

The Voyage of the “Amiram Shochat”

This vessel was named in honor of one of the foremost Hebrew seamen, who was one of the 23 seamen lost at sea, in a tragic mission for the British army. He had been one of the first to be active in accompanying Ma’apilim.

The vessel was prepared for her voyage at La Rochelle and Marseilles, France. She sailed from Bacoli, north of Naples, Italy, on August 6th 1946 (on the eve of Tet Be’Av)¹, carrying 183 Ma’apilim. About half of the ma’apilim were religious people from HaPoel HaMizrachi’s ‘hachshara’² named Kibbutz Mekor Baruch that had been established in Bacoli several months before the voyage ([click here](#) for a detailed account of the history of Mekor Baruch in Bacoli, in Italian). Her commander was Dudale Ben-Chorin, accompanied by Yonatan Kinarti and the Gideoni – Yosef Israeli (Lustig). The crew was French and so was the captain, but the latter hardly functioned, as he was hooked on dope. During the voyage a young deckhand known as Robert, whom the crew had taken on in Tangiers, prior to the voyage, on its way to Marseille, fell from the ship and disappeared.

The vessel sailed under a French flag, as an ordinary cargo carrier, thus avoiding recognition by British planes or destroyers. This meant that the Ma’apilim had to spend many daylight hours under cover. On the morning of August 16th, the vessel neared the coast at Caesarea, without having been spotted. The Palyamnikim from their near-by base of Sdot-Yam came to welcome them, with three boats, “Dov”, “Rivka” and “Tirza”, debarking the Ma’apilim in as short a time as possible and dispersing them in the neighboring settlements.

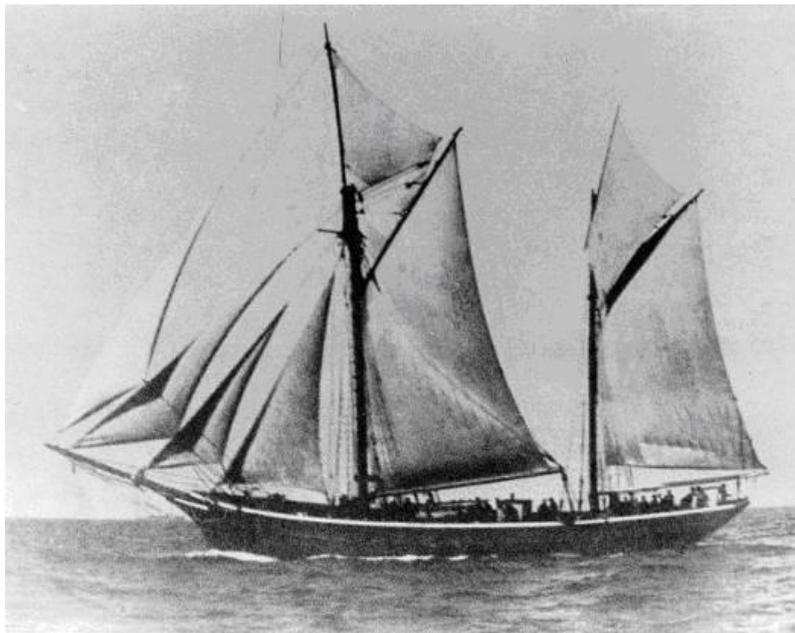


The vessel immediately turned about and headed back to Europe. “Amiram Shochat” was the first vessel to break through the British blockade, since the Royal Navy had taken over responsibility for it, but this remained a rare and difficult achievement. The first eight vessels succeeded before the Royal Navy came into the picture, but once it did, there were only four other vessels that succeeded to penetrate the blockade: “Shabtai Luzinski”, “Ha’Umot Ha’Meuchadot” [Hebrew: United Nations], “Ha’Portzim” and “Aliya”).

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

¹ According to the Jewish Calendar; Tet Be’Av is the fasting day in memory of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

² ‘Hachshara’ is the name given to a group of Zionists, typically members of the youth organization of a certain Zionist party, who gather to prepare themselves (typically over a period of several months to a year) for a later establishment of a permanent settlement together.



The vessel "Amiram Shochat"



The debarking operation at a beach in Caesarea on Aug. 16, 1946 led, about 71 years later, to a meeting between Yehuda Ben-tzur (on the left) – a Palyamnik who participated in the operation, and Michael Roitman – the son of the late Mordechai Roitman who was a ma'apil of the "Amiram Shochet". The link between the two was the result of efforts by the Italian Elio Samuele Guardascione from Bacoli to find the people who had been involved in the voyage.