Our Palestine — Depopulated village — Jaffa — 10 July 1948

Al-'Abbasiyya (Yahudiyya)

al-'Abbasiyya: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa District

al-'Abbasiyya, formerly known as al-Yahudiyya, was a Palestinian village in the Jaffa District. It stood on flat terrain on the central coastal plain approximately 13 kilometres east of Jaffa, at an average elevation of about 50 metres above sea level. The 1944/1945 statistical unit recorded 5,650 Arabs and 150 Jews, for a total population of 5,800. Irgun forces first occupied the village on 4 May 1948 after an assault that began the previous night, and most of the Palestinian population was

probably displaced during this stage. Arab forces regained the village in June, before Israeli forces finally occupied it on 10 July 1948 during Operation Dani.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from district center	13 km east of Jaffa
Average Elevation	50 m above sea level
Population in 1931	3,258
Number of Houses in 1931	772
Population in 1944/1945	5,650 – Arab population; the same statistical unit also recorded 150 Jews (total 5,800)
Estimated Population in 1948	About 6,554 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	20,540 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The Irgun attacked the village on 13 December 1947, killing seven people and seriously wounding seven others, two of whom later died; it then occupied the village on 4 May 1948 after an assault that began on the night of 3 May, during which the inhabitants were probably expelled. After Arab forces regained the village on the eve of the first truce (11 June 1948), Israeli occupation forces finally captured it on 10 July 1948 during Operation Dani.
Final Israeli Control	10 July 1948, during Operation Dani; the Irgun had first occupied the village on 4 May 1948 and was forced to withdraw from it on the eve of the first truce (11 June 1948)
Military Operation	Operation Dani (final occupation); PalQuest also lists the village among those affected by Operation Hametz (24 April – 13 May 1948), during which the Alexandroni Brigade took control of the area around the village before the Irgun occupied it on 4 May 1948

Item	Information
Military Unit	The Irgun (the attack of 13 December 1947 and the first occupation on 4 May 1948); units of the Israeli Home Guard (the final occupation on 10 July 1948); the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade had taken control of the area around the village in late April 1948
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault by Zionist forces (the Irgun); Khalidi considers it probable that the inhabitants were expelled during the assault that began on the night of 3 May 1948
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Yehud, established on the village site in 1948; Magshimim, built east of the site in 1949; and Ganne Yehuda (1951), Ganne Tiqwa (1953) and Savyon (1954). All were established on lands belonging to al-'Abbasiyya, as was Ben-Gurion airport

Location

al-'Abbasiyya stood on flat terrain on the central coastal plain approximately 13 kilometres east of Jaffa and at an average elevation of about 50 metres above sea level.

Major roads linked it with Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla, while the Jaffa–Lydda railway passed immediately south of the village.

Lydda airport stood approximately 4 kilometres to the south, giving al-'Abbasiyya an important position within the transportation network between Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla.

Name and Historical Background

Until 1932, the village was known as al-Yahudiyya.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest associate the village site with a settlement called Yehud in ancient sources and record a form of the name Iudaea during the Roman period, followed by al-Yahudiyya in a later period.

Because the exact identification of the modern village with ancient settlements requires specialized archaeological and historical study, this association is presented as a historical identification found in the reference sources rather than as an independently established archaeological certainty.

In 1596, the village belonged to the nahiya of Ramla in the Gaza district and had an estimated population of approximately 693.

The inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, fruit, sesame, goats, beehives, and other forms of production.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Sufi traveller al-Bakri al-Siddiqi visited the village and recorded the shrine of al-Nabi Huda.

By the late nineteenth century, the population was estimated at between 800 and 1,000. The village was built largely of adobe and surrounded by palm trees, with water obtained from a nearby pond.

The Renaming of the Village

In **1932**, the inhabitants changed the village's name from al-Yahudiyya to al-'Abbasiyya.

The new name primarily commemorated Shaykh al-'Abbas, who was buried in the village, while also alluding to the Abbasid dynasty.

At that time the overwhelming majority of the population was Muslim, with a small Christian minority.

Mosques and Shrines

al-'Abbasiyya had two mosques.

The main mosque was built of stone and had a minaret approximately 21 metres high. It originally stood near the centre of the village before later expansion

surrounded it.

A second, smaller mosque stood in the northwestern part of the village.

Shrine of al-Nabi Huda

The shrine of al-Nabi Huda was one of the principal religious landmarks of al-'Abbasiyya and was recorded in historical writing dating to the eighteenth century.

The stone, domed shrine survived the Nakba according to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi.

Population

The 1922 census recorded 2,437 inhabitants in al-'Abbasiyya.

By the 1931 census, the population had risen to 3,258 people living in 772 houses.

The 1944/1945 statistical unit recorded a total population of 5,800, including **5,650 Arabs and 150 Jews**.

The Arab population of the village should therefore be distinguished from the total statistical-unit population.

The figure of approximately 6,554 inhabitants in 1948 is a later estimate rather than an official British Mandate census figure, and Palestine Remembered presents it as including 150 Jews.

Palestine Remembered estimates the number of Palestinian refugees and their descendants at approximately 40,249 in 1998.

Population of al-'Abbasiyya

Year	Population	Note
1596	About 693	Historical estimate based on Ottoman records

Year	Population	Note
Late nineteenth century	About 800–1,000	Historical estimate
1922	2,437	Official census
1931	3,258	Official census; 772 houses
1944/1945	5,800	5,650 Arabs and 150 Jews in the statistical unit
1948	About 6,554	Later estimate including 150 Jews
1998	40,249	Estimate of Palestinian refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 772 houses in al-'Abbasiyya.

The estimate of approximately 1,553 houses in 1948 is a later figure rather than an official census count.

Education

al-'Abbasiyya had two schools, one for boys and another for girls.

The boys' school was established in **1919** and became a junior high school in **1941**.

It had fourteen teachers and an enrollment of 293 pupils, making it one of the largest village schools in the Jaffa subdistrict.

Approximately 27 dunams of land were attached to the school for agricultural training.

The girls' school opened in **1943** with an initial enrollment of 101 pupils.

al-Nadi al-'Abbasi and the Local Council

The inhabitants established a social and cultural club known as al-Nadi al-'Abbasi.

The club maintained a library and sponsored a football team.

A local council was established in **1945**, with village residents appointed to serve on it. Its responsibilities included improving social services and paving local roads.

Economic Life

Agriculture formed the principal basis of al-'Abbasiyya's economy, particularly citrus, bananas, cereals, and orchards.

Numerous artesian wells supplied irrigation water.

Some villagers also wove mats from papyrus brought from the marshes of Lake al-Hula.

During World War II, villagers began raising Holstein cattle.

A weekly Saturday market attracted residents from nearby villages to trade agricultural products, animals, and textiles.

Land Ownership

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, al-'Abbasiyya had a total land area of 20,540 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 17,499 dunams, Jewish ownership to 1,135 dunams, while 1,906 dunams were classified as public land.

Total	20,540
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	17,499
Jewish ownership	1,135
Public land	1,906

Land Use

The detailed statistics show that some later tables combined public land with Arab-owned land.

Citrus and banana cultivation covered 4,099 dunams: 3,879 Arab-owned and 220 Jewish-owned.

A further 1,019 Arab-owned dunams were irrigated or used for plantations.

Cereals covered 14,465 dunams: 12,348 Arab-owned dunams, 915 Jewish-owned dunams, and 1,202 dunams of public land.

The built-up area covered 101 Arab-owned dunams.

Uncultivable land covered 856 dunams: 152 Arab-owned dunams and 704 dunams of public land.

Palestine Remembered records approximately 450 dunams planted with olive trees. This represents a crop category within cultivated land and should not be added separately to the overall land-use total.

Total	17,499	1,135	1,906	20,540
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Citrus and bananas	3,879	220	0	4,099
Irrigated and plantation land	1,019	0	0	1,019
Cereals	12,348	915	1,202	14,465

Total	17,499	1,135	1,906	20,540
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Built-up area	101	0	0	101
Uncultivable land	152	0	704	856

Attacks Before the Occupation

al-'Abbasiyya was subjected to repeated attacks beginning in late 1947.

On **13 December 1947**, an Irgun force attacked the village. According to the account transmitted by Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, attackers entered in several vehicles, planted explosives near houses, and used firearms and hand grenades.

Reports cited by the source stated that seven Palestinians were initially killed and that two of the seriously wounded later died.

The village was subjected to another Zionist attack on 24 February 1948.

Operation Hametz

Operation Hametz began on **24 April 1948** and continued until 13 May.

Its immediate objective was to occupy the major Palestinian villages east and south of Jaffa, isolate the city from its hinterland, and facilitate its capture.

The operation involved the **Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati Brigades**.

al-'Abbasiyya was among the affected villages, alongside Salama, al-Khayriyya, Saqiya, Kafr 'Ana, al-Safiriyya, Yazur, Bayt Dajan, and others.

In late April, the **Alexandroni Brigade** gained control of the area surrounding al-'Abbasiyya during Operation Hametz.

Alexandroni, however, was not the formation that directly occupied the village itself in the following stage; the direct assault that captured al-'Abbasiyya on 4 May

was carried out by the Irgun.

The First Occupation and Depopulation in May 1948

The Irgun assault on al-'Abbasiyya began on the night of **3 May 1948**, and the village was occupied on **4 May**.

Irgun forces held the village for approximately five weeks.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest consider it likely that most of the Palestinian inhabitants were expelled or fled during the assault beginning on 3 May.

Thus, 4 May represents the village's first occupation and the principal stage of its depopulation.

Information derived from the History of the Haganah or Israeli historians is cited here only as transmitted through Walid Khalidi and PalQuest and not through direct reliance on the original Israeli sources.

The Arab Recapture in June

On the eve of the first truce on **11 June 1948**, Arab forces launched a counterattack and forced Irgun units to withdraw from al-'Abbasiyya.

Intermittent fighting continued around the village during the first days of the truce.

al-'Abbasiyya then remained in Arab hands for approximately one month.

Operation Dani and the Final Occupation

Operation Dani was conducted from 9 to 18 July 1948 and sought to expand Israeli control between the coastal area and Jerusalem and to capture Lydda,

Ramla, and their surrounding region.

al-'Abbasiyya was among the villages affected by the operation.

On **10 July 1948**, units of the **Israeli Home Guard** attacked and recaptured al-'Abbasiyya.

PalQuest records that the village fell during this stage with practically no fighting, as several villages east of Jaffa were seized in coordination with the offensive against Lydda and Ramla.

This date represents the final Israeli occupation of the village.

The two key dates should therefore be distinguished: **4 May 1948**, the first Irgun occupation and principal depopulation, and **10 July 1948**, the final occupation during Operation Dani.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
First attack on the village	13 December 1947	The Irgun infiltrated the village in four vehicles, set off explosive charges near several houses and left, according to the History of the Haganah as cited by Khalidi. The New York Times put the dead at seven and the seriously wounded at seven others, two of whom later died (a five-year-old child and a twenty-year-old woman), and reported that the twenty-four attackers were disguised as British soldiers.
Second attack	24 February 1948	A Zionist force struck at the village, according to an official British communiqué quoted by Filastin. Khalidi also reports, without a separate date, that two villagers were killed when a car belonging to the Jewish Settlement Police sped through the village and hurled a grenade at passers-by.

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the military operation	29 April 1948	Four days after the Irgun's frontal attack on Jaffa (25 April), the Haganah carried out Operation Hametz, which aimed to occupy the villages east and south of Jaffa in order to isolate the city, and the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade took control of the area around al-'Abbasiyya.
Temporary occupation (first occupation)	3–4 May 1948	The Irgun occupied the village on 4 May as part of the general Haganah plan to expel Palestinian villagers from the coastal area between Tel Aviv and the settlement of Zikhron Ya'aqov, according to Khalidi. The New York Times reported that the attack began on the night of 3 May and that its first phase was over by about 6:00 a.m. the following morning; according to the History of the Haganah, the Irgun held the village for five weeks.
Expulsion of the inhabitants	Probably 3–4 May 1948	Khalidi considers it probable that the village's inhabitants were expelled during the assault that began on the night of 3 May 1948.
Withdrawal of the attacking force	Eve of the first truce (11 June 1948)	Irgun units were forced to withdraw from the village after an Arab counterattack on the eve of the first truce, according to Khalidi, and the village then remained in Arab hands for about a month.
Attack by Israeli forces stationed in Kafr 'Ana	After 11 June 1948, in the first days of the first truce	Israeli occupation forces stationed in the neighbouring village of Kafr 'Ana attacked al-'Abbasiyya, and the fighting around the village continued 'spasmodically' for a couple of days into the truce, according to the New York Times correspondent as cited by Khalidi.
Beginning of the military operation	9 July 1948	After the first truce expired, Operation Dani began; its first stage (9–12 July) aimed to capture Lydda, Ramla and the villages in the attacking forces' path, and PalQuest lists al-'Abbasiyya among the villages it affected.

Stage	Date	Details
Final occupation	10 July 1948	Units of the Israeli Home Guard recaptured the village, along with a cluster of villages east of Jaffa, and it fell 'practically without any fighting', according to the History of the Haganah as cited by Khalidi. The same offensive took six neighbouring villages, and a New York Times report described it as an 'enveloping action' coordinated with the attack against Ramla and Lydda.
Request to destroy the village	13 September 1948	Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion asked his cabinet for permission to destroy the village, in the name of the Central Front commander Zvi Ayalon and on the grounds that there was insufficient manpower to occupy the area completely. Morris, as cited by Khalidi, does not clarify whether the request was implemented in full, and indirect evidence indicates that it was not.
Recommendation to settle Jewish immigrants in the village	Late September 1948 (ten days after the destruction request)	The Israeli Military Government recommended settling Jewish immigrants in the village, probably in the houses that were still standing, according to Khalidi.
Settlement on village lands	1948	The settlement of Yehud was established on the village site.
Settlement on village lands	1949	The settlement of Magshimim was built east of the village site.
Settlements on village lands	1951–1954	Ganne Yehuda was built in 1951, Ganne Tiqwa in 1953 and Savyon in 1954, on lands belonging to al-'Abbasiyya.

Destruction of the Village

On 13 September 1948, approval was requested from the Israeli government for the destruction of al-'Abbasiyya.

Indirect evidence transmitted by Walid Khalidi suggests that the village was not entirely demolished at that stage, since approximately ten days later the military government recommended settling Jewish immigrants in houses that apparently remained standing.

As a result, portions of the village's built environment survived the Nakba, even though much of al-'Abbasiyya was later destroyed or transformed.

Israeli Settlements on al-'Abbasiyya's Lands

Yehud

Yehud was established on the al-'Abbasiyya village site in **1948**.

Magshimim

Magshimim was established east of the village site in **1949**.

Ganne Yehuda

Ganne Yehuda was established on al-'Abbasiyya's lands in **1951**.

Ganne Tiqwa

Ganne Tiqwa was established on village lands in **1953**.

Savyon

Savyon was established on al-'Abbasiyya's lands in **1954**.

Ben-Gurion Airport

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest also state that portions of Ben-Gurion Airport, formerly Lydda Airport, were established on lands belonging to al-'Abbasiyya.

Documented Israeli Settlements and Installations on al-'Abbasiyya's Lands

Name	Year Established	Relationship to al-'Abbasiyya
Yehud	1948	Established on the village site
Magshimim	1949	Established east of the site on village land
Ganne Yehuda	1951	Established on al-'Abbasiyya's lands
Ganne Tiqwa	1953	Established on al-'Abbasiyya's lands
Savyon	1954	Established on al-'Abbasiyya's lands
Ben-Gurion Airport	Later expansion	Parts of the airport occupy land belonging to al-'Abbasiyya

al-'Abbasiyya After the Nakba

According to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi, the main mosque and the shrine of al-Nabi Huda survived.

The mosque was deserted and cracking in several places at the time of documentation, while the stone, domed shrine remained standing.

A number of Palestinian houses also survived and were used either as residences or for commercial and other purposes.

The surviving structures included concrete houses with sloping or tiled roofs and rectangular doors and windows.

Construction covered part of the former village lands, while other areas remained neglected and became overgrown with pine and Christ's-thorn trees.

Khalidi's description reflects the condition of the site during his field documentation and should not necessarily be interpreted as a comprehensive survey updated to 2026.

Sources

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