

The Voyage of the “Tirat Tzvi”

This vessel was named in honor of kibbutz Tirat Tzvi in the valley of Bet Sha'an, which repulsed a strong attack of the Arab Liberation Army on February 16th 1948. The vessel sailed on April 3rd 1948 from the port of Formia in the Bay of Gaeta, Italy, carrying 798 Ma'apilim. The commander of the vessel was Betzalel Feldman and accompanying him were Osnat Goldenberg, the American Machalnikim - Arnold Kite and Eliahu Bergman, a student from Switzerland - Eli Chaboinik and the Gideoni - Yosef Lazarovski.

The vessel sailed into a stormy sea and had no navigation instruments whatsoever. After five days of sailing, she ran into a severe storm in the vicinity of Crete, and was forced to seek asylum for two days near the island of Saria, Greece, making some repairs to the engines and waiting out the storm. On April 12th she was discovered by a British scout plane when she was about 50 miles distant from the shore of Palestine. Shortly afterwards, three British destroyers showed up to give her a royal escort. She did not offer resistance and entered the port of Haifa under her own steam. The Ma'apilim were deported to Cyprus on the following day. All the Palyamnikim hid in the vessel's hideout and were later freed by the 'Solel Boneh' cleaning team, except for Osnat, who elected to go with the Ma'apilim.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)

