

The Voyage of “Yerushalayim HaNetzura” [Besieged Jerusalem]

This vessel was called “Yerushalayim HaNetzura” in honor of the brave citizens of Jerusalem, who were besieged by the Arab armies at that time. The first attempt to load the Ma’apilim was near the shore of Civitavecchia, Italy, but the weather was bad and the sea was rough. When one of the launch boats carrying Ma’apilim to the vessel overturned, the loading was halted. It was resumed only two days later, when the sea had calmed down. The vessel sailed on February 3rd 1948, carrying 680 Ma’apilim.

Yehuda’le Tzfati was the commander of the vessel, accompanied by Moshe Dafni – (the Sailor) and the Gideoni - Danny Sandler. The Captain and the crew were not Jewish. The most exciting event during the voyage was a difficult birth in which Dafni played the part of midwife. Under the circumstances, it was only natural that the baby girl be named Galia [Hebrew: Gal = wave].

On February 10th, a British scout plane discovered the vessel, when it was about 80 miles west of Palestine. Shortly thereafter, two destroyers showed up, blocking her path and forcing her to sail in the direction of Haifa. Not far from Haifa, the vessel was boarded by British soldiers but the Palyamnikim had managed to knock out the engines, so that the vessel had to be towed to Haifa. There was no attempt to resist and all of the Ma’apilim and the foreign crew were deported to Cyprus.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)





Dafni holding the baby girl he helped deliver - Galia, born at sea