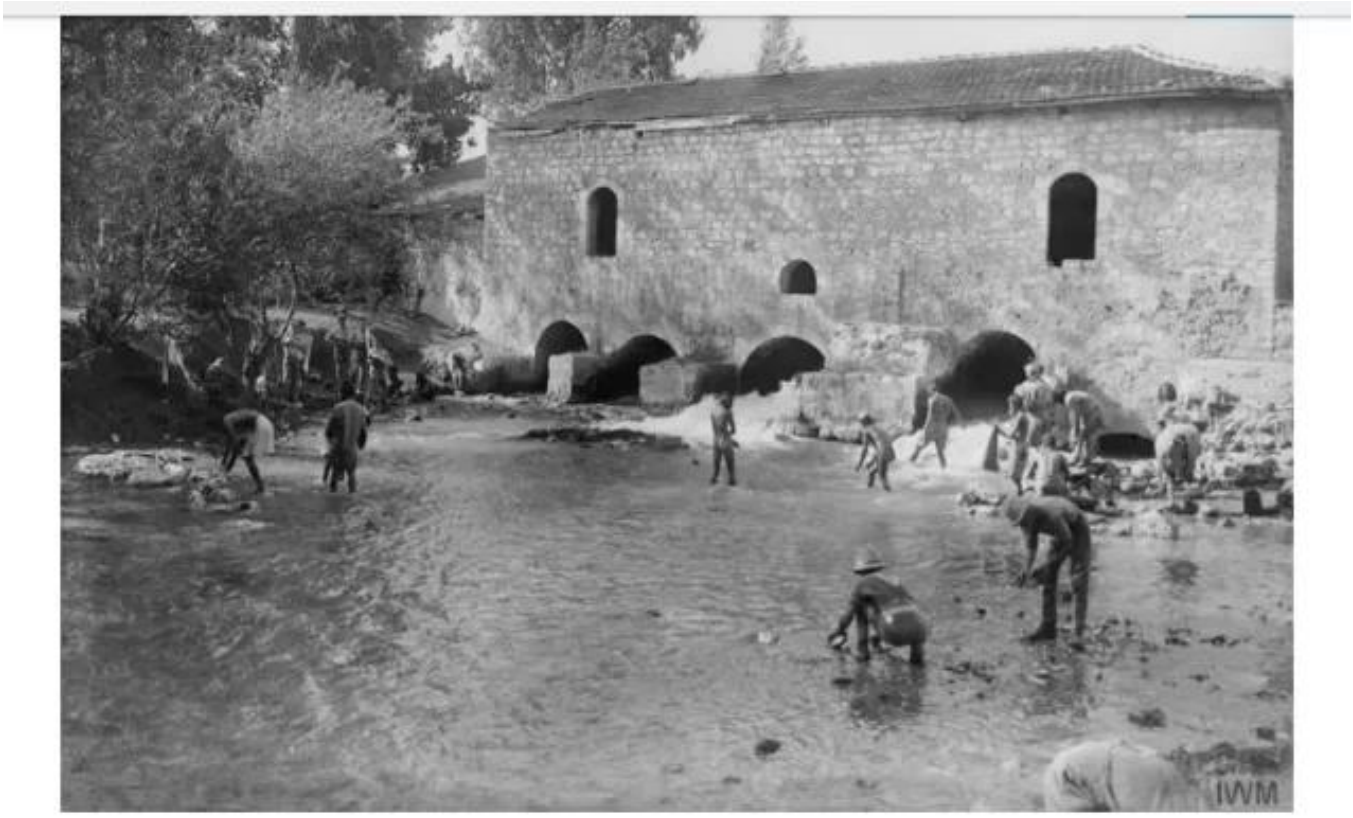
al-Khayriyya



Al-Khayriyya – A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa Subdistrict

Al-Khayriyya was a Palestinian village in the Jaffa Subdistrict, situated approximately 7.5 km east of the city of Jaffa on the central coastal plain, at an average elevation of about 25 meters above sea level.

A network of roads passing through and near the village provided easy access to Jaffa, Lydda, Ramla, and the surrounding Palestinian villages.

Al-Khayriyya was occupied during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. On 29 April 1948, units of the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade attacked and captured the village during Operation Hametz, an offensive aimed at controlling the Palestinian villages east of Jaffa and isolating the city from its hinterland.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from Jaffa	7.5 km east of Jaffa
Elevation	25 m above sea level
Population in 1931	886 – Arab population; the same statistical unit also recorded 28 Jews (total 914)
Number of Houses in 1931	212
Arab population, 1944/45	1,420
Estimated Population in 1948	About 1,647 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total land area	13,672 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The village was exposed to hostile military activity for several months before its occupation, including a night raid in which Zionist forces moved into one of its orchards and blew up a house, according to the newspaper Filastin (12 February 1948); units of the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade, operating from Kefar Azar, then attacked and seized it on 29 April 1948, during Operation Hametz, which was designed to “cleanse the area” and encircle Jaffa.
Final Israeli Control	29 April 1948
Date of occupation	29 April 1948
Military operation	Operation Hametz
Military unit	The Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault by Zionist forces (the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade) in the course of Operation Hametz
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Kefar Azar, established in 1932 on what was traditionally village land; Ramat Pinqas (1952) and Ramat Ef'al (1969), established on village lands north of the village site; the site now lies within the suburbs of the town of Giv'atayim

Location and Surroundings

Al-Khayriyya was built on level ground in the central coastal plain. Roads through and around the village connected its inhabitants with Jaffa, Lydda, Ramla, and neighboring communities.

The lands of Salama lay generally to the west and northwest, Saqiya to the east and southeast, while Yazur and Bayt Dajan lay to the south and southwest. Watercourses separated portions of these village lands.

The al-'Awja River flowed through the broader area to the north on its way toward the Mediterranean, while Wadi al-Musrar formed part of the water system of the surrounding coastal plain.

Name and Earlier History

During the Ottoman period the village was known as **Ibn Baraq**. During the British Mandate, its Palestinian inhabitants renamed it **al-Khayriyya** in order to distinguish it from the Zionist settlement of Bnei Beraq, established approximately 6 km north of the village in 1924.

Khalidi associates the site with an ancient settlement recorded in Assyrian sources as **Banai Berka**. A chronological error appears in some published versions of the village entry, which place Sennacherib in the early eighteenth century BCE. Sennacherib's campaign in Palestine occurred in 701 BCE, in the early seventh century BCE.

In Roman times the site was known as **Beneberak**, while the Crusaders built a fortification known as **Bombrac**.

In 1596, under the name Ibn Baraq, the village belonged to the nahiya of Ramla in the liwa' of Gaza and had an estimated population of about 154. Taxes were paid on wheat, barley, fruit, sesame, goats, beehives, and vineyards.

Population of Al-Khayriyya

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 546 inhabitants: 541 Muslims and 5 Christians.

In the 1931 census, the statistical unit contained 914 inhabitants living in 212 occupied houses. This total was not entirely Arab: the census recorded 881 Muslims and 5 Christians—886 Arabs in total—alongside 28 Jews.

By 1944/45, the official Village Statistics recorded 1,420 Arabs: 1,400 Muslims and 20 Christians.

Palestine Remembered later estimated the population at 1,647 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 10,116 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official British Mandate census counts.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
1596	Approximately 154	Estimate derived from an Ottoman tax register
1922	546	Official census; 541 Muslims and 5 Christians
1931	914 total	Official census: 886 Arabs and 28 Jews
1944/45	1,420 Arabs	Official statistics; 1,400 Muslims and 20 Christians
1948	1,647	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census
1998	10,116 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	212	Occupied houses recorded in the official census
1948	382	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered

Education in Al-Khayriyya

The village had two schools, one for boys and one for girls.

The boys' school was established in 1920 and had an eight-dunum plot attached to it for agricultural training.

The girls' school was established in 1945. By 1946, the two schools enrolled 183 boys and 69 girls.

Khalidi's pre-1992 field survey recorded one of the two school buildings as still standing at the village site.

Land Ownership in Al-Khayriyya

The total village land area in the 1944/45 statistics was 13,672 dunums. Palestine Remembered presents the simplified ownership categories as follows:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	7,182
Transferred to Zionists	5,842
Communal/Public	648
Total	**13,672**

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public: 7,182 dunums were classified as Arab, 5,842 as Jewish, and 648 as public land.

Land Use in 1944/45

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Citrus and bananas	3,359	2,623	0	5,982
Plantations and irrigable land	1,275	122	0	1,397
Cereals	2,355	3,097	40	5,492
Built-up land	26	0	0	26

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Non-cultivable land	167	0	608	775
Total	**7,182**	**5,842**	**648**	**13,672**

Cultivable land totaled 12,871 dunums: 6,989 Arab, 5,842 Jewish, and 40 public dunums.

A commonly reproduced simplified table incorrectly gives 2,395 Arab dunums of cereal land; the detailed PalQuest table gives 2,355. Likewise, the 775 dunums of non-cultivable land consisted of 167 Arab and 608 public dunums rather than belonging entirely to Palestinian private ownership.

Economic Life

Agriculture and livestock raising formed the principal basis of the Palestinian village economy. Citrus cultivation—especially Jaffa oranges—was particularly important, alongside cereals, orchards, and irrigated crops.

In 1944/45, Arab land included 3,359 dunums devoted to citrus and bananas, 2,355 dunums of cereals, and 1,275 dunums of plantations and irrigable land.

Numerous artesian wells supplied irrigation water, while the village's proximity to Jaffa, Lydda, Ramla, and major roads facilitated the marketing of agricultural produce.

Water

Artesian wells were a major water source in al-Khayriyya and were used particularly for the irrigation of citrus groves, orchards, and other cultivated land.

The village landscape was also shaped by Wadi al-Musrar and the wider watercourse system of the central coastal plain.

Military Activity before the Final Occupation

Al-Khayriyya experienced hostile military activity for several months before its final

occupation.

On 15 December 1947, the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* reported that villagers were digging defensive trenches and organizing guards at the entrances to the village in response to attacks on nearby Salama and al-'Abbasiyya.

On 12 February 1948, Zionist forces entered an orchard belonging to al-Khayriyya under cover of darkness and demolished a house with explosives. No casualties were reported in the newspaper account.

Operation Hametz and the Occupation of Al-Khayriyya

The final occupation of al-Khayriyya occurred during **Operation Hametz**, an offensive designed to seize Palestinian villages east of Jaffa and along the railway, isolate Jaffa from its Palestinian hinterland, and tighten the encirclement of the city.

The Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati brigades participated in the operation. On 29 April 1948, Alexandroni units operating from the Kefar Azar area attacked and captured Saqiya and al-Khayriyya.

Khalidi and PalQuest specifically identify **29 April 1948** as the date on which al-Khayriyya was seized by the Alexandroni Brigade.

The Palestine Remembered statistics header gives 25 April as the occupation date, but its detailed Khalidi-derived narrative also states that the village fell on 29 April. The latter date is therefore retained here.

Khalidi cites a Haganah intelligence report claiming that, shortly after their displacement in early May, some of the villagers wished to return to their homes even under what the report described as “Jewish authority.” They were not permitted to return.

Stage	Date	Details
Villagers' defensive preparations	15 December 1947	The Palestinian newspaper Filastin reported that the villagers of al-Khayriyya were digging defensive trenches around the village and manning outposts at its entrances, apparently in response to attacks on the nearby villages of Salama and al-'Abbasiyya.
House blown up in one of the village orchards	12 February 1948 (date of the report)	The newspaper Filastin reported that Zionist forces had moved into an orchard belonging to the village under cover of night and had blown up a house; no casualties were mentioned.
Beginning of the military operation	29 April 1948	The Haganah launched Operation Hametz, which PalQuest dates from 24 April to 13 May 1948, with units from the Alexandroni, Kiryati and Giv'ati Brigades under the command of Dan Epstein, commander of the Alexandroni Brigade, aiming to seize the villages on both sides of the railway linking Jaffa to its Arab hinterland and to isolate the city. Al-Khayriyya was among the villages north of the railway.
Final occupation	29 April 1948	Units of the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade, using Kefar Azar as their base, attacked and captured the villages of Saqiya and al-Khayriyya, one of the cluster of villages east of Jaffa occupied during Operation Hametz, which was designed to “cleanse the area” and encircle Jaffa.
Displaced villagers' wish to return	Early May 1948	A Haganah intelligence report claimed that the people of al-Khayriyya, shortly after their displacement in early May 1948, expressed a wish to return to their homes and to “accept Jewish authority”, according to the Arabic text of the village entry on PalQuest.
Settlement on village lands	1952	The settlement of Ramat Pinqas was established on village lands, north of the village site.
Settlement on village lands	1969	The settlement of Ramat Ef'al was established on village lands, north of the village site.

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Al-Khayriyya

Kefar Azar: Established in 1932 on what Khalidi describes as land traditionally belonging to al-Khayriyya.

Ramat Pinqas: Established in 1952 on village land north of the former site.

Ramat Ef'al: Established in 1969 on al-Khayriyya's lands north of the village site.

Subsequent metropolitan expansion incorporated large areas of al-Khayriyya's land into the urban fabric surrounding Ramat Gan, Giv'atayim, and neighboring localities.

The Hiriya Landfill on Al-Khayriyya's Lands

Parts of al-Khayriyya's lands were later used as a major refuse-disposal area for metropolitan Tel Aviv. The site became known as **Hiriya**, a name derived from al-Khayriyya.

Over several decades, the landfill developed into a large artificial mountain of waste. It was closed in 1998 following major environmental problems, including groundwater pollution, gas emissions, and hazards caused by birds near the airport flight paths.

The landfill and surrounding area were subsequently subjected to a major rehabilitation program and incorporated into the metropolitan environmental project now known as **Ariel Sharon Park**.

The wider landfill area should not be treated as identical with every part of the former village's built-up site. Portions of al-Khayriyya's original Palestinian structures survived elsewhere on the village lands.

Al-Khayriyya Today

According to the field description published by Walid Khalidi in *All That Remains*, several Palestinian houses and one of the village's two schools remained standing.

One abandoned house was surrounded by shrubs and wild vegetation and had a simple form with a rectangular doorway, small side windows, and a flat roof. A two-storey house identified as belonging to Ahmad al-Tibi was being used as a store at the time of Khalidi's survey and had rectangular openings and a gabled roof.

Cypress, fig, Christ's-thorn, and orange trees remained around the site. Part of the surrounding land was cultivated, while buildings occupied other sections.

This description derives from fieldwork conducted before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and should not be treated as direct field verification of every surviving structure in 2026.

Palestine Remembered contains later community documentation, including photographs uploaded in 2025 showing surviving structures associated with the village. Upload dates do not necessarily establish when the photographs were taken, so these materials are best treated as later community documentation rather than a comprehensive current survey.

The part of al-Khayriyya's lands that later became the Hiriya landfill ceased operating as a landfill in 1998 and has since been incorporated into a large environmental rehabilitation and park project known as Ariel Sharon Park.

Sources

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