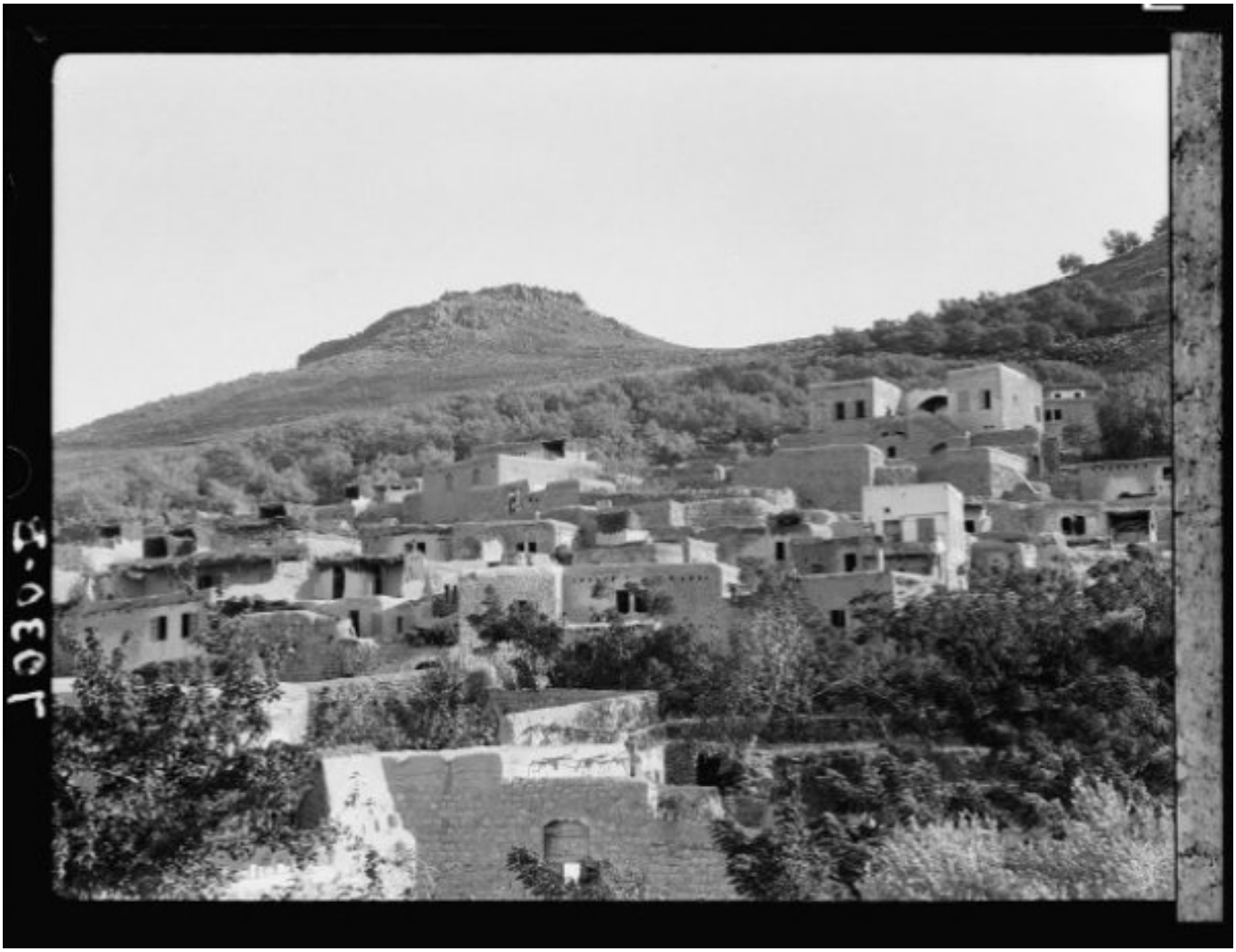
Our Palestine — Depopulated village — Tiberias — 16 July 1948

Hittin



Hittin: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Tiberias District

Hittin was a Palestinian village in the Tiberias District, located about 8 kilometres northwest of the city of Tiberias, at an average elevation of approximately 125 metres above sea level. It was historically renowned for the nearby plain where the Battle of Hittin took place in 1187, when Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi defeated the Crusader armies. During the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948, the inhabitants of Hittin were displaced following the attack on the village in the

context of Operation Dekel in July 1948.

Basic Information

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Tiberias
Distance from district center	8 km Northwest of Tiberias
Average Elevation	125 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	931 inhabitants - Official census
Number of Houses in 1931	190 houses - Official census
Population in 1944/1945	1,190 inhabitants - Government of Palestine statistics
Estimated Population in 1948	About 1,380 inhabitants - a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	22,764 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The first documented direct military involvement of Hittin's inhabitants during the Nakba took place on 9 June 1948, when fighters from the village participated in confronting Israeli forces withdrawing after an unsuccessful attack on the neighbouring village of Lubya. Testimonies collected by Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal indicate that an armored unit accompanied by infantry later advanced toward Hittin from...
Final Israeli Control	16 July 1948
Military Operation	Operation Dekel
Military Unit	The Seventh Brigade
Cause of Depopulation	Military assault by Zionist troops
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Arbel and Kfar Zeitim

Location

Hittin stood on both sides of a small valley at the northern foot of Mount Hittin and overlooked the strategically and commercially important Plain of Hittin.

The plain opened eastward toward the depressions surrounding Lake Tiberias and connected westward with the plains of Lower Galilee through mountain passes. This location made the area an important route for trade caravans and armies over many centuries.

The modern village was roughly triangular in shape, and its streets were relatively straight because of the level terrain on which much of the village was built.

Hittin Through History

Walid Khalidi suggests that Hittin may have stood on the site of the ancient Canaanite town of Siddim, mentioned in ancient sources. The site was later known in the third century BCE as Kfar Hittin, a name associated with wheat cultivation, and during the Roman period as Kfar Hittaya.

It should not be stated with certainty that the modern village represented a direct continuation of a Canaanite settlement called Hittin, since the sources present this connection as a possibility rather than an established fact.

In 1187, the famous Battle of Hittin took place on the surrounding plain. Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi defeated the Crusader armies there, paving the way for the recovery of large parts of Palestine, including Jerusalem later that same year.

Hittin was also associated with a number of scholars and notable figures during the Islamic periods. Arab historians and geographers referred to the village, including Yaqut al-Hamawi and al-Ansari al-Dimashqi, who was known as al-Shaykh al-Hittini.

In 1596, Hittin was a village in the Tiberias subdistrict of the Safad district, with a population of approximately 605. Its inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, olives, goats, beehives, and other products.

By the late nineteenth century, Hittin was described as a stone-built village surrounded by fruit and olive trees, with an estimated population of about 400.

Architecture and Public Facilities

The centre of the village lay in its northwestern section and contained a small market, an elementary school, and a mosque. According to the principal sources reviewed, all of Hittin's inhabitants were Muslims.

The village elementary school was established around 1897 during the Ottoman period.

The shrine of the Prophet Shu'ayb was among the most important religious landmarks near the village. It stood on the southwestern outskirts of Hittin and held particular religious significance for members of the Druze community, who visited it annually.

The shrine included rooms for visitors and a prayer area, and a spring was located nearby.

Population

The population of Hittin was 889 in the 1922 census and increased to 931 in the 1931 census.

In the 1944/1945 Village Statistics, the population stood at 1,190.

The figure of approximately 1,380 inhabitants for 1948, published by Palestine Remembered, is a later estimate rather than an official Government of Palestine census. The same applies to the estimate of 8,477 refugees and descendants in 1998.

Population of Hittin

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	605	Historical figure based on Ottoman records
Late nineteenth century	About 400	Historical estimate
1922	889	Official census
1931	931	Official census
1944/1945	1,190	Government of Palestine statistics
1948	About 1,380	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered
1998	8,477	Estimate of refugees and their descendants
The figures for 1948 and 1998 are estimates and are not official British Mandate censuses.		

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded approximately 190 houses in Hittin. The figure of 281 houses for 1948, published by Palestine Remembered, is a later estimate.

Number of Houses in Hittin

Year	Number of Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	190	Official census
1948	About 281	Later estimate

Land of Hittin

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, the total land area of Hittin amounted to 22,764 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 22,086 dunams, Jewish ownership to 147 dunams, while 531 dunams were classified as public land.

Total	22,764
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	22,086
Jewish ownership	147
Public land	531

Agriculture and Economic Life

Agriculture formed the basis of Hittin's economy. Fertile soil, abundant rainfall, groundwater, springs, and wells contributed to a prosperous agricultural economy.

The villagers cultivated cereals, olives, and fruit trees and also raised livestock.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, a total of 10,462 dunams were devoted to cereals, including 10,253 dunams of Arab-owned land, 23 dunams of Jewish-owned land, and 186 dunams of public land.

A total of 1,964 dunams were irrigated or used for plantations, including 1,936 Arab-owned dunams and 28 Jewish-owned dunams.

Palestine Remembered also reports approximately 200 dunams planted with olive trees. This figure has not been added as a separate category in the table below because the official PalQuest land-use table does not list olives separately within the 1944/1945 classification.

Total	22,086	147	531	22,764
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	10,253	23	186	10,462
Irrigated and plantation land	1,936	28	0	1,964
Built-up area	70	0	0	70
Uncultivable land	9,827	96	345	10,268

Archaeology and Historical Landmarks

Hittin was built over the remains of an older settlement, and evidence of earlier habitation was found throughout the village and its surroundings.

Nearby archaeological sites included Khirbat al-'Ayka, where Palestine Remembered records piles of stones, building foundations, a tower, and a cistern.

The Horns of Hittin and the Plain of Hittin are among the most important historical landmarks associated with the village because of the Battle of Hittin in 1187.

Claims that the village mosque was directly ordered to be built by Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab or later restored by Salah al-Din have not been presented as established facts because sufficient documentation for these accounts was not found in the principal sources reviewed.

The Nakba and the Defense of Hittin

The first documented direct military involvement of Hittin's inhabitants during the Nakba took place on 9 June 1948, when fighters from the village participated in confronting Israeli forces withdrawing after an unsuccessful attack on the neighbouring village of Lubya.

Testimonies collected by Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal indicate that an armored unit accompanied by infantry later advanced toward Hittin from the direction of Mitzpa. The defenders positioned themselves on the Horns of Hittin and succeeded in repelling the attack after several hours of fighting.

Operation Dekel and the Occupation of Hittin

The Military Operation

The final assault on Hittin took place in the context of Operation Dekel, which

began on 8 July 1948 and continued until 18 July. The operation was aimed at taking control of large areas of Lower Galilee.

The Seventh, Golani, and Carmeli brigades participated in Operation Dekel as a whole. However, the material specifically concerning Hittin associates the direct attack on the village with the Seventh Brigade, also known as the Sheva Brigade.

The Military Unit

Units of the Seventh Brigade advanced toward Hittin after the end of the First Truce. Following the fall of Nazareth on 16 July, approximately 25 to 30 soldiers of the Arab Liberation Army stationed in Hittin began withdrawing from their positions.

Date of Displacement and Occupation

The sources differ slightly regarding the date of Hittin's occupation. Palestine Remembered records 16 July 1948 as the date of occupation.

Walid Khalidi's account and testimonies from villagers reproduced by PalQuest indicate that most inhabitants left during the night of 16–17 July, following the fall of Nazareth, and that the remaining defenders on the Horns of Hittin withdrew when armored forces advanced toward the village.

Based on this sequence, it is more accurate to state that the displacement and military occupation of Hittin occurred between 16 and 17 July 1948. Palestine Remembered records 16 July as the date of occupation, while the more detailed account suggests that complete military control followed shortly afterward.

Fate of the Population

Most of Hittin's inhabitants left during the night of 16–17 July 1948 and initially sought refuge in the village of Sallama, located between Dayr Hanna and al-Maghar.

After the occupation, a number of men from Hittin attempted to return to assess the possibility of recovering the village, but Israeli forces fired on them. Some villagers also remained on the outskirts for approximately a month in the hope of returning to their homes before eventually moving toward Lebanon.

The Palestinian community of Hittin was completely displaced, and its inhabitants were not permitted to return and re-establish their village.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
The Military Operation	8 July 1948	The final assault on Hittin took place in the context of Operation Dekel, which began on 8 July 1948 and continued until 18 July. The operation was aimed at taking control of large areas of Lower Galilee.
Date of Displacement and Occupation	16 July 1948	The sources differ slightly regarding the date of Hittin's occupation. Palestine Remembered records 16 July 1948 as the date of occupation.

Israeli Settlements Established on the Lands of Hittin

Arbel

The settlement of Arbel was established in 1949 north of the village site on lands belonging to Hittin.

Kfar Zeitim

Kfar Zeitim was established in 1950 northeast of the village site, also on lands belonging to Hittin.

Nearby Settlements Not Established on Village Lands

Kfar Hittim, established in 1936, and Mitzpa, established in 1908, are located near Hittin. Walid Khalidi, however, states that neither was established on the lands of the village itself.

Settlements Associated with the Lands of Hittin

Name	Year Established	Relationship to Hittin's Lands
Arbel	1949	Established on the lands of Hittin
Kfar Zeitim	1950	Established on the lands of Hittin
Kfar Hittim	1936	Near the village but not on Hittin's lands according to Walid Khalidi
Mitzpa	1908	Near the village but not on Hittin's lands according to Walid Khalidi

The Site of Hittin After the Nakba

According to the field documentation published by Walid Khalidi, the village site became overgrown with grass, while piles of stones were scattered throughout the area. Vegetation also grew in the shallow watercourses crossing the site.

The village mosque remained standing but was abandoned. Its minaret was still intact at the time of Khalidi's documentation, although some of its arches were deteriorating.

Mulberry, fig, and eucalyptus trees, as well as cactus plants, grew around the site. The surrounding plain was used for agriculture, while the hilly lands were used for grazing.

The shrine of the Prophet Shu'ayb remains on the slope of a nearby hill and continues to hold particular religious significance for the Druze community.

This description is based primarily on the field documentation used by Walid Khalidi and should not necessarily be interpreted as a comprehensive field survey of the site in 2026.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Hittin.
- PalQuest: Operation Dekel.
- Palestine Remembered: Hittin, Tiberias District.
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- Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1978, as cited by Walid Khalidi in accounts of the defense of Hittin and the displacement of its inhabitants.
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics, 1945*.
- Palestine censuses of 1922 and 1931.


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