

Masil al-Jizl



Masil al-Jizl / Arab al-Zinati - Depopulated Palestinian Village of Baysan

Masil al-Jizl, also known as 'Arab al-Zinati' and 'Arab Masil al-Jizl', was a Palestinian village in the Baysan Subdistrict. It originated with the settlement of members of the 'Arab al-Zinati Bedouin tribe along the western edge of the Jordan Valley.

The village stood on level ground approximately 6 kilometers southeast of Baysan and about 250 meters below sea level. It overlooked the Jordan Valley and Jordan River to the east and was surrounded by springs, particularly toward the western edge of the valley.

The official 1922 census recorded 64 inhabitants, while the 1931 census recorded 197 residents living in 47 houses. In the 1944/45 statistics, Masil al-Jizl itself had 100 Palestinian inhabitants. The combined statistical unit also included the 180 Jewish residents of Kefar Ruppin, and these two populations should not be merged when describing the Palestinian village.

Basic Information

Field	Information
Name	Masil al-Jizl
Arabic name	مَسِيل الْجِزْل
Alternative names	'Arab al-Zinati; 'Arab Masil al-Jizl
Subdistrict	Baysan
Location	Southeast of Baysan on the western edge of the Jordan Valley
Distance from Baysan	Approximately 6 km
Average elevation	Approximately 250 m below sea level
Palestine Grid	202/207
Population in 1922	64, all Muslims
Population in 1931	197, all Muslims
Houses in 1931	47
Palestinian population in 1944/45	100; the combined statistical unit also included 180 Jewish residents of Kefar Ruppin
1948 population estimate	116 – later estimate, not an official census
Probable depopulation date	30–31 May 1948; Palestinian sources differ by one day
Military context	Continued Golani control of the Baysan Valley after the formal end of Operation Gideon
Military unit	Golani Brigade – probable and strongly supported; no village-specific battalion is documented

Field	Information
Cause of depopulation	Probable expulsion toward Transjordan during the military consolidation of the Jordan Valley; exact village-level circumstances remain undocumented
Pre-1948 settlement	Kefar Ruppin, founded in 1938 on land traditionally regarded as belonging to the village
Post-1948 settlement	No new settlement is identified by Khalidi as having been founded directly on the former village site after 1948

'Arab al-Zinati and the Formation of the Village

Masil al-Jizl was founded by members of the 'Arab al-Zinati Bedouin tribe, which explains the alternative names 'Arab al-Zinati and 'Arab Masil al-Jizl.

Some houses were scattered around the springs from which the inhabitants drew water, while others stood along the roads connecting the village with Baysan and neighboring communities.

Most houses were constructed of adobe and cane, reflecting both the Jordan Valley environment and the semi-sedentary origins of the community.

Location and Geography

The village occupied level terrain overlooking a wide open area to the east, beyond which lay the Jordan Valley and the Jordan River.

Two Jordan River fords, Makhadat al-Turaykhim and Makhadat al-Saghir, provided important crossings toward the eastern side of the valley and Transjordan.

A secondary road connected Masil al-Jizl with Baysan, while other tracks led to the main road between Baysan and Transjordan.

Population

Year	Population	Status
1922	64	Official census; 31 males and 33 females, all Muslims
1931	197	Official census; all Muslims
1944/45	100 Palestinians	Palestinian population within the combined statistical unit; Kefar Ruppin added 180 Jewish residents
1948	116	Later estimate, not an official census
1998	712	Later estimate of refugees and descendants

The figure of 280 for 1945 should not be presented as the population of Palestinian Masil al-Jizl. It represents 100 Palestinian inhabitants together with 180 Jewish residents of Kefar Ruppin in the combined statistical unit.

Number of Houses

The official 1931 census recorded 47 occupied houses.

A later Palestine Remembered table repeats 47 for 1948, but this is not a new official house census and is therefore not treated as an official 1948 figure.

Land Ownership, 1944/45

The 1945 land table requires particular caution because PalQuest explicitly states that the statistical unit includes Kefar Ruppin.

Total	5,873
Ownership Category in the Combined Statistical Unit	Dunums
Palestinian	976
Transferred to Zionists / Jewish category in the original table	2,222
Public	2,675

The original Government of Palestine categories were Arab, Jewish, and Public.

The total of 5,873 dunums should not be described simply as privately owned Palestinian Masil al-Jizl land. The table combines the Palestinian village, Kefar Ruppin, and public land within one statistical unit.

Land Use - Palestinian Component

The Palestinian ownership component can be separated clearly and totals 976 dunums:

Total	976
Land Use	Palestinian Dunums
Cereals	702
Plantations and irrigable land	252
Non-cultivable land	22

The figures balance exactly: $702 + 252 + 22 = 976$ dunums.

No separate built-up acreage is recorded in the Arab column. The 40 built-up dunums in the combined unit are recorded in the Jewish column associated with Kefar Ruppin.

A Statistical Error in Secondary Tables

A Palestine Remembered summary table assigns 1,149 dunums of cereals to the Arab category. This appears to combine 702 Arab dunums with 447 public dunums.

The same summary assigns 2,250 non-arable dunums to the Arab category, apparently combining 22 Arab dunums with 2,228 public dunums.

This article therefore follows the more detailed PalQuest breakdown and keeps Palestinian, Jewish, and Public categories separate.

Economy and Agriculture

The villagers relied primarily on agriculture, particularly cereals, vegetables, and irrigated cultivation.

The abundance of springs supported vegetable plots and orchards. In 1944/45, 702 Palestinian dunums were devoted to cereals and 252 to plantations or irrigable land.

South of the village was a narrow strip of uncultivated land running parallel to the Jordan River and marked by rows of palm trees.

Water

Water was central to the settlement pattern of Masil al-Jizl. Several houses were built close to springs used for domestic consumption and agriculture.

The local landscape also included Wadi al-Shaykh Muhammad, Masil al-Jizl itself, and the nearby Jordan River.

Later Palestinian community documentation from 2023 records 'Ayn al-Masil, also known locally as 'Ayn al-Shaykh Samad, as a continuing water feature in the area.

Education and Services

No independently documented school, pupil enrollment, or teacher totals were located for Masil al-Jizl in the principal sources consulted.

No school, clinic, or administrative institution is therefore assumed without direct documentary evidence.

Archaeology and Religious Remains

Khalidi records at least three archaeological sites surrounding Masil al-Jizl: Tall al-Qitaf, Khirbat al-Hajj Mahmud, and Tall al-Shaykh Dawud.

Pottery fragments, flint artifacts, and building foundations were found in these locations.

In 1929, remains of a small mosque were discovered near the village at Tall al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Qabu.

This archaeological mosque remain should not automatically be interpreted as evidence for a functioning village mosque immediately before 1948 without additional documentation.

Operation Gideon

Operation Gideon was conducted by the Golani Brigade in the Baysan Valley from 10 to 15 May 1948.

It resulted in the capture of Baysan and several surrounding Palestinian communities and contributed to the large-scale depopulation of the valley.

However, if Masil al-Jizl was depopulated on 30–31 May, its final occupation cannot chronologically have taken place during Operation Gideon itself.

Occupation and Depopulation in Late May 1948

Walid Khalidi states explicitly that specific information concerning the occupation of Masil al-Jizl is unavailable.

He considers it reasonable to assume that the village was occupied at the same time as other communities along the Jordan River in the Baysan area, most of which were overrun by the Golani Brigade in late May.

The Palestine Land Society register gives 30 May 1948, while Palestine Remembered and Palestinian official reference material give 31 May.

This article therefore uses **30–31 May 1948** as the most defensible documented period rather than treating either date as conclusively established.

Was Masil al-Jizl Occupied during Operation Gideon?

Some secondary sources assign Operation Gideon to Masil al-Jizl while also dating the village's depopulation to 31 May.

This creates a chronological contradiction because Operation Gideon formally ended on 15 May.

The more accurate formulation is that Masil al-Jizl was depopulated **in the aftermath of Operation Gideon, during the Golani Brigade's continued consolidation of control over the Baysan and Jordan Valley region in late May.**

Military Unit

The Golani Brigade is the strongest documented military attribution for Masil al-Jizl.

Khalidi connects the village's likely occupation with Golani's late-May advance through communities along the Jordan River.

No specific battalion is independently identified as having entered Masil al-Jizl.

Possible Irgun participation concerns Operation Gideon at the broader operational level and should not be transferred to Masil al-Jizl without village-specific evidence.

Cause of Depopulation

Palestine Remembered classifies the cause as expulsion by Zionist forces.

Khalidi is more cautious, writing that the villagers may have been expelled toward Transjordan as occurred with other inhabitants of the area.

Expulsion toward Transjordan is therefore the strongest available interpretation, but the precise village-level circumstances of how the inhabitants were removed

are not independently documented.

Destruction

The Palestinian built environment of Masil al-Jizl subsequently disappeared.

Khalidi does not provide an exact date for demolition, so destruction should not automatically be assigned to 30 or 31 May.

By the time of later fieldwork, fish ponds and warehouses belonging to Kefar Ruppín covered part of the former village site.

Ethnic Cleansing in Source Classification

Palestine Remembered uses the classification “complete ethnic cleansing” for Masil al-Jizl. The term is retained here only as an attributed source classification.

The more specifically documented sequence consists of the Golani Brigade's consolidation of the Baysan Valley, the villagers' probable expulsion toward Transjordan in late May 1948, the absence of a permanent collective return, and the later use of the village site by Kefar Ruppín.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Date	Event
10 May 1948	Operation Gideon begins under the Golani Brigade in the Baysan Valley.
12 May 1948	Baysan falls during the operation.
15 May 1948	Operation Gideon formally ends.
Second half of May 1948	Golani forces continue consolidating control over Palestinian communities in the Baysan and Jordan River area.
30 May 1948	Date listed by the Palestine Land Society register for Masil al-Jizl's depopulation.

Date	Event
31 May 1948	Date used by Palestine Remembered and Palestinian official reference material.
Late May 1948	Khalidi considers Golani the likely occupying force and suggests that the inhabitants may have been expelled toward Transjordan.
After depopulation	The village structures disappear and part of the site becomes occupied by Kefar Ruppin fish ponds and warehouses.

Israeli Settlements on Masil al-Jizl's Lands

Kefar Ruppin was established in 1938 north of Masil al-Jizl, before the Nakba.

Khalidi states that it was established on land traditionally considered part of the village lands.

Kefar Ruppin should therefore be classified as a pre-1948 Zionist settlement on traditionally recognized Masil al-Jizl land, rather than as a post-1948 settlement founded after the village was depopulated.

Khalidi does not identify a new Israeli settlement founded specifically on the village site after 1948.

Masil al-Jizl Today

According to the field description used by Walid Khalidi before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992, fish ponds and warehouses belonging to Kibbutz Kefar Ruppin partly covered the former village site.

The waters of Masil al-Jizl continued to flow through the kibbutz, preserving an element of the village's historical water landscape despite the disappearance of its Palestinian built environment.

Palestine Remembered contains later Palestinian community documentation, including 2023 visits to 'Ayn al-Masil / 'Ayn al-Shaykh Samad and other water and

landscape features around the former village.

Such recent material is useful community documentation but is not a comprehensive archaeological or cadastral survey. Khalidi's field description likewise represents historical documentation from before 1992 rather than a complete direct survey of the site in 2026.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Masil al-Jizl](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Gideon and its chronology](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Masil al-Jizl / 'Arab al-Zinati](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Masil al-Jizl entry from Walid Khalidi's All That Remains](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922: Mesil al-Jezel](#)
- [Palestine Land Society – Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine](#)
- [Palestine Encyclopedia – Masil al-Jizl](#)
- [Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – Masil al-Jizl / 'Arab al-Zinati](#)
- [WAFA – Palestinian localities depopulated in 1948](#)