Bayt Tima



Bayt Tima: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Gaza District

Bayt Tima was a Palestinian village in the Gaza District, located approximately 21 km northeast of Gaza city on flat terrain in the southern coastal plain, at an average elevation of about 75 metres above sea level. Its inhabitants were displaced during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. The village was most probably occupied by Israeli occupation forces on 18–19 October 1948 during the early stages of Operation Yoav.

Location of Bayt Tima

Bayt Tima stood on flat terrain in the southern coastal plain in an area rich in archaeological remains.

A secondary road connected the village with the main coastal highway a short distance to the west, providing access to Gaza and the town of al-Majdal. Local roads also connected Bayt Tima with neighbouring villages, including Kawkaba, Hulayqat, and al-Jiyya.

The village was approximately 21 km northeast of Gaza city and stood at an average elevation of about 75 metres above sea level.

Bayt Tima during the Ottoman Period

In 1596, Bayt Tima was a village in the nahiya of Gaza within the liwa of Gaza, with an estimated population of approximately 693.

The inhabitants paid taxes on crops and products including wheat, barley, fruit, almonds, sesame, goats, and beehives.

Architecture and Services in Bayt Tima

In the late nineteenth century, Bayt Tima was described as a moderately sized village containing two pools, several shrines, and two adjoining patches of gardens.

During the British Mandate period, the village had its own shops and mosque. Most houses were constructed of mud and adobe and were grouped into compact blocks separated by streets and open spaces. The largest cluster of houses occupied the centre of the village.

Most of Bayt Tima's inhabitants were Muslim.

Education in Bayt Tima

Bayt Tima shared an elementary school with the neighbouring villages of Kawkaba and Hulayqat. The school was built in 1946.

Palestine Remembered states that the school was for boys and enrolled 136 pupils in 1946, taught by three teachers. Khalidi's PalQuest entry confirms the establishment of the shared school but does not provide those detailed enrolment and staffing figures.

Economic Life in Bayt Tima

The inhabitants relied primarily on rainfed agriculture. They cultivated cereals, vegetables, and fruit, particularly figs, apricots, and almonds.

According to the 1944/45 statistics, 10,444 dunums were devoted to cereals, while 197 dunums were irrigated or used for plantations.

Land Ownership in Bayt Tima

The total land area of Bayt Tima was 11,032 dunums according to the 1944/45 statistics.

Total	**11,032**
Statistical category	**Area in dunums**
Arab	10,753
Jewish	0
Public	279

Palestine Remembered presents the corresponding Arabic categories as 10,753 Palestinian dunums, zero dunums “transferred to Zionists,” and 279 dunums of communal land.

Land Use in Bayt Tima, 1944/45

Total	10,753	279	11,032
Land use	**Arab**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	10,444	0	10,444
Plantations and irrigable land	197	0	197
Built-up area	60	0	60
Non-cultivable land	52	279	331

A total of 10,641 dunums was cultivated or cultivable, representing approximately 96 percent of the village lands. Built-up and non-cultivable areas together amounted to 391 dunums.

Population of Bayt Tima

Population of Bayt Tima in selected years

Year	Population	Nature of figure
1596	693	Estimate derived from Ottoman tax records
1922	606	Official British Mandate census
1931	762	Official British Mandate census
1944/45	1,060	Official statistics
1948	1,230	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
Estimated refugees in 1998	7,551	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
Official Mandate census and statistical figures should be distinguished from the later estimates for 1948 and 1998.		

Number of Houses in Bayt Tima

Number of houses in Bayt Tima

Year	Number of houses	Nature of figure
1931	157	Official census figure
1948	253	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
The 1948 figure is a later estimate rather than an official British Mandate census figure.		

Archaeological Remains in Bayt Tima

Bayt Tima stood in an area rich in archaeological remains. In the cemetery south of the village, a badly worn mosaic pavement was discovered, suggesting a Roman or Byzantine presence at the site.

Architectural elements from earlier periods had also been reused in the construction of the village mosque, indicating a long history of settlement and building in the area.

Attacks on Bayt Tima before its Final Occupation

Bayt Tima was subjected to several attacks and incursions before its final occupation. On 9 February 1948, the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* reported a Zionist attempt to infiltrate the village. The defenders repelled the attempt during an exchange of fire lasting approximately thirty minutes.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest also reproduce an account, attributed to Israeli sources through the Associated Press, claiming that Israeli occupation forces entered Bayt Tima on 1 June 1948. If such an occupation occurred, it was brief and did not constitute the village's final capture.

An account by Egyptian writer Muhammad Abd al-Mun'im states that by the end of the first truce, in early July 1948, Bayt Tima remained in the hands of Palestinian fighters. When Israeli occupation forces moved toward the village and occupied overlooking hills, its defenders were reinforced by a Saudi company serving on the southern front.

The village remained in Arab hands throughout the second truce, confirming that the earlier incursions did not result in permanent occupation.

Occupation and Depopulation of Bayt Tima during the Nakba

In mid-October 1948, Bayt Tima and the surrounding area were subjected to aerial and artillery bombardment during the opening stages of Operation Yoav. The attacks caused large numbers of residents and refugees in the area to flee.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest place the final occupation of the village on 18–19 October 1948, during the early stages of Operation Yoav. The *New York Times* later cited an Israeli military communiqué issued on 20 October announcing that Bayt Tima had fallen together with Kawkaba and Hulayqat.

Khalidi's village entry considers it likely that the Giv'ati Brigade captured Bayt Tima. Palestine Remembered gives 18 October 1948 as the specific occupation date and identifies the Giv'ati Brigade as the attacking unit and the Egyptian Army as the defending force.

Bayt Tima was among the villages affected by Operation Yoav, which lasted from 15 October to 4 November 1948. The operation involved the Giv'ati, Yiftach, Negev, and Har'el brigades against Egyptian forces on the southern front.

- Most probable date of final occupation: 18–19 October 1948.
- Palestine Remembered date: 18 October 1948.
- Military operation: Operation Yoav.
- Probable attacking unit: Giv'ati Brigade.
- Defending force: Palestine Remembered identifies the Egyptian Army, while Palestinian fighters and a Saudi company are documented as defending the area during an earlier phase.
- Fate of the inhabitants: bombardment, military assault, and occupation resulted in the displacement of the village's population during the Nakba.
- Fate of the village: the village was subsequently destroyed, leaving

rubble at the site.

Palestine Remembered states in its summary data that a massacre occurred at Bayt Tima. Khalidi's dedicated PalQuest entry, however, does not provide independently documented details of a specific massacre or a verified casualty figure. This article therefore does not present a massacre or casualty number as an established fact.

Settlements Established on the Lands of Bayt Tima

According to Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, no Israeli settlements were established on the lands of Bayt Tima itself.

Bayt Tima Today

According to the field description published by Walid Khalidi in *All That Remains*, sycamore and carob trees grew around the rubble of the former village, while the surrounding land was being used for agriculture.

This description derives from field research published in Khalidi's book in 1992. Palestine Remembered also contains later photographs of the village site, including material added in 2015, but these contributions do not constitute a comprehensive independent field survey.

The approved sources used here therefore do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive and independent contemporary field verification of the condition of every part of the Bayt Tima site in 2026.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Bayt Tima
- PalQuest – Operation Yoav
- Palestine Remembered – Bayt Tima, Gaza District
- Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi