

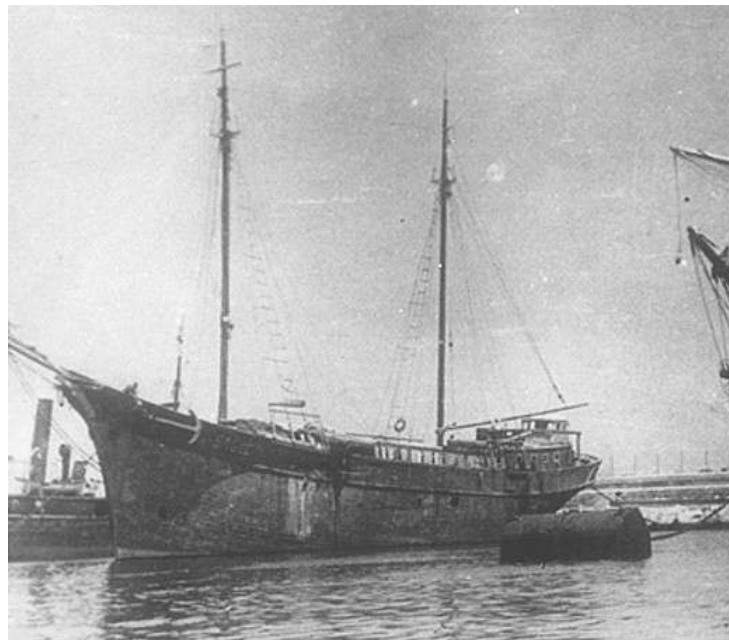
The Voyage of the “Yechiam”

In January 1948, a convoy was rushed to the defense of Kibbutz Yechiam in the Western Galilee. The convoy was ambushed by the Arabs and failed to reach the Kibbutz, losing 47 of its 90 fighters.¹

The vessel was named in honor of this convoy and the Kibbutz. The commander was Eli Zohar, accompanied by Chaim Senesh and Emanuel Katzav. The Gideonit was Chana Sereni. The vessel sailed from Formia in the Bay of Gaeta, Italy on March 10th 1948, carrying only 256 Ma'apilim, as she was also scheduled to take aboard the Ma'apilim of the “Tamar” (this was a temporary name; this same vessel sailed again later with Ma'apilim and was then called the “Nachshon-Castel”.) The “Yechiam” and the “Tamar” met on March 12th near the island of Monte Christo where 530 Ma'apilim boarded the “Yechiam”. This vessel, now carrying 786 Ma'apilim continued on its voyage to Palestine, suffering many technical troubles and delays en route, including two episodes of short-terms imprisonments, by the Italian Navy and by the Greek coast guard.

The vessel was discovered by a British scout plane on March 28th and several hours later a British destroyer showed up, and made her change course from Tel Aviv to Haifa. The following morning, British soldiers overcame resistance and took over the vessel. The Ma'apilim experienced physical weakness and some had to be moved in stretchers. They were all deported to Cyprus.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)



¹ This failed convoy marked the end of this strategy, which was replaced by a more aggressive strategy of attack & conquer, as used in the Nachshon operation.