

The Voyage of “Le’Nitzachon” [To Victory]

This vessel was prepared for its voyage in the Bay of Gaeta, Italy. Its commander was Benny Kravitz, accompanied by Gideon Weisser and the Gideoni - Reuvan Oren (Orenstein). She left from the port of Brindisi, Italy, on May 8th 1948, carrying 189 Ma’apilim. On that same day and from that same port, the vessel “Medinat Israel” [Hebrew: State of Israel] also set sail. Two children were born on each vessel during their journey, and as there was only one doctor he transferred from vessel to vessel to deliver each baby in turn.

The original plan called for the Ma’apilim of “Le’Nitzachon” to be transferred to the larger ship - “Medinat Israel” within 200 miles of Palestine, so that it could return to take more Ma’apilim. As this was to take place on 14th May, just one day before the British were expected to leave Palestine, it was decided that both vessels continued to port.

The British identified the vessels on May 15th near Tel Aviv, but did not halt them, as they had already announced their leaving the country. The Ma’apilim intended to disembark in Tel Aviv the following day, but the vessels backed out to open water because of the Egyptian bombing. On May 17th the Ma’apilim were disembarked in full daylight and with much fanfare, being the first legal entrants into the State of Israel.

On May 19th both ships left for Italy. From that time on, this vessel was used to bring Olim to Israel, bearing the name “Narkis”.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

