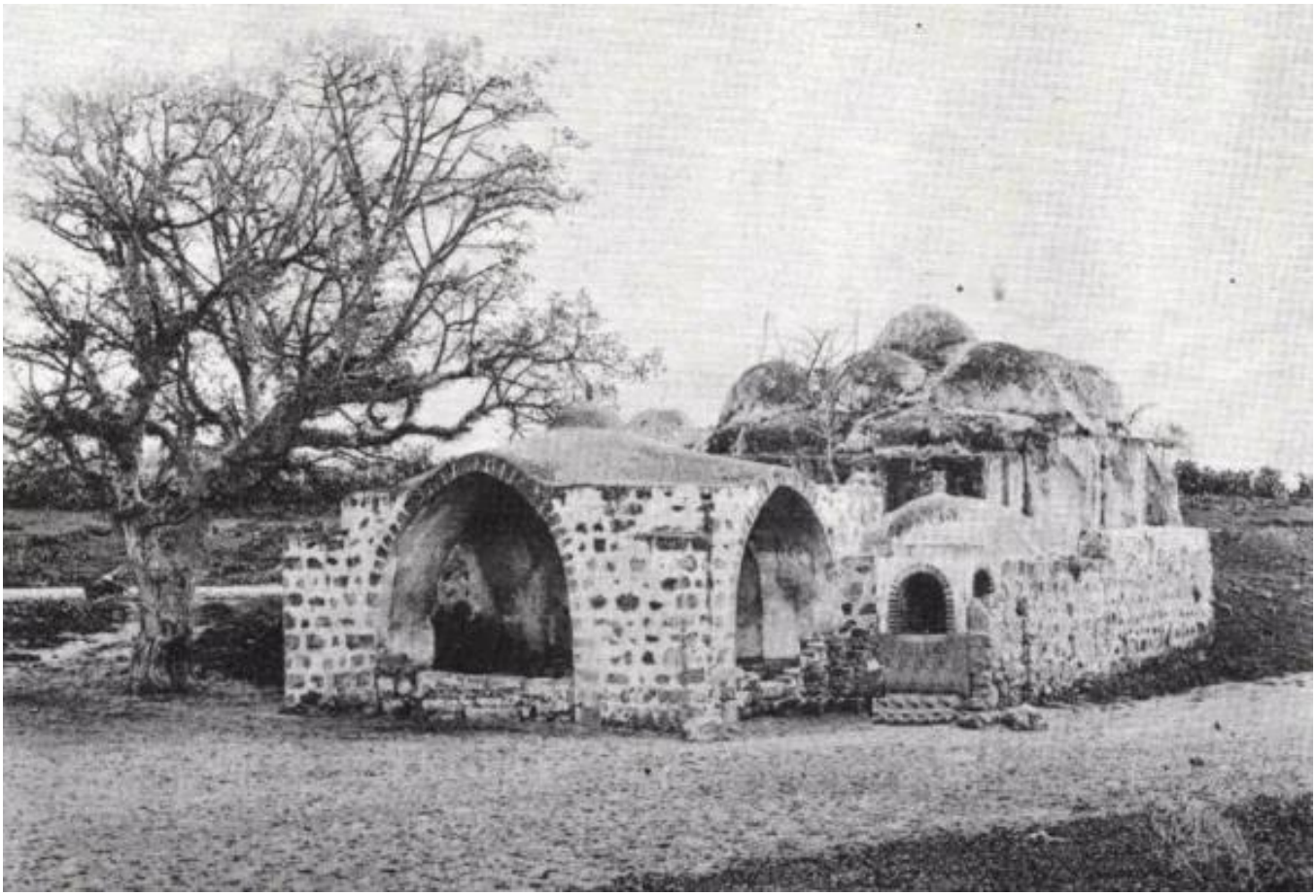
Yazur



Yazur: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa Subdistrict

Yazur was one of the largest and most prosperous Palestinian villages in the Jaffa subdistrict, particularly known for its citrus cultivation. The village was occupied and its inhabitants were displaced during the Nakba, in the course of Operation Hametz, which targeted the Palestinian villages surrounding Jaffa and sought to isolate the city from its hinterland.

Basic Information

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from district center	6 km East of Jaffa
Average Elevation	25 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	2,337 inhabitants - Official Government of Palestine census
Number of Houses in 1931	419 houses - Official Government of Palestine census figure
Population in 1944/1945	4,030 inhabitants - Official Government of Palestine estimate
Estimated Population in 1948	4,675 inhabitants - a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	11,807 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	Operation Hametz Yazur was occupied during Operation Hametz, an offensive conducted by the Haganah to occupy the villages surrounding Jaffa and sever the city’s connections with its Palestinian hinterland. The operation was intended to complete Jaffa’s isolation during the occupation of Palestine in 1948.
Final Israeli Control	30 April-1 May 1948
Military Operation	Operation Hametz
Military Unit	The Givati Brigade within the Haganah forces of Operation Hametz
Cause of Depopulation	Military assault by Zionist troops
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Azor. Parts of Holon and its industrial zone later expanded over village lands.

Location and Area

Yazur was situated on level ground in the central coastal plain, approximately 6 kilometers east of Jaffa. It stood about 25 meters above sea level.

The village was connected to Jaffa and Ramla by the main road linking the two

cities. It was also connected to Jaffa and Lydda by railway. Its location near the transportation routes leading to Jaffa gave Yazur considerable economic and strategic importance.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, Yazur's lands covered a total of 11,807 dunums. Its built-up area covered only 87 dunums; therefore, the latter figure does not represent the village's total land area.

Yazur Through History

Archaeological evidence indicates that the site of Yazur was inhabited during the Chalcolithic period, around the fifth millennium BCE. Two caves at the site contained burials dating from that period.

Yazur was mentioned as "Azuru" in the annals of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. Its name also appeared as "Azor" in the Septuagint. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Muslim and Crusader forces contested control of the village, which changed hands more than once.

The Arab geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi described Yazur as a small town that was the birthplace of several prominent figures during the Fatimid period. The most notable was al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Yazuri, who became a minister in the Fatimid state during the eleventh century.

Ottoman tax records from 1596 listed Yazur as part of the nahiya of Ramla in the liwa of Gaza. Its population was estimated at approximately 275. The villagers paid taxes on wheat, barley, fruit and sesame, in addition to goats and beehives.

Population and Built Environment

In the late nineteenth century, Yazur was described as a village built mainly of adobe brick and surrounded by gardens and wells. It also contained a domed shrine.

Modern Yazur was divided into four quarters, each associated with one of the four clans residing in the village. Houses were constructed from stone or adobe brick mixed with straw. Many were arranged in residential compounds known as ahwash. The houses of each hawsh opened onto a shared courtyard with a single entrance, often marked by an arched gateway.

Population of Yazur

Year	Population	Classification
1596	275	Estimate based on Ottoman tax records
1922	1,284	Official Government of Palestine census
1931	2,337	Official Government of Palestine census
1944/1945	4,030	Official Government of Palestine estimate
1948	4,675	Population estimate, not an official census
1998	28,708	Estimate of refugees descended from the village’s inhabitants, not the population of the site
The 1948 and 1998 figures should not be treated as official census results. Each figure also represents a different population category.		

In 1944/1945, Yazur had 4,010 Muslim and 20 Christian inhabitants, giving a total population of 4,030.

Number of Houses in Yazur

Year	Number of Houses	Classification
1931	419	Official Government of Palestine census figure
1948	838	Published estimate, not an official census figure
The directly documented official figure is 419 houses in 1931.		

Land Ownership

According to the Government of Palestine’s 1944/1945 statistics, Yazur’s lands covered 11,807 dunums. Recorded ownership was distributed as follows:

Land Ownership in Yazur, 1944/1945

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian Arab ownership	9,742
Registered Jewish ownership	1,428
Public land	637
Total	11,807

Economy and Land Use

Agriculture formed the backbone of Yazur’s economy, with citrus fruit serving as its principal crop. The villagers also cultivated cereals and irrigated orchards. Farming depended on both rainfall and water drawn from artesian wells.

During the Second World War, villagers began raising Holstein cattle for milk production. Palestinian local sources state that approximately 140 artesian wells were operating shortly before the Nakba. PalQuest confirms the presence of numerous artesian wells used for irrigation by 1947 but does not provide the same exact total.

Land Use in Yazur, 1944/1945

Land Use	Arab Land	Jewish Land	Public Land	Total
Citrus and bananas	6,272	451	0	6,723
Plantations and irrigable land	1,689	80	0	1,769
Cereals	1,441	864	20	2,325
Built-up area	85	2	0	87
Non-cultivable land	255	33	615	903
Total cultivable land	9,402	1,395	20	10,817
Overall total	9,742	1,428	637	11,807

Palestinian geographical sources state that approximately 30 dunums were

planted with olive trees. This area should be treated as part of the land classified as plantations and should not be added again to the totals in the table.

The original text also stated that dairy production generated approximately 25,000 Palestinian pounds annually and that the village's total annual income reached 140,000 Palestinian pounds. These were presented as estimates without an identified statistical methodology and therefore cannot be treated as official figures.

Education

Yazur had two elementary schools: a boys' school established in 1920 and a girls' school opened in 1933.

The boys' school occupied approximately 27 dunums, most of which were used to teach agricultural work. It also had its own artesian well. In 1947, approximately 430 boys and 160 girls were enrolled in the village's schools.

The figure of 160 girls provided by PalQuest differs from the 106 pupils stated in the original text for the 1947/1948 school year. The PalQuest figure has been retained because it is based on the research published in *All That Remains*, while the disagreement has been explicitly noted.

Archaeological and Religious Sites

Yazur contained the remains of a Crusader castle known as Casel des Plains, or the Castle of the Plains. The sources attribute its construction to Richard the Lionheart in 1191.

The village also contained the remains of a Crusader church that was later rebuilt and used as Yazur's mosque. The mosque, market and coffeehouse formed the center of public life in the village.

Yazur was known for several shrines, the most prominent of which was the shrine

of Imam Ali, a stone structure topped by a cluster of smaller domes surrounding a larger central dome.

Attacks on Yazur Before the Nakba

Yazur was subjected to repeated attacks beginning in December 1947. The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* reported that, on 11 December, a vehicle passed through the village and its occupants threw bombs at a coffeehouse and a barbershop, without causing any deaths.

According to Palestinian historian Arif al-Arif, a Zionist force disguised as British soldiers entered the village on 18 December and threw bombs at a coffeehouse beside the main road, killing six villagers.

Raids continued during January and February 1948 and included the demolition of houses and the shelling of the village with mortars and machine guns.

On 20 February 1948, a Zionist force advanced on Yazur from the west and north under mortar cover. According to the account published by *Filastin* and reproduced by PalQuest, the attackers used tanks and armored vehicles, destroyed an ice factory and two houses, killed one villager and wounded four others.

The Occupation of Yazur and the Displacement of Its Inhabitants

Operation Hametz

Yazur was occupied during Operation Hametz, an offensive conducted by the Haganah to occupy the villages surrounding Jaffa and sever the city’s connections with its Palestinian hinterland. The operation was intended to complete Jaffa’s isolation during the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

The operation targeted Palestinian villages on both sides of the railway connecting

Jaffa with the surrounding region. These included Yazur, Bayt Dajan, al-Safiriyya, Salama, al-Khayriyya, Saqiya, Kafr Ana and al-Abbasiyya.

Participating Brigades

The Alexandroni, Kiryati and Giv‘ati brigades participated in Operation Hametz under the command of Dan Epstein, commander of the Alexandroni Brigade.

According to PalQuest’s study of the operation, the Giv‘ati Brigade conducted the offensive south of the railway from its base at Miqwe Yisrael and occupied Yazur on or shortly after 29 April 1948.

Disagreement Over the Occupation Date

Several accounts cited in PalQuest state that Yazur was occupied on 30 April 1948. The same PalQuest entry reports that Israeli historian Benny Morris gives 1 May 1948 as the date of occupation.

The occupation may therefore be dated cautiously to 30 April–1 May 1948. The first date appears in several accounts, while the second is attributed to Morris exclusively as reproduced by PalQuest. Morris is not used here as a direct source.

Attempt to Defend the Area

Records maintained by Arab Liberation Army commander Fawzi al-Qawuqji, as cited by PalQuest, state that a unit equipped with two field guns was sent to Yazur to shell Tel Aviv and relieve the pressure on Jaffa.

The unit withdrew on 28 April to participate in another battle. Yazur was occupied shortly afterward, along with several other villages in the area.

Displacement and the Fate of the Village

The assault and occupation led to the displacement of Yazur’s Palestinian inhabitants during the Nakba. The principal sources consulted do not identify one destination shared by all the displaced villagers; it would therefore be inaccurate

to claim that every inhabitant took refuge in a particular location.

The British authorities initially objected to the Haganah’s occupation of Yazur because the village stood on a major road. They threatened to shell Haganah positions unless they were evacuated by 5 May. A temporary arrangement was subsequently reached under which the houses overlooking the road were handed to British forces, while the Haganah retained control of the remainder of the village.

After the end of the British Mandate, Yazur was used as an Israeli military headquarters during Operation Dani in July 1948.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Operation Hametz	Not specified precisely	Yazur was occupied during Operation Hametz, an offensive conducted by the Haganah to occupy the villages surrounding Jaffa and sever the city’s connections with its Palestinian hinterland. The operation was intended to complete Jaffa’s isolation during the occupation of Palestine in 1948.
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Settlements Established on Yazur’s Lands

- Miqwe Yisrael was established in 1870 on land described by the sources

as traditionally belonging to Yazur.
- Azor was established in 1948 on the village's lands and later expanded into the urban and industrial area connected to Tel Aviv.

The suburbs of Holon adjoin the village lands. However, the consulted source does not classify Holon itself as a settlement established on Yazur's lands, so it has not been included in the list.

The Village Site After the Nakba

According to the field description published in Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains* and made available through PalQuest, two of Yazur's shrines remained standing. One was a stone structure topped by several smaller domes surrounding a larger central dome.

Several village houses and other structures also remained. Some were used for residential or commercial purposes, while others stood vacant. Modern apartment buildings were constructed at the site, where cypress, fig and sycamore trees, as well as cactuses, continued to grow. Parts of the surrounding land were cultivated.

This description records the condition of the site when the field survey associated with Khalidi's work was conducted. It does not establish that every detail remains unchanged today.

Sources

- Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question — PalQuest: Yazur
- Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question — PalQuest: Operation Hametz
- Institute for Palestine Studies: Yazur Village
- Institute for Palestine Studies: All That Remains, edited by Walid Khalidi
- Palestine Remembered: Yazur, Jaffa Subdistrict
- Palestine Remembered: Village Statistics of 1945