

## The Voyage of the “Mishmar Ha’Emek”

This vessel was named in honor of the Kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, which, in April of 1948 defended itself successfully and repulsed a strong attack of the Arab Liberation Army of Fauzi Kaukaji. The vessel was readied for its voyage in the port of Naples, Italy, with commander David Eisen (pictured here), accompanied by the American volunteer - Teddy Vardi and the Gideoni - Benny Berkovitz.



The vessel sailed on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1948 from La Ciotat, France, carrying 782 Ma’apilim on board. When she was about 100 miles from Cyprus she received orders from Ha’Mossad Le’Aliya Bet to go to the aid of the vessel “Nachshon – Castel”, which was having technical problems near the island of Crete. The two vessels did not make contact and shortly thereafter the “Mishmar Ha’Emek” was discovered by a British scout plane. Soon after, a British destroyer showed up to tail her. A British force took over the ship on April 24<sup>th</sup> when she was near Haifa and towed her into port. All the Ma’apilim and the Palyamnikim on board were deported to Cyprus.

After the State of Israel had come into being this vessel was taken from the ‘shadow fleet’ and pressed into service carrying Olim from Cyprus and from France to Israel (see the articles on this topic by the Gideoniot, Shosh Keyni and Yochi Yahel). Later still, the vessel was used for procurement cargo (see the article about this by Pinny Ashuach).

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

