

Al-Dawayima



Al-Dawayima was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Hebron Subdistrict. It lay west of Hebron and possessed 60,585 dunams of land. Published references give its distance from Hebron as either 18 or 24 kilometres; PalQuest's village profile records 18 kilometres, while its dedicated historical study of the massacre gives 24 kilometres.

Its lands bordered those of Idna, Dura, al-Qubayba, Bayt Jibrin, and Arab al-Jabbarat.

The village had a star-shaped layout and extended along the summit of a broad rocky ridge on the western side of the Hebron Mountains. It overlooked Wadi Qubayba to the north and faced higher mountains to the east.

The inhabitants were Muslim. Al-Dawayima contained several religious shrines, a mosque in the village centre, shops, and an elementary school.

Its houses were constructed from stone and mud. The economy rested principally on rainfed agriculture and animal husbandry.

The village was built over an archaeological site and was surrounded by a number of khirbas, indicating a long history of settlement in the area.

Field	Information
District	Hebron
Distance from Hebron	Approximately 18 km northwest of the city
Average Elevation	Approximately 350 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	2,688 inhabitants – including Khirbat Khallet Sabah, Khirbat Shi'ab Shuyukh, Khirbat Shi'ab Nazaza, and Khirbat Nasm Jibrin
Number of Houses in 1931	559 inhabited houses – including the four nearby khirbas listed in the census
Population in 1944/1945	3,710 inhabitants
Estimated Population in 1948	Approximately 4,304 inhabitants – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	60,585 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	29 October 1948; al-Dawayima was attacked during Operation Yoav. Israeli forces shelled and entered the village, where a massacre was committed, and the assault led to the displacement of the surviving Palestinian population
Final Israeli Control	29 October 1948; Israeli forces occupied the village and the consulted sources do not document its subsequent recovery by Palestinian forces
Military Operation	Operation Yoav
Military Unit that Attacked al-Dawayima	89th Battalion of the 8th Brigade, commanded by Yitzhak Sadeh
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault and the massacre committed during the occupation of the village, accompanied by killing, shelling, expulsion, and the flight of Palestinian civilians during the Nakba
Settlement Documented on the Village Lands	Amatzia – established in 1955 on part of the ruins and lands of al-Dawayima

Built Environment of al-Dawayima

The village's star-shaped plan allowed construction to expand in every direction, particularly toward the northeast and northwest along the roads connecting it with neighbouring villages.

Shops were distributed throughout the neighbourhoods around the village centre. Houses were built of stone and mud and separated by narrow paths and alleys. The oldest houses stood in closely grouped clusters, each sharing a *hawsh*: a large communal courtyard where women carried out domestic work, children played, and families gathered in the evenings and on special occasions. As the village expanded, residents built larger houses beyond the old centre. These newer buildings were made of whitewashed stone; some had thick stone walls known locally as *jidari*, from the Arabic word *jidar*, meaning “wall.” Unlike the older clusters, they generally stood apart and did not share courtyards.

The internal arrangement of the newer houses nevertheless resembled that of the older dwellings. Each typically had two levels: an upper floor for the family and a lower floor for livestock. Homes belonging to wealthier villagers had their own spacious courtyards, guest and sleeping rooms, storage rooms, and animal stables.

Education in al-Dawayima

Al-Dawayima had an elementary school that opened in 1937.

Economic Life in al-Dawayima

Rainfed agriculture formed the basis of the village economy. The principal crops included wheat, barley, maize, vegetables, figs, and grapes. According to the official 1944/45 land-use figures, 29,191 dunams were devoted to cereal cultivation and 1,206 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards. The figure of

21,191 dunams found in some narrative accounts is inconsistent with the official table and its cultivable-land total. Oaks, Palestine buckthorn, and other trees grew in the rugged terrain surrounding the village.

Animal husbandry was likewise important. Al-Dawayima had twenty-seven clans, or *hamulas*, each reportedly owning an average of 200 to 300 goats or sheep, together with some camels and cattle. The villagers grazed their animals over extensive uncultivated lands. They also spun fibre and wove tents and sacks for storing grain, tanned animal hides, and produced baskets for sale. The village had approximately thirty to fifty small shops, ten butcher shops, and two grain mills.

The local economy gained further momentum in 1944 with the establishment of a weekly Friday market. It attracted people from nearby villages and towns, including Bayt Jibrin, Hebron, and Gaza, who traded crops, clothing, baked goods, and other merchandise. The market was held on the village threshing floor and was known as *Suq al-Barrayn*, “the market of the two terrains,” because villagers understood it to bring together the commerce of the mountains and the plains.

Land Ownership in al-Dawayima

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	60,560
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	25
Total	60,585

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in al-Dawayima, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	1,206	0	1,206
Olive cultivation**	1,952	0	1,952
Cereal cultivation	29,191	0	29,191
Cultivable land	30,397	0	30,397
Built-up area	179	0	179
Uncultivated land	29,984	25	30,009
Total land area	60,560	25	60,585

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

** Olive acreage is a supplementary crop figure and is included within the broader agricultural classifications; it must not be added again to the cultivable-land total.

Population of al-Dawayima

The 1922 census recorded 2,441 inhabitants, all Muslim. The population rose to 2,688 in 1931, living in 559 houses, and to 3,710 in the official 1945 statistics. The latter figures included several nearby khirbas. A later estimate placed the population at approximately 4,304 in 1948. Armed Zionist forces occupied and depopulated the village during Operation Yoav. A figure of 3,358 is sometimes given for the number displaced in 1948, but its basis could not be verified and it is inconsistent with the estimated village population. The number of refugees from al-Dawayima and their descendants was estimated at 26,429 in 1998.

Population Figures for al-Dawayima

Year	Population*
1922	2,441
1931	2,688
1945	3,710
1948 estimate	Approximately 4,304
Estimated refugees and descendants, 1998	26,429

* The 1922, 1931, and 1945 figures derive from British Mandate census or statistical records. The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates. The 1931 and 1945 totals include several nearby khirbas.

Mosques and Religious Shrines in al-Dawayima

The village had several religious shrines, the most prominent of which was dedicated to a shaykh named Ali. The shrine comprised a large courtyard, several rooms, and a spacious prayer hall, and was surrounded by fig and carob trees and cactuses. It attracted visitors from neighbouring villages. A mosque in the centre of al-Dawayima was maintained by followers of the Khalwatiyya, a Sufi order associated with Shaykh Umar al-Khalwati, who died in 1397. Villagers enlarged and renovated the mosque during the 1930s and added a tall minaret.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Yoav	15 October 1948	Israeli forces launched Operation Yoav in southern Palestine, expanding military operations and territorial control across the southern coastal plain, the Naqab, and the western approaches to the Hebron hills.

Stage	Date	Details
Military Operations Approach al-Dawayima	Second half of October 1948	Israeli forces occupied a number of nearby Palestinian villages, bringing the fighting increasingly close to al-Dawayima.
Egyptian Withdrawal from Bayt Jibrin	27 October 1948	Egyptian forces withdrew from Bayt Jibrin toward Hebron. Palestinian refugees from Bayt Jibrin, al-Qubayba, and other nearby localities moved toward al-Dawayima and surrounding villages.
Preparations to Defend the Village	Before 29 October 1948	Villagers organized night watches and limited local defenses, while some families began moving women, children, and elderly people away as the attacking forces approached.
Attack on al-Dawayima	29 October 1948	The 89th Battalion of the 8th Brigade advanced from the direction of al-Qubayba and attacked the village with armored vehicles, machine guns, and artillery, approaching from the north, south, and west while leaving the eastern side open.
Entry into the Village	Midday, 29 October 1948	Faced with overwhelming military superiority, the small local defense collapsed, and Israeli forces entered al-Dawayima after shelling houses and firing during their advance.
Al-Dawayima Massacre	29 October 1948	A massacre of Palestinian civilians took place in village houses and lanes, in the village mosque, and in a nearby cave. Sources differ over the precise number of victims but document a large civilian death toll.
Displacement of the Palestinian Population	29 October 1948 and afterward	The assault and massacre displaced the surviving inhabitants. Many initially moved toward the Hebron hills and nearby villages and caves, while large numbers later became refugees in camps in the West Bank and Jordan.
Final Israeli Control	29 October 1948	Al-Dawayima remained under Israeli control after the attack, and its displaced Palestinian inhabitants were not permitted to re-establish the village after the Nakba.

Occupation of al-Dawayima and the Massacre

Al-Dawayima was occupied on 29 October 1948 during the Israeli army's Operation Yoav. The assault was carried out by the 89th Commando Battalion of the 8th Armored Brigade, commanded by Yitzhak Sadeh. Contemporary documentation and later testimony establish that Israeli soldiers killed Palestinian civilians in the village, including women, children, and elderly people, and that the massacre precipitated widespread flight from the surrounding area.

The precise number of victims remains disputed. An Israeli soldier's testimony referred to approximately 80–100 people killed by the initial attacking force. The village mukhtar later reported 455 named victims from al-Dawayima, in addition to people from elsewhere who had sought refuge there. Other contemporary diplomatic, military, and local reports offered estimates ranging from about 70 or 80 to several hundred. Because the site was not subjected to a complete independent investigation and United Nations access was initially restricted, no definitive death toll can be established. Estimates therefore vary substantially between sources.

Israeli Settlement on al-Dawayima's Lands

The Israeli moshav of Amatzya was established in 1955 on part of the ruins of al-Dawayima. The village site was later fenced. Stone terraces and the remains of a house survive in its southern section, while the eastern section is occupied by a residential area of the moshav. Cactuses and numerous carob and olive trees continue to grow on the slopes.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question \(PalQuest\): al-Dawayima.](#)

- [PalQuest: Al-Dawayima, 29 October 1948.](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies: Al-Dawayima Massacre, 29 October 1948.](#)
- [Palestine Open Maps: al-Dawayima.](#)
- [Government of Palestine, Village Statistics, April 1945, reproduced by Palestine Remembered.](#)