

## The Voyage of the “Berl Katzenelson”



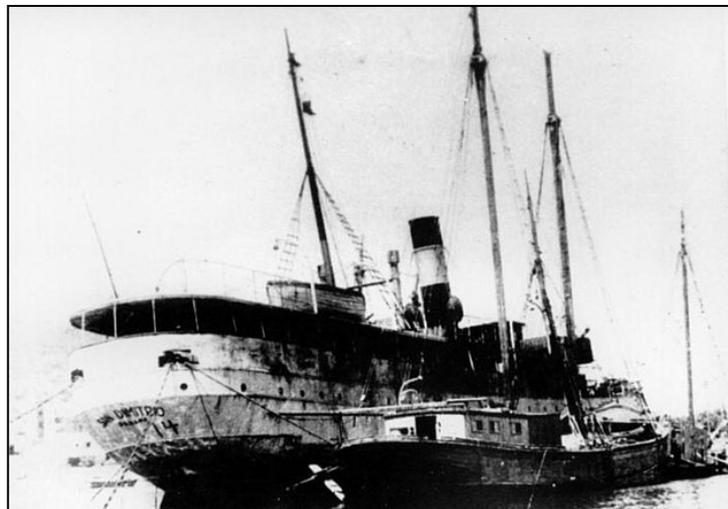
*Moshe Rabinowitz – the Berl Katzenelson Commander*

This vessel was named after Berl Katzenelson – one of the foremost leaders of the Zionist Movement; an author and philosopher, founder of the newspaper “Davar” and of the book publishing company - “Am Oved”, who passed away in Jerusalem in 1944. The vessel was prepared for its voyage at Piraeus, Greece, and sailed on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November 1945 from the port of Lavrion, south-east of Athens, carrying 211 Ma’apilim. Commander of the vessel was Moshe Rabinowitz and he was accompanied by Arie (Kippy) Kaplan and the Gideoni - Yedidya Tzafirir.

The British learned that the vessel had left port and sent scout planes several times to keep track of her whereabouts. She weathered a severe storm for two days before arriving at Sidne Ali (north of Hertzeliya, near Shfayim). At 21:30 the Ma’apilim started to disembark the vessel with the aid of some boats that she carried and additional four boats brought by members of the Palyam, who came to her assistance. Arab fishermen who happened to be in that area that night were arrested by the Palyam, but one of them managed to run away and reported the arrival of the ship to the authorities. Within half an hour a British destroyer appeared on the scene, but by then most of the Ma’apilim had been able to disembark. Eleven Ma’apilim and the foreign crew of the vessel were detained by the British. Kippy managed to jump into the water and to swim ashore but Moshe and Yedidya were caught and interned with the Ma’apilim at Atlit. Two of the boats of the Palyam that were under the command of Yoske Dror and Yoske Almog were also caught, together with their crews and were sent to the Latrun prison, where they languished for six months.

The “Berl Katzenelson” was the first vessel carrying Ma’apilim that the British caught after WW II. In reaction to its capture, the Hebrew Resistance Movement decided to sabotage the British Police Coastal Stations at Givat Olga and Sidne Ali. On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1945 a force of the Fourth Battalion of the Palmach attacked the two stations. The British reacted by conducting a violent search at kibbutz Givat Chaim. It was at this juncture that the Royal Navy was called upon to lay siege to the shore of Palestine. The efficiency of this force (called “The Palestine Patrol”) was amply demonstrated very soon. Following the “Berl Katzenelson”, the vessel “Hana Senesh” also managed to slip through the blockade, but after that - vessel after vessel was caught, and only five more managed to break through (“Amiram Shochat”, “Shabtai Luzhinski”, “Aliya”, “HaPortzim” and “The United Nations”).

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)





*Boat Commander Course #5 of the Palmach, preparing for the sabotage operation at Sidne Ali, November 1945, following the capture of "Berl Katzenelson"*