

Yibna



Estimated population of Yibna in 1948: approximately 6,287 (often rounded to 6,290). This is a later estimate; the official 1945 figure was 5,420.

Date of occupation and depopulation: 4 June 1948. Contemporary and later accounts differ slightly over whether the final takeover occurred on 4 June or during the night of 4–5 June.

Military operation: Operation Barak.

Israeli military formation: Giv'ati Brigade.

Israeli settlements established wholly or partly on Yibna's lands after 1948: Yavne, Kfar HaNagid, Beit Gamliel, Ben Zakkai, Kfar Aviv, Tzofiyya, and Kerem Yavne. Beit Rabban and the earlier Yavne settlement had been established on village lands before 1948.

Yibna lay 15 kilometres southwest of al-Ramla.

Yibna was a large Palestinian village—more closely resembling a small town—in the Ramla Subdistrict. It stood about 25 metres above sea level and was occupied and depopulated in early June 1948. The official British Mandate statistics recorded 5,420 inhabitants in 1945, while later estimates placed its population at approximately 6,287 in 1948. Some accounts also refer to about 1,500 nomadic Bedouins living in the surrounding area; these residents were not included in Yibna's official settled population.

Location of Yibna

The village stood on the coastal plain, approximately 7.5 kilometres east of the Mediterranean Sea. It was an important transport junction linking southern Palestine with the central western region. Yibna had a station on the Gaza–Lydda railway, and the main Gaza–Jaffa road passed through its lands.

Boundaries of Yibna

Yibna was surrounded by the following villages and localities:

- North: [al-Qubayba](#).
- West: [al-Nabi Rubin](#).
- Southwest: [Arab Suqrir \(Abu Suwayrih\)](#).
 - South: [Bashshit](#).
- Southeast: [al-Maghar](#).
- Northeast: [Zarnuqa](#).



The depopulated Palestinian village of Yibna

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Geography of Yibna

Yibna was built partly of stone on a hill in the coastal plain, about 7.5 kilometres east of the Mediterranean Sea. Its position made it a central transport junction: the village had a railway station on the Gaza–Lydda line, while the Gaza–Jaffa highway crossed its lands.

Its lands bordered those of al-Nabi Rubin, al-Qubayba, Zarnuqa, Arab Suqir, Bashshit, Isdud, and al-Maghar. The site included an archaeological mound beneath the village, together with foundations, architectural fragments, and burial remains.

Population of Yibna

Yibna was among the largest villages in the Ramla Subdistrict and functioned in many respects as a small town. Its population was predominantly Muslim. The official 1945 survey recorded 5,400 Muslims and 20 Christians, for a total settled population of 5,420. Later retrospective estimates place the population at approximately 6,287 in 1948. Accounts also mention roughly 1,500 nomadic Bedouins living around Yibna, but they were counted separately from the settled village population.

Population Figures for Yibna

Year	Population*
1596	710
1834	Approximately 3,000
1922	1,791
1931	3,600
1945	5,420

Year	Population*
1948 estimate	Approximately 6,287
Estimated refugees and descendants, 1998	38,610

* The 1948 and 1998 figures are retrospective estimates rather than official censuses. Estimates vary between sources.

Number of Houses in Yibna

Year	Number of houses
1931	794
1948 estimate	1,386

* The figure for 1931 comes from the official census; the 1948 figure is a later estimate.

Mosques and Religious Shrines in Yibna

Yibna had two principal Muslim religious buildings. The first was associated with the shrine of Abu Hurayra and was later used for schooling—initially for boys and subsequently for girls. The second was the village's Great Mosque. The structure incorporated a former Crusader church, while its surviving Mamluk minaret bears an inscription dating it to 1337. Sources identify the patron as Sayf al-Din Bashtak al-Nasiri, an amir of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun. Local testimonies report that the Great Mosque was repaired during the Mandate period and that the minaret was heightened or restored in 1935 by the builder Ahmad Natat.

The upper part of the minaret was damaged during the 1948 war. The mosque itself was later destroyed, while part of the minaret remains. Because the available sources differ on some architectural dates and details, the inscription date of 1337 is the most securely documented chronological reference.

Education in Yibna

Yibna had two elementary schools: one for boys and one for girls.

The boys' school was founded in 1921 and initially operated in the Abu Hurayra mosque before moving to a separate building; the former premises were subsequently used for the girls' school. In 1936, a new eleven-room building was reportedly constructed for the boys' school. It had approximately thirty dunams of land, part of which was used for practical agricultural education, including poultry keeping and beekeeping. By 1941 the school offered a complete elementary programme through the seventh grade. In the 1941–42 academic year, it enrolled 445 pupils from Yibna and neighbouring villages and employed fourteen teachers. Local accounts state that six headmasters administered the school between its establishment and the Nakba.

The girls' school was founded in 1943 through local community support. By 1948, it enrolled 44 pupils.

Near the end of the British Mandate, residents petitioned the Department of Education to add a secondary class. Approval was reportedly made conditional upon village representatives undertaking in writing to cover the expenses of that class and of any later secondary classes.

In 1947, residents began collecting donations to build a secondary school on a forty-dunam plot south of the village. Construction was completed the following year, but the occupation and depopulation of Yibna in 1948 prevented the school from opening for the 1948–49 academic year.

Yibna's Schools after the Nakba

The former elementary school was initially used as a school for Jewish children and was converted into a municipal building in 1980. The secondary-school building south of the village, completed around the time of the Nakba but never opened by Yibna's residents, was subsequently repurposed. Local accounts describe its later use as a detention or correctional facility; this specific function could not be independently confirmed in the principal reference

Health Services in Yibna

Medical services were initially provided by visiting teams that came once a week or when requested. A clinic opened in Yibna during the 1930s and offered basic treatment and first aid.

Residents requiring more extensive care travelled to Jaffa or al-Majdal.

Economic Life in Yibna

Yibna had numerous springs and wells, and citrus growing was central to its economy. In 1944/45, 6,473 dunams were planted with citrus and bananas, 18,483 dunams were used for cereal cultivation, and 11,104 dunams were classified as plantation and irrigable land. Within the Palestinian-owned portion, 6,468 dunams were devoted to citrus and bananas, 15,124 dunams to cereals, and 11,091 dunams to irrigated land and orchards; 25 dunams were planted with olive trees.

Land Ownership in Yibna

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	37,919
Jewish ownership	2,845
Public land	18,790
Total	59,554

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Yibna, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Cereal cultivation	15,124	2,754	605	18,483
Plantation and irrigable land	11,091	13	0	11,104
Citrus and bananas	6,468	5	0	6,473
Cultivable land	32,683	2,772	605	36,060
Uncultivated land	5,109	73	18,185	23,367
Built-up area	127	0	0	127
Total land area	37,919	2,845	18,790	59,554

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres. Citrus and bananas form part of the plantation and irrigable category in some statistical presentations; they are shown separately here in accordance with the source table, without double-counting the cultivable-land total.

Archaeological and Religious Sites in Yibna

- **The Great Mosque and Mamluk minaret:** the minaret, dated by inscription to 1337, is one of the most prominent surviving architectural remains at the village site.
- **The shrine associated with Abu Hurayra:** Muslims traditionally identified the mausoleum as the tomb of Abu Hurayra. After 1948, the site was appropriated as a Jewish holy place and identified with Rabban Gamaliel of Yavne. The attribution of the tomb has long been contested.

Occupation and Depopulation of Yibna

Yibna was contested between Egyptian and Israeli forces during the first week of June 1948.

Accounts differ over the precise circumstances and timing of its occupation. Israeli historian Benny Morris places the occupation on 4 June, during the second stage of Operation Barak, after mortar fire and a brief engagement; Israeli units reportedly entered a village from which most residents had already fled and expelled the remaining elderly inhabitants. Another Israeli military history states that Egyptian troops had not reached Yibna and that its inhabitants left after seeing Israeli troop concentrations, after which the village fell without fighting on the night of 4–5 June. Contemporary press reports likewise offered differing accounts, including a description of Israeli artillery fire followed by a commando advance as civilians fled toward the coast. The available evidence therefore supports an occupation and depopulation date of 4 June 1948, while acknowledging variations in the descriptions of the final assault.

Israeli Settlements on Yibna's Lands

The following Israeli settlements and institutions were established on Yibna's traditional village lands:

1. Yavne, established in 1941.
2. Beit Rabban, established in 1946.
3. A second locality recorded as Yavne, established in 1949.
4. Kfar HaNagid, established in 1949.
5. Beit Gamliel, established in 1949.
6. Ben Zakkai, established in 1950.
7. Kfar Aviv, established in 1951; its original name was Kfar HaYe'or.
8. Tzofiyya, established in 1955.
9. Kerem Yavne, an educational institution established in 1963.

Yibna Today

A railway line crosses the village site. The surviving remains include part of the mosque's minaret, a shrine, a well, and several houses. Published field descriptions report that at least two surviving houses were used by Jewish families and another by an Arab family at the time

of documentation. The surrounding landscape has been substantially transformed by the expansion of modern Yavne and other Israeli localities established on Yibna's lands.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question \(PalQuest\): Yibna.](#)
 - [Palestine Open Maps: Yibna.](#)
 - [Palestine Remembered: Yibna.](#)
- [Government of Palestine, Village Statistics, April 1945, reproduced by Palestine Remembered.](#)