it with neighboring villages.

Palestinian village maps place 'Innaba generally to the north, al-Midya to the northeast, al-Burj to the east, Bir Ma'in to the southeast, Bayt Shanna to the south, al-Kunayyisa to the southwest, and Kharruba to the west. Khirbat Zakariyya appears in the northwestern sector of the surrounding area.

These locations describe geographical proximity rather than necessarily defining every exact cadastral boundary.

Name and Historical Background

During the Crusader period, the village was known as Porpylia and was a fief belonging to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

In 1596, Barfiliya belonged to the nahiya of Ramla in the liwa' of Gaza and had an estimated population of approximately 44.

The villagers paid taxes on wheat, barley, sesame, fruit, vineyards, goats, and beehives, indicating a mixed agricultural and pastoral economy during the Ottoman period.

Barfiliya in the Late Nineteenth Century

Late nineteenth-century descriptions characterized Barfiliya as a small hamlet or

agricultural settlement on a slope overlooking a nearby wadi. Olive cultivation was already an important activity.

In the modern period, the village acquired a rectangular layout. Most houses were constructed of adobe brick, clustered closely together and separated by narrow alleys.

New construction expanded toward the southwest along the road leading to neighboring 'Innaba.

Population of Barfiliya

Year	Population	Nature of figure / Notes
1596	44	Estimate derived from an Ottoman tax register; not a modern census
1922	411	Official Census of Palestine; all enumerated inhabitants were Muslims
1931	544	Official Census of Palestine; all inhabitants were Muslims
1944/45	730	Official British Mandate-era statistics
1948	847	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered; not an official census
1998	5,200 refugees and descendants	Later demographic estimate published by Palestine Remembered

Several Palestinian secondary sources give 421 inhabitants for 1922. The original Government of Palestine census table, however, records Barfilia with 411 residents, and that official figure is used here.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of figure
1931	132	Official Census of Palestine
1948	205	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered; not an official census figure

Land Ownership

Barfiliya's registered lands totaled 7,134 dunums in 1944/45. Palestine Remembered presents the simplified ownership categories as follows:

Ownership category	Dunums
Palestinian	7,130
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	4
Total	7,134

PalQuest preserves the original official categories, recording 7,130 dunums as Arab and 4 dunums as Public, with no land registered in the Jewish ownership category.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land use	Arab	Public	Total dunums
Cereals	2,739	0	2,739
Plantations and irrigable land	241	0	241
Built-up land	17	0	17
Non-cultivable land	4,133	4	4,137
Total	7,130	4	7,134

The land-use totals therefore balance exactly with the official ownership figures.

Palestinian sources additionally record approximately 191 dunums of olive groves. This is a crop-specific figure within the broader agricultural categories and should not be added again when calculating total land use.

Economic Life in Barfiliya

Agriculture formed the principal basis of the village economy. The residents cultivated cereals and fruit trees, including figs, lemons, olives, and grapes.

Farming combined rain-fed cultivation with irrigated orchards. In 1944/45, 2,739 dunums were devoted to cereals and 241 dunums were classified as plantations or irrigable land.

Olive growing had been significant since at least the nineteenth century, and Palestinian sources record approximately 191 dunums planted with olives during the late Mandate period.

Several small shops in the village center supplied everyday needs.

Water

The village contained remains of old cisterns, indicating a long history of water storage at the site.

The official land statistics also confirm the presence of irrigated cultivation and orchards. The principal sources reviewed, however, do not provide a securely documented list of named springs or wells that served as the village's principal water sources.

Education

An elementary school opened in Barfiliya in 1946.

It had approximately fifty pupils when it opened. The school stood among the principal public facilities of the village alongside its mosque and shops.

Mosque and Religious Life

Barfiliya's inhabitants were Muslims and the village had a mosque in its center.

The principal sources reviewed do not provide a securely documented construction date or architectural history for the mosque.

Archaeological Remains

The village contained the remains of cisterns and an ancient road, indicating older

use of the site.

Northwest of the village stood Khirbat al-Wasan, which contained the remains of a vaulted stone structure, earlier building foundations, a press, rock-cut cisterns, and a shrine.

These remains point to earlier periods of settlement but cannot all be assigned a precise date without specialized archaeological investigation.

Operation Dani

Operation Dani began on 9 July 1948 and ended on 18 July. It was one of the largest Israeli offensives during the “Ten Days” of renewed fighting between the two truces.

The operation was conducted in two major phases. The first, from 9 to 12 July, focused on Lydda and Ramla. The second began on 13 July and aimed to expand eastward toward the Ramallah-Latrun road and the southern half of the Jerusalem corridor.

Several brigades participated in Operation Dani at the overall operational level, including Har'el, Yiftach, Kiryati, Alexandroni, and Etziyyoni, among other formations.

For Barfiliya itself, however, Khalidi relays a more specific account identifying units from the Giv'ati Brigade, Kiryati Brigade, and Eighth Armored Brigade as the force moving on the village.

Occupation and Depopulation of Barfiliya

The sources differ over the exact date on which the attack on Barfiliya began.

Palestine Remembered gives 14 July 1948 as the occupation date, corresponding to the date Khalidi relays from Benny Morris.

Khalidi also cites the *History of the War of Independence*, which states that a force

composed of units from the Giv'ati, Kiryati, and Eighth Armored brigades moved on Barfiliya on 15–16 July during the second phase of Operation Dani.

A contemporary press report further confirms that intense fighting was still taking place around Barfiliya and three other villages on 16 July.

The capture of Barfiliya should therefore not be reduced with certainty to 14 July alone. The best-supported formulation is that the attack and takeover occurred during 14–16 July 1948, with sources differing on the exact day.

The fate of the civilian population is not documented in detail. Khalidi considers it probable that the inhabitants were expelled eastward, as happened to many villagers elsewhere during Operation Dani.

The villagers' displacement is therefore described as taking place in the context of the military assault and takeover of the area, without adding unsupported details about the precise circumstances of each family's departure.

Military Units

Barfiliya is one of the cases in which the village-specific narrative identifies the attacking formation more precisely than the overall Operation Dani order of battle.

Khalidi relays that the force advancing toward Barfiliya on 15–16 July included units from:

- Giv'ati Brigade.
- Kiryati Brigade.
- Eighth Armored Brigade.

This village-specific identification is more appropriate than attributing Barfiliya indiscriminately to every brigade that participated in Operation Dani.

Palestine Remembered lists the Jordanian Army as the defending force, and the Transjordanian Arab Legion was active on this front during the fighting around Latrun and the villages east of Ramla. Khalidi's Barfiliya entry, however, does not

provide an independent description of a specific Jordanian garrison inside the village.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Dani	9 July 1948	The major offensive to capture the Lydda–Ramla area and expand the corridor toward Jerusalem began.
First phase	9–12 July 1948	Operations concentrated on Lydda, Ramla, and their surrounding area.
Beginning of the second phase	13 July 1948	Israeli forces turned eastward toward the Ramallah–Latrun road and villages in the southern Jerusalem corridor.
Date given by Benny Morris	14 July 1948	This account places the attack or capture on this date, which is also the date appearing in Palestine Remembered's summary.
Advance on Barfiliya	15–16 July 1948	According to the military account relayed by Khalidi, units from Giv'ati, Kiryati, and the Eighth Armored Brigade advanced on the village.
Heavy fighting around Barfiliya	16 July 1948	A contemporary press report records intense fighting around Barfiliya and three other villages.
Depopulation	In the context of the fighting and takeover, 14–16 July 1948	The sources do not clearly describe the villagers' fate; Khalidi considers it probable that they were expelled eastward.
End of Operation Dani	18 July 1948	The operation concluded after substantially expanding Israeli control across the Lydda–Ramla plain and Jerusalem corridor.
Destruction of the village	Later; exact date not established by the principal source	Khalidi does not provide one precise date for the destruction of Barfiliya's buildings.

Refugees from Barfiliya

Palestine Remembered estimates Barfiliya's population in 1948 at approximately 847. This is a later estimate rather than an official British Mandate census figure.

The same source estimates that refugees from Barfiliya and their descendants numbered approximately 5,200 in 1998.

Khalidi considers it probable that villagers were driven eastward during Operation Dani, but the core sources do not provide a comprehensive record of the subsequent destination of every family.

Israeli Settlements on Barfiliya Village Lands

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest record no Israeli settlement as having been established on Barfiliya's village lands.

Modern urban and infrastructure development exists in the wider region around the former village site, and recent community material makes claims about the expansion of nearby development across lands of several depopulated Palestinian villages. Without independent cadastral verification, such claims should not be converted into a list of settlements on Barfiliya's land contrary to the principal village source.

Barfiliya Today

In the field description published by Walid Khalidi, the former village site was being used as a military firing range and was closed to the public.

This description does not constitute direct verification of conditions in 2026. It derives from the field research conducted for *All That Remains* before the book's publication in 1992.

The site's military closure at the time of the field survey also limited the possibility of providing a detailed inventory of surviving structures and archaeological remains. Its current condition therefore should not be inferred solely from the older

field description without contemporary independent documentation.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Barfiliya](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Dani](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Barfiliya, Ramla District](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Barfiliya entry from Walid Khalidi's All That Remains](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922](#)
- [Palestinian Encyclopedia – Barfiliya](#)
- [PalQuest – All That Remains: Methodology and Field Research](#)