# liyah Bet

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Aliyah Bet ([Hebrew](): עלייה ב', "[Aliyah]() 'B'" - [bet]() being the second letter of the [Hebrew alphabet]()) was the code name given to illegal immigration by [Jews]()to the [British Mandate for Palestine]() in violation of British [White Paper of 1939]() restrictions, in the years 1934-1948. In modern day Israel it has also been called by the Hebrew term **Ha'apala** ([Hebrew](): ההעפלה; *ascension*). The *Aliyah Bet* is distinguished from the *Aliyah Aleph* ("Aliyah 'A'", [Aleph]()being the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet): the limited Jewish immigration permitted by British authorities in the same period.

Organization[[edit]()]

During *Ha'apala*, several Jewish organizations worked together to facilitate immigration beyond the established quotas. As persecution of Jews intensified in Europe during the [Nazi]() era, the urgency driving the immigration also became more acute. Those who participated in the immigration efforts consistently refused to term it "illegal", instead calling it "clandestine."

Ha'apala occurred in two phases. First, from 1934 to 1942, it was an effort to enable European Jews to escape Nazi persecution and murder. From 1945 to 1948, in a stage known as *[Bricha]()*, it was an effort to find homes for Jewish survivors of the Nazi crimes ([Sh'erit ha-Pletah]()) who were among the millions of [displaced persons]() ("DPs") languishing in refugee camps in occupied [Germany](). During the first phase, several organizations (including[Revisionists]()) led the effort; after [World War II](), the [Mossad LeAliyah Bet]() ("the Institute for Aliyah B"), an arm of the [Haganah](), took charge.

The journey of Aliyah Bet Group 14
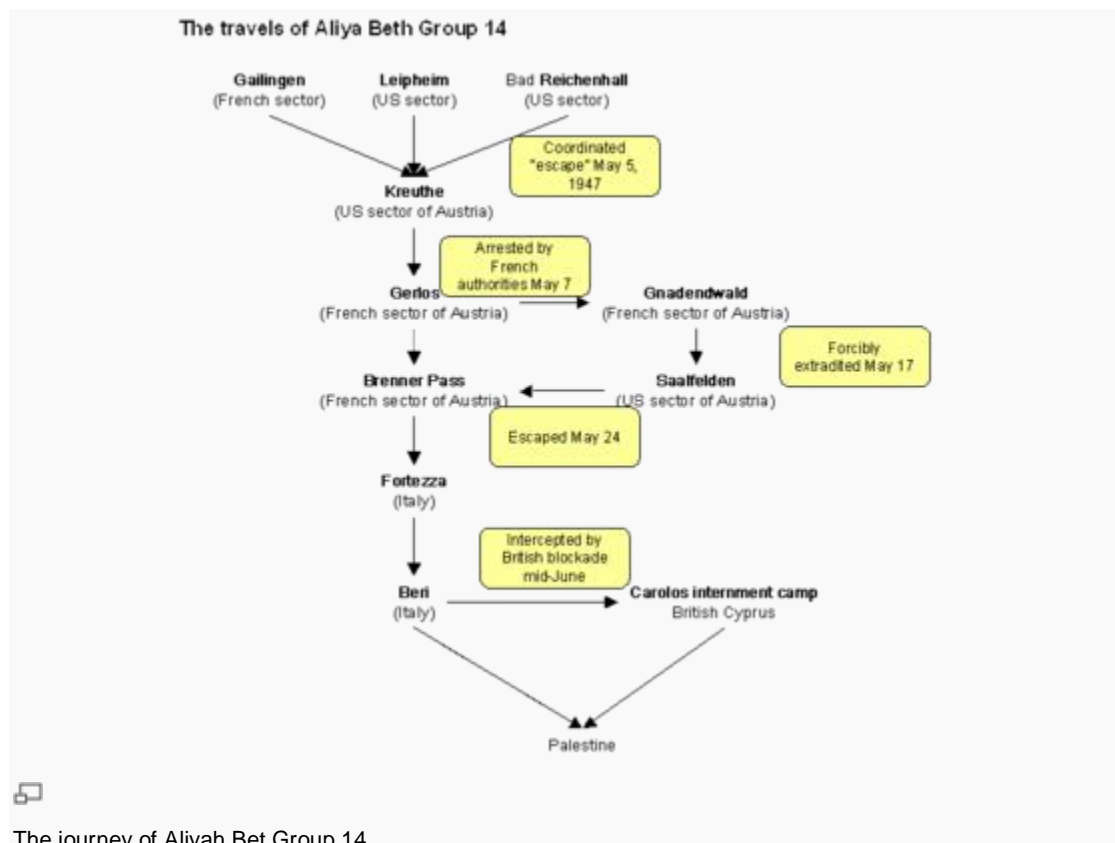
Post-World War II, *Ha'apala* journeys typically started in the DP camps and moved through one of two collection points in the [American] occupation sector, [Bad Reichenhall] and [Leipheim]. From there, the refugees travelled in disguised trucks, on foot, or by train to ports on the [Mediterranean Sea], where ships brought them to Palestine. Most of the ships had names such as *Lo Tafchidunu* ("You can't frighten us") and *La-Nitzahon* ("To the victory") designed to inspire and rally the Jews of Palestine. Some were named after prominent figures in the [Zionist movement], and people who had been killed while supporting Aliyah Bet.[1] More than 70,000 Jews arrived in Palestine on more than 100 ships.[2]

American sector camps imposed no restrictions on the movements out of the camps, and American, French, and Italian officials often turned a blind eye to the movements. Several [UNRRA] officials (in particular [Elizabeth Robertson] in Leipheim) acted as facilitators of the emigration. The British government vehemently opposed the movement, and restricted movement in and out of their camps. Britain also set up armed naval patrols to prevent immigrants from landing in Palestine.

History[edit]

Over 100,000 people attempted to illegally enter Palestine. There were 142 voyages by 120 ships. Over half were stopped by the British patrols. The [Royal Navy] had eight ships on station in Palestine, and additional ships were tasked with tracking suspicious vessels heading for Palestine. Most of the intercepted immigrants were sent to [internment camps] in [Cyprus]: (Karaolos

near [Famagusta](#), [Nicosia](#), [Dhekelia](#), and [Xylotumbou](#)). Some were sent to the [Atlit detention camp](#) in Palestine, and some to [Mauritius](#). The British held as many as 50,000 people in these camps (see [Jews in British camps on Cyprus](#)). Over 1,600 drowned at sea. Only a few thousand actually entered Palestine.

The pivotal event in the *Ha'apala* program was the incident of the [*SS Exodus*](#) in 1947. The *Exodus* was intercepted, attacked, and boarded by the British patrol. Despite significant resistance from its passengers, *Exodus* was forcibly returned to Europe. Its passengers were eventually sent back to Germany. This was publicized, to the great embarrassment of the British government.

One account of Aliyah Bet is given by journalist [I. F. Stone](#) in his 1946 book [*Underground to Palestine,*](#) a first-person account of traveling with European displaced persons attempting to reach the Jewish homeland.[3]

Some 250 American veterans, including Murray S. Greenfield (of the ship *Hatikva*), from World War II volunteered to sail ten ships ("The Jews' Secret Fleet") from the USA to Europe to load 35,000 survivors of the Holocaust (half of the illegal immigrants to Palestine), only to be deported to detention camps on Cyprus.

Timeline[[edit](#)]

[Haganah](#) ship *Medinat HaYehudim*("Jewish State") in Haifa port, 1947

[Yisrael Meir Lau](#) (aged 8) in the arms of Elazar Schiff, survivors of [Buchenwald concentration camp](#) on their arrival at [Haifa](#), 15 July 1945

In 1934, the first attempt to bring in a large number of illegal immigrants by sea happened when some 350 Jews sailed on the *Vallos*, a chartered ship, without the permission of Jewish Agency, who feared illegal immigration would cause the British to restrict legal immigration. She arrived off the coast of Palestine on August 25, and the passengers disembarked with the help of the [Haganah](#), which received special permission to assist them.[4]

The *Tiger Hill*, a 1,499 ton ship, built in 1887, sailed from [Constanța](#) on August 3, 1939, with about 750 immigrants on board. She took on board the passengers from the *Frossoula*, another illegal

immigrant ship that was marooned in Lebanon. On September 1, the first day of World War II, the *Tiger Hill* was intercepted and fired on by Royal Navy gunboats off Tel Aviv, and was beached.

On October 3, 1939 a large group of immigrants sailed from Vienna on the riverboat *Uranus* down the Danube. At the Romanian border, the *Uranus* was intercepted and the immigrants were forced to disembark at the old fortress town of Kladovo in Yugoslavia. About 1,100 refugees were stranded there. In May, 1941, they were still in Yugoslavia, where 915 of them were caught and eventually killed by the invading Nazis.

In October 1940 1,770 Jewish refugees sailed from Tulcea to Haifa in two ships. The *Pacific* arrived off Haifa on November 1, followed a few days later by the by *Milos*. The Royal Navy intercepted each ship and escorted it into Haifa, where British authorities detained the refugees before tranferring them to a requisitioned French ocean liner, the *Patria*, for deportation to Mauritius. They were followed from Tulcea by another 1,634 refugees aboard the *Atlantic*, which arrived on November 24 off Haifa, where the Royal Navy escorted her into harbour. On November 25 the British had just started transferring *Atlantic*'s refugees to *Patria* when Haganah agents planted a bomb aboard the French liner with the intention of disabling her to prevent her from sailing. However, the bomb quickly sank *Patria*, killing 260 people and wounding 172. The survivors were allowed to stay in Palestine on humanitarian grounds.[5][6]

On May 18, 1940 the old Italian paddle steamer *Pencho* sailed from Bratislava, with 514 passengers, mostly Betar members. The *Pencho* sailed down the Danube to the Black Sea and into the Aegean Sea. On October 9 her engines failed and she was wrecked off Mytilene, in the Italian-ruled Dodecanese Islands. The Italians rescued the passengers and took them to Rhodes. All but two were then placed in an internment camp at Ferramonti di Tarsia in southern Italy. They were held there until Allied forces liberated the area in September 1943. The story of the *Pencho* was published as *Odyssey*, by John Bierman.

In October 1940 a large group of refugees were allowed to leave Vienna. The exodus was organized by Berthold Storfer, a Jewish businessman who worked under Adolf Eichmann. They took four river boats, *Uranus*, *Schönbrunn*, *Helios*, and *Melk*, down the Danube to Romania, where the *Uranus* passengers, about 1,000, boarded the *Pacific*, and sailed on October 11, 1940. They arrived at Haifa on November 1, followed by the *Milos*. The British transferred all the immigrants to the French liner SS *Patria* to take them for internment to Mauritius. To stop the *Patria* from sailing, the Haganah smuggled a bomb aboard. The explosion holed her side, capsizing her and killing 267 people. The British, by order of Winston Churchill, allowed the survivors to remain in Palestine.

Graves of the 223 Jewish passengers of *Salvador* who drowned at sea, Mount Herzl, Jerusalem

In December 1940 the *Salvador*, a small Bulgarian schooner formerly named *Tsar Krum*, left Burgas with 327 refugees. On December 12 the *Salvador* was wrecked in a violent storm in

the Sea of Marmara, near Istanbul. 223 persons, including 66 children, lost their lives. The survivors were taken to Istanbul. 125 survivors were deported back to Bulgaria, and the remaining 70 left on the *Darien* (No. 66).[7]

On December 11, 1941 the *Struma* sailed from Constanţa carrying between 760 and 790 refugees. Three days later she reached Istanbul, where Turkey detained her and her passengers for 10 weeks. On February 23, 1942 Turkish authorities towed her back into the Black Sea and cast her adrift. Early the next day the Soviet submarine *Shch-213* torpedoed and sank her. Between 767 and 791 people were killed, and there was only one survivor.[8]

On September 20, 1942 the *Europa* sailed from Romania with 21 passengers. She was wrecked in the Bosphorus.

On August 5, 1944 *Bulbul*, *Mefküre* and *Morino* sailed from Constanţa carrying about 1,000 refugees between them. In the night the Soviet submarine *Shch-215* sank *Mefküre* by torpedo and shellfire, and then machine-gunned survivors in the water.[9] Between 289 and 394 refugees plus seven crew were aboard *Mefküre*; only the crew and five refugees survived. *Bulbul* rescued the few survivors and took them to Turkey.[10]

On August 28, 1945 the Italian fishing vessel *Dalin*, carrying 35 immigrants, landed at Caesarea, disembarked its passengers, and returned to Italy.[11]

On September 4, 1945 the ship *Natan*, carrying 79 immigrants, landed in Palestine. It carried seamen and radio operators from the Palmach and Jewish Agency emissaries on the return trip to Italy. On October 1, 1945, the *Natan* again ran the blockade arrived at Shefayim with 73 immigrants.[11]

On September 9, 1945 the *Gabriela*, carrying 40 passengers, arrived undetected in Palestine.[11]

On September 17, 1945 the *Peter*, carrying 168 immigrants, landed in Palestine undetected by the British. She again slipped into Palestine undetected and arrived at Shefayim on October 22, this time carrying 174 passengers.[11]

On November 23, 1945 the *Berl Katznelson*, carrying 220 Jewish refugees, arrived in Shefayim. As the ship was landing immigrants she was intercepted by the Royal Navy sloop HMS *Peacock*. Of the passengers, 200 reached the beach and escaped, and 20 were arrested.[11]

On December 14, 1945 the ship *Hannah Senesh*, carrying 252 passengers, was beached at Nahariya after evading Royal Navy patrols. The passengers were brought ashore *via* a rope bridge, and evaded capture.[11]

On January 17, 1946 the *Enzo Sereni*, carrying 908 passengers, was intercepted by the destroyer HMS *Talybont* and escorted to Haifa.[11]

On March 13, 1946 the schooner *Windgate*, carrying 248 passengers, ran the blockade and attempted to land. British Palestine Police opened fire from the shore, killing a

female Palmachmember. The ship was then captured and escorted to Haifa by the destroyer HMS *Chevron*.[11]

On March 27, 1946 the steamer *Tel Hai*, carrying 736 passengers, was intercepted by the destroyer HMS *Chequers* 140 miles out at sea as it approached Palestine.[11]

On May 13, 1946 the ship *Max Nordau*, carrying 1,754 immigrants, was captured by the destroyers HMS *Jervis* and HMS *Chequers*. The same day, the ships *Dov Hos* (675 passengers) and*Eliahu Golomb* (735 passengers) arrived in Palestine legally. The British had blockaded the *Dov Hos* after it had arrived in La Spezia, but the passengers responded with a hunger strike and a threat to blow her up, compelling the British to give them entry permits.[11]

On June 8, 1946 the *Haviva Reik*, carrying 462 passengers, was intercepted by HMS *Saumarez* on June 8, 1946. Some 150 people had previously transferred from the *Haviva Reik* to the *Rafi* off the Palestinian coast, and the crew had disembarked.

On June 26, 1946 the *Josiah Wedgwood*, carrying 1,259 passengers, was intercepted by HMS *Venus*.

On July 20, 1946 the *Haganah*, carrying 2,678 passengers, departed from France, and transferred 1,108 of its passengers to the small steamer *Biriah* west of Crete. The *Biriah* was intercepted byHMS *Virago* on July 2. The *Haganah* picked up a new party of refugees at Bakar, Yugoslavia, and set sail for Palestine, this time also carrying 2,678 passengers total. She was found at sea with its engines broken down and no electrical power, and was towed to Haifa by HMS *Venus*. Her passengers were arrested and interned.

On August 11, 1946 the *Yagur*, carrying 758 passengers, was intercepted by the destroyer HMS *Brissenden*, with passive resistance from the immigrants.[11]

On August 12, 1946 the *Henrietta Szold*, carrying 536 passengers, was intercepted. The same day, the British announced that illegal immigrants would be sent to Cyprus and other areas under detention. The first British deportation ship sailed for Cyprus on the same day, with 500 illegal immigrants on board.[6]

On August 13, 1946 two immigration ships were intercepted: *Katriel Jaffe* (604 passengers) by HMS *Talybont*, and *Twenty Three* (790 passengers) by HMS *Brissenden*. There was desperate resistance on board *Twenty Three*. The same day, two British ships with 1,300 Jewish detainees on board set sail for Cyprus. A crowd of about 1,000 Jews attempted to break into the Haifa port area, and British troops responded with live fire, killing three and wounding seven.[6][11]

On August 16, 1946 the yawl *Amiram Shochat*, carrying 183 passengers, evaded the British blockade and landed near Caesarea.[11]

On September 2, 1946 the *Dov Hos*, this time named the *Arba Cheruyot*, carrying 1,024 passengers, was seized by the destroyers HMS *Childers* and HMS *Chivalrous*. The boarding was strongly resisted, and two people drowned after jumping off the ship.[11]

On September 22, 1946 the brigantine *Palmach*, 611 passengers, was seized by the minesweeper HMS *Rowena*. The Royal Navy tried to board the ship four times before finally seizing her, and one passenger was killed.[11]

On October 20, 1946 the *Eliahu Golomb*, renamed the *Braha Fuld*, carrying 806 passengers, was captured off Lebanon by the destroyer HMS *Chaplet* and minesweeper HMS *Moon*.[11]

On October 19, the *Latrun* (1,279 passengers), was intercepted by HMS *Chivalrous* and the minesweeper HMS *Octavia*. Four people had died *en route*, and the ship was leaking and listing heavily when she was intercepted.[11]

On November 9, 1946 the *HaKedosha* (600 passengers), foundered in a gale and sank. The passengers were rescued by the *Knesset Israel*. The *Knesset Israel*, carrying a total of 3,845 passengers, was intercepted by the destroyers HMS *Haydon* and HMS *Brissenden* and minesweepers HMS Octavia and HMS *Espiegle* and taken to Haifa. The interception met no resistance, but in Haifa when the British tried to transfer them to transport ships to take them to Cyprus the refugees resisted fiercely, two were killed and 46 injured.[11]

On December 5, 1946 the *Rafiah* (785 passengers), was wrecked on Syrina Island in bad weather. The survivors were rescued by two Royal Navy and one Greek warship, and were taken to Cyprus. Women and children were taken to Palestine.[11]

On February 9, 1947 the wooden brigantine *Lanegev* (647 passengers) was captured by HMS *Chieftain* after a battle which left one refugee dead.[11]

On February 17, 1947 the steamer *HaMapil HaAlmoni* (807 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *St Austell Bay*, captured after a violent battle, and taken in tow by the minesweeperHMS *Welfare*.[11]

On February 27, 1947 the *Haim Arlosoroff* (1,378 passengers) was intercepted by Royal Navy warships, and the passengers put up fierce resistance. The ship ran aground south of Haifa, just opposite a British Army camp. The passengers were arrested and deported to Cyprus.[12]

On March 9, 1947, the *Ben Hecht* (597 passengers), the only ship sponsored by the Irgun, was captured without resistance by the destroyers HMS *Chieftain*, HMS *Chevron* and HMS*Chivalrous*.[11]

On March 12, 1947 the *Shabtai Luzinsky* (823 passengers) ran the blockade and beached itself north of Gaza, where the passengers disembarked, and most escaped a British Army cordon. Hundreds of local residents came down to the beach to mingle with passengers who evaded

arrest. Many residents were mistaken for refugees, arrested, and sent to Cyprus, with some 460 locals returned home the following week.[11]

On March 30, 1947 the *Moledet* (1,588 passengers) developed a list and suffered engine failure some 50 miles outside Palestinian waters and issued an SOS. Passengers were transferred to the destroyers HMS *Haydon* and HMS *Charity*, minesweeper HMS *Octavia* and frigate HMS *St Brides Bay*, and the Royal Navy towed *Moledet* to Haifa.[6][11]

On April 13, 1947 the *Theodor Herzl* (2,641 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Haydon* and HMS *St Brides Bay*. Passengers resisted heavily; three were killed and 27 were injured.[11]

On April 23, 1947 the *Shear Yashuv* (768 passengers) was intercepted by destroyer HMS *Cheviot*.[11]

On May 17, 1947 the *Hatikva* (1,414 passengers) was intercepted, rammed and captured by the destroyers HMS *Venus* and HMS *Brissenden*.[11]

On May 23, 1947 the immigrant ship *Mordei Hagetaot*, carrying 1,457 immigrants, was intercepted and boarded by the Royal Navy off southern Palestine. All of its passengers were arrested.[6]

On May 31, 1947 the Haganah ship *Yehuda Halevy*, carrying 399 immigrants, arrived in Palestine under escort after being intercepted by the Royal Navy. The immigrants were immediately transferred to Cyprus.

On July 18, 1947, the ship SS *Exodus*, carrying 4,515 immigrants, was intercepted by the cruiser HMS *Ajax* and a flotilla of destroyers. She was rammed and boarded but the immigrants resisted the boarding, and had put up barriers and barbed wire to impede boarding. Two passengers and a crewman were bludgeoned to death, several dozen were injured, and the ship was taken over. The *Exodus* was towed to Haifa, where the immigrants were forced onto three deportation ships and taken to France. When the deportation ships docked in Port-de-Bouc, the passengers refused to disembark after the French government announced that it would only allow the immigrants off the ships if they consented. The immigrants were then taken to Germany, forcibly taken off the ships, and sent back to DP camps.[13]

On July 28, 1947 the *14 Halalei Gesher Haziv*, carrying 685 Eastern European Jews was intercepted by HMS *Rowena*. Also, the *Shivat Zion*, carrying 411 North African Jews, was intercepted without resistance by the minesweeper HMS *Providence*.[11]

On September 27 1947, the *Af Al Pi Chen* (434 passengers), was intercepted by HMS *Talybont* and taken after violent resistance. One person was killed and ten were injured.[11]

On October 2, 1947 the *Medinat HaYehudim* (2,664 passengers) was intercepted by the Royal Navy. The same day, the *Geulah*, with 1,385 passengers, was intercepted by HMS *Chaplet*.[11]

On November 15, 1947 the *Peter*, renamed the *Aliyah* and carrying 182 passengers, ran the British blockade and beached near [Netanya](#). The passengers, all specially-picked youths, quickly disembarked and escaped.[11]

On November 16, 1947 the *Kadima*, a larger ship carrying 794 immigrants, was intercepted by the Royal Navy and brought to Haifa, where its passengers were transferred to the British transport ship HMT *Runnymede Park* and taken to Cyprus.[6]

On December 4, 1947 the *HaPortzim* ran the blockade and landed its 167 passengers at the mouth of the [Yarkon River](#).[11]

On December 22, 1947 the *Lo Fafchidunu* (884 passengers) was intercepted by [HMS *Verulam*](#) and taken in tow by the sloop [HMS *Mermaid*](#).[11]

On December 28, 1947 the *29 BeNovember* (680 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Chevron*.[11]

On January 1, 1948 the *HaUmot HaMeuhadot* (537 passengers) ran the blockade and beached herself at [Nahariya](#). 131 passengers were caught, the rest evaded arrest. The same day, the*Atzmaut* (7,612 passengers) and the *Kibbutz Galuyot* (7,557 passengers) were intercepted by the cruisers [HMS *Mauritius*](#) and [HMS *Phoebe*](#) and taken to Cyprus.[11]

On January 31, 1948 the *35 Giborei Kfar Etzion* (280 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Childers*.[11]

On February 12, 1948 the *Yerushalayim Hanezura* (679 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Cheviot*.[11]

On February 20, 1948 the *Lekommemiyut* (696 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Childers*.[11]

On February 28, 1948 the *Bonim v'Lochamim* formerly the *Enzo Sede*, (982 passengers) was intercepted off Cape Carmel by HMS *Venus* .[11]

On March 29, 1948 the *Yehiam* (771 passengers) was intercepted by the destroyer HMS *Verulam*.[11]

On April 12, 1948 the *Tirat Zvi* (817 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Virago*.[11]

On April 24, 1948 the *Mishmar HaEmek* (782 passengers) was intercepted by HMS *Chevron* off Haifa.[11]

On April 26, 1948 the *Nakhson* (553 passengers) was intercepted off Haifa by the sloop [HMS *Pelican*](#) after fierce resistance which left a number of people injured.[11]

Conclusion[[edit](#)]

The success of *Aliyah Bet* was modest when measured in terms of the numbers who succeeded in entering Palestine. But it proved to be a unifying force both for the Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv) and for the Holocaust-survivor refugees in Europe (Sh'erit ha-Pletah).

The immigrants who drowned in the sea and whose bodies were found were buried in the National Cemetery in Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

See also[edit]

- Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries

1. **Jump up^** Eliav, Arie L. *The Voyage of the Ulua*. Funk & Wagnalls.
2. **Jump up^** "The Exodus 1947". *Jewish Virtual Library*. The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.