

The Voyage of “HaTikva” [The Hope]

“HaTikva” was one of the nine vessels purchased in America by Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet and her crew consisted mostly of young Jewish volunteers. She was prepared for its voyage to Palestine at Lisbon, Portugal and Porto Venere, Italy. Yehoshua Baharav Rabinowitz was in charge of the work in Portugal and Avraham Zakai was in charge in Italy. The vessel sailed from Bocca di Magra, Italy on May 8th 1947 carrying 1,414 Ma’apilim. Israel Rotem was its commander and those accompanying him were Alex Shour and Meir Falik; the Gid’oni (radio operator) was Nachum Manor.



*Israel Rotem –
Commander of HaTikva*

The volunteer Sidney (“Sid”) Yellin was the captain, replacing the hired American captain who served on the voyage from the USA to France (Shaul Yellin, Sidney’s brother, was also a volunteer on the vessel). Two infants were born during the voyage.

On May 16th a British scout plane sighted her and shortly afterwards a destroyer appeared and tailed her. The following day, five more destroyers of His Majesty’s Royal Navy joined in the chase. When “HaTikva” approached Rosh HaNikra, the destroyers attacked with massive force using tear gas and captured the vessel. That same night the Ma’apilim were transferred to the deportation ships that took them to detention camps in Cyprus. The Palyamnikim hid on the vessel and were freed after several hours of hiding. The crew members were deported together with the Ma’apilim to the detention camps in Cyprus; some of them helped there the Palyam’s sabotage expert Moshe Nachshon (Lipson) with carrying out the sabotage operation against the British prison ship Empire Life Guard in late July 1947.

When the Israeli navy came into being, the vessel served in it for a short period.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

