

## The Voyage of the “Hannah Senesh”



The vessel “Hannah Senesh” was a 250 ton metal ship with a diesel engine that could move her at 7 knots. Its original name was the “Andarta” and it was purchased by a branch of Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet in Italy for \$40,000. On the night of December 14<sup>th</sup> 1945, 252 Ma’apilim boarded the vessel near the port of Savona. The commander was Israel Horev (pictured here), accompanied by Eliezer Armon and the Gideoni - Chaim Porat. On the night of December 25<sup>th</sup> the vessel arrived at the shore of Nahariya. The sea was stormy and there was a strong wind blowing; these circumstances caused the vessel to run up onto the rocks close to the shore. The vessel keeled over dangerously. A shore team of the Palyam, together with town citizens helped the Ma’apilim to leave the vessel and scattered them about in the neighboring kibbutzim. A woman on board died, suspected to have been left in the hospital room of the vessel, her absence unnoticed in the course of the rushed removal of the other Ma’apilim, in the darkness<sup>1</sup>. The vessel was abandoned and shortly afterwards the foreign crew was smuggled out of the country. This whole episode was extolled in the famous poem by Nathan Alterman in honor of the Italian Captain - Ansaldo: “A Speech in Reply to an Italian Captain, after an Unloading Night”.

The “Hannah Senesh” was the 8<sup>th</sup> vessel of Ma’apilim to arrive in Palestine after WW II. After these eight succeeded in breaking the British blockade, the British intensified their efforts to halt the Aliya Bet vessels, by exchanging the Police coastal patrol boats for the services of His Majesty’s Royal Navy Flotilla called “The Palestine Patrol”. From this moment on, almost every vessel was caught except five that succeeded in breaking through. While en-route to Palestine, the name of the vessel was changed to “Hannah Senesh”, in honor of the parachutist and poet (RIP), who was captured in Yugoslavia, when she parachuted behind the German lines and was tortured and killed on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1944 in Budapest.



In 1945 an engraved memorial stone marking her gravesite was placed there, commissioned by her mother – Katharina Senesh, from the sculptor Andreas Beck. In 1950 her bones were brought to Israel and she was interred on Mt. Herzl. In 2007 the memorial stone was brought from Budapest and set up next to “Hanna House” in her kibbutz, Sdot Yam, which serves as a meeting place and library. Hannah knew all the veteran Palyamnikim well, as she had been in charge of the food supply allocation at kibbutz Sdot Yam, which served as the main training center for the Palyam.



During 1946, the vessel was salvaged by the Ha’Ogen Company, which belonged to the Israeli concern “Solel Boneh”. It was renovated and used as a cargo ship. In 1947 she was leased to a shipping company. At the outbreak of the War of Independence she was transferred to the Palyam, where her first mission was to bring reinforcement to the besieged town of Nahariya and remove women and children from the town to Haifa. In May 1951 she was decommissioned from the Navy and became a merchant vessel, the MS 52. In 1956 she was taken out of service and in 1996 she was completely salvaged.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noticed that the rumor was never confirmed. Two Palyamnikim, Moshe Dafni and Avner Gilad searched the vessel thoroughly and didn’t find anybody on board. They were the last to leave it.



*The vessel "Hannah Senesh" near Nahariya*