

The Voyage of the "Tel Hai"

This vessel was named in honor of the settlement Tel Hai, in defense of which Yosef Trumpeldor and a group of his friends were killed in 1920, in a battle with Arab villagers. It is situated in the upper corner of the Eastern Galilee, near Kfar Giladi.

The vessel was formerly Turkish and went by the name of Asya. She carried cargos of grain and livestock to ports of the Mediterranean.



She left Marseilles on March 17th 1946 carrying 736 Ma'apilim. This was the first vessel of Ma'apilim that left from a French port. The Ma'apilim had come from Sweden via Belgium, as well as from France itself. All the Ma'apilim had visas to South American countries, which the French accepted as the real destination, even though they knew better. The commander of the vessel was Israel Rotem (pictured here), accompanied by Chaim Miller and the Gideoni - Yoash (Chatto) Tzidon.

The sea was very rough and the vessel was obliged to seek shelter, first in Bonifacio, Corsica, and again in the Greek island of Crete. It was originally planned for her to meet with the vessel "Wingate" at sea, in order to take on her passengers, but that plan never materialized. On March 26th the vessel was discovered by the British and towed to Haifa. The Ma'apilim were interned in the Atlit detention camp.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

