

A town about six miles west-northwest of [Nazareth](#) in the region of [Galilee](#) ([Josh 19:15](#)). The place is only mentioned in the description of the territory allotted to the [tribe of Zebulun](#) in Josh 19:10–16.

Joshua 19:10–16

The New International Version

Allotment for Zebulun

10 The third lot came up for Zebulunⁱ according to its clans:

The boundary of their inheritance went as far as Sarid.^j **11** Going west it ran to Maralah, touched Dabbesheth, and extended to the ravine near Jokneam.^k **12** It turned east from Sarid^l toward the sunrise to the territory of Kisloth Tabor and went on to Daberath^m and up to Japhia. **13** Then it continued eastward to Gath Hopherⁿ and Eth Kazin; it came out at Rimmon^o and turned toward Neah. **14** There the boundary went around on the north to Hannathon and ended at the Valley of Iphtah El.^p **15** Included were Kattath, Nahalal,^q Shimron,^r Idalah and Bethlehem.^s There were twelve towns and their villages.

16 These towns and their villages were the inheritance of Zebulun,^t according to its clans.^u

The judge [Ibzan](#) of Bethlehem was probably from this Bethlehem ([Judg 12:8–10](#)); and Elon, the judge listed as succeeding Ibzan, was also a Zebulunite ([Judg 12:11](#)).

Bethlehem of Galilee (**Hebrew**: בֵּית לֶחֶם הַגְּלִילִית, *Beit Lehem HaGlilit*; lit. "the Galilean Bethlehem") is a [moshav](#) in northern Israel. Located in the [Galilee](#) near [Kiryat Tivon](#), around 10 kilometres north-west of [Nazareth](#) and 30 kilometres east of [Haifa](#), it falls under the jurisdiction of the [Jezreel Valley Regional Council](#). As of 2019 it had a population of 843.^[1]

The modern moshav is located at the site of the ancient Israelite settlement known as Bethlehem of [Zebulun](#) or Berlehem Zoria. Due to its proximity to Nazareth, one historian believes that it is the Bethlehem where [Jesus of Nazareth](#) was born. Aviram Oshri, a senior archaeologist with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, supports this claim, but other researchers at the same institution reject it. The town existed as Christian settlement in the classic era and was populated during the Middle Ages. It was reestablished as a [German Templar Colony in Palestine](#) in the 19th century and turned into Jewish moshav in 1948.

History

To distinguish the city from the city of [Bethlehem](#) near [Jerusalem](#), it was originally known as *Bethlehem of Zebulun*, whilst the town near Jerusalem was called "Bethlehem of Judea".^[citation needed] In the [Jerusalem Talmud](#) it is referred to as *Beth Lehem Zoria*, as it was part of the kingdom of [Tyre](#) at the time. According to the [Book of Judges](#), one of the so-called "[Minor Judges](#)" of early settlement Israel, [Ibzan](#), came from Bethlehem and was buried there.^[2] The [Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#) suggests that the Bethlehem referred to in this passage is Bethlehem of Galilee "rather than the more famous Bethlehem in the Tribe of Judah".^[3]

Until the late 19th century, ruins of a [church](#) and a [synagogue](#) could be seen there, and archaeological findings "from the early Roman Period"^[4] show it was a prosperous city, so the biblical Bethlehem of Zebulun is identified^[4] by archaeologists with today's Bethlehem of Galilee.

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Major building remains and pottery from the fourth–fifth century [Byzantine](#) era have been found here,^[8] together with major remains from [Umayyad](#), [Abbasid](#) (eighth century CE) and [Mamluk](#) eras (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE).^[9]

Ottoman period

Arab village

In 1517, the village was included in the [Ottoman empire](#), and in the 1596 [tax-records](#) it appeared as *Bayt Lahm*, located in the [Nahiya](#) of [Tabariyya](#) of the [Liwa](#) of [Safad](#). The population was 27 households and two bachelors, all [Muslim](#). They paid a tax rate of 25% on agricultural products, which included wheat, barley, cotton, vegetable and fruit gardens, occasional revenues, goats and beehives; a total of 1200 [Akçe](#).^{[10][11]}

In 1859, the British consul Rogers stated that the population was 110, and the tillage at sixteen [feddans](#).^[12]

In 1875 [Victor Guérin](#) visited and noted that Bethlehem was a small village, which had succeeded a town of the same name.^[13] He further noted the ruins of two buildings; one, completely destroyed, had been constructed of good cut stones; the entrance was at the south façade. He thought, from its orientation north and south, that it was a synagogue. The other building, which lay east and west, may have been a Christian church. On its site were seen a few shafts, four of which were still [in situ](#) and half covered up.^[14]

In 1882, the [Palestine Exploration Fund](#)'s *Survey of Western Palestine* described it as "The ancient Bethlehem of Zebulon. A village principally built of [adobe](#) on high ground in the border of the wooded country. The nearest water is in *Wady el Melek*, on the north (Ras el 'Ain), and at the springs near Muwarah on the south."^[12]

A population list from about 1887 showed that Kh. Beit Lahm had about 55 inhabitants; all Muslims.^[15]

Templer village

In 1906 [Templers](#) from the [German Colony](#) in [Haifa](#) established a colony in Galilee,^{[16][*better source needed*]} naming it for the ancient city.

British Mandate period

In the [1922 census of Palestine](#) conducted by the [British authorities](#), Bait Lam had a population of 224; 111 Christians and 113 Muslims.^[17] Of the Christians, 95 were [Protestant](#) and 16 were Greek Catholics ([Melkites](#)).^[18] This had increased slightly by the [1931 census](#) to a population of 235; 135 Muslim, 99 Christians and 1 Jew, in a total of 51 inhabited houses.^[19]

In 1932 the [Nazi Party](#) gained its first two members in Palestine; Karl Ruff and Walter Aberle from the Templer colony in Haifa.^[20] In the course of the 1930s, Bethlehemites also joined the party, indicating the fading affinity to the Templers' original ideals. By August 1939, 17% of all German Christians in Palestine were members of the Nazi Party.^[21] After the [Nazi takeover](#) in Germany, all international schools of German language subsidized or fully financed by government funds were obliged to employ teachers aligned to the Nazi Party. In 1933, Templer functionaries appealed to [Paul von Hindenburg](#) and the Foreign Office not to use swastika symbols for German institutions in Palestine and voiced opposition to the boycott of German Jewish shops.^[22] Later, this

opposition subsided. On 20 August 1939 the German government called on German Christians in Palestine to join the [Wehrmacht](#) and 350 men enlisted.

After the start of [World War II](#), all Germans in Palestine were declared [enemy aliens](#). The British authorities sent them to [Saronā](#), Bethlehem (Galilee), Waldheim (today's [Allonei Abba](#)) and [Wilhelma](#). In summer 1941, 665 German internees, mostly young families with children, were deported to [Australia](#), leaving those who were too old or sick. In December 1941 and in the course of 1942 another 400 German internees, mostly wives and children of men who had enlisted in the Wehrmacht, were released - via Turkey - to Germany for the purpose of [family reunification](#).^[23]

In the [1945 statistics](#) the population of *Beit Lam* consisted of 370 people; 210 Muslims and 160 Christians,^[24] and the total land area was 7,526 [dunams](#) according to an official land and population survey.^[25] 6 dunams of land were designated for citrus and bananas, 278 dunams for plantations and irrigable land, 4,796 for cereals,^{[26][better source needed]} while 51 dunams were built-up areas.^{[27][better source needed]}

In 1945 the Italian and Hungarian internees were released but the Britons refused to repatriate the remaining German internees to the British zone in Germany. In 1947, they were allowed to emigrate to Australia.^[28]

Israel

On 17 April 1948 the [Haganah](#) captured the village, and it was subsequently depopulated. By 14 May 1948, when Israel declared independence, only 50 Templers remained in the country.^[29] It was resettled by Jewish farmers, becoming a moshav. Much of the original Templer architecture survives, and is similar in style to the homes built by the Templers in other parts of the country, such as [Saronā](#) in [Tel Aviv](#), Wilhelma (today [Bnei Atarot](#)) and the [German colonies](#) of [Haifa](#) and [Jerusalem](#).

In recent years, tourism has replaced agriculture as the main economic branch. A dairy, an herb farm, restaurants and country-style accommodation are among the tourist-oriented businesses in the village today.^[16]

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