

Biyar 'Adas



Biyar 'Adas - A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa Subdistrict

Biyar 'Adas was a Palestinian village in the Jaffa Subdistrict, situated approximately 19 km northeast of Jaffa on uneven ground in the central coastal plain that sloped southwestward, at an average elevation of about 25 meters above sea level.

The coastal highway passed approximately 2.5 km east of the village and the railway approximately 1.5 km to the east. Secondary roads connected Biyar 'Adas

with surrounding Palestinian communities.

The village experienced repeated attacks during February, March, and April 1948. The Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade attacked it on 5 March, while the Stern/Lehi organization attacked on 5 April and announced the demolition of thirty houses. According to the chronology cited by Walid Khalidi, Zionist military activity around Biyar 'Adas had resulted in its complete evacuation by 12 April 1948.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from Jaffa	Approximately 19 km northeast
Average elevation	Approximately 25 m above sea level
Population, 1944/45	300 Arabs
Estimated population, 1948	348
Total land area	5,492 dunums
First documented 1948 attack	27 February 1948
Alexandroni attack	5 March 1948 – Third Battalion
Stern / Lehi attack	5 April 1948 – thirty houses reportedly demolished
Completion of depopulation	12 April 1948
Final occupying unit	No single unit can be identified conclusively; Alexandroni is documented in March and Stern/Lehi in April
Destruction of village	Recorded as completed by 16 June 1948 in the diary account cited by Khalidi
Israeli settlements on village lands	'Adanim, 1950; Elishama', 1951

Location and Geography

Biyar 'Adas stood on uneven terrain in Palestine's central coastal plain, sloping generally toward the southwest.

The coastal highway ran approximately 2.5 km east of the village, while the railway line passed approximately 1.5 km east.

This location connected the village with communities throughout the coastal plain and facilitated the transport and marketing of agricultural produce, particularly citrus fruit and vegetables.

Neighboring Villages and Localities

Palestinian maps and later local documentation place Biyar 'Adas west of Jaljulya, south of Kafr Saba, north of Ra's al-'Ayn, and northeast of Jaffa.

Its approximate geographical relationships were:

- North: Kafr Saba and its lands.
- East: Jaljulya, approximately two kilometers away according to local oral documentation.
- South and southwest: 'Arab Abu Kishk and the broader Ra's al-'Ayn area.
- West: the locality known in oral accounts as Khawr al-Wawi, with Ra'anana farther west.
- Farther east and northeast: lands adjoining Qalqiliya and other villages on the edge of the coastal plain.

These are approximate geographical relationships and should not be treated as substitutes for historical cadastral maps.

Name of Biyar 'Adas

Khalidi considers the name Biyar 'Adas to be associated with rock-cut underground storage pits found in the village and used for storing lentils.

This interpretation corresponds to older translations of the place-name as the “well” or “wells of lentils.”

Palestinian oral history preserves another explanation linking the name to a local

holy man known as Abu al-'Adas and to the cultivation of lentils. This remains a community tradition rather than the sole securely established etymology.

Biyar 'Adas in the Late Ottoman Period

The village appeared on nineteenth-century maps under forms such as Bir 'Adas and Biyar 'Adas.

Around 1870, Victor Guérin recorded the locality, while an Ottoman village list from roughly the same period gave approximately 198 males and about sixty houses. Since that population figure counted males only, it should not be treated as the total population.

In 1882, the Survey of Western Palestine described Biyar 'Adas as an adobe-built village with a well on its eastern side.

Built Form

The older houses of Biyar 'Adas were closely clustered.

During the final years of the British Mandate, new houses were built mainly southeast of the older village core.

Traditional construction used adobe brick, while more permanent concrete structures also appeared during the later period.

The 1944/45 Village Statistics classified 14 dunums as built-up Arab land.

Population of Biyar 'Adas

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 87 inhabitants in Biyar 'Adas, all Muslims.

By the 1931 census, the population had risen to 161, again all Muslims.

The number of occupied houses in 1931 requires a correction. PalQuest currently displays 38 houses, while sources reproducing the official 1931 census and citing

Mills, page 13, give **28 occupied houses**. Palestinian local documentation also gives 28. This article therefore uses 28 and treats the PalQuest figure as a likely transcription error.

The 1944/45 Village Statistics recorded 300 Arabs.

Palestine Remembered later estimated the population at 348 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 2,137 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official Mandate census counts.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
1922	87	Official census; all Muslims
1931	161	Official census; all Muslims
1944/45	300	Official Village Statistics; all Arabs
1948	348	Later estimate, not an official census
1998	2,137 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	28	Official census figure as reproduced from Mills; PalQuest currently displays 38
1948	82	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census count

Education

Khalidi's principal village entry does not document a government school in Biyar 'Adas.

Palestinian oral-history documentation states that the villagers established a privately funded community school because there was no government school.

'Abd al-Ghani Zaydan, reportedly from al-Tira/al-Tayyiba area, taught at the school, and oral testimony states that instruction extended to approximately the fifth

grade and included Arabic, religion, arithmetic, and English.

The same oral documentation refers to a mosque and a village guesthouse.

These details are presented as Palestinian community and oral-history evidence rather than as official Department of Education statistics.

Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal source of livelihood, supported by fertile coastal-plain soils, rainfall, and wells.

Citrus fruit was one of the most important commercial crops, alongside cereals, vegetables, and other fruit trees.

Local oral histories additionally record oranges, watermelons, melons, wheat, and barley, with some produce marketed in Jaffa.

The agricultural economy also attracted seasonal workers from other Palestinian villages, particularly for citrus groves and harvesting.

Wells and Irrigation

Villagers relied on rainfall and wells for agricultural water.

The Survey of Western Palestine recorded a well on the eastern side of the village in the late nineteenth century.

Palestinian oral histories also refer to artesian wells and deep collection wells associated with citrus groves and irrigated agriculture.

Land Ownership

The total land area recorded for Biyar 'Adas in the 1944/45 Village Statistics was 5,492 dunums.

Using Palestine Remembered's simplified terminology:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	5,232
Transferred to Zionists	109
Communal/Public	151
Total	5,492

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public: 5,232 dunums were Arab land, 109 Jewish, and 151 public.

Land Use in 1944/45

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Citrus and bananas	1,604	0	0	1,604
Plantations and irrigable land	181	0	0	181
Cereals	3,413	107	3	3,523
Built-up land	14	0	0	14
Non-cultivable land	20	2	148	170
Total	5,232	109	151	5,492

Cultivable land totaled 5,308 dunums, approximately 97 percent of the village area: 5,198 Arab, 107 Jewish, and 3 public dunums.

Built-up and non-cultivable land totaled 184 dunums.

This breakdown corrects simplified tables that place 3,416 dunums of cereal land in the Palestinian column. The official figure is 3,413 Arab dunums plus 3 public dunums.

Likewise, the 168 dunums sometimes shown as Palestinian non-arable land actually combine 20 Arab and 148 public dunums. A further 2 dunums were Jewish.

Roman and Byzantine Remains

Remains of Roman-Byzantine structures were located on the northern and northwestern sides of the village.

The rock-cut underground storage pits associated with the village name also indicate older forms of agricultural storage and land use.

The principal source does not provide a detailed archaeological sequence, and these remains should therefore not be used to claim uninterrupted demographic continuity from antiquity to the modern Palestinian village without independent archaeological evidence.

The 1939 Attack

Biyar 'Adas experienced a serious armed attack on the night of 29 May 1939 during the final phase of the Great Palestinian Revolt.

Palestinian documentation citing Akram Zu'ayter records that armed men entered the home of village mukhtar Hamid al-Nays and other houses and opened fire on residents.

According to this account, five Palestinians—one man and four women—were killed and several others were wounded.

Local testimony places the incident within the broader pattern of retaliatory attacks against Palestinian communities associated with support for the 1936–1939 revolt.

Fighting around Biyar 'Adas in 1948

Fighting around the village began weeks before its final depopulation.

On 27 February 1948, a Zionist unit reportedly fired on Palestinian workers picking oranges in a grove outside the village, according to the Jaffa-based newspaper *Filastin*.

The raid led to continuing engagements between Zionist forces and the village defenders.

Tension intensified on 1–2 March and culminated in another infiltration attempt during the night of 4–5 March.

Alexandroni Attack - 5 March 1948

According to the account Khalidi cites from the *History of the Haganah*, a force from the **Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade** attacked Biyar 'Adas at dawn on 5 March 1948.

The operation followed fighting in the area involving members of the Arab Liberation Army.

A contemporary press report stated that fifteen Arabs were killed during the attack.

Palestinian press reporting on the fighting did not state that this attack permanently emptied the village. The date should therefore not be treated as the final depopulation date.

Stern / Lehi Attack - 5 April 1948

On 5 April 1948, the **Stern organization / Lehi** announced that its units had blown up thirty houses in Biyar 'Adas.

The organization claimed that the houses had been fortified and that the village served as a base for attacks on a neighboring Zionist settlement.

The press account cited by Khalidi, however, stated that a truce had existed between the Haganah and the village population and that the attacking force met no resistance because villagers fled as the assault approached.

Occupation and Depopulation

The chronology does not support reducing the occupation of Biyar 'Adas to a single

attack or one military formation.

Khalidi cites an account stating that Zionist military activity around the village had resulted in its evacuation by **12 April 1948**.

This article therefore uses 12 April as the date by which depopulation had been completed while preserving the documented sequence:

- 27 February: beginning of the documented cycle of fighting.
- 5 March: attack by the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade.
- 5 April: Stern/Lehi attack and demolition of thirty houses.
- 12 April: completion of the village's evacuation.

It is therefore misleading to list only one “attacking unit” for the final depopulation. Alexandroni is securely documented in the 5 March attack, while Stern/Lehi is securely documented in the 5 April assault. Khalidi does not identify one single formation as the exclusive final occupying force on 12 April.

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of documented fighting	27 February 1948	Palestinian orange workers fired upon outside the village, followed by sustained clashes
Escalation	1–2 March 1948	Fighting intensifies around Biyar 'Adas
Alexandroni attack	5 March 1948	Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade attacks the village
Stern / Lehi attack	5 April 1948	Organization announces demolition of thirty houses; villagers flee before the assault
Completion of depopulation	12 April 1948	Military pressure around the village results in complete evacuation
Single final occupying unit	Not conclusively identified	Multiple formations attacked Biyar 'Adas at different stages

Destruction of the Village in June 1948

After the establishment of Israel, Biyar 'Adas was selected for demolition in early June 1948 as part of plans affecting depopulated Palestinian villages along the coastal region between Tel Aviv and Hadera.

Khalidi states that the policy was connected with the intention to create an area free of its Palestinian Arab population.

On 16 June 1948, David Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary that Biyar 'Adas had been levelled.

The physical destruction therefore followed approximately two months after the village's complete depopulation.

Israeli Settlements on Village Lands

Two Israeli settlements were established on Biyar 'Adas's lands after the Nakba:

- **'Adanim:** established in 1950 southwest of the former village site.
- **Elishama':** established in 1951 on village lands and closer to the former site than 'Adanim.

These are the two settlements that Khalidi explicitly identifies as having been founded on Biyar 'Adas's lands.

Biyar 'Adas Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description in *All That Remains*, the former village site was marked by cactus, fig trees, palm trees, and house rubble.

Several houses or sections of houses that had once stood among the citrus groves remained abandoned amid wild vegetation.

These surviving concrete structures varied considerably in architectural design, from simple to elaborate. Their roofs included flat, sloping, and pyramidal forms, while doors and windows were generally rectangular.

The surrounding land was cultivated, with Israeli fruit orchards covering some areas.

This account derives from fieldwork conducted before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and does not constitute direct verification of every surviving feature in 2026.

Later Palestinian community documentation includes photographs and field visits, including material associated with a 2013 visit. Such documentation helps trace the survival and transformation of the site but does not constitute a comprehensive current archaeological or architectural survey, and upload dates should not automatically be treated as photography dates.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Biyar 'Adas](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Biyar 'Adas, Jaffa](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Biyar 'Adas entry from All That Remains](#)
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- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922](#)
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- [Government of Palestine – Village Statistics 1945: Jaffa Sub-District, Population and Land Ownership](#)
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- [Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – Biyar 'Adas: history, local geography, and oral documentation](#)
- [Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – Biyar 'Adas: education](#)