

Bayt Dajan



Subdistrict: Jaffa

Estimated Palestinian population in 1948: approximately 4,454

Occupation and depopulation: Late April 1948; documented estimates range from 25 to 30 April

Military operation: Operation Chametz

Military formation: The Alexandroni Brigade is generally identified with the occupation of Bayt Dajan, although several brigades participated in Operation Chametz

Israeli settlement established over the village site after 1948: Beit Dagan

Israeli settlements established on village land after 1948: Mishmar HaShiv'a, Hemed, and Gannot. Later urban expansion reportedly incorporated additional parts of Bayt Dajan's land into neighbourhoods and industrial areas associated with Nahalat Yehuda, Rishon LeZion, and Holon; the exact cadastral extent of these later developments requires specialised parcel-level verification.

Bayt Dajan was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Jaffa Subdistrict. Its population immediately before the Nakba is estimated at approximately 4,454. The village was occupied, its inhabitants were displaced, and most of its buildings were subsequently demolished.

General Information about Bayt Dajan

Bayt Dajan was located approximately 9 kilometres southeast of Jaffa, on a sandy hill in the central coastal plain. It stood near the intersection of the Jaffa–al–Ramla highway and the coastal road extending south toward Gaza. The Jaffa–Jerusalem railway passed a short distance to the north.

The history of the locality extends into antiquity. Bayt Dajan has been associated with the ancient place-name Beth Dagon. During the Assyrian period, a locality in the area was known as Bit Daganna, while Roman-period sources referred to a settlement identified as Keparadagon. These historical identifications are generally associated with the broader site rather than with uninterrupted occupation of precisely the same built-up area.

By the late nineteenth century, Bayt Dajan was described as a medium-sized village surrounded by olive trees. During the British Mandate, its houses spread across the site and were built from adobe, stone and cement. Most residents were Muslim, although the village also had a Palestinian Christian community. In 1945, the population comprised approximately 3,710 Muslims and 130 Christians.

Boundaries of Bayt Dajan

Bayt Dajan was situated among the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- **North:** [al-Khayriyya](#).
- **Northeast:** [Yazur](#).
- **East, southeast, and south:** the Qabbaniyyat estates and agricultural lands.
- **Southwest:** [Sarafand al-Amar](#).
- **West:** [al-Safiriyya](#).
- **Northwest:** [Saqiya](#).

Population of Bayt Dajan

Bayt Dajan had 1,714 residents in the British Mandate census of 1922. Its population increased to 2,653 in 1931 and to 3,840 in the official statistics of 1945. The population immediately before the village's occupation during the Nakba is estimated at approximately 4,454.

The figure of 27,355 descendants and refugees in 1998 is a demographic projection, not an official census count. Some local accounts give a slightly different estimate of 27,560; estimates therefore vary between sources.

Population of Bayt Dajan

Year	Population
1596	Approximately 633
1922	1,714
1931	2,653
1945	3,840
1948	Approximately 4,454
Estimated refugee population in 1998	Approximately 27,355

The figures for 1596, 1948, and 1998 are historical or demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous modern census counts.

Number of Houses in Bayt Dajan

Year	Number of houses
1931	591
1948	Approximately 992

The 1948 figure is an estimate based on population growth rather than an official house census.

Education in Bayt Dajan

The village had two schools, one for boys and another for girls. The boys' school was founded in 1920 and was allocated approximately 15 dunams of land for practical instruction in agricultural science. It also maintained a library containing about 600 books.

Available educational records report that the two schools enrolled 353 boys and 102 girls during the 1940s. These institutions made Bayt Dajan an important centre of elementary education among the Palestinian villages east of Jaffa.

Economic Life in Bayt Dajan

Agriculture formed the basis of the village economy. The fertile soil and availability of artesian wells supported extensive citrus cultivation and irrigated orchards. In 1944/45, 7,990 dunams of Palestinian-owned land were planted with citrus and bananas, 3,195 dunams were classified as irrigated land or orchards, and 676 dunams were devoted to cereal cultivation.

Bayt Dajan was particularly noted for its citrus groves. Olive cultivation occupied a smaller recorded area of approximately 35 dunams. The reference in the original account to “Crusader remains” being irrigated appears to be a textual corruption and has therefore not been

presented as a historical or agricultural fact.

Land Ownership in Bayt Dajan, 1944/45

Ownership category	Area in dunams*
Palestinian ownership	12,261
Jewish ownership	1,975
Public land	3,091
Total	17,327

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Bayt Dajan, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	7,990	1,078
Irrigated land and orchards	3,195	758
Olive cultivation	35	0
Cereal cultivation	676	83
Built-up area	60	0
Cultivable land	11,861	1,919
Uncultivated land	3,431	56

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Citrus and banana groves were recorded separately from other irrigated plantations in the British Mandate land-use statistics. Olive acreage may overlap with the broader orchard classification and should not be added independently when calculating the total cultivable area.

Religious Shrines in Bayt Dajan

Local accounts identify several religious shrines in Bayt Dajan:

- **The shrine of Ahmad al-Zawi:** The surviving accounts provide no sufficiently documented biographical information about the person to whom it was attributed.
- **The shrine of Saad al-Ansari:** Village tradition associated this shrine with Saad al-Dawla al-Qawasi, a Fatimid commander sent to Palestine by al-Afdal Shahanshah in 1101 to confront the Crusaders. According to this tradition, he was killed after falling from his horse during a battle near Bayt Dajan. This identification is a local historical tradition and cannot be treated as conclusively established.
The mosque containing the shrine was later used as a warehouse and was subsequently demolished.
- **The shrine of Shaykh Uthman:** Little documented information survives about it. Local accounts place it near a brickworks owned by Sabri al-Jibrini until 1948.

Attacks, Occupation, and Depopulation

Bayt Dajan was subjected to a series of armed attacks beginning in January 1948. Palestinian historian Arif al-Arif documented a major dawn raid on 26 February in which attacking forces used mortars, machine guns, and hand grenades. Three villagers were reportedly killed, four were wounded, and a house was demolished. A separate confrontation involving British troops on 19 February reportedly killed two villagers and one British soldier and wounded three other villagers.

The village's definitive occupation is associated with Operation Chametz, which sought to occupy the Palestinian villages east of Jaffa, sever the city's connections with its rural hinterland, and accelerate its isolation and depopulation. Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati formations participated in the wider operation.

The claim that Bayt Dajan was occupied on 14 May 1948 is not supported by the strongest available Palestinian reference works. The village's residents appear to have begun leaving under military pressure around 25 April. Arif al-Arif dated its occupation to 30 April, while other

contemporary reporting placed its capture later. Estimates therefore vary between sources. The most defensible formulation is that Bayt Dajan was depopulated and occupied during the final week of April 1948, in the context of Operation Chametz.

The exact brigade that entered the village is not entirely clear from the permitted sources.

Palestinian village references generally associate its fall with the Alexandroni Brigade, although the operational record shows that Giv'ati formations were responsible for much of the advance south of the railway, where Bayt Dajan was located. The article therefore identifies Alexandroni as the commonly reported formation without presenting that attribution as undisputed.

By June 1948, organised demolition of the village was under way. Most of Bayt Dajan's buildings were destroyed, preventing its displaced Palestinian inhabitants from returning.

Israeli Settlements on Bayt Dajan's Land

- **Beit Dagan:** established over or immediately adjoining the village site in late 1948.
- **Mishmar HaShiv'a:** established on village land in 1949.
 - **Hemed:** established on village land in 1950.
 - **Gannot:** established on village land in 1953.

Other local geographical compilations associate parts of Bayt Dajan's former lands with later expansion in Nahalat Yehuda; the Ramat Eliyahu and Neve Eliyahu neighbourhoods of Rishon LeZion; part of Rishon LeZion's western industrial zone; and the Kiryat Ben-Gurion area of Holon. These later claims concern extensive cadastral boundaries rather than the village's built-up centre. Their precise parcel-level extent could not be conclusively verified in the consulted Palestinian academic sources and should therefore not be presented as an uncontested fact.

Bayt Dajan Today

A small number of Palestinian houses remain standing. Some are deserted, while others have

been occupied or converted into shops, offices, warehouses, and other buildings. They preserve a range of architectural features, including flat and tiled roofs, rectangular plans, arched entrances, and arched windows.

One surviving building was converted into a synagogue. Other structures have been sealed or left amid shrubs and weeds. Cactus plants, cypress trees, fig trees, and date palms grow on the village site, while much of the surrounding agricultural land continues to be cultivated.

Sources

- [Palestine Remembered, “Bayt Dajan—Jaffa”.](#)
- [Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*.](#)
- [British Mandate Village Statistics, reproduced by the Palestine Village Statistics Project.](#)
- [Government of Palestine, *Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922*.](#)