

Dayr Ayyub



Dayr Ayyub - Depopulated Palestinian Village in Ramla Subdistrict

Dayr Ayyub was a Palestinian village in the Ramla subdistrict of the Lydda district. It stood on southwest-facing slopes overlooking the Ramla-Jerusalem highway near Bab al-Wad and the Latrun area, approximately 17.5 kilometers southeast of Ramla, at an average elevation of about 325 meters above sea level.

The village had 320 inhabitants in the official 1944/45 statistics and a registered land area of 6,028 dunums. Agriculture was the principal source of livelihood, particularly cereals, fruit trees, and vegetables.

Because of its position overlooking the Jerusalem road, Dayr Ayyub became a repeatedly contested military site in 1948. Its Palestinian population appears to have been displaced during April, while the village site itself changed hands or was targeted repeatedly during the battles around Latrun in May and June.

Key Facts about Dayr Ayyub

Field	Information
Name	Dayr Ayyub
Subdistrict in 1948	Ramla
Earlier administrative affiliation	Part of the Jerusalem subdistrict before being transferred to Ramla in 1941
Status	Depopulated Palestinian village
Distance from Ramla	Approximately 17.5 km southeast
Average elevation	Approximately 325 m above sea level
Population, 1944/45	320
Houses, 1931	66
Registered land area	6,028 dunums
Population displacement	April 1948 according to the account cited by Khalidi; precise day unknown
First clearly documented military capture	16 May 1948
Operation during first capture	Operation Makkabi
Unit during first capture	Palmach's Har'el Brigade
Second capture	Late May 1948 during Operation Ben-Nun
Units during second capture	Elements of the Giv'ati and Sheva' / Seventh Brigades

Field	Information
Cause of depopulation	Military assault; no precise village-specific expulsion order or date is established
Israeli settlements on village land	None documented by Khalidi/PalQuest

Location of Dayr Ayyub

Dayr Ayyub stood on mountainous slopes facing southwest and directly overlooked the main Ramla–Jerusalem highway through the strategic Bab al-Wad corridor.

A secondary road connected the village with the highway, giving its location considerable strategic importance for movement between the coastal plain and Jerusalem during the 1948 fighting.

Nearby localities included 'Imwas, Yalu, Bayt Nuba, al-Latrun, and Bayt Susin in the hill country at the western entrance to the Jerusalem corridor.

The Name and the Tradition of the Prophet Ayyub

The village name was associated with Ayyub, or Job. Villagers believed that a location northwest of the settlement contained the tomb of the Prophet Ayyub.

Khalidi records this as a local religious tradition rather than an archaeological identification. It should therefore not be treated as independent material proof that the tomb belonged to the historical or biblical Job.

Dayr Ayyub in the Ottoman Period

In 1596, Dayr Ayyub was a village in the nahiya of Ramla in the liwa' of Gaza, with a recorded population of 94.

Villagers paid taxes on wheat, barley, fruit, vineyards, goats, beehives, and other products, indicating a diversified agricultural economy.

By the late nineteenth century, the village was described as a small settlement on a hillside, with houses built of stone and mud.

Dayr Ayyub during the British Mandate

Dayr Ayyub belonged to the Jerusalem subdistrict during the earlier Mandate censuses. In 1941 it was administratively transferred to the Ramla subdistrict, where it appeared in the 1944/45 statistics.

The village expanded along roads connecting it with neighboring communities, while agriculture remained its principal economic activity.

Population of Dayr Ayyub

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	94	Historical Ottoman-era figure
1922	215	Official Mandate census; all Muslims
1931	221	Official Census of Palestine; all Muslims
1944/45	320	Official statistics; all Arabs and Muslims
1948	371	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered, not an official census
1998	2,280 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and descendants reported by Palestine Remembered

Some secondary sources incorrectly reproduce a figure of 229 for 1931. The original 1931 Census of Palestine lists Dayr Ayyub with 221 inhabitants—107 males and 114 females—all Muslims, living in 66 occupied houses.

The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates and should not be attributed to British Mandatory census statistics.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	66	Official Census of Palestine figure
1948	110	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census figure

Land Ownership in Dayr Ayyub

The total registered land area of Dayr Ayyub in 1944/45 was 6,028 dunums.

Ownership Category	Dunums
Palestinian	4,500
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	1,528
Total	6,028

The figures balance correctly: $4,500 + 0 + 1,528 = 6,028$ dunums.

The original official classification records 4,500 Arab dunums and 1,528 Public dunums, with no land listed in the Jewish ownership category.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land Use	Arab	Public	Total
Cereals	2,769	0	2,769
Plantations and irrigable land	127	0	127
Built-up land	26	0	26
Non-cultivable land	1,578	1,528	3,106
Total	4,500	1,528	6,028

The table balances correctly: $2,769 + 127 + 26 + 3,106 = 6,028$ dunums.

Ten dunums of olives were included within the 127 dunums classified as plantations and irrigable land. They are therefore a subcategory and must not be added again when calculating the total.

Likewise, the figure of 2,896 dunums classified as cultivable land is the subtotal of 2,769 cereal dunums and 127 plantation/irrigable dunums, not an additional land-use category.

Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal source of livelihood and was predominantly rain-fed.

Cultivation was concentrated north and northwest of the village. Villagers grew cereals, vegetables, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and other fruit crops.

The sixteenth-century tax records also document goats, beehives, and vineyards, indicating the long-standing importance of both agriculture and livestock-related activity.

Water Resources

Most agriculture was rain-fed, although the 127 dunums classified as irrigated land or plantations indicate the use of local water sources for part of the cultivated area.

Khalidi's later field description also records a spring at the southeastern edge of the village site.

Education in Dayr Ayyub

Villagers established an elementary school in 1947 through local subscriptions and paid the teacher's salary themselves.

The school opened with an enrollment of 51 pupils.

The initiative illustrates the community's efforts to provide local education despite

the village's relatively small population.

First Attack on Dayr Ayyub

Military violence reached Dayr Ayyub several months before the first clearly documented occupation of the village site.

On 21 December 1947, a force of twenty-five men raided the village, according to the village mukhtar's account reported by the *New York Times*. Bombs were thrown at three houses, with no casualties reported in the account cited by Khalidi.

On 7 February 1948, British forces entered Dayr Ayyub and demolished two houses. The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* cited a British communiqué stating that the buildings had been used to fire on Jewish convoys passing near the village.

Depopulation of Dayr Ayyub

Khalidi cites Israeli historian Benny Morris as stating that Dayr Ayyub was depopulated as a result of military assault in April 1948.

No precise April date or village-specific attacking formation is provided in this account. The 6 March 1948 date displayed in Palestine Remembered's summary table is therefore not treated as an established occupation or depopulation date.

Palestine Remembered classifies the cause of exodus as direct military assault, which is consistent with the April depopulation account.

An important distinction must be maintained between the departure of the civilian population and military control of the physical village site: Dayr Ayyub continued to change hands or face renewed attacks after its residents had left.

Operation Makkabi and the First Documented

Capture

Operation Makkabi was one of several offensives directed at the Latrun area and the Jerusalem road during May 1948.

On 16 May 1948, units of the Palmach's Har'el Brigade captured Dayr Ayyub in the first clearly documented occupation of the village site.

The Har'el units did not retain permanent control and apparently withdrew later.

Operation Ben-Nun and the Second Capture

In late May 1948, another attempt to control Dayr Ayyub took place during Operation Ben-Nun, which aimed to capture Latrun and open the Jerusalem road.

A combined force made up of elements of the Giv'ati and Sheva' / Seventh Brigades entered the village. The account cited by Khalidi states that the force entered without resistance inside the village but soon withdrew under Arab fire from the surrounding area.

The principal Ben-Nun battle around Latrun took place on 25–26 May, followed by another phase on 30 May.

Operation Yoram and Later Attempts

Khalidi suggests that Dayr Ayyub may have been targeted again during the fourth Israeli assault on Latrun, Operation Yoram, on the night of 8–9 June 1948.

The village nevertheless appears to have remained outside Israeli occupation during the second truce.

On 15 August, the *New York Times* reported Arab Legion sources as saying that another Israeli attempt to occupy Dayr Ayyub in violation of the truce had been repulsed.

Dayr Ayyub's 1948 history therefore cannot accurately be reduced to a single

“occupation date.” Its population was displaced at one stage, while military control over the site remained contested through several later operations.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
First recorded raid	21 December 1947	A force of twenty-five men attacked the village and bombed three houses; no casualties were reported in Khalidi's cited account.
British demolition	7 February 1948	British forces demolished two houses, stating that they had been used to fire on passing convoys.
Population displacement	April 1948	Khalidi cites an account that villagers left as a result of military assault; the exact day and attacking unit are not specified.
First documented capture	16 May 1948	Har'el Brigade units captured Dayr Ayyub during Operation Makkabi and later withdrew.
Second capture	Late May 1948	Giv'ati and Sheva' / Seventh Brigade units entered during Operation Ben-Nun but withdrew under fire.
Possible further attempt	Night of 8–9 June 1948	Khalidi suggests another attempt may have occurred during Operation Yoram.
Second truce	Summer 1948	The village appears to have remained outside Israeli occupation during this period.
Another attempted occupation	Around 15 August 1948	Arab Legion sources reported that an Israeli attempt to take the village had been repulsed.
Armistice	1949	The village site ended up immediately adjacent to the armistice lines in the Latrun sector.

Destruction

Dayr Ayyub was extensively destroyed. In Khalidi's later field description, the surviving evidence consisted largely of rubble, sections of walls, house remains, and the village cemetery.

The principal sources reviewed do not establish one precise demolition date, and the village's destruction should therefore not automatically be attributed in its entirety to any one of the several military operations that affected the site.

Israeli Settlements on Dayr Ayyub's Lands

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest state that no Israeli residential settlement was established directly on Dayr Ayyub's village lands.

Settlement / Project	Established	Relationship to Dayr Ayyub
Mevo Horon	1970	Located north of the village site but not on Dayr Ayyub's lands according to Khalidi
Canada Park	Opened in 1978	Its eastern section occupies part of the Dayr Ayyub site; it is a park rather than a residential settlement

Palestine Remembered's automated table lists Mevo Horon as associated with village lands, but Khalidi's original village entry explicitly states that no Israeli settlement was established on Dayr Ayyub's lands and that Mevo Horon lies north of the site. This article follows Khalidi's more specific formulation.

Dayr Ayyub Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, the eastern section of Canada Park occupies the Dayr Ayyub site.

Rubble was scattered across the area, including wall fragments attached to iron beams, while the remains of village houses could be seen on a high hill to the

south.

The village cemetery remained on the southeastern hill. Among the surviving stones documented by Khalidi was the grave marker of al-Hajj Muhammad 'Ulayyan Taha, who died on 6 April 1936.

Large cypress, eucalyptus, carob, and fig trees dominated the site, together with fir trees planted later. The valleys were being used for fig cultivation, and a spring remained at the southeastern edge of the former village.

This description derives from fieldwork undertaken before the publication of Khalidi's *All That Remains* in 1992. It is therefore a documented historical description rather than a comprehensive direct field verification of Dayr Ayyub's condition in 2026.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Dayr Ayyub](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Makkabi](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Nachshon](#)
- [PalQuest – al-Latrun and the Ben-Nun / Yoram battles](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Dayr Ayyub, Ramla District](#)
- [Walid Khalidi – All That Remains: Dayr Ayyub](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1931](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi](#)