

Bayt Shanna



Bayt Shanna - Depopulated Palestinian Village of the Ramla Subdistrict

Bayt Shanna was a Palestinian village in the Ramla Subdistrict, approximately 11.5 kilometers southeast of Ramla. It stood on the summit of a high hill surrounded by lower hills, at an average elevation of about 240 meters above sea level.

The village overlooked broad areas in most directions except the north. Its hill descended gradually southward toward a wadi separating Bayt Shanna land from neighboring Salbit. A secondary road linked it with the Jerusalem-Jaffa highway to

the southwest, while dirt tracks connected it with nearby villages.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Ramla
Distance from Ramla	Approximately 11.5 km southeast
Average Elevation	Approximately 240 meters
Population in 1922	8 Muslims – official Census of Palestine
Population in 1931	No independent Bayt Shanna figure; 406 was the combined population of Bayt Shanna and Salbit
Population in 1944/1945	210
Estimated Population in 1948	244 according to Salman Abu Sitta's Register – a later estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area	3,617 dunums
Occupation / Depopulation Date	15–16 July 1948; several Palestinian sources use 15 July as the single date
Military Operation	Generally attributed to the second phase of Operation Dani
Military Unit	Not conclusively established at village level; some secondary sources name a Giv'ati–Kiryati force, but this attribution is not fully corroborated by the principal operation record
Cause of Displacement	Military assault
Extent of Destruction	Most of the village was destroyed; rubble and at least one small surviving structure were recorded in historical fieldwork
Israeli Settlements on Village Land	None documented; Sha'alvim was established on neighboring Salbit land

Name

The village name appears in several forms, including Bayt Shanna and Bayt Shinna.

Palestinian linguistic accounts connect the name with an Aramaic/Syriac root

associated with a high place or rocky summit, a plausible interpretation given the village's elevated location.

Because historical forms of the name vary, this etymology is best treated as a linguistic interpretation rather than an undisputed fact.

Bayt Shanna in the Ottoman Period

Bayt Shanna appeared in the 1596 Ottoman records within the nahiya of Ramla in the Gaza district.

Its population was estimated at approximately **22 people**, and taxes were levied on several agricultural and pastoral products, including:

- Wheat.
- Barley.
- Fruit trees.
- Vineyards.
- Goats.
- Beehives.

By the late nineteenth century the site was described as sparsely inhabited or ruined, before permanent settlement became clearer again during the modern period.

Village Layout and Buildings

Bayt Shanna stood on the summit of a hill surrounded by lower elevations and had a roughly crescent-shaped built-up plan.

The houses were closely grouped and were principally constructed of stone and adobe.

Fields spread across both level and undulating land, while rougher terrain was used for grazing.

Population in 1922

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded **8 Muslims** at Bayt Shanna.

The locality was still extremely small at this stage compared with its later Mandate-era population.

Population and Houses in 1931

The frequently reproduced figure of 406 should not be presented as the population of Bayt Shanna alone.

The official 1931 census combined Bayt Shanna with neighboring Salbit:

Item	Figure
Bayt Shanna + Salbit	406 inhabitants
Occupied Houses	71

No independent Bayt Shanna population or house count can therefore be extracted from these figures.

Population in 1945

By 1944/45 Bayt Shanna was listed separately and had **210 inhabitants**, all Palestinian Arabs and Muslims.

Estimated Population in 1948

Salman Abu Sitta's Register gives an estimated **244 inhabitants** for Bayt Shanna in 1948.

This is a retrospective demographic estimate rather than an official census conducted in that year.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	Approximately 22	Estimate derived from Ottoman records
1922	8	Official Census of Palestine
1931	Not independently available	406 was the combined population of Bayt Shanna and Salbit
1944/1945	210	Official Mandate statistics
1948	244	Later estimate in Salman Abu Sitta's Register

Refugees and Descendants

Salman Abu Sitta's Register estimated approximately **1,496 refugees and descendants in 1998** originating from Bayt Shanna.

This is a later demographic projection rather than a comprehensive official census of all village refugees.

Land Ownership in 1945

Bayt Shanna had a total land area of **3,617 dunums**.

Total	3,617
Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	3,617
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	0

In the official Mandate classification, all 3,617 dunums were recorded in the Arab category, with none in the Jewish or Public categories.

Land Use in 1945

Total	3,617
Land Use	Area in Dunums
Cereals	865
Plantations and Irrigable Land	44
Total Cultivated/Cultivable Land	909
Non-Cultivable Land	2,708

The figures reconcile exactly: 909 dunums of cultivated/cultivable land plus 2,708 dunums classified as non-cultivable equal the village's total 3,617 dunums.

Economic Life

The inhabitants relied largely on rain-fed agriculture and livestock raising.

They cultivated cereals and several types of fruit and vegetables, including:

- Olives.
- Grapes.
- Figs.
- Apples.
- Almonds.
- Vegetables.

Rougher parts of the village land were used as pasture.

Water and Services

Bayt Shanna was a small locality with few public institutions and relied partly on neighboring villages for services and the marketing of agricultural produce.

Local Palestinian sources mention a drinking-water reservoir near the northern end of the village and the maqam of Shaykh al-Shinnawi.

No sufficiently documented independent village school has been identified in the principal sources, so no school from neighboring villages is reassigned to Bayt Shanna.

Archaeological Remains

Bayt Shanna land contained several archaeological features.

Two khirbas were recorded, one west of the village and another northeast of it, containing remains including:

- Foundations of an old church.
- Building foundations.
- Cisterns.
- Rock-hewn presses.

Operation Dani

Operation Dani began on 9 July 1948 and continued until 18 July.

It unfolded in two stages. The first resulted in the occupation of Lydda and Ramla, while the second stage, from 13 to 18 July, pushed eastward toward al-Latrun and the western approaches to the Jerusalem highlands.

On 15 July Israeli forces occupied several villages neighboring Bayt Shanna, including Barfiliya, Bir Ma'in, al-Burj, and Salbit.

Palestinian village documentation generally places the occupation of Bayt Shanna within this second phase of Operation Dani.

Occupation and Depopulation

Salman Abu Sitta records Bayt Shanna's occupation during **15-16 July 1948**.

Other Palestinian sources use **15 July 1948** as the village's depopulation date.

Given the simultaneous fall of surrounding villages and Abu Sitta's date range, Bayt Shanna's final occupation clearly belongs to the mid-July fighting associated with the second phase of Operation Dani.

Military Unit

No single attacking formation can be established conclusively from the principal sources at the village-specific level.

The Encyclopedia of Palestinian Villages attributes the assault to a force drawn from the **Giv'ati and Kiryati brigades**.

PalQuest's general Operation Dani record, however, lists Har'el, Yiftach, Kiryati, Alexandroni, Etziyyoni, and other formations, but does not list Giv'ati among the operation's brigades.

PalQuest also does not explicitly include Bayt Shanna in its list of affected localities, although it documents the occupation of several neighboring villages on 15 July.

The most cautious formulation is therefore:

Military unit: not conclusively established at village level; Kiryati participated in Operation Dani, while some Palestinian secondary sources attribute the Bayt Shanna assault to a combined Giv'ati-Kiryati force.

Occupation and Displacement Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Bayt Shanna before the Offensive	Until July 1948	A small agricultural village with an estimated 244 inhabitants on the eve of depopulation.
Beginning of Operation Dani	9 July 1948	A major Israeli offensive began across the Lydda–Ramla region and the Jerusalem corridor.

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the Second Phase	13 July 1948	The offensive expanded eastward toward al-Latrun and the western approaches to the Jerusalem highlands.
Occupation of Neighboring Villages	15 July 1948	Barfiliya, Bir Ma'in, al-Burj, and Salbit were occupied.
Occupation and Depopulation of Bayt Shanna	15–16 July 1948	Abu Sitta records this date range, while several Palestinian sources use 15 July as the occupation date.
End of Operation Dani	18 July 1948	The operation ended with the beginning of the Second Truce.

Cause of Displacement

Palestinian sources attribute the displacement of Bayt Shanna's inhabitants to **direct military assault** during the mid-July 1948 fighting.

The sources reviewed do not provide a detailed family-by-family account of departure, so unsupported details about individual expulsion routes are not added.

Extent of Destruction

Most of Bayt Shanna's built-up area was destroyed after its inhabitants were displaced.

Historical descriptions record extensive stone rubble across the site, with a small room or structure surviving on the eastern hillside.

No official numerical destruction percentage is available, so the article does not use an unsupported figure such as 100 percent.

Israeli Settlements on Village Land

According to Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, **no Israeli settlement was established on Bayt Shanna's own lands.**

Sha'alvim, established in 1951, lies close to the village site but was built on land belonging to the neighboring depopulated village of **Salbit**.

Sha'alvim should therefore not be listed as a settlement established on Bayt Shanna land.

Bayt Shanna Today

The available description of the village site is based on historical fieldwork used by Walid Khalidi, including photographs dated June 1990. It is therefore a historical description rather than direct 2026 field verification.

Stone rubble from demolished houses covered the village site, while large mulberry, olive, and almond trees grew among the ruins and wild vegetation.

The entire site was fenced and appeared to be used for grazing.

On the hillside east of the former village, a masonry room remained standing with fruit trees growing around it.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Bayt Shanna](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Dani](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Bayt Shanna, Ramla](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Bayt Shanna entry from All That Remains](#)
- [Salman Abu Sitta – Register of Depopulated Palestinian Localities: Bayt Shanna](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine, 1922: Bait Shanna](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine, 1931: Bayt Shanna and Salbit](#)