Tall al-Shawk

Tall al-Shawk – Depopulated Palestinian Village in Baysan Subdistrict

Tall al-Shawk was a Palestinian village in the Baysan subdistrict of Galilee. It lay approximately 5 kilometers west of the town of Baysan on flat terrain that gradually descended northeastward near the eastern foothills of the al-Faqqu'a Mountains, also known as the Jilbu' Hills. Its average elevation was approximately 100 meters below sea level.

The village had a population of 120 in the official 1944/45 statistics and a registered land area of 3,685 dunums. Its location was relatively rich in water: 'Ayn

al-Jawsaq flowed nearby, while a dam and water-powered grain mill stood west of the village.

Palestine Remembered dates the depopulation of Tall al-Shawk to 12 May 1948 and associates it with Operation Gideon and the Haganah's Golani Brigade. This chronology is consistent with the fall of Baysan on the same day, although Walid Khalidi's village-specific entry does not provide an independent detailed narrative of the attack on Tall al-Shawk itself.

Key Facts about Tall al-Shawk

Field	Information
Name	Tall al-Shawk
Subdistrict	Baysan
Status	Depopulated Palestinian village
Distance from Baysan	Approximately 5 km west
Average elevation	Approximately 100 m below sea level
Population, 1944/45	120 – official statistics
Registered land area	3,685 dunums
Reported occupation/depopulation date	12 May 1948 according to Palestine Remembered
Military operation	Operation Gideon according to Palestine Remembered, consistent with the broader Baysan Valley campaign
Military unit	Golani Brigade according to Palestine Remembered; Khalidi's village entry does not independently identify the unit that entered Tall al-Shawk
Cause of depopulation	Influence of the fall or exodus of a neighboring town, according to Palestine Remembered; chronologically associated with the fall of Baysan

Field	Information
Extent of destruction	The village was effectively obliterated; Khalidi's field description found no remaining village structures
Israeli settlements established on village lands	None documented

Location of Tall al-Shawk

Tall al-Shawk was located approximately 5 kilometers west of Baysan on level ground that sloped gradually toward the northeast near the eastern foothills of the al-Faqqu'a or Jilbu' Hills.

The Jamma'in River lay to the north of the village, while Wadi al-Jawsaq was to the south. A secondary road connected Tall al-Shawk directly with Baysan, and dirt tracks linked it with neighboring Palestinian communities.

Nearby villages and localities included al-Sakhina, al-Ashrafiyya, and Khirbat al-Jawfa, while the town of Baysan lay to the east.

The Name Tall al-Shawk

The Arabic name “Tall al-Shawk” refers to the village's physical setting on a mound or tell where traces of earlier structures were visible. Literally, the name can be understood as “the mound of thorns.”

The principal sources used here do not provide a documented alternative historical explanation for the name, and no unsupported etymology has therefore been added.

Tall al-Shawk before the Nakba

The village had a rectangular layout, and all of its inhabitants were Muslims. Its location benefited from nearby water resources and agricultural land.

'Ayn al-Jawsaq emerged approximately half a kilometer south of the village site. About 200 meters west of the village stood a dam equipped with a water-powered mill.

The secondary road to Baysan gave the villagers direct access to the subdistrict capital, its markets, and its services.

Population of Tall al-Shawk

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1922	58	Official British Mandate census; all Muslims
1931	41	Official British Mandate census; all Muslims
1944/45	120	Official statistics; all classified as Arab
1948	139	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered, not an official census
1998	855 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and descendants reported by Palestine Remembered

The population fell from 58 in 1922 to 41 in 1931 before rising to 120 in the 1944/45 statistics.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	11	Official 1931 census figure
1948	37	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered, not an official census count

Land Ownership in Tall al-Shawk

The total registered area of Tall al-Shawk in the 1944/45 statistics was 3,685 dunums. Using the terminology employed in Palestine Remembered's simplified ownership table:

Ownership Category	Dunums
Palestinian	65
Transferred to Zionists	3,116
Communal/Public	504
Total	**3,685**

The figures are internally consistent: 65 + 3,116 + 504 = 3,685 dunums.

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab / Jewish / Public and record the same distribution: 65 Arab dunums, 3,116 Jewish dunums, and 504 Public dunums.

Land Use in 1944/45

The official statistics show that most of the land within Tall al-Shawk's registered boundaries was recorded in the Jewish category, while only a small portion of Arab land remained under agricultural use.

Land Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Cereals	33	3,052	0	3,085
Plantations and irrigable land	14	40	0	54
Citrus and bananas	0	24	0	24
Non-cultivable land	18	0	504	522
Total	**65**	**3,116**	**504**	**3,685**

The table balances correctly: 3,085 + 54 + 24 + 522 = 3,685 dunums.

The entire 522 dunums of non-cultivable land should not be described as Palestinian land. The official breakdown consists of 18 Arab dunums and 504 Public dunums.

Economic Life in Tall al-Shawk

The inhabitants of Tall al-Shawk depended on agriculture, with nearby water resources supporting cereal cultivation and orchards. In 1944/45, 33 dunums of Arab land were devoted to cereals and 14 dunums were irrigated or used for plantations.

The larger agricultural area registered within the village boundaries was classified as Jewish land, including 3,052 dunums of cereals, 40 dunums of plantations and irrigable land, and 24 dunums of citrus and bananas.

The water-powered grain mill west of the village was also part of the local economic landscape and illustrates the practical use of the area's water resources.

Water Resources

Water was a defining feature of Tall al-Shawk's location. The village stood between the Jamma'in River to the north and Wadi al-Jawsaq to the south, while 'Ayn al-Jawsaq emerged approximately half a kilometer south of the village.

A dam and water-powered grain mill stood about 200 meters west of the site, demonstrating the role of local water in agriculture, milling, and daily economic life.

Education and Institutions

The principal sources reviewed do not provide sufficient documented information about an independent school in Tall al-Shawk, its founding date, or student enrollment. No unsupported educational details have therefore been added.

The sources used here likewise do not provide sufficient documentation to identify a specific mosque or other religious institution within the village, although all recorded inhabitants were Muslims.

Archaeological Remains

Tall al-Shawk itself was built on a mound where traces of earlier structures could be seen, indicating that the site contained remains predating the modern Palestinian village.

Nearby Tall al-Shaykh Humud contained visible granite columns. These should be described simply as documented archaeological remains unless a specialist archaeological source establishes a more precise date or interpretation.

Operation Gideon

The Haganah carried out Operation Gideon between 10 and 15 May 1948 under the Golani Brigade. The campaign was directed at gaining control of the Baysan Valley and led to the depopulation of Palestinian communities throughout the area.

The town of Baysan fell on 12 May 1948 during this campaign. Several surrounding villages were captured during the same period, and some were demolished shortly after their occupation.

Palestine Remembered places Tall al-Shawk within Operation Gideon and attributes its occupation on 12 May to the Golani Brigade. This is geographically and chronologically consistent with the wider campaign, although Khalidi's village-specific entry does not independently identify the battalion or force that entered Tall al-Shawk itself.

Occupation and Depopulation of Tall al-Shawk

Palestine Remembered gives 12 May 1948 as the occupation date of Tall al-Shawk and associates the event with Operation Gideon and the Golani Brigade.

It classifies the cause of depopulation as the influence of the fall or exodus of a neighboring town. This is chronologically consistent with the fall of Baysan on 12 May and with the resulting collapse of the Palestinian civilian situation throughout

the valley.

Walid Khalidi's entry, however, does not provide an independent detailed description of the hour of attack, combat inside the village, an expulsion order, or the precise manner in which Tall al-Shawk's inhabitants left. Such details should therefore not be reconstructed without evidence.

Palestine Remembered describes the complete removal of the villagers as ethnic cleansing. In directly descriptive terms supported by the sources, Tall al-Shawk became entirely depopulated of its Palestinian community during the campaign for control of the Baysan Valley, and its buildings were subsequently destroyed to the point that no village structures remained visible in Khalidi's later field documentation.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Gideon	10 May 1948	The Golani Brigade began the wider campaign for control of the Baysan Valley.
Advance around Baysan	10–12 May 1948	Golani forces advanced through the valley and occupied Palestinian villages and positions around Baysan.
Fall of Baysan	12 May 1948	The subdistrict capital fell to the Golani Brigade, contributing to widespread displacement in the surrounding area.
Occupation/depopulation of Tall al-Shawk	12 May 1948 according to Palestine Remembered	The site attributes the event to Operation Gideon and the Golani Brigade and classifies the cause of flight as the influence of the fall or exodus of a nearby town.

Stage	Date	Details
End of Operation Gideon	15 May 1948	The principal campaign for control of the Baysan Valley concluded.
Destruction	Precise date not documented in the principal sources reviewed	The village was ultimately obliterated, and Khalidi's later field survey found no visible remains of its buildings.

Israeli Settlements on Tall al-Shawk's Lands

Neither Walid Khalidi nor PalQuest identifies an Israeli settlement established directly on the lands of Tall al-Shawk.

Nir David lies nearby but was founded in 1936 under the name Tel 'Amal on lands traditionally belonging to the neighboring Palestinian village of al-Sakhina, not on Tall al-Shawk's lands.

Settlement	Established	Relationship to Tall al-Shawk
Nir David	1936	Not established on Tall al-Shawk's lands; founded on neighboring al-Sakhina land, while its residents cultivated land near Wadi al-Jawsaq

Tall al-Shawk Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, no visible trace of the village buildings remained. Wild grasses and thorns covered the site, an artificial canal crossed it, and two large eucalyptus trees stood prominently in the area.

Land near Wadi al-Jawsaq was cultivated by residents of Nir David, a settlement established before the Nakba on the lands of neighboring al-Sakhina.

PalQuest dates Hassan Hawari's field photograph of the Tall al-Shawk site to May 1990. Khalidi's description therefore documents conditions during the period of field research preceding the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and should not

be treated as a comprehensive direct field verification of the site in 2026.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Tall al-Shawk
- PalQuest – Operation Gideon
- Palestine Remembered – Tall al-Shawk, Baysan District
- Walid Khalidi – All That Remains: Tall al-Shawk
- Village Statistics of 1945 – Sami Hadawi reproduction of Government of Palestine statistics