Khirbat Ism Allah

Khirbat Ism Allah – Depopulated Palestinian Village in Jerusalem Subdistrict

Khirbat Ism Allah was a Palestinian village in the Jerusalem subdistrict. It stood approximately 26 kilometers west of Jerusalem at an average elevation of about 300 meters above sea level.

The village occupied the western slope of a hill and consisted of two separate clusters of stone houses. Several caves north of the site were also used as dwellings. A spring west of the village supplied water, and numerous caves

surrounded the locality.

Khirbat Ism Allah had 20 Arab Muslim inhabitants in the official 1944/45 statistics and a registered land area of 568 dunums, all classified as Arab-owned.

Walid Khalidi considers it probable that the Har'el Brigade occupied Khirbat Ism Allah on 17–18 July 1948 during Operation Dani. Palestine Remembered gives 17 July as the specific occupation date.

Key Facts about Khirbat Ism Allah

Field	Information
Name	Khirbat Ism Allah
Subdistrict	Jerusalem
Distance from Jerusalem	Approximately 26 km west
Average elevation	Approximately 300 m above sea level
Population, 1931	18 in 4 houses
Population, 1944/45	20 Arab Muslims
Registered land area	568 dunums
Occupation date	17–18 July 1948; Palestine Remembered gives 17 July
Military operation	Operation Dani
Military unit	Har'el Brigade, according to Khalidi's reconstruction
Cause of depopulation	Military overrun during Operation Dani; no detailed independent account of each family's departure survives in Khalidi's entry
Extent of destruction	Most buildings were destroyed, while several houses, caves, and stone walls survived
Israeli settlements on village land	None documented

The Name Khirbat Ism Allah

Ism Allah literally means “Name of God” in Arabic.

Walid Khalidi explicitly states that the reason for this designation is unknown.

No unsupported religious legend or shrine tradition has therefore been added to explain the name.

Location

Khirbat Ism Allah stood on the western slope of a hill in the western part of the Jerusalem subdistrict.

Secondary roads and dirt tracks connected it with the highways running from Gaza and Bayt Jibrin and with the Jerusalem–Jaffa road.

This placed the hamlet within the network of small localities along secondary approaches to the Jerusalem corridor, an area of considerable military significance in 1948.

Village Layout and Dwellings

The village consisted of two separate clusters of houses on the western slope.

Several nearby caves to the north were also used as dwellings.

The village houses were built of stone, as were the constructed entrances attached to the inhabited caves, turning some natural caves into residential spaces.

Only a few families lived in the hamlet, and all were Muslim.

Population

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1931	18	Official census, living in 4 houses

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1944/45	20	Official Village Statistics; all Arab Muslims
1948	23	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census
1998	143	Later estimate of refugees and descendants reported by Palestine Remembered

The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates and should not be described as figures produced by the British Mandatory census authorities.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	4	Official Census of Palestine figure
1948	Not available	No independently documented house total in the principal sources reviewed

The number of residential spaces may nevertheless have exceeded the conventional house count because several caves were also occupied as dwellings.

Land Ownership

The total registered village land area in 1944/45 was 568 dunums.

Ownership Category	Dunums
Palestinian / Arab	568
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	0
Total	**568**

All registered village land was classified as Arab-owned.

Palestine Remembered contains a typographical inconsistency: its individual ownership rows total 568 dunums, but the displayed overall total is 567. PalQuest

and the underlying 1944/45 statistics give the correct total as 568 dunums.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land Use	Dunums
Cereals	485
Plantations and irrigable land	3
Non-cultivable land	80
Total	**568**

The figures balance exactly: 485 + 3 + 80 = 568 dunums.

PalQuest does not provide a separate built-up acreage for Khirbat Ism Allah, so no estimated built-up figure has been inserted.

Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal economic activity despite the village's very small population.

Cereal cultivation dominated the land-use pattern, with 485 dunums devoted to grain in 1944/45.

A further 3 dunums were irrigated or used for orchards.

The very large cereal acreage relative to the small number of residents reflects the agricultural character of the hamlet and its surrounding lands.

Water and the Village Spring

A spring west of Khirbat Ism Allah supplied water to the villagers.

The spring remained visible and in use in Khalidi's later field description.

Numerous caves also surrounded the site, several of which had formed part of the

residential landscape.

Education and Public Institutions

Khalidi and PalQuest do not document an independent school, mosque, market, or other public institution in Khirbat Ism Allah.

Given that the official population was only 20 in 1944/45, such institutions should not be inferred without direct evidence.

Archaeological Site

The village houses stood at the southern edge of an older archaeological khirba.

The archaeological locality contained wall foundations and a well.

The nineteenth-century Survey of Western Palestine likewise recorded building foundations at the site.

The principal sources do not securely date these remains, so no specific archaeological period has been assigned without specialist evidence.

Operation Dani

Operation Dani began on 9 July 1948 and continued until 18 July.

It was one of the largest offensives launched during the “Ten Days” between the two truces and unfolded in two principal stages.

The first stage, from 9 to 12 July, focused on Lydda, Ramla, and surrounding communities.

The second stage, from 13 to 18 July, pushed eastward toward the Jerusalem corridor and the Ramallah–Latrun road, widening the corridor already opened between the coast and Jerusalem.

PalQuest explicitly lists Khirbat Ism Allah among the localities affected by Operation Dani.

Occupation and Depopulation

Walid Khalidi does not assign an absolutely certain single-day occupation date to Khirbat Ism Allah.

Based on the hamlet's location and the military sequence in the area, he considers it probable that the Har'el Brigade captured it on 17–18 July 1948 together with a chain of villages along a secondary road leading toward Jerusalem.

Palestine Remembered gives 17 July 1948 as the specific occupation date and identifies the Har'el Brigade in the context of Operation Dani.

The most precise formulation is therefore that **Khirbat Ism Allah was occupied on 17–18 July 1948 during the second stage of Operation Dani, probably by the Har'el Brigade, with Palestine Remembered specifying 17 July.**

Khalidi does not provide a separate village-specific expulsion order or a detailed route of departure for the residents, so no such detail has been added without evidence.

Ethnic Cleansing

Palestine Remembered characterizes the final outcome at Khirbat Ism Allah as complete ethnic cleansing.

Khalidi establishes that the village was occupied and depopulated during Operation Dani but does not provide a detailed account of the precise mechanism by which each resident left.

The term “ethnic cleansing” is therefore retained as an attributed characterization used by Palestine Remembered, while the directly established descriptive fact is the disappearance of Khirbat Ism Allah's Palestinian community following the

occupation.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Dani	9 July 1948	The offensive began in the Lydda–Ramla area and the Jerusalem corridor.
First stage	9–12 July 1948	The operation concentrated on Lydda, Ramla, and surrounding villages.
Second stage	13–18 July 1948	Forces pushed eastward toward the Ramallah–Latrun road and the Jerusalem corridor.
Occupation of Khirbat Ism Allah	17–18 July 1948	Khalidi considers capture during this period by the Har'el Brigade probable; Palestine Remembered specifies 17 July.
Depopulation	During the occupation	The Palestinian community disappeared from the hamlet; Khalidi provides no village-specific expulsion order or detailed departure route.
End of Operation Dani	18 July 1948	The operation ended with the close of the Ten Days fighting.
Destruction	Precise date not documented	Most of the built-up hamlet was destroyed, although several houses, caves, and low stone walls survived.

Israeli Settlements and Khirbat Ism Allah's Lands

Khalidi and PalQuest identify no Israeli settlement as having been established directly on Khirbat Ism Allah's village lands.

Settlement	Established	Relationship to Khirbat Ism Allah
Kefar Uriyya / Kfar Uria	1944	Established approximately 1.5 km northwest of the village site, close to but not on Khirbat Ism Allah's land

Kfar Uria should therefore not be described as a settlement established on Khirbat

Ism Allah's lands despite its close proximity to the site.

Khirbat Ism Allah Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, caves in the northern part of the site still showed evidence of their former use as dwellings, including the remains of arched entrances.

In the southern part, several ruined houses remained surrounded by low stone walls.

By the period of Khalidi's documentation, a Jewish shepherd family had settled at the site, renovated one of the houses, and used the enclosed area as a goat pen.

The wider site had become grazing land, while the family continued to draw water from the former village spring to the west.

This account derives from fieldwork undertaken before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and is therefore a documented historical site description rather than comprehensive direct field verification of conditions in 2026.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Khirbat Ism Allah
- PalQuest – Operation Dani
- Palestine Remembered – Khirbat Ism Allah, Jerusalem District
- Walid Khalidi – All That Remains: Khirbat Ism Allah
- Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi