

MEÏR GOLDSCHMIDT AND THE MAIN CURRENTS IN 19TH-CENTURY JUDAISM¹

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ABSTRACT Although the noted nineteenth-century Danish-Jewish writer Meïr Goldschmidt (1819-1887) made his entry into literature with a novel on Jewish themes, his later novels treated non-Jewish subjects, and his Jewish heritage appeared progressively to recede into the background of his public image. Literary historians have paid little attention to his complex perception of his own Jewishness and have made no effort to discover the immense significance he himself felt that Judaism had for his life and for his literary works. Moreover, no previous study has comprehensively treated Goldschmidt's far-reaching network of interrelationships with an astonishing number of other major Jewish cultural figures of nineteenth-century Europe. During his restless travels crisscrossing Europe, which were facilitated by his phenomenal knowledge of the major European languages, he habitually sought out and associated with the leading Jewish figures in literature, the arts, journalism, and religion, but this fact and the resulting mutually influential connections he formed have been overlooked and ignored. This is the first focussed and documented study of the Jewish aspect of Goldschmidt's life, so vitally important to Goldschmidt himself and so indispensable to a complete understanding of his place in Danish and in world literatures.

Meïr Goldschmidt (1819-87) was the most noted and successful Danish prose writer of the mid-19th century (Hans Christian Andersen's and Søren Kierkegaard's major works fall into their own special genres). Although he first made his name in belles-lettres with a novel on purely Jewish themes and continued to produce Jewish stories, his later novels all deal with non-Jewish subjects,

and his feelings about his Jewishness have been largely discounted or ignored by literary historians. No focussed effort has been made to identify and document what being Jewish actually meant to him and what impact he himself felt his Jewishness had on his works, or to examine his relationship, as a Jew, with other major Jewish cultural figures of nineteenth-century Europe. Wherever he went in Europe – and he was constantly travelling and was well acquainted with Paris, Rome, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, and London – he invariably sought out and associated with the leading Jewish figures in literature, in the arts, in journalism, and in the Reform movement. His linguistic abilities enabled him to ignore language boundaries; although his knowledge of the Jewish *lingua franca*, Yiddish, was apparently limited, he spoke German, English, French, and Italian fluently. In his travels he built up a network of Jewish contacts and friendships which lasted throughout his life. He was influenced by these acquaintances, of course, but it was by no means exclusively a question of receiving; in highly significant ways he also exercised influence on major Jewish writers of German literature, for example.² No study has investigated this purely Jewish aspect of Goldschmidt's life, although it was probably the most vital and ever-present feature of his complex character, and was the source of many of his strengths (and perhaps weaknesses) as a writer as well as a human being. It therefore seems worthwhile to attempt such a study, so important to constructing a complete biography of Goldschmidt and thus no less important to the history of Danish nineteenth-century letters.

Perhaps the reason literary historians and critics have been misled into belittling Goldschmidt's Jewishness lies in Goldschmidt's own character. He must have been an extremely defensive and private personality, and was himself prone to minimize his own Jewishness to non-Jews, except when it was necessary to respond to anti-Semitic acts or gestures. His sense of privacy extended to his diaries, some of which in his later life he admittedly burned, along with private letters and papers – all of which would now be documents of inestimable value to researchers. In the extant diaries³ his entries containing names of friends and acquaintances sometimes

have to be virtually deciphered and read with great care, since they are frequently so terse and cryptic as to be practically shorthand notations. Fortunately, however, these brief notations can sometimes be corroborated and elucidated with the help of other sources. Through the use of all these sources it is possible to reconstruct this paramount aspect of Goldschmidt's life.

Meir Goldschmidt was born Meyer Aron on 26 October 1819 in the provincial Danish town of Vordingborg, on the island of Sjælland. As an adult, he unofficially changed his name to Meir as being more Jewish, and the expression "I am of the Tribe of Levi" became something of a motto for him. This he based on his family name; in his interpretation, "Goldschmidt" signified that his biblical ancestors belonged to the caste associated with duties of caring for temple treasures in the synagogue. Thus those ancestors had been second only to the *kohanim* or priests; in this way, Goldschmidt could lay claim to aristocracy in any Jewish community. His father's family had come to Copenhagen from Hamburg in the early eighteenth century, while his maternal grandfather had immigrated to Denmark from a small town in the German-Polish border area, settling in Roskilde. The name of this town, Germanized – or rather "Yiddishized" – to "Rothschild," after 1814 became the family name (a common practice at the time when Jews were forced to adopt permanent legal family names for the first time) of one branch of the family, which thus bore the name long before the German Rothschild dynasty was heard of outside of Frankfurt. Since Goldschmidt's cousin Benjamin (Lewis Meyer) Rothschild, who had emigrated to London, happened also to have attained considerable wealth (though not approaching that of the Frankfurt clan, of course), the coincidence of last names has made it doubly difficult to research his background. This fact is important since Benjamin and his family were to play a significant role in Goldschmidt's commitment to Judaism, his later life, and his literary activity.

Goldschmidt's father, Aron, married in 1819 and settled in Vordingborg. This was the year of the anti-Semitic riots and pogroms which spread across northern Europe, eventually reaching Den-

mark and Vordingborg. Goldschmidt was born soon after the riots, and his mother Lea frequently told him of the terrors of that experience, so that it almost seemed to him that he had himself witnessed it. He was thus able so graphically to describe these events in his first novel, *En Jøde (A Jew)*.⁴

Since there were not enough Jews in Vordingborg to support an organized Jewish community life, Goldschmidt's family drifted away from Orthodox Judaism. Lea's brother, who was notable for his unusual size and strength, lived nearby with his family, and it was partly due to the protection of his young cousins (presumably including Benjamin), who had inherited their father's heroic proportions, that Goldschmidt was not exposed to much anti-Semitic persecution as a child. When he was six years old, his father took him to Copenhagen to attend school. He was to live with his father's sister who with her husband, Heyman Levin, maintained a strict Orthodox home. It was Aron Goldschmidt's intention that his son would now make up for his lack of traditional Jewish training. During the year he lived in his uncle's household, Goldschmidt was enveloped in an Orthodox environment in home and synagogue, and he eagerly learned all its tenets, at the same time questioning many. In the meantime, Aron and his family had had to give up his business in Vordingborg and had decided to attempt farming in the village of Valby near Copenhagen (now a suburb). Goldschmidt then went to live there while continuing to attend school in the city. In 1829 the family had to move once again, this time to Copenhagen itself, where Goldschmidt's father failed in another business venture and the family had to return to the provinces, this time to the town of Næstved. Goldschmidt, however, was placed in a respected non-Jewish preparatory school in Copenhagen, where he soon established himself as one of the leading pupils. In May 1835 Goldschmidt's bar mitzvah took place in the Krystalgade synagogue, which had been dedicated only two years earlier, under the Chief Rabbi, Abraham Wolff (1801-91), who had succeeded Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793-1865) in 1828. Goldschmidt completed school with highest honors, and in 1836 he expected to pass the examinations qualifying him to enter the

university with the highest mark, but a treacherous and unforeseen question on religion – i.e., Christianity – deprived him of this honor. This may have been a deliberate act on the part of the school official in question, since Goldschmidt had been promised that he would not be examined specifically on this topic. Shattered by the experience, Goldschmidt never completed a university course. Forced to find a means to support himself, he – like so many other European Jewish writers-to-be – turned to journalism, establishing a provincial newspaper. Publications in absolutist Denmark at the time were subject to strict censorship, but the provincial periodical press, with its right to publish only domestic news, was not as closely watched as that in the capital. Thus provincial periodical publications were widely read, even in the capital, by those seeking news that could not be printed in periodicals in Copenhagen itself. Goldschmidt built a modest reputation as a liberal editor, and in a few years he was able to sell his newspaper for a respectable sum. His family was then divided, his father and a younger brother going to Falster to attempt to establish a small factory; Goldschmidt was left in Copenhagen as the sole support of his mother and two sisters. For a time he worked for a Copenhagen newspaper, then founded the periodical that was to make him famous, or rather notorious, in Denmark – the satirical journal *Corsaren* (“The Corsair”). During the six years of Goldschmidt’s editorship (under the names of a series of straw editors, to confuse the censor), *Corsaren* established itself as the most read and most feared periodical in Denmark; even the king was reputed to read it. It was during this period that Goldschmidt had his famous feud with the theologian and philosopher Kierkegaard, which has ever since been misrepresented – not to say falsified – by Kierkegaard scholars.⁵

In 1843 Goldschmidt made the first of many trips abroad, this time a short one to Paris, “to see, forget, learn, enjoy, grow,” as he put it. That he did all these is attested by his correspondence of the time. During the early 1840s, too, Goldschmidt had his first serious love affair, with a Christian girl, Johanne Marie Sonne (1825–1900). A son was born, and in 1848 the parents entered into a pro forma

marriage to legitimize him; the marriage was annulled in 1852. Goldschmidt took the son, Adolf (1845–1914), who became a well-known medical doctor, but a daughter, Theodora, he apparently refused to acknowledge as his own.

Goldschmidt was intensely interested in political matters in Denmark; he was always a liberal, and was at the time eager to have the absolute monarchy abolished, and to see the Schleswig-Holstein question resolved in a democratic way. In 1844 he attended a mass political rally, at which he was asked to speak. The occasion is historically unimportant, except that Goldschmidt's opening words became a sort of battle cry for him throughout the rest of his life: "I am a Jew; what do I want among you?"⁶

Goldschmidt had for years smarted under the constant discrimination against Jews, although Denmark was far from being one of the more anti-Semitic states of Europe. In a long nocturnal conversation with his Christian friend and fellow writer and editor P. L. Møller (1814–65), Goldschmidt vented his bitterness and resentment against the Danish anti-Semites. Møller, apparently utterly without prejudice himself, was thunderstruck by Goldschmidt's vehement outpouring, and at its conclusion, according to Goldschmidt, said, "With feelings like those, one writes a novel." The result was Goldschmidt's first novel, *En Jøde (A Jew, 1845)*, which experienced a sensational reception. European readers had long been accustomed to Jewish characters presented – by Gentile authors, of course – as comic, vicious, or (rarely) idealized cardboard figures. Goldschmidt's novel presented these readers with their first realistic depiction of the life of a Jew from birth to death. Jewish household ceremony and synagogue ritual were for the first time described by a Jewish writer. Many Jews, however, were alarmed by this publicity; the anti-Jewish riots and pogroms which had spread across northern Europe in 1819, the year of Goldschmidt's birth, had not been forgotten, and Jews preferred not to attract undue Christian attention.

In 1846 Goldschmidt sold *Corsaren*, and on the considerable proceeds he left his mother and sister Ragnhild (the other sister had married) in comfortable circumstances in Copenhagen and went

on an extended tour of Europe. Goldschmidt was an avid observer of all aspects of political and cultural life; nothing escaped his attention, and the list of the people he met during this tour reads like a who's who of the leading European intellectuals, particularly Jewish ones; it is primarily the latter with whom we will here be concerned. In Vienna Goldschmidt met Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793–1865), the son of a cantor in Copenhagen, who had been the “royal catechist” in Copenhagen from 1816 to 1821, and was now the spiritual leader (he was not officially a rabbi) of the Vienna Jewish community. Goldschmidt had from the beginning of his trip planned to visit Mannheimer, since he mentions the intended visit in a letter to his family, written from Leipzig on 2 November 1846.⁷ Apparently it turned out that Goldschmidt's father and Mannheimer had known each other as schoolboys, for Goldschmidt wrote his father on 18 November, “You, dear father, I am supposed to greet from your old school comrade Dr. Mannheimer, whose home I visit almost daily.”⁸

The fine new synagogue in Vienna had been dedicated in 1826, and the brilliant cantor Solomon Sultzer (1804–90) had been installed there. Goldschmidt arrived in Vienna on 12 November 1846, and the next day – a Friday – he went to see Mannheimer, who was very friendly and invited him to dinner the following day. Mannheimer's son showed Goldschmidt around Vienna, and Goldschmidt was a repeated dinner guest at the Mannheimers'.

Another outstanding Jewish intellectual whom Goldschmidt sought out in Vienna was the distinguished editor and writer Ludwig August Frankl (1810–94), whom he visited the day after his arrival in Vienna. According to Goldschmidt's diary, he went directly from Mannheimer's to see Frankl,⁹ so it is probable that Mannheimer referred him to Frankl. Frankl, born in Bohemia, had come to Vienna in 1828, where he studied medicine. Though he obtained his medical degree, he was never able to secure a position as a practicing physician. In 1841 he took over the editorship of a Viennese newspaper, and the next year established his own periodical, *Sonntagsblätter. Zeitschrift für soziales Leben, Literatur und Kunst*, which he directed until its suppression in 1848. Since

1838 he had been secretary and archivist of the Viennese Jewish community, and was thus in the position to know personally all the leading Jews of Vienna. Leopold Kompert (1822–86), whom Goldschmidt met at this time, had published his first picture of Jewish life, “Die Schnorrer,” in Frankl’s *Sonntagsblätter* at the latter’s invitation, and it seems highly probable that it was Frankl who brought the two younger writers together, thus acting as godfather for the new genre of ghetto stories. It was evidently a result of Kompert and Goldschmidt discussing their writing, especially the success of Goldschmidt’s recent novel *A Jew*, that Kompert began writing his own ghetto stories, the first collection of which was to come out in 1848. Frankl is mentioned in several succeeding diary entries, and he introduced Goldschmidt into several circles of Viennese intellectual life, including the “Juridisch-politischer Leseverein” and, apparently, the “Concordia” society of artists and writers.¹⁰ Both these social organizations were regarded by the police as potentially revolutionary, and both were sought out by visiting foreign intellectuals. Frankl discussed both in detail in his *Erinnerungen* (“Memoirs”).¹¹

Goldschmidt was simultaneously drawn to and repelled by Christianity – this was undoubtedly the attitude of most of the Jewish intellectuals of northern Europe at the time, considering the unrelieved oppression and discrimination prevalent over most of the area. But he never seriously considered the possibility of conversion. He remained true to Judaism, but it was his own form of enlightened Judaism, and he always regarded himself as an aristocrat among Jews. His travel diaries and his correspondence must be read with extreme care to attain a true picture of his innermost feelings in this regard; he always seemed on his guard about revealing much of himself even in his obviously private diary entries. His interest in and reverence for Jewish sites is amply attested. In Prague, for example, on 11 November 1846, he had been shown around the “new” synagogue by Dr. Saul Isaac Kämpf (or Kaempff, 1818–92), and he had examined the Jewish cemetery and visited the famous Jewish “Rathaus” or city hall as well.¹² Kaempff had been appointed a preacher in Prague in 1845, and was later to become

well known as Professor of Semitic Languages at the University of Prague, a post to which he was appointed in 1858. In Prague Goldschmidt also visited the tomb of Simon Abeles, the Jewish boy who had been killed by his father because he had let himself be baptized – an episode which had been so prominently narrated in Goldschmidt's novel *A Jew*.¹³

In Vienna Goldschmidt frequently mentions attending the synagogue. For example on Friday, 20 November 1846, he writes, "This evening in the synagogue and heard Sultzer sing."¹⁴ Salomon Sulzer (1804–90) was one of the most famous cantors in synagogal history; he is considered the father of modern synagogal music. He was widely recognized for his musical genius, for example, by such names as Liszt, Schubert, Schumann, and Meyerbeer, was the recipient of orders from Russia, Austria, etc., was an honorary member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and was a professor of music in the Akademie der Musik in Vienna. On Saturday, 5 December 1846, Goldschmidt was "at Rothschild's, Saphir's, and in the synagogue, where *Mannheimer* preached."¹⁵ The Rothschild here referred to is the Rothschild money dynasty's family branch in Vienna. Moritz Gottlieb Saphir (1795–1858) was the highly popular and at times controversial Jewish-born satirist and humorist. On Sunday, 13 December, Goldschmidt left Vienna for Italy.

In Rome, Goldschmidt was occupied for several months with activities typical of any cultured tourist – he visited museums, monuments, libraries, and other tourist attractions, and got to know most of the foreign sculptors and painters in the considerable artists' colony in that city, especially the Scandinavian ones. In his diary Goldschmidt gives few details of his reactions to his encounters with Jewish life in Rome, but it is clear that Goldschmidt never tried to hide his Jewishness, even when it would have been easy and expedient to do so. On the contrary, he went out of his way to demonstrate solidarity with even the least attractive of the downtrodden Roman Jews. He visited the Roman ghetto several times,¹⁶ once in the company of a Polish artist (the incident is described in Goldschmidt's published sketch "Ghetto"), who did not realize that Goldschmidt was a Jew. In the ghetto, the Pole

insulted a Jewish vendor, and Goldschmidt did not hesitate to take the side of the vendor, thus making his faith clear and costing him the Pole's friendship. Goldschmidt's little sketch on Titus's triumphal arch,¹⁷ with its representation of the menorah plundered from the Temple at Jerusalem, gives eloquent testimonial to his feelings toward Judaism:

... If I had at any time been able to forget that I was a Jew, if I had even for a moment doubted that my people's subjugation was anything but a dream, a delusion, if in my mind there had arisen the thought that history perhaps was nothing other than a fairy tale invented by idle poets, then there it stood here, hewed in stone, eternal, imperishable even in dismemberment!¹⁸

Then, referring to the enslavement of the Jews and the historically recurring necessity of their ransoming themselves in one or another form, he goes on, apparently touching on his own position,

... from this tribe sprang the Jew, my entire people, which has borne to this very day the mark of the slave on its forehead, and has amassed gold. And if one has conquered the gold thirst in himself and tried to overcome the slave nature, inherited through centuries, still the single word "Jew, Slave!" has been sufficient to hurl him down from the imagined height, from the seat beside the progeny of the barbarians.¹⁹

In the same sketch, Goldschmidt reveals that he has kept abreast of "modern" Jewish authors (although Goldschmidt was extremely widely read in contemporary European literature – he read several languages – it is curious that he rarely specifically identifies other writers whose works he has read):

I saw again the Jewish cemetery in Prague with poor Löbel's frosted grave, him they broke on the wheel ... I saw the rabbi flee from Bacharach on the Rhine, while his house was in flames²⁰

The first reference is to the story "Simon Abeles" in Hermann Schiff's *Hundert und ein Sabbat, Oder Geschichten und Sagen des*

israelitischen Volkes (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1842), which Goldschmidt had used in his novel *En Jøde*, and the second refers to Heinrich Heine's story *Der Rabbi von Bacharach* (1840).

In April (1847) Goldschmidt left Rome for the south, and after a quick tour to Naples and Sicily, he returned northward, visiting several cities in Switzerland, where he met the leading political figures in the civil strife between Protestant and Catholic cantons. He returned to Denmark via Leipzig and Berlin. According to Goldschmidt's diary (I, 175) on the day following his arrival in Berlin (18 September 1847), he sought out the Danish-speaking Jewish-born writer Friedrich August Leo (1820–98), to whom he had apparently been referred.

Leo, who was to become a noted Shakespeare translator and commentator, was born in Warsaw of Orthodox Jewish parents. The family came to Berlin soon after his birth, and when his father died shortly thereafter (in 1824), Leo's mother had herself and her son baptized. Nonetheless, Leo considered himself Jewish his entire life, and associated by preference with Jews (he was later to marry the daughter of baptized Jews). Having worked in Leipzig and Teplitz for a bookseller's firm, he went to Copenhagen for further training with the publisher and book dealer A. F. Høst (1811–97), who incidentally was to become Goldschmidt's close friend. There he met the leading Danish writers H. C. Andersen and Henrik Hertz, the latter himself a baptized Jew. Apparently under their influence, he decided upon a literary career. Already in his early twenties, he abandoned business, forfeiting thereby the support of his wealthy guardian and patron, and upon his return to Berlin, he entered a *gymnasium* (high school) in order to qualify himself for university study. He acquired his *Abitur* (diploma) at the age of 26 and went on eventually to earn the doctoral degree. In 1846 he had translated Henrik Hertz's lyrical drama *Kong Renés Datter* "im Versmaaße des dänischen Originals" (the translation underwent a third printing already in 1847, and by 1884 it had been reprinted 14 times).²¹ This translation was published by Carl Berendt Lorck (1814–1905), the prominent Danish-born Leipzig book dealer and publisher, also an acquaintance of Goldschmidt's.

In 1854 Leo was to marry, after a long courtship, Elisabeth Friedländer, the daughter of Heinrich Heine's cousin and early love Amalie (in turn the daughter of Heine's uncle, the Hamburg millionaire Salomon Heine). Thus Leo's bride was, like Leo himself, of Jewish background but brought up in Protestantism.

Thus for many reasons, it was natural for Goldschmidt to have been referred to Leo, and for the two writers to have much in common. Leo showed Goldschmidt around the city, and introduced him into intellectual circles. In his diary Goldschmidt mentions (I, 175) having a social lunch, apparently with such intellectuals, at the well-known Jewish hotel "Hotel de Saxe" (in the Burgstraße, in the Jewish quarter). Just before he left Berlin, Goldschmidt met the German writer Karl A. Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858), whose wife, the Jewish-born Rahel Levin (1771-1833), had presided over Berlin's leading literary salon, where Heinrich Heine had been a favored visitor in the early 1820's.

Once back in Copenhagen, Goldschmidt established another periodical, this time a sort of political and cultural miscellany bearing the title *Nord og Syd* ("North and South") and aimed at bringing to the Danes the political lessons Goldschmidt had learned during his travels. This journal acquired considerable significance during the 1850's, and added greatly to Goldschmidt's reputation and influence. Unfortunately, this influence had to remain indirect, since as a Jew Goldschmidt was barred from any political office. Although his political opinions invariably proved correct, he was also invariably disarmed and defeated by anti-Semitic opponents. For example, when he attempted to point out the dangers of exaggerated nationalism in Denmark, the leading religious Protestant thinker and writer N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) publicly announced that Goldschmidt as a Jew - and thus only a tolerated "guest" in Denmark - had no right to criticize anything Danish, and was not qualified to point out any Danish faults. This was more or less the last line of "reasoning" used repeatedly by Goldschmidt's opponents when Goldschmidt was proven right, and it never failed to destroy his position.

In the summer of 1849 the restless Goldschmidt traveled to Nor-

way (where he still had to obtain a humiliating official entry permit, since no Jews were yet permitted to settle in that land), and the next year his itinerary included Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt, and Paris. In Berlin he became acquainted with Aron Bernstein²² and visited Bernstein's *Reform-Gemeinde* (Reform Congregation), a recently formed body of liberal Jews who could not subscribe to rigid Jewish orthodoxy and who had set up their own synagogue, and had appointed the radical reformer Samuel Holdheim (1806–60) as their rabbi in 1847. During Goldschmidt's first visit with Bernstein, according to the former's diary, a certain "Madam Rahel Meyer from Danzig, a very cultivated and witty middle-aged lady"²³ also came to visit Bernstein. Rahel Meyer (1806–74), the largely self-educated daughter and wife of Jewish merchants, was to move to Vienna in 1852, where her circle of close acquaintances would include Goldschmidt's friends Ludwig A. Frankl and Leopold Kompert. She herself was to become a successful novelist, producing several two- and three-volume works between 1853 and 1865.

The following Sunday, 9 June, Goldschmidt attended services at the Reform synagogue (which had recently instituted Sunday religious services), where a sermon by Rabbi Samuel Holdheim greatly impressed him. The following day Goldschmidt paid a visit to Holdheim, and was surprised and somewhat confused at Holdheim's tolerant attitude toward mixed Jewish-Gentile marriages (I, 200). Goldschmidt must have been remembering his own affair and pro forma marriage with Johanne Sonne.

During the remaining time of Goldschmidt's stay in Berlin in 1850, he frequently visited Bernstein; the two evidently had lively discussions concerning Reform Judaism, and Goldschmidt writes of borrowing books on the subject from Bernstein (I, 201). After a short visit in Leipzig, Goldschmidt went on to Paris, where he spent his time mostly as a foreign tourist and political journalist. His specifically Jewish contacts seem to have been limited to his repeated visits to the mortally ill Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) – on 8 July (I, 206), 15 July (I, 209), and 17 July (I, 211). He later described his visits with Heine in his periodical *Nord og Syd*, in the

introduction to a review of Heine's *Romanzero*:

When I (in July 1850) came in to see Heinrich Heine, rue d'Amsterdam 50, he was lying in bed. He could not open his eyes except by grasping his eyelids and raising them; but when he began to speak, these black eyes became lively and radiant. The illness, from which he will never be cured, had made him thin and had given him a yellow complexion, and his beard was very long; but I think that I never saw a more beautiful poet's countenance than this suffering, oval, yellow face with those black eyes and that black beard. He seemed to me to be lying there like the symbol of his time and his poetry, beautiful, but with doubt and mockery on his lips, unable to live and unable to die, like the first half of the 19th century, which lies paralyzed in revolution and waits for the gravity of death and the gravity of resurrection. But he himself made a sad and uplifting impression on me; he, the sufferer being purified through great pain and in the midst of suffering, with the freshness of youth asked and spoke about poetry and – Judaism.

Yes, he spoke about Judaism, and when he had said a few words in which was expressed profound love, there came a little mockery, as if he actually were ashamed at expressing love. Warmth's gold coins of full weight were followed by some small coins, thrown down to placate the gods of the underworld, whom he has not been able to bring to release him from the contract that was concluded in his youth.

My recommendation to him was that I was a Jew – a glance and a few words – though his best friend Varnhagen v. Ense had given me a letter to bring along to him, which I later read to him. He asked me, after the first greetings, what I was, a question I really did not know how to answer. "Nun, was sind Sie denn?" – "O, ich bin wohl so eine Art von Poet." Heine burst out: "Eine Art von Poet? Man ist Poet, oder man ist es nicht!" – He asked what I had written, and I named *Corsaren*, *En Jøde*, "Aron og Esther," and *Nord og Syd* – all unknown to him, with the exception of *En Jøde*, of which he had heard mention, and now he asked me to relate the contents.

"Good," he said, raising one eyelid so that that whimsical eye's light fell on me, "It's not completely without

sentimentality; translate the book, then I will read it." – He said this, while I supposed that he would not live until the the first chapter of the book could be printed.²⁴

In the summer of 1851 Goldschmidt made what was to be the first of many trips to England. In the next decade, he even decided to emigrate permanently to England, to avoid legal bankruptcy and to try to make a new career as a novelist and short story writer in English – fortunately for Danish letters a decision which he in the end was unable to carry out. It was in London that Goldschmidt was most profoundly and for the longest periods immersed in Judaism, and where he was most deeply inspired by it, but where he was eventually to become embroiled in controversy with several of the leaders of the Jewish community. This led to his virtual, though unofficial, expulsion from London's Jewish community. Two of Goldschmidt's cousins were permanent residents of London – Martin Levin (1818–75) and Lewis Meyer (Benjamin) Rothschild (1810–84). Rothschild was a wealthy diamond merchant, unrelated to the Frankfurt dynasty. Goldschmidt was to be for years a frequent and welcome guest in Benjamin's home, and it is more than probable that Goldschmidt and Benjamin's English-born wife Hester eventually became lovers. Goldschmidt does not seem to have made many new Jewish acquaintances on this first trip to London, however; he was occupied by the Great Exhibition, probably the greatest European tourist attraction in history up to that time.

During his next visit to London, in the summer of the following year (1852), on the other hand, Goldschmidt became acquainted with many of the leading figures of the Jewish community, in both the Orthodox and the Reformed camps, and participated actively in this community. Prior to the 1840s the large London Jewish community had been traditionally divided only into Sephardim (of Spanish and Portuguese origin) and Ashkenazim (German and East European). Each group had its own synagogue, that at Bevis Marks and the Great Synagogue, respectively, as well as their own burial grounds. The great and wealthy families of the Mocattas and the Montefiores were representative of the Sephardim, while the

equally wealthy and prominent Goldsmid family belonged to the Ashkenazim. (Goldschmidt was to become acquainted with both the Montefiores and the Goldsmids.) Since the Goldsmids and the Mocattas were linked by both business interests and marriage, it was natural that they should want a common synagogue. In 1842 the Reform West London Synagogue of British Jews was established, and David Woolf Marks (1811-1909) was appointed its spiritual leader. Goldschmidt was later to become well acquainted with Marks, and was eventually to quarrel violently with him, and with other members of the Reform congregation as well. The Orthodox community, with its outspoken chief rabbi, Nathan Marcus Adler (1803-90), was strongly and volubly opposed to the Reform movement (Goldschmidt was to clash with Adler as well). It was in this still unsettled philosophical and religious climate that Goldschmidt found himself in the summer of 1852.

Goldschmidt arrived in London on Monday, 14 June, and apparently went directly to his cousin Benjamin's to live. Benjamin had immigrated to England, had made and lost one fortune, and had made another in the diamond trade, and had married an English Jewish woman, Hester Leverson. Through his wealth and open-handed generosity (he presented the newly founded Jews' College with a library²⁵, and sat on its board of directors, for example), Benjamin had become an influential member of the London Jewish community. Benjamin and his wife were strict in their observance of Jewish ritual, and were never associated with the Reform congregation, although their large circle of wealthy and influential Jewish friends included members of that congregation, and Hester's own brothers were active members. On the evening of Goldschmidt's first day in London, Abraham Benisch (1811-78), who was soon to become the noted influential editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, came to visit the Rothschilds. Benisch was born in Bohemia and had come to London in 1841 from Vienna, where he had studied medicine (without, however, completing a degree), and where he and Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), the subsequently well-known literary historian and bibliographer, had established a society for restoring an independent Jewish state in Pale-

stine. Benisch was an extreme Zionist with firm views on Judaism, and Goldschmidt was later to cross swords with him. But at this first meeting Goldschmidt was favorably impressed with him, as his diary indicates.²⁶

Goldschmidt immediately began busily visiting publishers and translators, evidently concerned with the English translation of his novel *En Jøde* (indeed, two translations of the novel appeared in 1852), as well as with a planned translation of his new novel *Hjemløs* (*Homeless*). After a vacation trip to the Isle of Wight, with Benjamin and his family (23–29 June), Goldschmidt was back in London, and on the evening of his return, he mentions (I, 262) a visit (to Benjamin's home) of Dr. Albert Löwy (1816–1908), rabbi and – along with David Woolf Marks – co-minister of the Reform West London Synagogue. Löwy, born in Moravia, had in Vienna been associated with Benisch's Zionist group.

On 30 June, on a visit to Mary Howitt (1799–1888), one of the translators of Goldschmidt's novel, Goldschmidt met a "Mistress Bensusan," probably the Esther Levy Bensusan to whom Mrs. Howitt dedicated her translation.²⁷ Goldschmidt subsequently mentions frequently visiting the Bensusan family and their cousin "Bravo from Jamaica."²⁸

On 3 July Goldschmidt visited the Goldsmids, the powerful and wealthy Jewish clan headed by Sir Isaac Goldsmid (1778–1859). The following day he was taken by the Rothschilds to the country home of an unidentified "Mr. Benjamin," where the family was made up of "genuine, but for the most part, comfortable, good-natured Jews." In the evening he was taken to the home of Charles Salaman in Baker Street. Charles Kensington Salaman (1814–1901) was a celebrated London composer and musician who had been a child prodigy, giving his first public concert at the age of 14. He had studied with Charles Neate, a friend of Beethoven, and had played piano duets with Liszt. Salaman was a highly successful teacher, composer, performer, lecturer, and writer, and had composed choral and organ music for the London Reform congregation. Two of his sisters, Kate Salaman (1821–56) and Julia Salaman Goodman (1812–1906) were successful painters, the former of miniatures and

the latter of portraits. Both exhibited at the Royal Academy. Two of Julia's many subjects were Sir Francis Goldsmid and David Woolf Marks. A third sister, Rachel, was married to (later Sir) John Simon (1818-97), the second Jew (after Sir Francis Goldsmid) to be admitted to the bar in England. Born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, Simon had early been sent to school, among other places, in Liverpool, where he had been taught by the young David Woolf Marks, with whom he became close friends. Early interested in reforming Judaism in England, he had been instrumental in having Marks appointed first minister to the Reform West London Synagogue in 1841.

On 9 July Goldschmidt notes (I, 267) that he had refused an invitation to the Goldsmids, but a few days later he paid a visit to Baron Sir Isaac Goldsmid, and on 13 July he sent a (presumably English) copy of his sketch on Titus's Arch in Rome to Anna Maria Goldsmid (1805-89),²⁹ Sir Isaac's daughter. Anna Maria was a well-known writer and philanthropist.

It is clear that during his entire stay in London in 1852, Goldschmidt was constantly preoccupied with Judaism and his personal relationship to it. Even when none of the London Jewish notables were visiting his cousin's home, Goldschmidt was earnestly discussing Judaism with Benjamin and Hester,³⁰ the latter of whom had her own informed and clearly-formulated, but rather conservative views on the subject.

On 16 July Goldschmidt writes (I, 270) of visiting Jacob Waley (1818-73), an influential member of the Reform congregation and a wealthy conveyancer, legal writer, and later professor of political economy at University College, London. He was the fourth Jew to be admitted to the English bar (1842). He was married to the third daughter of Rebecca Solomons, the sister of Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), who by reason of his great wealth, longevity (he lived to be over 100), and accumulated influence both within and beyond the London Jewish community was the virtual dictator of English Judaism.

During this same period Goldschmidt became deeply interested in Jewish history and philosophy, and, among other cultural

allusions, he mentions discovering Maimonides, as well as Mendelssohn, to whose *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (1783) he had just been introduced. In his diary of this period Goldschmidt only mentions attending the synagogue when some noteworthy occurrence is attached to the visit, but it is clear from his knowledge of local ritual that he was more than just a casual visitor to the synagogue; in fact, it is evident that he was at home in synagogues all across Europe. On Saturday, 17 July 1852, he writes that he went with Charles Salaman and his family to the Reform West London Synagogue. He describes the service there, which greatly impressed him:

They stood there with their tallis (blue stripes) in the beautiful synagogue (a quadrangular building, the gallery of which rests on delicate columns connected by beautiful vaulted arches). They sang beautifully, namely the 29th Psalm, Mirjam's hymn, and the Adon olom. The minister, Mr. Loewy, was dressed in Portuguese robes, pronunciation Portuguese; they sang as the shrine was opened, and the Ten Commandments were read out. Everything very simple, dignified and solemn.
— A good, short sermon on Isaiah 33:6.³¹

After the service, Goldschmidt returned to the Salamans', where he spent the afternoon discussing Judaism with Salaman's sisters Annette³² and Kate.

The following day Goldschmidt was taken by Hester Rothschild's brother, Montague Richard Leveson (1830–?), an attorney, to see the Jews' Free School in Whitechapel, which, however, was closed. Goldschmidt learned that there were places for about 650 children, but only 11 teachers, only 5 of whom were over 18 years of age. Goldschmidt was then taken to inspect the poor Jewish quarter in the area, which he describes with journalistic detachment. That same evening Goldschmidt had another invitation to dinner with the Goldsmids. The next day, Goldschmidt was driven by Sir Isaac Goldsmid around to the various London clubs patronized by the wealthiest members of London society, including the wealthy Jewish clans – the City Club, Reform Club, Conservative Club, Army and Navy Club, etc. (He was impressed

by the fact that many had their own libraries and bathrooms.)

On 20 July Benjamin gave a dinner party in honor of a noted Jewish doctor, Ludovik Hirschfeld (1811-76), at that time professor of anatomy at the Ecole pratique in Paris. Professor Hirschfeld, whom Goldschmidt had met several days earlier (I, 269), was the son-in-law of the Mawsons, successful art dealers in central London. Hirschfeld was later to return to Warsaw, where he had a noteworthy career.

On 22 July Abraham Benisch paid another of his frequent visits to the Rothschilds, and Goldschmidt give a detailed summary of his conversation with the rather rigid Zionist. Since no such private conversation with the well-known and influential editor is in all likelihood recorded elsewhere, it is worth quoting in full:

When I came home and had eaten dinner, I had a new conversation with Dr. Benisch about *Judaism*. He called attention to the fact that Christianity is not original, that it borrowed its spiritual content (morality and sublimity) literally from Judaism; but undeniably it has its enormous significance from the fact that it has translated this into Greek and Latin and into all other languages, so that the step from paganism to Christianity must be regarded as *progress* (missionary institutions praiseworthy); but the Jew smiles when he is urged to convert, although he recognizes that Judaism for centuries has lost itself in externals, in ceremonies, while Christianity has lost itself in dogmas and has created a new kind of paganism, has divided the divinity and has made ideas about it all too material. If anyone wants to understand Christianity symbolically and thus conceive of Christ merely as a divinely gifted human being, the thinking Jew has nothing against acknowledging it as a historical step forward. A step forward in Judaism was intended by the Portuguese Jews here in London. At first they wanted only to have the religious service in the City changed a little, then their demands increased, and instead of working, agitating, battling for a development, a reform of rabbinism, they rejected rabbinism and tradition entirely and wanted to acknowledge only the five books of Moses as law. But Mosaism either is

impossible or will lead completely out of Judaism. Mosaism prohibits eating certain animals, but it knows nothing of *kosher* and *terefah*. If one wants to reject the tradition about this, who will then say that tradition is correct when it translates *chasisir* with "swine"? The Reform Jews stop, fearful of the consequences of their thought, and buy meat at the *shachters*, etc., although their principle does not make it necessary, and although in details they frequently transgress these ceremonies (for example, oysters?). – It is also through tradition, rabbinism, that holidays are regulated (when does Sabbath begin?), and by discarding a holiday the Reform Jews are only placing their will uppermost without inserting anything definite and firm. But it is tradition that helps us out of the difficulty with the solar year and the lunar year. – Finally, marriage, monogamy, is regulated and developed by tradition (i.e., Moses spoke of marriage as it *existed* and was practiced), and thus the Reform Jews think they are acknowledging in the individual case what they in principle reject. Judaism as a religion, a religious community, is possible only through tradition, and therefore the Reform Jews should have had the matter brought before a general legislative assembly which could make changes in what the great legislative assemblies in their time ordained. Marks to the contrary. – Dr. B. thinks that reform will lead to disintegration; but won't the whole time in which we live lead to disintegration? Isn't civil freedom, enlightenment, Christian nationality incompatible with Judaism, and is there anything else to be done than to *conquer* Christianity? Thus I ask myself, standing, I suppose, on a standpoint of pure deism and not really being able to grasp and acknowledge religion's ceremonies and dogmas. Nevertheless I do acknowledge that morality, purity, faithfulness in marriage are closely bound up with Jewish ceremonies, with *kosher* and *terefah*, etc. Is there a necessity for a certain lack of freedom, a certain fear of mystical things in morality? Or is morality among people, as they are for the most part, helped by this, while superior persons could give themselves up to their thought and intellect, could acquire moral freedom and perfection without letting themselves be bound by morality-preserving custom? – Let us,

then, differentiate between what the individual, gifted, upward striving, perceiving, living in the movement of the spirit, needs – and what is necessary for the masses. Let us recognize that the individual Jew, as he develops to moral freedom, to self-determination and realization, frees himself from the necessity of ceremonies – just as ceremonies, completion, purity in this sense is utterly impossible among the Christians; that thus the Christian world is impelled far more strongly toward exerting control over itself through recognition than are Jews, who find rest only in ceremonies. – But on the other hand it must be remembered that we have not yet seen what Judaism is capable of producing. Civil freedom, the prerequisite for any development, is so new and so young. And Judaism has nothing to do with the very mystical superstition which of necessity has developed from Christianity.³⁵

During this period (on Saturday, 24 July), Goldschmidt writes of a visit with the Salamans, where the conversation turned to Rome and Judaism. Goldschmidt was interested in Salaman's description of the removal of the ghetto walls of Rome – an event which was to figure in Goldschmidt's next novel *Hjemløs* (*Homeless*). At the Salamans' he again met Rabbi Albert Loewy, whom he had heard preach in the Reform Synagogue the week before, and noted that Loewy lived at 50 Margaret Street, Cavendish Square (the Reform Synagogue at that time was located in Margaret Street). The following day Goldschmidt, evidently by invitation, went to Loewy's home. His notes of his interview with Loewy make an interesting counterpart to those of his conversation with Benisch:

Conversation with L. about religion. He said *that truth lies in the good*; that our time is not suited for real, profound inner religion and the immersion of the intellect in it; that as every time has its characteristic feature, the hallmark of our time in this direction is *a philanthropic striving* (cf. that sermon in the Berlin Reform Synagogue: we should not attain love through belief, but belief through love). – But doesn't the question then arise: What is the good – Concerning the

Messiah he pointed out that there were actually two types of prophecies: 1) Isaiah, who promises the reign of peace. 2) Ezekiel, who proclaims a reigning king. A redemption of the human soul, a liberation from original sin, an equalizing divine grace is not contained in the Jewish concept of the Messiah. – He conceded to me that Judaism, by wanting to preserve the people from producing the Messiah, is disregarding the individual for the sake of nation (“one for all and all for one”). – With this, even Judaism seems to acknowledge the universal significance in Christ’s self-sacrifice. He also conceded that Judaism *in a way* is more a nationality than a religion, and that unity with the Christians is possible in the future, but through the Christians drawing closer to Judaism. Christianity, which is Judaism translated into all the world’s languages and expanded with new, unreasonable dogmas, has perhaps already or soon will have played out its civilizing role. – It was difficult for both of us to say what should be substituted for *kosher* and *tereipho* and the like as a safeguard for family life and morality. Education? Upbringing? Zealous philanthropic activity? Fulfillment of duty? That is what I already thought to develop in *Homeless*. – The man himself, his great culture, his truly liberal intellect and lofty, pure mode of thought merit perhaps far more attention than all dogmas and all disputes over dogmas.³⁴

Goldschmidt’s reference to Samuel Holdheim’s sermon in the Berlin Reform Synagogue on 9 July 1850 clearly demonstrates the profound impression it had made on him, and at the same time underlines the struggle Goldschmidt was undergoing, striving to crystallize his own concept of Judaism, especially confronted with Christianity. His notes on his discussion with Loewy are followed in his diary by his own inner debate:

... A conviction! Something to believe with all one’s heart – that’s the secret in life, the key to happiness, to great work, to the soul’s development through action, indeed even through error. I have not had such a thing. For everywhere the binding material has been lacking. Nowhere have I found friends, partially because of my Jewish blood, but also

because no battle was fought to the end. But could I add that making a living – the necessity of earning, of hurrying, of writing – is a hindrance? This has certainly contributed much, but why do I nowhere find friends? And why do I nowhere find a cause? I regard passion as disturbing, and I try to keep myself free of it and to be many-sided; and nonetheless perhaps passion and one-sidedness is the condition for all practical action.... Wasn't Moses the word and Jesus the action, Moses the command and Jesus the model, Moses the letter and Jesus the spirit?

Hasn't *religion* in certain ways kept pace with *intelligence*, namely in the sense that they both are of divine origin, both God's revelation through the human soul, both complementing and supporting each other – measured by centuries, not by hours – until the consummation of humankind? – And are we then to allow ourselves to be led astray by the sight of sin, crimes, revolutions? – But isn't *grace* then necessary to procure a spiritual-heavenly existence for *those* who died at various stages of development? Mustn't we assume this, if we don't want to believe that the individual disappears vis-à-vis the race?³⁵

Further on in his diary Goldschmidt returns to the conversation he had had with Benisch:

Dr. Benisch asserts or acknowledges that in Judaism there is no dogma; it consists only of practical precepts, partly of purely moral significance, e.g., the Ten Commandments (cf. M. Mendelsson's *Jerusalem*). Consequently Judaism is really a nationality; cf. that a Jewess's child is a Jew. Plus a fine national deism.³⁶

Apparently in Goldschmidt's view, Benisch and Loewy agreed that Judaism was more a nationality than a religion. That he carefully read some of Benisch's works is attested by another diary note (I, 281).

On 30 July Goldschmidt wrote to his family in Copenhagen:

... Tomorrow I'm making a little excursion to Ramsgate and will stay there a couple of days. There I'm to be introduced to the Jewish baron, Sir Moses Montefiore, a famous man.³⁷

Goldschmidt was invited by his cousin Benjamin to accompany him and his wife Hester to Ramsgate – clear evidence of Benjamin's exceedingly high position within the London Jewish community. Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), the extremely wealthy and powerful philanthropist of international fame, was a member of the Sephardic community who had married an Ashkenazi (as had his brother Abraham), so that he bridged the two Jewish communities. The Montefiore brothers had been brokers to their friend Nathan Mayer Rothschild (Montefiore's wife and Nathan Mayer Rothschild's wife were sisters). Montefiore was the long-time president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the governing body for the entire English Jewish community, and was rigidly orthodox in his beliefs. He was an avowed opponent of Reform Judaism and in his position as president of the Board of Deputies had long refused to certify the Reform Synagogue for performing marriages. Nevertheless, when he was in residence there, all approved London Jews were welcome to visit his estate in the seaside resort of Ramsgate, on the Kentish coast, which he had purchased in 1830. There he had built and maintained his own synagogue, and at times during the mid-nineteenth century there was a considerable Jewish colony in Ramsgate.

One of Goldschmidt's companions on the trip to Ramsgate was Isidor Gerstenberg (1821–76), a wealthy Jewish broker born in Breslau and a British subject since 1847. He had at one time been a friend and patron of Karl Marx. Goldschmidt had first met him in 1851 at the home of his cousin, Martin Levin. There had at one point been some talk of Gerstenberg subsidizing the English translation of Goldschmidt's novel *En Jøde*.

Apparently one of the first visits Goldschmidt planned to make in Ramsgate, probably at Benjamin's suggestion, was to Emanuel H. Myers (1803–85), who, along with his brother Isaac, had been appointed by Montefiore in 1833 as minister to Montefiore's synagogue in Ramsgate. Although Myers was away at the time, Goldschmidt and he later became acquainted, and during Goldschmidt's visit to London in 1854 he mentions meeting and conversing with Myers several times.

Immediately after his arrival in Ramsgate, Goldschmidt sought out David Woolf Marks, the first minister of the Reform West London Synagogue, who was also visiting Ramsgate, and who had found lodging next door to Benjamin and Hester. Goldschmidt seems to have been a frequent visitor of Marks, sometimes in the company of Gerstenberg. Goldschmidt's diary notes of his conversations with Marks make an interesting comparison with those of Loewy and Benisch. Thus on 1 August Goldschmidt, referring to Marks, writes:

He bases Judaism on belief in God's revelation through Moses, God's unity, immortality of the soul. In all this, especially in the question of reward or punishment after death, he allows the greatest freedom and spiritualism. He thought that as soon as priests approach religion, there arise formulas of faith and dogmas. He said, "The Catholic church forbids people to read the Bible; the Protestant church invites them to do it, but as soon as they begin, it says, 'To the devil with you if you read it otherwise than in accordance with the 39 Articles (or our translation or explanation); then you should be damned.'"

Concerning the Law for Jews, it is contained in the five books of Moses and interpreted and explained by the Prophets. On ceremonies, *kosher*, *tereipho*, etc. he does not place any extraordinary weight ... but he assumes, incidentally, that the spirit's progress was the Messiah always revealing himself.

He conceded to Christianity no spiritualism in advance of Judaism, except in the unreasonable demand that one should *love* one's enemy, while Judaism requires that one do good to one's enemy.³⁸

At this point, Goldschmidt and Marks seem to have been friends, since the following day they made a trip to Dover together, but they were later to become bitter enemies. After the three-day excursion to Ramsgate, Goldschmidt and the Rothschilds returned to the Rothschilds' London home, where during the remainder of Goldschmidt's 1852 stay, Abraham Benisch and many of the other leaders of the London Jewish community were frequent visitors.

Goldschmidt read some of his manuscripts to Benisch, and the latter promised Goldschmidt help in finding a publisher, but apparently nothing came of the promise.

Goldschmidt, as far as is known, did not visit London again for two years, but in the summer of 1854 he was again living in the Rothschilds' home, and he immediately resumed his friendly contacts with the various members of the Jewish community whom he had met in 1852, beginning with the Charles Salaman family and including the Benisches. Other Jewish families whom he again visited were the Goldsmids, Gerstenbergs, Bensusans, Mawsons, Leversons, etc.³⁹ A new acquaintance was Benjamin Lumley (born Levy, 1811-75), director of the Drury Lane Theater, who was also a social acquaintance of the Benjamin Rothschilds. On 2 June, Goldschmidt met Disraeli, the Jewish-born Tory political leader, who had just served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and was later to become Prime Minister.⁴⁰

Goldschmidt had become acquainted with Abraham Benisch's wife, and shortly before leaving London in 1854 he talked with her without her husband being present. While the conversation, as summarized by Goldschmidt in his diary, was evidently not profound, it offers a rare glimpse of the thoughts and feelings of the wife of a well-known public figure in London Jewish society:

Mdm. Benisch says plainly that she cannot believe that everything which is in the Bible (the Old Testament) is worthy of a divinity. She believes that it is all human, that God nowhere has revealed Himself tangibly or comprehensibly for the senses. About Christ's death, she thinks that it was "more than a crime, a mistake"; without that stupidity, Judaism already at that time would have been reformed. She says that, relative to ceremonies, she blindly obeys whatever her husband prescribes as her duty. She also avoids expressing herself or bringing him into awkward conflicts, for a public figure must be cautious. She doesn't like needlework; helps her husband by keeping books. She does not like large social gatherings or conversation with women, but likes to talk with men about politics and literature.⁴¹

From this time on, Goldschmidt's few surviving diaries are too fragmentary to offer much material information, and his sparse surviving correspondence must be relied upon for further biographical data, including references to Judaism and Jewish figures, along with notes scattered through his published writings.

In December 1858, Goldschmidt met the German Jewish writer Berthold Auerbach (1812–82) in Dresden. He mentions this new acquaintance in both his diary (I, 396) and his correspondence; in a letter to his family written in Vienna and dated 31 December 1859 Goldschmidt writes,

My acquaintance with Auerbach in Dresden provides me with pleasure every time I think of him. It is difficult for one to imagine what a warm person he is. But curiously enough, he is quite without religious belief, but nevertheless declared to me immediately that he was a Jew *belef* (with all his heart).⁴²

Goldschmidt's next remark in this letter is interesting both in itself and for the horrifying connection it inevitably calls to mind with the events of the 1930s and 1940s:

I am amazed on this trip at the power Jews are seen to have. There are moments when it may seem to one as if they were the only effective, thinking, and acting people. If this does not bring about a new wave of Jewish persecution within fifty years, the world will come to look quite longnosed.

During his 15-month stay in London (August 1861–January 1862), for the most part with the Benjamin Rothschilds, Goldschmidt apparently kept a diary, as was his custom when he was abroad, and he refers to such a diary in his letters, but as far as is known, it has not survived. This is indeed a pity, since this period seems to have been one of the most productive of his life, and one of those richest in emotional experiences. His correspondence must largely be relied upon to glean data concerning his life during this time. The literary aspect of this period has already been discussed in a series of articles.⁴³ Among the Jewish cultural figures whom he mentions – but whom he and his family had apparently known for some time –

was the popular Danish Jewish painter David Monies (1812–94), who visited London and painted the portraits of Benjamin and Hester Rothschild. Upon his return to Copenhagen, Monies painted the portrait of Goldschmidt's mother.⁴⁴

In Rome in 1863, Goldschmidt sought out Salomon Ludwig Steinheim (1789–1866), the noted Jewish doctor, writer, and religious philosopher who had taken up residence in Rome in 1846, and who sided with neither the Reformers nor the extreme Orthodox in the Reform debate. In a letter to Hester Rothschild, written in English and dated 1 February 1863, Goldschmidt writes,

Then I went to a Jew, Dr. Steinheim, an aged, gentlemanly physician, who has retired to Rome, and who, after having in his youth approached to Christianity, has returned (unbaptized) with zealous love of Judaism, and now clings to it and to all of our nation, who seem likely to do honour to "the old people". He would feel exceedingly gratified for a copy of the music to the Song of Moses. Would you be kind enough to send it?⁴⁵

As Goldschmidt makes clear in a later letter, he did not at first know that Steinheim was a well-known poet, philosopher, and intellectual. He does not indicate the reason for his first visit, and it may have been to seek medical advice. In any case, Goldschmidt was to write Hester on 16 March,

Since last I have been almost entirely occupied with the works by Dr. Steinheim, of whom I wrote to you in my first letters. Accident only made me acquainted with the fact, that he is an eminent Jewish author (although by profession a physician – like Maimonides); he has published a very voluminous work on Jewish theology, and as soon as I learned this I returned to him to borrow his books. Although very philosophical and metaphysical the old gentleman delights me. He belongs neither to the Polish orthodoxy, nor to the reformers, of whom he says, that they might have produced good, if the spirit moving them had not been a more or less concealed desire of pleasing the Christians. In his introductory remarks to "Dogmas of the synagogue", in an article

headed "Friends and enemies of Christianity", he has without knowing him described Mr. Aaron Green, for he points out, how some ministers believing themselves to be orthodox but at the same time uneducated and superficially acquainted with symbolism, try to symbolize Judaism and thus carrying its reality off sap the very ground of our religion. They instil into the youth a so-called Jewish poetry, which in its very essence is Heathen, and prepares them in after life for Christianity. It would be of no use *privately* to repeat this to the London Jews, for they would not believe it, but it can be made palpable to them in another way. Dr. Steinheim touches the greatest and deepest questions of faith, and I learn, that the greatest German theologians (Christians) have thought it necessary to criticise and oppose him – for he attacks Christianity and proves an immense difference to exist between "the religion of Christ" and "the Christian religion", the latter having been manufactured through a mixture of Judaism, Heathendom and Platonic philosophy. He is very interesting and very cutting, sometimes. Among his minor works is an essay on the German poet Henry Heine, whom he claims for Judaism, and whose character he explains. I would like to be able to present him with a copy of "the song of Moses".⁴⁶

The Aaron Green mentioned was Rabbi Aaron Levy Green (1821–83) of the Old Portland Street Branch Synagogue, with whom Goldschmidt had had more or less violent disagreements concerning their respective interpretations of Judaism, and who was instrumental in forcing Benjamin Rothschild to "banish" Goldschmidt from London for a time.

Goldschmidt's reading in Jewish theology and philosophy was not limited to Steinheim's works during this period, for he mentions in the same letter to Hester Rothschild that he was reading "the rites and ceremonies of the Jews," evidently David Levi's *A Succinct Account of the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jews*. Also in the same letter, Goldschmidt writes of visiting Rome's ghetto, which he had first seen during his stay in Rome in 1847. In 1848 the walls and gates of the ghetto had been torn down, an event which

Goldschmidt had described in his novel *Hjemløs* (1853–57). He published a description of both visits in the sketch “Ghetto” in the second volume of his collection *Fortællinger og Skildringer* in 1865 (pp. 129–74); he seems to have written the sketch first in English, but the English version was apparently never published. In the letter, too, he had mentioned his intention of attending the synagogue in the ghetto, and this visit is also described in detail in the 1865 sketch. He, as a foreigner, was honored by being called up to the reading of the Torah.

In “Ghetto” Goldschmidt includes a short account of Steinheim:

In Rome lives a certain Dr. Steinheim, formerly a practicing physician and, if I remember correctly, a native of Altona. He writes with great zeal, even with passion, in favor of Judaism and against Christianity; he strives to set up a scientific Jewish dogmatics and to prove that the correct and sufficient consciousness of God lies in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and that a distortion of Christianity took place in the second to the sixth century A.D. He is a kind old man, but in this area impassioned, even intolerant. Nevertheless, he has nothing to do with the ghetto or with the body of ceremonies prevailing there.⁴⁷

In 1867 Goldschmidt was greatly impressed by an article on the Talmud which appeared in the English *Quarterly Review*.⁴⁸ The article had been written by the Talmudic scholar and librarian of the British Museum, Emanuel Oscar Menahem Deutsch (1829–73) and attracted the attention of both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars; it established the scholarly reputation of its author and was almost immediately translated into many languages, including French, German, Dutch, Polish, and Swedish. Goldschmidt himself anonymously translated it into Danish,⁴⁹ as is made clear in a letter he wrote to the Danish critic Clemens Petersen (1834–1918), the draft of which, dated 8 December 1867, appears among Goldschmidt’s published letters.⁵⁰ In it, Goldschmidt, referring to his translation, wrote,

I am sending you the little book now, and when I ask you to write a *good* review of it, I know that this request may be made without offending any law or rule, since the book is after all not *my* work; there is no personal service to me in recommending it. But it nonetheless stands in a very close relationship to me; for the few who want to, and in addition who can, see, it contains the key to what people in a friendly fashion call my poetry and to what you call my culture or breeding. This is namely not simply an individual product, but is in addition and essentially a heritage through the blood, and it is the singular enjoyment or happiness that I have had from translating the article, that it is as though I had been personally present at my own previous life, before I was born, and had undergone a kind of transmigration of souls, but in reverse direction, from the present to the origin instead of from the end to a new beginning. ... The more I think about it, the more singularly I feel my relationship to the Talmud.

Here Goldschmidt's own words need no further elaboration.

Similar to the effect of Deutsch's Talmud article on Goldschmidt was the impression made upon him by his first hearing the shofar blown by a real expert in this art. It is not clear when this event occurred, but it must have been in the early 1860s, and is described in his memoir:⁵¹

It was again in London, in my above-mentioned relative's house. I was there on a visit on the Jewish New Year, when he came home from the synagogue and brought along a man to blow the shofar for his sick wife. ...

The man quite simply wanted to let his wife enjoy hearing the shofar and saying the prayer of thanks. I was invited to be present ... and what immediately fascinated me when we came in was the man from the synagogue in his odd mixture of English gentleman and Polish Hasid (holy man). He was correctly dressed in a black coat, but had that characteristic pointed beard, and from his temples down on his cheeks hung those long curls that particularly the Polish Jews have kept as a sign of special observance. He was shy or embarrass-

sed at feeling himself among strangers and in a wealthy house; but at the same time there was in his eyes a sort of wild self-confidence, a proud realization that he had come as a *baal tekiah*, a master of the horn. As soon as he saw that we were all there and ready, he made a sudden movement, and with it there appeared from its place under his coat an object that had a magical effect on me then, and still does in my memory – the horn. So there I stood, two paces from the famed horn, poetically celebrated to me from my early childhood. ... It was a ram's horn, quite straight, a good two feet long, as an instrument the simplest one can imagine, without holes and without any mechanism at all; the sound must be produced by the way one sets one's finger between the lips and the narrow end of the horn ... now the master of the horn gave the master of the house a sign, a little nod, that signified that he should begin to recite the words according to the custom of the synagogue. There were not many words, namely only *tekiah*, *shevorim*, and *teruah* ... and they are thus nothing else than the priest's instruction or order to the musician ... I heard, listened with everything that was in me. The master of the house said "Tekiah" ... There came a sound, so dark, sorrowful, cruel, menacing, humbly calling, that I, strangely stirred, seemed to recognize it ...

The master of the house said, "Shevorim," and the same tone came in short, sharp blasts; he said, "Teruah," and the same prime tone came with a kind of trill, quaver. The whole thing was repeated and ended with the *tekiah gedulah*, the great blowing, the great trumpet call. Each time the man set the horn to his lips and the sound began, it was, in its incredible simplicity, equally surprising, astounding, moving. My blood cried out in me. All reality reeled, and the most unreasonable seemed at hand... there were blood, bludgeon strokes, cries for mercy, dying gasps in the horn, but above all sorrow – a sorrow so great that in it was room for the sorrow of the whole world, and mine along with it ...

Here too Goldschmidt's words speak for themselves; there can be no doubt of the central position which Goldschmidt's Judaism occupied in his life and works.

On 1 July 1879, Goldschmidt (1819–87) wrote to his sister from Paris that his story “Maser” in a French translation has been delivered to a man who is intimately connected to *Journal des Débats*.⁵² Morten Borup, the editor of Goldschmidt’s letters, in a note identifies the man mentioned as Alexandre (originally Abraham) Weill (1811–99), the well-known and extraordinarily prolific Parisian Jewish writer, citing an unpublished letter from Goldschmidt to his sister dated 10 July 1879.⁵³ Borup’s note makes it clear that Goldschmidt personally knew Weill (this fact further underlines the significant fact that Goldschmidt was well acquainted with virtually every Jewish cultural figure in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century).

During the late 1860s and 1870s Goldschmidt became increasingly obsessed with what he came to consider his newly discovered “Nemesis-religion,” and devoted years to “research” in the British Museum and Library and in other libraries in Europe, especially France, finally publishing the results as the second part of his memoirs, *Livs Erindringer og Resultater* (“Life’s Memories and Results”) in 1877. He expended a great deal of effort during the rest of his life trying, largely in vain, to explain this “religion.” The “Nemesis” volume has been an embarrassment and a perplexity to Goldschmidt scholars, as it probably was to Goldschmidt’s friends and acquaintances at the time of its publication, and is generally politely ignored by them. It consists of dilettantish efforts to trace the Nemesis figure of mythology back through history, confusing poorly digested bits of history, mythology, linguistics, and modern literature and art. Goldschmidt was evidently unable to produce a reasonable conclusion to the work, and indeed was unable even to define or explain intelligibly this “religion” – he simply hit upon the slogan “to recognize the Order and bring ourselves in Order” (“erkjende Ordenen og bringe os i Orden”) and frequently repeated it in his writings and correspondence during the final ten years of his life.

However trivial and disappointing Goldschmidt’s “Nemesis-religion” may be to the Goldschmidt scholar, it is important because it was important to him – as a person, but also as a writer. It is also

significant that Goldschmidt evidently thought of it in relation to Judaism rather than to Christianity; in a letter to Otto Borchsenius, the literary historian, dated 8 January 1879, referring to his “Nemesis” idea, he wrote,

I have demonstrated or wanted to demonstrate as a paradigm the growth of the collective Nemesis idea in an individual who became a personality. It is a non-dogmatic religiosity, based on universal human evidence. I have ... shown the idea growing up from seeds, from my blood and my race; from my father’s talk of secret justice ... from my father’s love, which could bequeath to me that which he himself did not own ...⁵⁴

That Goldschmidt’s “Nemesis idea” was related in his mind to Judaism is further attested by his reported conversation with a rabbi in Nice; in a letter to his sister from that city, dated 29 March 1878, he wrote,

... the rabbi in Nice ... who was here the day before yesterday and began a discussion with me about religion. When I then developed the Nemesis idea for him, it was as if he were in another world; he had never heard of the great discoveries, of Egypt’s language and religion, of the models for all religion which had lived there. But he burst out, “If that is so, Judaism will collapse!” – I of course replied that only the forms will collapse.⁵⁵

In addition to his various belletristic works, journalistic articles, and his *Livs Erindringer*, Goldschmidt discusses his relationship to Judaism in three articles which were not published in his lifetime. They were included by Morten Borup in his edition of *Livs Erindringer og Resultater* (the second volume of which is made up of *Nemesis*)⁵⁶: “Jødedommen og den danske Nationalitet,” (“Judaism and the Danish Nationality”) and two items to which Borup, apparently, gave the titles “Om Frimureriet” (“On Freemasonry”) and “Om at være Jøde” (“On being a Jew”). These articles give more examples of overt and concealed anti-Semitism to which Goldschmidt had been exposed in his professional career, but add

little to Goldschmidt's conception of Judaism itself.

The chronicling and annotating of the available pieces of evidence concerning Meïr Goldschmidt's associations with Jewish figures across Europe and his contacts with, and his reactions to, Judaism is useful for several reasons. The Jewish side of Goldschmidt's nature has been deliberately discounted by scholars, perhaps out of misplaced liberalistic motives. The Jewish aspect of Goldschmidt's biography has been neglected or overlooked, and it is too important to the study of his work and the understanding of his impact on Danish and world literature to be ignored further. His diary notes on personal meetings and conversations with leading Jewish cultural figures, particularly those leaders of the Jewish Reform Movement and some of their opponents, provide fresh glimpses of these historic personalities which may add significant details to their biographies. The very list of his Jewish acquaintances and friends is noteworthy, since it includes major writers, rabbis, ministers, men of wealth and power, and political figures across Europe, from Vienna to London and from Copenhagen to Rome. The second half of the nineteenth century, in spite of the horrifying persecutions at various times and in various places, was a golden age for modern Judaism, and at least in certain parts of Europe it was an age of opportunity to be Jewish, successful, and – within previously undreamed-of wide limits – free. Goldschmidt was a highly intelligent, cultured, and articulate witness to this age, but he was not a passive onlooker; his influence on such pioneer Jewish writers as Leopold Kompert and Aron Bernstein has been demonstrated, and the documentation of his reaction to the age and its intellectual currents can only increase his stature as an international literary figure.

NOTES

1. For this title I am, of course, indebted to that of the monumental work by the Danish-Jewish critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927) – with whom the older Goldschmidt was closely acquainted – *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes Litteratur* (*Main Currents in 19th-Century Literature*).

2. For Goldschmidt's decisive role in the origin and development of the new genre of the German "ghetto story" see Kenneth H. Ober, "Meir Goldschmidt og den tysk-jødiske ghetto-fortælling." *Rambam. Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning*, 31 (1991/92), 82-93.
3. *M. A. Goldschmidts Dagbøger*, ed. Kenneth H. Ober (Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab & C. A. Reitzel, 1987). Following references will be to volume and page numbers.
4. Translated by Kenneth H. Ober (New York: Garland, 1990).
5. The skewed version of this feud perpetuated by Kierkegaardians is still a sensitive issue and one dear to their hearts; in the 1970s when the present writer's monograph on Goldschmidt appeared, he was the recipient of a virulent hate letter, replete with the crudest of anti-Semitic remarks, from a Kierkegaardian at a state university of one of the Dakotas.
6. "Jeg er en Jøde, hvad vil jeg imellem Jer?"
7. "I Wien vil jeg besøge den jødiske Præst Mannheimer fra Kjøbenhavn." *Meir Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, ed. Morten Borup (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1963), I, 124. In the same letter, Goldschmidt mentions that he had had the forethought to secure, in advance, letters of recommendation to Jews in both Prague and Vienna. Thus he had planned from the beginning to seek out the prominent Jews wherever he went - further evidence of Goldschmidt's pride in his Jewishness.
8. *Meir Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, I, 127.
9. *Dagbøger*, I, 49.
10. See *Dagbøger*, I, 50 (entry for 14 November 1846).
11. Ed. Stefan Hock (Prague: Calve'sche Hof- u. Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1910), pp. 265-88.
12. *Dagbøger*, I, 48.
13. See Kenneth H. Ober, "Med saadanne Følelser skriver man en Roman": Origins of Meir Goldschmidt's *En Jøde*," *Scandinavica*, 30 (1991), 25-39.
14. *Dagbøger*, I, 52.
15. *Dagbøger*, I, 56.
16. See, e.g., his diary entry for 20 January 1847, in *Dagbøger*, I, 72.
17. First published in Goldschmidt's periodical *Nord og Syd*, 1849, V, 50-54.
18. *Nord og Syd*, 1849, V, 52.
19. *Nord og Syd*, 1849, V, 53.
20. *Nord og Syd*, 1849, V, 53.
21. Leo went on to translate Hertz's *Svend Dyrings Hus* in 1848 and Johan Ludvig Heiberg's *En Sjæl efter Døden* in 1861 (*Eine Seele nach dem Tode*, Berlin: Lüderitz'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung).
22. See Note 2.
23. Entry dated 7 June 1850; I, 199.
24. *Nord og Syd*, 7 (Oct.-Dec. 1851), 304-306; the entire review, pp. 304-23.
25. For an outline of Benjamin's life and his similar generosity in establishing the library of the Alliance israélite universelle in Paris, where he spent his last years, see Kenneth H. Ober, "L. M. Benjamin Rothschild, le fondateur

oublié de la bibliothèque de l'A.I.U." *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Paris), N.S., no. 14 (June 1996), pp. 2-4.

26. Goldschmidt noted (I, 256) that Benisch was "a broad, comfortable Jew" ("en bred, behagelig Jøde").

27. The Samuel Levy Bensusan (born 1872) who edited the newspaper *The Jewish World* in the years following 1897 must have been a member of the same family.

28. There had been a Jewish colony in Jamaica since the 17th century, and by the 19th century it was a large and prosperous one, consisting apparently mostly of Sephardim. The Bravo family was among the most influential; an Alexander Bravo had been the first Jew chosen to be a member of the Jamaica Assembly in 1835.

29. A member of the Berkeley Street Synagogue and an admirer of Marks, on her death she bequeathed him 3000 pounds sterling and Rembrandt's portrait of Menasseh ben Israel. She was a noted linguist and had translated Salomon's *Predigten* and Cohen's *Die Gottesmörder*; see her obituary, e.g., in *Israelitische Wochenschrift* (Magdeburg), vol. 20, no. 9, for 28 Feb. 1889, p. 70.

30. For example, on 15 July Goldschmidt notes in his diary (I, 269), "violent argument at home about Judaism" ("... stærk Disput hjemme om Jødedommen").

31. I, 270

32. Annette A. Salaman (died 1879) was a writer. Bedridden in her youth, she had compiled biblical texts illustrating Jewish teachings, which were later published under the title *Footsteps in the Way of Life* (London: Trübner, 1873). She also wrote and published children's stories.

33. I, 275-77

34. I, 278

35. I, 279

36. I, 280

37. *Meir Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, I, 175

38. I, 286-87

39. During this visit to London, Goldschmidt also became acquainted with the leading English writers Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, etc., but we are here concerned with Goldschmidt's Jewish contacts.

40. Goldschmidt described the interview in his journal *Nord og Syd*, N.S., VII (1855), 21-22. In a letter to his family dated 5 June, Goldschmidt laconically described his meeting Disraeli: "The other day I was introduced to Disraeli, who recently was England's Finance Minister and for the moment is leader of the Opposition in Parliament; he is, as you know, at the same time a writer and of Jewish descent, has a yearly income of 100,000 *rigsdaler*, etc." *Meir Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, I, 180-81.

41. I, 349

42. *Meir Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, I, 212

43. See Kenneth H. Ober, "Meir Goldschmidt as a Writer of English," *Orbis Litterarum*, 29 (1974), 231-44; "Goldschmidt's English Novel *Homeless*,"

Orbis Litterarum, 34 (1979), 113–23; “Meïr Goldschmidt’s Unpublished English Novel,” *Scandinavian Studies*, 52 (1980), 278–88.

44. The paintings of the Rothschilds have disappeared, while the portrait of Goldschmidt’s mother is now apparently privately owned, and is reproduced in *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, between pp. 32–33.

45. *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, 47

46. *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, 74–75

47. *Fortællinger og Skildringer*, Vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Steen, 1865), p. 145.

48. Vol. 123 (1867), No. 246 (October), pp. 417–64.

49. *Talmud. Efter den engelske Originals 4. Udgave* (Copenhagen: Steen, 1867).

50. In *Breve fra og til Meïr Goldschmidt*, ed. Morten Borup (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1963), II, 134–40.

51. *Livs erindringer og resultater*, ed. Morten Borup (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1965), I, 204–206.

52. *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, 131. Although Borup states that the translation was probably never published, in fact it appeared serially in the popular Jewish journal *L’Univers israélite* (Paris) in 1880–82, where the translator is identified as “Mme R.” – i.e., Hester Rothschild. Entitled “Maaser, nouvelle juive, par Goldschmidt” it appeared in the following numbers: Vol. 36 (1880–81): No. 7, pp. 209–12; No. 8, pp. 238–42; No. 12, pp. 369–73; No. 14, pp. 435–39; No. 15, pp. 469–72; No. 21, pp. 662–65; No. 23, pp. 791–94; Vol. 37 (1881–82): No. 12, pp. 366–69; No. 19, pp. 595–96; and No. 23/24, pp. 739–42.

53. *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, 201–202.

54. *Breve fra og til Meïr Goldschmidt*, II, 224–25.

55. *Meïr Goldschmidts breve til hans familie*, II, 124.

56. II, (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1965), pp. 181–84, 210–212, and 220–23, resp.