

CRUISING ALONG

Jonathan Fishburn on Jewish seafaring from antiquity to luxury liners

All of the 2007 Kosherica cruises offer

State-of-the-art 5-star ships, gourmet glatt kosher culinary cuisine prepared on board daily by 5-star chefs under the strict supervision of the M.G.K. (Maritim Glatt Kosher), stimulating Jewish entertainment and lectures and daily *minyanim*, *daf yomi*, *shiurim*.

At Kosher Travelers, there's a Resident Cruise Rabbi available to lead prayer services, answer questions and supervise kosher food. Although we tend to think of affluent Jewish passengers on cruise ships as a recent phenomenon, even back in the 1930s the Cunard Steam Ship Company took its commitment to its Jewish customers very seriously. In an explanatory brochure (see overleaf), the management explained that the kosher kitchens

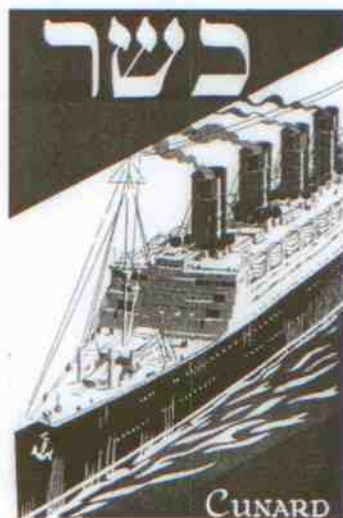
are quite apart from the other saloons and when not in use are locked, the key being in the possession of the Jewish Cook or the Chief Steward... Many of the waiters at Jewish tables are Jews and also the attendants working in other spheres of activity in which Jewish passengers require special service.

The brochure also tells us how Miss Katherine Spector, voted 'most beautiful Jewish girl in the United States', sailed in the *Berengaria* as part of her competition prize, and how in 1935 Chief Rabbi Hertz gave his blessing to the Jewish passengers setting off on the *Lancastria*, who were going to 'participate in the Prayer for our noble King and Queen on the occasion of their semi-Jubilee'. The kosher menu included mutton chops à la Homeric, ox tongue, strawberry shortcake and Palestine wines. I have recently purchased a collection of kosher crockery and cutlery used on board these Cunard ships, a sample of which is currently on display at the National Maritime Museum in London.

Strange to think that, during the same period, hordes of Jewish immigrants were desperately trying to board ships to escape grinding poverty or persecution in

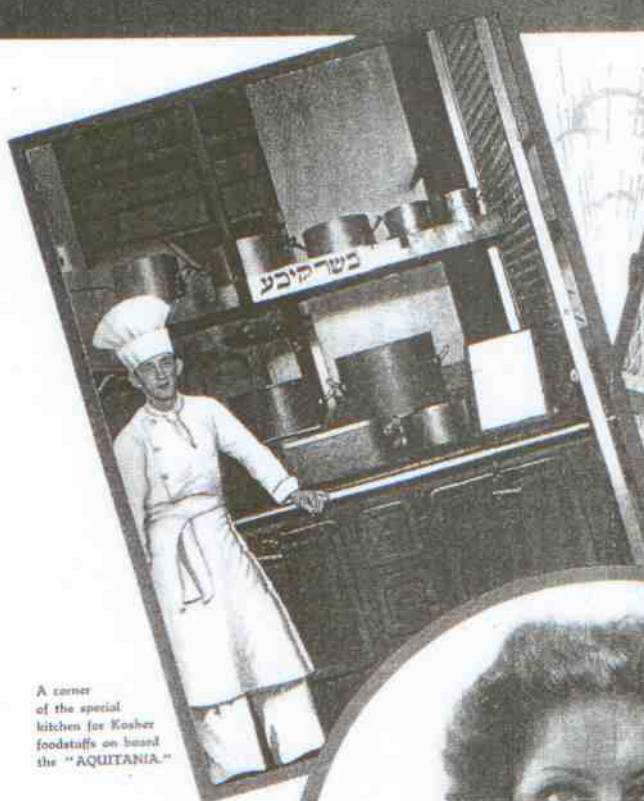
Europe and reach the shores of America or England. A 1945 brochure outlining the foundation of maritime activities in Palestine noted the movement of 322,671 Jewish travellers in the four years between 1935 and 1939 – an average of 80,000 persons a year. In 1934, three Jewish shipping companies were founded to handle passenger and cargo traffic. These were the Palestine Shipping Company, the Palestine Maritime Lloyd and the Atid Company, which between them launched seven ships (with a total capacity of 15,000 tons) and employed 200 Jewish sailors.

Since then, maritime studies have been firmly established as a serious academic discipline that can help us to understand the history of Jewish seafaring, first documented in the Talmud. (See Daniel Sperber's *Nautica Talmudica* [Gamat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986] for an exhaustive overview of shipping and seafaring in traditional sources.) In the mid-1990s, an eighth-century shipwreck was discovered off Israel's northern coast; Haifa University's Institute for Maritime Studies announced the find after completing its research into the vessel in January 2007. The wreck will provide valuable historical and archaeological evidence about the economic activity and commerce of the period. According to newspaper reports, much of the boat's contents was preserved, including 30 pottery vessels of various sizes and designs containing fish bones, ropes, mats, a bone needle, a wooden spoon, wood carvings and food remains, mainly carobs and olives. Not quite the menu one imagines would satisfy the passengers on a glatt kosher cruise sailing through the Caribbean in 2007. ☪



Jonathan Fishburn is an antiquarian bookseller specializing in Judaica (www.fishburnbooks.com). His latest catalogue has 1,000 items relating to Zionism.

Cunard for Kashrus



A corner of the special kitchen for Kosher foodstuffs on board the "AQUITANIA."

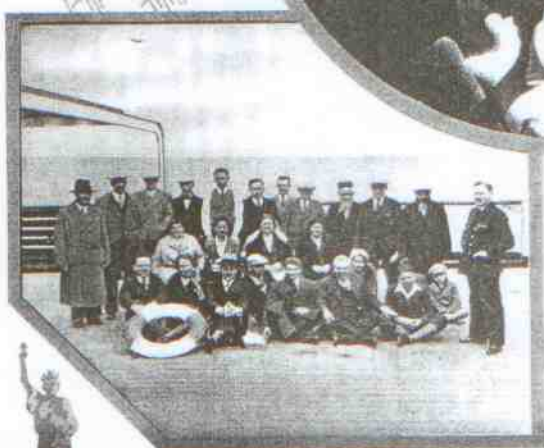


Cooking utensils for milk and meat meals are kept entirely separate.



Selected by vote as the most beautiful Jewish girl in the United States—Miss Katherine Spector.

Miss Spector sailed in the "BERENGARIA" en route for the Mediterranean cruise which was part of her competition prize.



A contented Jewish party which sailed recently to New York in one of the Cunard giant express liners.



A typical example of the comfort of modern Third Class by Cunard—the Lounge on board the "BERENGARIA."



CUNARD

