

Umm Kalkha



Umm Kalkha - Depopulated Palestinian Village of the Ramla Subdistrict

Umm Kalkha was a small Palestinian village in the Ramla Subdistrict, approximately 12.5 kilometers south of al-Ramla. It stood on the northern bank of Wadi al-Sarar in the central coastal plain, at an average elevation of about 100 meters above sea level.

The village contained only a small number of mud- and stone-built houses. The main road connecting Gaza with the Ramla-Jerusalem highway passed to its south, while the nearby Wadi al-Sarar railway station connected the area with the railway line between al-Ramla and Jerusalem.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Ramla

Item	Information
Mandate District	Lydda
Distance from al-Ramla	12.5 km south
Average Elevation	Approximately 100 meters
Population in 1931	24
Occupied Houses in 1931	6
Population in 1944/1945	60
Estimated Population in 1948	Approximately 70 – a later estimate, not an official 1948 census
Total Land Area	1,405 dunums
Occupation Date	Uncertain; April or May 1948, with Walid Khalidi regarding Operation Barak as the stronger possibility for final occupation
Military Operation	Operation Nachshon is possible in the early phase; Operation Barak is the stronger possibility for final occupation
Military Unit	Not conclusively established at village level; Giv'ati participated in both possible operational contexts, Har'el in Nachshon, and Negev in Barak
Cause of Displacement	Military occupation and attack within the campaigns around the Jerusalem corridor and southern Ramla; the sources do not provide a detailed village-specific departure narrative
Extent of Destruction	The village no longer survives as an independent Palestinian built-up locality; Yesodot occupies the site
Post-1948 Settlement	Yesodot – 1948

Location

Umm Kalkha stood on flat land in the central coastal plain along the northern bank of Wadi al-Sarar.

The wadi carries seasonal runoff from the Jerusalem hills toward the

Mediterranean, where its lower course is known as Nahr Rubin.

The main road linking Gaza with the Ramla–Jerusalem highway passed south of the village.

The nearby Wadi al-Sarar railway station connected Umm Kalkha with the railway between al-Ramla and Jerusalem, while local dirt tracks linked it with surrounding villages.

Origins of the Modern Village

Walid Khalidi suggests that the modern village of Umm Kalkha was established after 1881.

When the Survey of Western Palestine visited the area in that year, its authors recorded only visible ruins of an older settlement rather than the later inhabited village.

The modern Palestinian locality therefore appears to have developed or expanded during the final decades of Ottoman rule.

Built Environment

Umm Kalkha was very small and had no clearly defined street plan.

Its limited number of houses were built principally of mud and stone, with buildings clustered together and only narrow passages rather than a formal road system.

Population

All of Umm Kalkha's recorded residents were Muslims.

The official 1931 Census of Palestine recorded **24 inhabitants** living in **six occupied houses**.

By 1944/45, the population had risen to **60**.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1931	24	Official Census of Palestine
1944/1945	60	Late-Mandate official statistics
1948	Approximately 70	Later estimate, not an official census conducted in 1948

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded **six occupied houses**.

Some Palestinian databases estimate approximately 17 houses by 1948, but this is a later estimate and not a formal official 1948 housing census.

Land Ownership in 1944/1945

Umm Kalkha had a total land area of **1,405 dunums**.

Total	1,405
Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	1,233
Transferred to Zionists	96
Public	76

The official Mandate statistics use the categories Arab, Jewish, and Public. The terminology above follows the project's standardized presentation while preserving the meaning of the official categories.

Land Use in 1944/1945

Total	1,233	96	76	1,405
Land Use	Palestinian	Transferred to Zionists	Public	Total Dunums
Citrus and Bananas	21	0	0	21

Total	1,233	96	76	1,405
Land Use	Palestinian	Transferred to Zionists	Public	Total Dunums
Plantations and Irrigable Land	93	0	0	93
Cereals	1,119	96	13	1,228
Non-Cultivable	0	0	63	63

Most of the village land was cultivated or cultivable, with cereal production representing the largest agricultural use.

Economic Life

The inhabitants depended primarily on agriculture, cultivating cereals, vegetables, citrus, and olives.

Some agriculture was rain-fed, while artesian wells supplied irrigation for portions of the orchards and vegetable plots.

The land-use figures indicate that farming was the principal economic activity of the village.

Water

The villagers obtained drinking water from a nearby well.

Artesian wells were also used to irrigate some agricultural land and orchards.

Education and Services

Because of its very small population, Umm Kalkha had few public facilities, and the principal sources reviewed do not document an independent village school.

Its proximity to the main roads and Wadi al-Sarar railway station facilitated travel to larger centers in the Ramla region.

Khirbat Umm Kalkha

An archaeological site known as **Khirbat Umm Kalkha** lay near the village.

Its remains included:

- Stone columns.
- Water cisterns.
- Rock-cut tombs.
- Caves.

These remains point to settlement at or near the site long before the establishment of the modern Palestinian village.

The Occupation of Umm Kalkha: Conflicting Chronologies

No single occupation date can be established with complete confidence.

Several Palestinian databases give **7 April 1948** and associate the village with Operation Nachshon.

Walid Khalidi, however, states that both the timing and circumstances remain uncertain and identifies three possibilities:

- Occupation during the first half of April in Operation Nachshon.
- Occupation during smaller follow-up operations from mid-April to early June in the Jerusalem corridor.
- The possibility Khalidi regards as stronger: occupation during Operation Barak in May 1948.

Operation Nachshon

Operation Nachshon lasted from **3 to 15 April 1948** and targeted villages and positions along the road corridor leading toward Jerusalem.

The Har'el and Giv'ati brigades participated at the operation-wide level, and PalQuest lists Umm Kalkha among the affected localities.

Its inclusion in the operational area, however, does not conclusively establish that the village was permanently depopulated on 7 April.

Operation Barak

Walid Khalidi considers **Operation Barak** the stronger possibility for Umm Kalkha's final occupation.

Operation Barak began on 9 May 1948 and targeted villages south and west of Ramla and across the southern sector.

The Giv'ati Brigade formed the principal attacking force, while the Negev Brigade participated from the south.

PalQuest explicitly lists Umm Kalkha among the localities affected by Operation Barak.

Military Unit

The principal sources do not conclusively identify one village-specific attacking unit.

The possibilities depend on the occupation chronology:

- **If Umm Kalkha fell during Operation Nachshon:** the operation involved the Har'el and Giv'ati brigades.
- **If the village fell during Operation Barak, which Khalidi considers more likely:** Giv'ati was the principal brigade, with the Negev Brigade participating in the wider offensive.

Giv'ati is the common formation in both operational contexts, but this does not by itself prove that a particular Giv'ati battalion captured Umm Kalkha.

The most accurate entry is therefore: **military unit not conclusively established; Giv'ati was the most prominent formation across both possible operational contexts.**

Occupation and Displacement Chronology

Stage	Period	Details
Pre-Nakba Village	Until 1948	A very small agricultural village with approximately 60 inhabitants in the final Mandate years.
Beginning of Operation Nachshon	3 April 1948	The offensive began against villages and positions along the Jerusalem road corridor.
Frequently Cited Date	7 April 1948	Several databases use this as Umm Kalkha's occupation date, but Khalidi does not regard it as conclusively established.
End of Operation Nachshon	15 April 1948	Smaller follow-up operations continued afterward in the Jerusalem corridor.
Follow-Up Operations	Mid-April – early June 1948	Additional villages were occupied during these operations, and Umm Kalkha may have fallen during this phase.
Operation Barak	May 1948	Khalidi regards this as the stronger context for the village's final occupation.
Establishment of Yesodot	1948	Yesodot was established on Umm Kalkha land and came to occupy the village site.

Cause of Displacement

The displacement of Umm Kalkha's inhabitants was connected with Zionist military operations targeting the Jerusalem road corridor and villages south of Ramla during the spring of 1948.

Khalidi's account does not provide a detailed village-specific description of whether

the inhabitants left during direct combat, immediately before occupation, or after the attacking forces entered.

The most supportable formulation is therefore **displacement during military attack and occupation associated with Operation Nachshon and subsequent campaigns, with Operation Barak regarded as the stronger possibility for final occupation.**

Extent of Destruction

No Palestinian village survives as an independent built-up locality at the site of Umm Kalkha.

Walid Khalidi states that Yesodot occupies the village site, while other Palestinian sources describe the original village fabric as effectively obliterated.

No documented building-by-building destruction percentage is available, so no unsupported numerical percentage is used.

Yesodot on Umm Kalkha Land

The settlement of **Yesodot** was established in **1948** on the lands of Umm Kalkha.

Walid Khalidi's site description states that the settlement occupies the village site itself.

Umm Kalkha Today

According to the historical site description incorporated into Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*, Yesodot occupies the former site of Umm Kalkha.

The original Palestinian village no longer survives as a distinct built-up settlement.

The surrounding geography of Wadi al-Sarar and the historic railway corridor still helps identify the former village area, but establishing any material remains that may survive today would require a current field survey.

This section relies on published historical descriptions and is not a direct 2026 field verification.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Umm Kalkha](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Nachshon](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Barak](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Umm Kalkha entry from All That Remains](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Umm Kalkha: Population and Land Statistics](#)