

The Voyage of “Yod Dalet Halalei Gesher Aziv” [The 14 Fallen of Gesher Aziv]

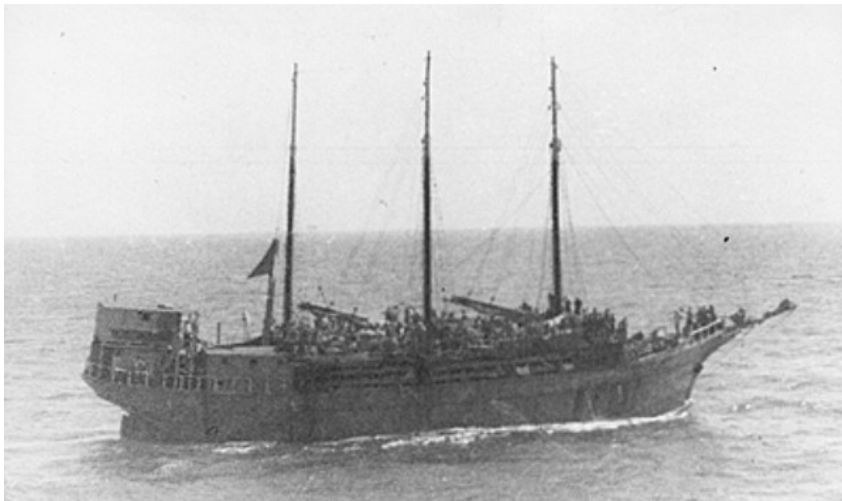
This vessel was named in honor of the 14 Palmach fighters, who were killed on the “Night of the Bridges”, in June 1946 while they attacked the A'Ziv¹ bridge, near Nahariya. The vessel received its name on the first anniversary of that event.

On July 9th 1947, the “Yod Dalet” arrived from the port of Marseilles, where it had been prepared to receive Ma'apilim, to the port of Migliareno, south of La Spezia, Italy. It intended to pick up the Ma'apilim there, but the local police prevented her from so doing. The vessel left port and marked time at sea, not far from Corsica. On July 16th 1947, 685 Ma'apilim were brought out to her, at sea, by another vessel of Ha'Mossad Le'Aliya Bet, the “Albertina”. The commander of the “Yod Dalet” was Eliezer Tal (Klein), accompanied by Shalom Dolitzki, Uri Horowitz and the Gideoni - Yitzchak Breuer. Zeev Paz and the Gideoni - Yosef Lazarowski were the pair on board the “Albertina”.

On July 18th, the vessel was discovered by a British destroyer in the Straits of Messina, Italy, and from then on, it was accompanied all the way to Palestine. During this voyage, three babies were born on the vessel and one Ma'apil committed suicide by jumping off the deck into the water and drowning. On arriving close to the port of Haifa, three additional British destroyers closed in upon her from all sides. She arrived there at about the same time that the Ma'apilim of “Exodus”, who were deported to France, arrived at Marseilles. As there was a very large proportion of young children and women on this vessel, (about 100 children, 34 pregnant women at the beginning of the voyage, 31 following the blessed births,) it was decided not to resist and to wait for the British reaction.

The Palyamnikim sabotaged the vessel's engine, forcing the British to tow her into Haifa. On the day following their arrival in port, the Ma'apilim were transferred to the deportation British vessel “Empire Comfort” and shipped to the detention camps in Cyprus.

(Compiled by Tzvi Ben-Tzur)



¹ The Arab village of A'ziv was replaced by the British, who used it during WWII; a Jewish settlement Gesher Ha'ziv - was established on the grounds of the deserted camp in January 1949, naming it in memory of the fallen.