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Grace Aguilar's Correspondence

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Grace Aguilar's Correspondence

The writings of Grace Aguilar (1816-1847), the most popular Anglo-Jewish writer of the early and mid-Victorian periods, are beginning to receive a good deal of historical and literary critical attention.¹ After nearly a century of neglect, Aguilar's poetry, fiction, midrash, theology, history, and polemics are receiving careful reexamination to determine her contribution to the Victorian Jewish Enlightenment (or Haskalah), to Victorian literature, and to women's history.

Her writings are just beginning to be reissued, and in some cases published for the first time. Among the latter are Aguilar's letters, which are interesting on both historical and literary grounds. Several of Aguilar's correspondences have survived. She held a lengthy correspondence, of which eleven of her letters are extant, with Miriam Moses Cohen and Solomon Cohen of Savannah, Georgia, between November, 1842 and July, 1846. Miriam Moses Cohen, the niece of Rebecca Gratz, the religious reformer and founder of the Hebrew Sunday School movement in Philadelphia, wrote to Aguilar to express her appreciation for Aguilar's first theological work, The Spirit of Judaism. After Aguilar's death in 1847, her mother Sarah Aguilar continued to correspond with the Cohens until December, 1853. The daughter's and mother's letters—twenty-nine in all, written over a period of eleven years—are held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and have never been transcribed or published.

These letters illuminate a range of subjects. . From the perspective of Jewish history, they contain Aguilar’s reflections on theology and on the reform of English Jews’ religious life, confirming her place as an active participant in the Victorian Jewish Enlightenment or Haskalah, the English Jews’ movement into modernity. From a literary perspective, they help clarify the development of Aguilar’s literary reputation; they reveal her dealings with American presses, agents, and distributors; they shed light on her business acumen; and they suggest her opinions of contemporary literature, both her own and others’. From the perspective of nineteenth-century women’s history, the letters contain Aguilar’s reflections on domestic ideology, motherhood, and women’s literary aspirations, and are mostly written in the sentimental mode she crafted for her domestic fiction, including Woman’s Friendship, Home Scenes and Heart Studies, Home Influence, and A Mother’s Recompense. The letters end abruptly in April, 1846, probably due to the onset of Aguilar’s final illness, a somewhat mysterious spinal disease from which she died in November, 1847.

Though space limitations prevent a full transcription of relevant correspondence here, such a transcription would also encompass Sarah Aguilar’s letters to the Cohens, as well as several brief but telling exchanges between Grace Aguilar and several major and minor literary figures of her day. These figures include: Isaac D’Israeli, the author of Curiosities of Literature and The Genius of Judaism, and the father of Benjamin Disraeli; Robert Chambers, the Edinburgh publisher of the radical journal Chambers’ Miscellany, who published Aguilar’s important “History of the Jews in England”; Edward Bulwer Lytton, the prolific author whose novels included a Jewish historical romance entitled Leila; or, the Siege of Granada and who was the literary patron of the Anglo-Jewish

writers Celia and Marion Moss; and Isaac Leeser, one of Aguilar's editors and the publisher of the American Jewish periodical The Occident. Only recently discovered and never published, these papers are held, respectively, at the Bodleian Library (D'Israeli), the National Library of Scotland (Chambers), the Hertfordshire County Records Office (Bulwer Lytton), and the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (Leeser). They increase our knowledge of the extent of Aguilar's intimacy with other writers and publishers in Great Britain and the U.S., and reveal the intriguing rhetorical performances of a Jewish woman attempting to secure the aid of influential men in forwarding her literary aspirations.

I have edited out some parts of the following correspondence due to space considerations, and have minimally annotated the selections. I have preserved Aguilar's spelling and sometimes idiosyncratic punctuation. On occasion I have broken up long paragraphs for ease of legibility. When I have been unable to identify a word or phrase, I have marked its absence in the transcription with brackets, and have occasionally hazarded a guess [in brackets] as to the missing word.² All underlining for emphasis is Aguilar's.

* * *

[Letter 1, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 27 November 1842.]

5 Triangle Hackney

Sunday Morning 27 Nov / 42

My dear Madam,

I scarcely know in what manner to express my thanks, for your friendly and gratifying communication, of the 29th Sept, which reached me early in the present

month—Believe me a letter such as yours, required no apology—The Faith of Israel is the sacred link which unites all those who bear that Holy Name—We are as David so beautifully calls us in his 22 Psalm, “The kindreds of the Nations”³ and scattered as we are over widely severed lands have still the claim of kindred on each other—but even without that holy kindred the force of spiritual love and kindness which pervaded your letter, must have ever prevented my regarding it as the communication of a Stranger.

The answer which your own heart has given, to the precepts and feelings of my book,⁴ will I feel convinced enable you to imagine the pure and exalted sense of pleasure, which your information of the good which the “Spirit of Judaism” has been mercifully permitted to effect, must have given me.— The gratification of a successful Author in a religious work is only secondary,—compared to the delightful feeling of having contributed, to the comfort, the guidance, the encouragement of my Nation—I can truly say that the first thoughts of the book, the first, second, and third writing of the same⁵—were attended with prayer to Him from whom alone the power to so write alone could come—prayer, that it might be in His hands an instrument of good towards His chosen people—and He has answered that prayer.—Had I only received your account alone, I should feel He had [] blessed my task, and for that feeling, in addition to many others of pleasure, permit me dear Madam to thank you.

One sentence alone in your letter pained me.-- You wrote,--“Whence comes this change of heart. To whom is the glory and honor due? Miss Aguilar.”—Oh do not forget in your kind feelings towards myself that were this not some higher Grace, and power at work in the human heart, all I have written would be as a sealed book. “Not unto me—not unto me but unto this Great Name give Glory.”⁶—This spirit inspired me

to write—and it is that same blessed spirit at work on those who read. Believe me this is no fake humility.—I feel my religious writings so distinct from myself, that I shrink with pain and dread from any undue praise.—If more to me has been intrusted, oh [] how much more is demanded from me—If I know what is the right, none may know but by God—the bitter pang of conscience if I fade from that criterion of right even in those little things of which some perhaps think nothing.--

With regard to your request⁷—I will most gladly contribute my mite if the little I have the time to make should be acceptable, but employed as I am, filled in the morning and afternoon with pupils, five days out of the seven,—and only two hours or at most two and a half in the evening for writing, with very many correspondents in addition and their necessary work—you will easily perceive I have very very little time for fancy work....

Intreating you once more to accept my sincerest thanks for your truly gratifying communication—and wishing you every spiritual and temporal happiness, I remain

very sincerely yours—Grace Aguilar

P.S. I am sending with other fancy things some copies of a little work of mine called The Magic Wreath of Hidden Flowers⁸—a kind of game—the profits of which you are welcome to keep for the purpose of the fair. Should I be convinced to send more—on my own speculation—may I intrude upon your kindness by asking you to dispose of them for me?

* * *

[Letter 2, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 3 February 1843.]

Triangle Hackney

3rd February 43

Dear Madam

...I have also sent fourteen copies of my "Magic Wreath" two of which I beg your acceptance of for the fair⁹—the other twelve I should feel greatly obliged if you will dispose of for me-- I have not put prices to the things, because I do not know their valuation in America—and thought it much better to leave it to your judgment—the little books sell in England for half a crown each-- I shall feel much interested in your Fancy Fair—and sincerely trust it may accomplish the desirable end for which it is held—will you kindly oblige me by writing the particulars where it is held?--how attended? and the sum it produced? and whether you are likely to obtain a permanent Reader-- I long for that reform in every Jewish Congregation—I cannot bear the idea of our ministers being dependent on the generosity of their congregation, an approved salary, however moderate—and to be him to whom their flock may look not alone for religious instruction but for sympathy in their hours of rejoicing as well as of sorrow, a friend as well as minister-- They have accomplished this desirable object in the New Synagogue of British Jews in London and I do not [but] trust it will be generally followed—¹⁰

...The kindly tone of your letter addressing as it did a stranger, emboldens me dear Madam to ask a question, which perhaps is scarcely permitted to an acquaintance of so short a date as ours-- I have a brother (a lad of fifteen) who is particularly anxious to seek his fortune abroad—and we (his parents and myself) are equally anxious he should go amongst his own Nation where he may still adhere to his Faith-- Is there any opening for a youth in Savannah or Charlestown? He has been in a highly respectable counting house in London—and can be well recommended—He understands both French and German and has very good abilities particularly quick in figures—perhaps in your reply

you will mention if there be any opening, for such a youth—The tone of your letter prevents my feeling as if I were addressing a stranger—if I have been too bold in thus freely writing - pray pardon it-- Interested as you are, in the cause of our Holy Faith, you will I have no doubt understand the anxiety we feel to send him where he may keep his religion, even while we gratify his wish to leave England--

Praying you to excuse this egotistical epistle—and earnestly trusting it may find you and all dear to you in health and happiness I remain

Dear Madam

yours very sincerely

Grace Aguilar--

* * *

[Letter 3, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 28 June 1843.]

5 Triangle Hackney

Wednesday 28th June/43

Dear Madam

I have been waiting to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter dated 8 Jan'y, and received by me the 19 of February, until I could learn some intelligence of the safe arrival, and approval of the little box of fancy things which I forwarded to you direct, in a ship going from Liverpool to Charleston....

I should have written some months before to enquire about it and to reply to your last kind favour - but continued illness, and a very long task of writing which I had to complete in as short a time as possible obliged me to postpone all my correspondents-- Will you oblige me dear Madam, by a few lines on the receipt of this informing me all

you can regarding this rather strange silence.... I should feel much interested in an account of your Fancy Fair, even if, my things were lost in their way-- Did you have many contributions? and many visitors? Are there many of our Nation at Savannah? There is so little stirring of interest in our religion at present, and my life from continued indisposition, such a quiet one, that I fear my letter will scarcely be worth your reading;--

I have seen two numbers of Mr Leeser's periodical, but not read either of them—except the introduction of the first¹¹-- The undertaking seems very praise worthy, but I rather regret it should be confined only to very serious topics-- I think a diversity of subjects, so much more likely to become more popular, and wise attention to serious things—the kind sometimes required to be led unconsciously and gently to solemn thoughts-- My great wish also, is to see some vehicle for bringing forward, Jewish talent generally; I long to feel that Literature of all kinds is cultivated amongst us—and that the Sons of Israel yes and daughters too, might become [envied], not only for their adherence to their ancient Heritage, but in the Literature and arts of Modern times--

I shall send by this packet two poems on serious subjects to Mr Leeser, for his periodical, if sufficiently worthy-- I should be pleased to hear, if the one he has inserted has met with your approbation I mean “The Chamber of the Dying”¹²-- Have you seen any of the numbers of the Cheap Jewish Library. The Birthday and Caleb Asher I think extremely good--¹³ I have written for it, but my tale is not yet printed—they are very irregular in their publication—

Trusting most sincerely this letter will find you and all dear to you enjoying health and happiness, I remain dear Madam

yours very faithfully

Grace Aguilar

* * *

[Letter 4, Grace Aguilar to Solomon Cohen, 6 July 1843.]

5 Triangle Hackney

6 July [1843]

Dear Sir

As you so kindly offered to endeavour to dispose of some more copies of my Magic Wreath for me, I have sent all I have remaining in England to Liverpool requesting Mr Samuel to forward them to Charleston, by the first private opportunity. Of course I do not know when that opportunity may be, but as I can hand them by a private hand to Liverpool to day I think it better to take my chance of Mr Samuel being able to forward it thence to you—

As you seem to think I could have disposed at least of fifty in America --I regret much that I have only fourteen to send, but I shall send instructions to Jamaica, desiring that six or eight may be sent on to you by the first free opportunity from there—as in that Island, they now but lay on hand--

I wrote fully to Mrs Cohen the 3rd July packet, which I trust she will receive long ere this reaches you.-- I answered your very gratifying letter, in mine to her-- and I will therefore now trespass no longer on your time, but to repeat my acknowledgments for it—and requesting you to present my kind regards and good wishes to Mrs Cohen, remain

Dear Sir

yours very sincerely,

Grace Aguilar—

PPS The 14 Books accompany this note

* * *

[Letter 5, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 30 November 1843.]

5 Triangle Hackney

Thursday 30 November / 43

How can I thank you, and your worthy husband sufficiently my dear Friend, for the most kind invitation you have given me. I cannot tell you, how delightfully, almost affectingly, it has spoken to my heart, and to that of my dear parents. If you knew how often the prayer has entered my heart thus, thro' the sentiments which my God inspires me to feel and write, I might obtain the regard and love of my fellow creatures, you might in some degree estimate, the enjoyment your letters are to me.... That it is not in my power to accept your so warmly proffered hospitality, must not allow you to think one moment, that I do not value it.... When you hear, that I am an only daughter, that the health of my beloved Parents is anything but strong...-- I do not like to leave them for even a week at a time,--that there is no one but me, to give them a daughter's care and love—even when my brothers are at Home, for youths however kind and affectionate, are not like women round a domestic hearth, when you hear this my dear Friends, you will I am sure feel, that I could not accept your kindness without neglecting those nearer and dearer duties of Home, which our Law so blessedly and repeatedly commands.-- Perhaps I ought not to regard the remaining at home in the light of a duty, because that word, would lead some to believe, that as a duty it is a sacrifice of inclination—whereas- I am never so happy as at Home—feel...no privilege so precious, as administering to the

happiness of my parents - by the daily routine of domestic employment, and cheerful acquiescence in whatever our Heavenly Father may ordain.... As it is I can only express the earnest hope, shared by my dear Parents, that though now it seems almost impossible, still that we may one day become personally acquainted,--and that you may visit England some future day, when the dictates of feeling [] may be indulged, to a fuller extent than circumstances would permit now, and when we may be enabled to proffer you as warm a welcome—and hospitality, as you my kind Friends have so generously proffered me-- Have you ever read the Life of Mrs Hemans, by her Sister?¹⁴ She like myself was blessed with most kind American Friends, whom quite unexpectedly she had the happiness of welcoming to her English Home-- How earnestly I hope such pleasure may one day be mine!--

...With your spiritual feelings, and such dear objects of interest in your little nieces, I can quite understand that you feel less longing to be a mother than others-- Had you none on whom to lavish the love, with which a God of Love has stored our hearts—and to whom to teach Him and all His mercies—then I think you too might feel like Hannah¹⁵—whose yearning as mine were not unacceptable to Him for He not only granted her prayer but blessed her in her child—but not situated as you are or [] feeling as you do—you are one of those truly blessed ones, who receive enough from the hands of their God.-- My domestic circle consists of my dear Parents, and an unmarried Aunt, one of the kindest, and best of beings-- My eldest brother Emanuel who is just nineteen (eight years my junior) is most extraordinarily gifted for Music and has been in Germany almost a year studying his profession, as hard and steadily as for the bar, or any of what are called the learned professions-- I long to see him again, as you will quite believe for

he is one of the most domestic young men I know—Henry my younger brother just sixteen the youth—of whom I wrote to you in a former letter, is a Midshipman on board an East Indiaman—he started on his first voyage last August-- It is not the life we could have chosen;-- one that is fraught with many anxieties not for the dangers of the Deep for our God is with him there as on Land—but for the temptations and perils to which his Faith must necessarily be exposed—but when the inclination is so decidedly averse to any other line, and when in fact—there was nothing for him to do, either in England, America or the Colonies, and occupation was imperatively needed; a youth of sixteen of wild spirits, and unsteady habits, like the generality of boys somewhat too fond of pleasure—my mother and myself both felt, he was exposed to infinitely more temptation for transgressing the most important Laws of our beautiful Faith on Land, thus at sea that the blessing of God may rest upon Him, keeping the Spirit of his religion alive within his heart—that in riper years, he may be an Israelite indeed—is as you will believe our daily and nightly prayer—

--You will perceive my dear Mrs Cohen that I could not have thought you egotistical by having been quite the same—yet more so—and yet I have not mentioned my health which is thank God greatly improved—the Autumn is always my best season in England—Spring unnerves me, and renders me in general a sufferer from weakness all the Summer which prevents the exertions I should willingly make.-- I cannot bear that you should picture us differently circumstanced to what we really are, and therefore frankly confess that we no longer possess the independent competence, which was once the happy portion of my dear Father we are of those, commanded by an inscrutable tho' I feel to my heart's core, still Loving God—to struggle with earthly cares—to feel when

we look to the future—that our God is Abraham’s God—and “He will provide”-- by blessing mine and my brothers’ efforts after independence-- Will this lessen your kind feelings towards me—my dear Friend? Oh no—your letters are not those of the worldling—they are those of hearts, who look on all His children as their brethren—

--I am so very glad my little poems, in the Occident have given you pleasure¹⁶.... Mr Cohen’s article on Savannah quite charmed me-- I wish he would contribute more – pray urge him so to do-- I am now hard at work on another volume of a Scriptural Subject—which I earnestly trust to be permitted to finish and publish¹⁷-- My Spirit of Judaism has won such praise that I tremble for the fate a second work, it cannot be liked as the first—

...[M]y very best thanks for your most kind invitation and valued regard—believe me

My dear Mrs Cohen

Sincerely and affec’ly yours

Grace Aguilar

* * *

[Letter 6, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 3 May 1844.]

5 Triangle Hackney

Friday 3 May 1844

...In answer to what Mr Cohen terms his business letter—I beg to assure him, that it was most acceptable convincing me, at the very time I most wished it, that I really have an influential Friend in America more actively anxious to forward my interests than very many of my own Country-- My “Records of Israel” were published and in circulation

when your letters arrived—and Mr Henry Cohen of Philadelphia has kindly taken charge of a small case, containing 60 of the little books.--¹⁸ One of which, will you oblige me my dear Mrs Cohen, by accepting as a trifling token of the regard which you have inspired.-- I was staying from home when the books were put up—or I should have written your name in one and made it up for you—perhaps Mr Cohen will kindly do so for me—as Mr H. Cohen takes charge of them, I hope they will get to you free from duty the per-centage [agreed?]- I will willingly pay, as I am obliged to do so with the book sellers in England, that per-centage freight and whatever other expenses may attend the arrival of the books-- I shall of course depend on Mr Cohen charging against the receipts.-- I believe that is the correct business phrase—tho' I am so little used to mercantile letters that I must not depend on myself--

My dear Father, would also accuse me of being exceedingly remiss, in not, before this acknowledging the receipt of the bill for £14. 2. and thanking Mr Cohen (which I trust he will believe I do, more warmly) for the trouble and interest he has taken in the disposal of my little books-- I am sure the high price he obtained for them, has its origin more in the interest he has taken than in the value of the books themselves-- My “Records” are selling in England as 3/6 each book.-- With regard to publishing my Religious work in America, I feel really obliged to Mr Cohen for his exceedingly kind offer, but I do not think the difference in the expences of American and English printing, so material, as to incur all the additional charges of duty and freight in getting them from America, besides all the Custom home delays and [carrying prices?], which I may have to encounter as I had with the Spirit of Judaism.--

I intend publishing my Religious work—in monthly numbers at the small cost of 1 p. [?] each-- I rather think it will reach 16 or 18 numbers, and when completed will make two handsome foolscap volumes—of about 400 pages in each—the Subject is all the female characters of Scripture.¹⁹ I will enclose the particulars, which you will also find advertized in the “Records of Israel-- I am anxious to get as many subscribers as I can, that I may not depend entirely on chance sales—for at least the covering the expences—for more than that I can wait patiently, but I dare not publish at a loss-- If it should be therefore in your power my dear Friends, to obtain me any regular subscribers, I shall feel gratefully obliged, but do not come forward to do so, in any way unpleasant to yourselves-- The freights and duty may make the numbers twopence or threepence more in America as the Occident is in England, but of that I shall not decide till the books are out and sent over, as I mean to accept Mr Cohen’s friendly offer of being my Agent for them as well as the “Records,” without depending entirely on Subscribers—

We were amused at Mr Cohen’s underlined “without annotation” penetrating at once all it meant to express my Mother especially, as the notes to the Spirit never met her entire approbation²⁰-- I am so glad you like the first two numbers of the Perez Family—and am longing to send you out the remainder, but they are so exceedingly tardy in bringing them out, that the work never can become popular, and much injustice may be done the writers My Tale is intended more for young persons just entering into independent life, than for children for whom most of the others are-- I think the Occident a most interesting and improving work, but I am quite disappointed in not having any more of Mr Cohen’s contributions-- Pray beg him to write more...

There is a very beautiful article in the new monthly Belle Assemblée (a periodical for which I write) on the poems of James Russell Lowell—an American Poet--²¹ Are you acquainted with them? Surely the Literature of our two Countries Literature [sic] whose English tongue should mark its offspring of one Father Land ought to bring us nearer than we are and inspire the purest feelings between the Children of either Land-- Father is waiting to take this to the City with him—I can therefore only hurriedly Conclude—with the very best regards of my Circle to yourselves and yours—and remain

My dear Mrs Cohen

yours with the most aff.ate regard

Grace Aguilar—

PS- I ought in the way of business to say that I have received the money for the bill—

* * *

[Letter 7, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 30 Oct. 1844.]

5 Triangle – Hackney

Wednesday 30 Oct. /44

My dear Friend,

If you could only imagine the gratification, and pleasure which your awaited letters, always afford me, you would I think give me that pleasure still oftener.... I long for you to read all the numbers of my Women of Israel that are out. You will find so very many passages [entering upon?] one idea, that Home is Woman's appropriate shining scene—and that an amiable disposition and loving heart, are so much dearer in Woman—than their superficial accomplishments which to many make the sole end and scope of their existence. Domestic affections and duties, are not in general, brought as visibly

before the young as they ought to be—It is my longing desire to represent them in all their natural beauty in whatever I write, if it is of a light or serious nature—

I was much, very much gratified, by your kind transcript, from Miss Gratz' letter-
- The want she expresses, I felt from the age of 18—and satisfied by writing prayers exactly suited to what she desires, for my own [] use—but that I have done so, is scarcely known beyond the hallowed Circle of my own dear Family²²-- I dare not publish such a volume, as Miss Gratz describes—with my own name, amongst our nation in England. If even my Records of Israel—simple Tales as they are—are censured by would be critics as anti Jewish my Spirit of Judaism by many violently condemned and my prospectus of my Women of Israel, greeted with both hinted and expressed disbelief in my capacity to write it, my dreadful presumption, to attempt it because as a Woman I could know nothing on the subject—what would such kind encouragors say, did I issue a book of prayer!²³

Understand me my dear Friend-- It is by the Jews by my own nation—not by the English—I am so regarded. From the latter I never fail to receive sympathetic appreciation, indulgence, and the sweet reward of knowing that my works have been permitted to remove many prejudices, which ignorance had engendered.²⁴ Nor is it, all my nation, who regard me, as I have hinted above-- I have some kind and encouraging friends, but I do assure you, there are times when I feel as if I could not struggle up against, the difficulties I have to encounter, but my prayer is to endure far more than to receive earthly reward, and leave the end in the hands of my God. If it ever should be permitted me to write a volume of domestic worship I should send the no. 1 on to America and have it printed anonymously there--

I am very anxious to [send] you the conclusion of “[The Perez Fa]mily” with the remaining nos. of the “Women” but scarcely know how to do so-- I will write, how[ever] with particulars on the subject to Mr Cohen--

I quite agree with you in all you say of Miss Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott-- I think the former a very talented writer and her “Helen” is an exquisite work²⁵—but even putting aside her prejudice against us which I can forgive, for it is only very lately we have been really known,- I disapprove of the drift of her works—making reason, and calculation govern every action instead of feeling and religion-- I hate that cold calculating principle of making our own individual happiness, the first consideration—that even a good action is only to be done for the satisfaction it brings to ourselves-- “Helen” is quite unlike her usual style of writing. If you have read it pray write about it in your next. Is not Lady Davenant a beautiful conception of character? And Helen one of the most natural loveable creations ever sketched. Lady Cecilia fascinating in her very faults and General Clarendon one of those beings we must fear and love-- Beauclerc too is natural as Helen. You will smile perhaps at my enthusiasm, but I am passionately fond of Literature and to find sympathy in this taste, in my friends is so delightful--

I was a little disappointed that you did not mention the “Records of Israel” more particularly-- “The Edict” is a favourite tale of my own—and the reviews of the little work in the English papers most encouraging. Do you [receive the] new monthly Belle Assemble which comes out monthly in England? I have a Tale in that, “Florence or Woman’s Friendship”—which I fancy would interest you²⁶-- It is not all published [] yet—as I think it will occupy ten or twelve months—being only allowed a certain portion of the magazine every month-- It is [] a domestic English (not Jewish) Tale--

Are not “Records of Women” by Mrs Hemans very beautiful?²⁷ And Sir Walter Scott’s work—but I must not begin writing of him—when my decreasing paper so loudly warns me to conclude-- My parents send kindest regards to yourself and Mr Cohen. Pray mention me in all kindness to the members of your happy circle—and reiterating my assurance that I look forward to your letters as only of very dear pleasure

believe me dear Mrs Cohen yours most affeclly

Grace Aguilar

* * *

[Letter 8, Grace Aguilar to Solomon Cohen, 1 Nov. 1844.]

5 Triangle Hackney

Friday 1 Nov 1844—

My dear Sir—

Your having so kindly constituted yourself my agent [] occasions my addressing you separately from Mrs Cohen—fearing that business details, might occupy too much of a [] letter. Allow me first to thank you sincerely, for all the exertions you have already made in my service.... I am quite satisfied that agents should be had for the sale of my books in the principal towns of America as that is the only way to make them [] known, but not being on the spot myself unless I have a friend to act for me, in [appointing?] them subagents I fear trusting [in them?]. [It] will be but a losing concern—even now Mr Leeser has not remitted to me, or even accounted for the Sales of the “Spirit of Judaism” in some of the Towns and Colonies to which he sent them—and therefore except to those sent to Philadelphia—I did not wish to trouble him further²⁸-- He appears to me to have become very lukewarm in my cause never having written a single line even to

acknowledge the receipt of the 25 copies of the 1st number of my “Women of Israel”—and his review of my Records, by accepting the fake charges of the Voice of Jacob was calculated greatly to injure the sale of the book-- I wrote him a private letter of expostulation, with a public one intended for [inclusion] in the Occident explaining away entirely, the charge against my little work—to which I have received no reply whatever²⁹—On him therefore I cannot depend—but on you by your friendly letters I feel I can—and it is to...brush up the memories of my subagents in the divers Towns that I look to you my dear Sir, more even than to your personal exertions in the sale of my books, for your time fully occupied as no doubt it is—I am sure cannot afford the leisure necessary for such employment.—

I am quite aware of the difficulties attending the sale of books intended for the Jews only—but the “Records of Israel” are equally intended, for all and every class of readers—and surely much more worth purchasing than the “Wreath”-- The English reviewers in eight or nine different papers [] of the little book most highly and encouraged [] [recomm]ending it to their readers many of whom [] purchased it—and even the Women of Israel tho’ [] [] for my own nation is subscribed and read with great interest by Christians amongst which subscribers I [approve?]—I am proud to number Mrs S. C. Hall—the Authoress--³⁰ In fact my works in England—find more appreciation [among] Christians than in our own nation-- Talent is little valued by the English Jews—but it is by the English themselves³¹--

There are now 5 entire numbers of the Women of Israel out—counting Sarah, Rebekah Leah and Rachel—and the Law, establishing the privileges of Woman as Mothers, Wives, [] Daughters—Maid Servants—and in miscellaneous ch[aracters]. I

forward 50 of each of these numbers [] [] [] earnestly seeking an opportunity, either of Mr Samuel of Liverpool, or Mr Cohen of London-- The former may be able to forward them direct to Savannah the latter will to his brother Mr [H.] Cohen of Philadelphia who no doubt will forward them to Savannah as he did the "Records" but as soon as I know how they are going I will write again.

I cannot possibly allow my dear Friend, that our Literature is read more in America than in England-- Within the last two years the reduction in the prices of books is such that not a house not a cottage need be without a copy of some of our [] but standard (works—above 70,000)³².... [E]very year the number of cheap [reprints] increases to satisfy the still increasing demand.

You must know I am heart and soul an English woman an enthusiast for my adopted country her government laws and talent—I cannot feel towards any other country as I do towards England The love I bear Judea is a different kind of feeling, but I have no prejudice, not the very slightest against America-- I never believe the accounts of English visitors about her, convinced that in their [] [] they could only have become acquainted with only a portion of her population-- I honor her struggle for independence, I believe she never was intended to be under the sway of a distant potentate but I grieve that England behaved towards her as she did-- I grieve too that we are no longer un[ited]. It is s]inful and unnatural to my feelings that two [nations] speaking the same language—owing the same descent—sprung from the same Land, should be as they are now, so unconsciously prejudiced against each other, as must always be the case where there has been a struggle of succession and war...as mutually to embitter both word and feeling. I confess too, to a strong preference of the monarchical

government such as England's over a republican—but these are of course a part of my love of my country—but tho' our politics and nationality be so different—I trust my dear Sir that this will not interfere with our private friendship but that you will accept the kind regards of my parents and the thanks of

yours very truly

Grace Aguilar

Will you oblige me by sending copies of the "Records of Israel" and of the Women to any literary papers which you can recommend as likely to review them

* * *

[Letter 9, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen and Solomon Cohen, 28 Sept. 1845.]

Clarence Place - Clapton Square

Sunday 28 Sept 1845

My dear Friends,

I fear that you have been long expecting a reply to your most kind letters of June 8—(received 11 July) and indeed if thought could have addressed you, you would have heard from me very often—but alas! the physical only too often fetters the mental, and when I tell you, that from the very week I received your most welcome communications until now I have had a succession of illnesses and very painful followed the weakness and lassitude of convalescence, you will I am sure forgive my silence and regret its cause. I am thank God now in some degree regaining energy and strength and I trust to pass the winter less painfully-- Gratefully, and earnestly my Mother , and myself both thank you both for your warm and affectionate sympathy-- indeed your last letter my dear, Mrs Cohen, increased if possible my longing desire to know you personally, so exactly did

your sentiments with regard to your lamented parent, death and Immortality—reflect back my own-- The very example of David comforted for the death of his babe by the thought that he should go to him I have brought forward in a little M.S. work on Immortality, which one day I hope to make more of—³³

...I had not seen the Philadelphia review of my book when you wrote but I have since and I was much gratified. Many Christian (English) papers have reviewed it in a spirit of love and praise which could not but be very pleasing to me alike as a Woman, an Author, and a Jewess. My greatest aim is that my works should always be feminine; I have an absolute horror of those of my sex, who would imitate the writings of the man and so cast aside the delicacy of thought and expression and even of creation, which should be their characteristic, and I have not only the gratification of seeing this aim acknowledged and praised in reviews but the unlooked for reward of the praise and regard of some worthy men, by whom I hardly thought my works would have been even read—and of those male friends believe me my dear Mr Cohen I count you one of the very first upon my list-- --

You must not my dear Mrs Cohen, be too severe in your opinion of Miss Edgeworth's sentiment towards the Jews--³⁴ She had no opportunity of either knowing, associating with, or hearing of us but as the very lowest of the low, degraded alike in mind and character, In the small village of Ireland where she principally dwelt—the only Jewish inmate was one of this cast and in Irish Towns—there is not one respectable Jewish family. Remember too when she wrote now nearly thirty or forty years ago prejudice even against respectable Jews was strong and [] as she was, we cannot wonder, tho' we may regret, that she should have portrayed us as she did. It was from

an ignorance of our religion, and our families, which, could she have ever associated with us, I am convinced she would have regretted, as much as ourselves-- It is to remove this ignorance concerning us, which even now must exist where no Jews are known, that is one of my principal aims in writing and I am truly thankful to say, that in more than one instance--I have been enabled to remove prejudice and create love--

I think Charlotte Elizabeth³⁵ an enthusiast as are all those who imagine that to believe in Christ and yet retain Jewish forms and ceremonies makes the better Jew-- an enthusiast not only with regard to the Jews, but on every subject that she touches—and as such, I have no dependence on her-- She began a correspondence with me thro' the Spirit of Judaism in June 1845 until the following May she used to write in the warmest most affectionate terms possible—after that, (her last letter saying she hoped even to see me soon) I have not received a single line from her-- I sent her books to review, wrote three times, requesting at least one line in reply-- she has neither written nor noticed my books-- The wherefore of such extraordinary caprice, I have vainly endeavoured to discern-- That she has dreadful health I am aware, but that would not prevent a literary notice in her monthly magazine, though it might a private letter-- A work by her entitled “Personal Recollections” no doubt published in America, will give you, much interesting information concerning her and very nicely told--

And now my dear Sir, I must answer your kind letter-- I do hope long ere this you have received the wanting nos of the Women of Israel-- I thought thro' Longman and Hart a speedy mode of conveyance, and it has proved quite the contrary, a source of regret and annoyance-- The loss too of the 50 copies of no. 1 originally sent (tho' by whom I cannot recall) to you, compelled a very great delay. I had some more printed and

sent early in August-- I fear they can hardly yet have reached you-- I am quite sure that however long it may be without hearing from you, that your kindly friendship is still working for me, and I am more obliged than I can express, for the trouble you have already taken-- Whatever plan you suggest I am most willing to adopt, trusting implicitly in your friendship and experience--

I do indeed rejoice at the awakening spirit in our congregations, over many parts of the world—even some division is better than the dead calm of stagnation—for there is no apparent evil in my opinion that is not over ruled to bring forth good—but a dead calm is as fearful to a nation, as indifference to an individual--

...Conversionists appear much more determined in America than in England--. We certainly hear of their Societies, but I know of no instance of their interference in private life, and I know very many amongst Christians themselves who abhor the system quite as much as we can³⁶—

I thank you from my heart my dear Sir, for your most kind offer of concerning a volume of domestic worship-- My own M.S. prayers are so essentially for private use and adapted but to my own wants that I could not lend them out as they are, nor in fact have I any copy but the one I use.-- To write prayers for a family would be very very much more difficult, than for an individual—in fact I sometimes feel as if it were impossible to write the first-- Still I do not dismiss the subject from my mind. I think of it continually and should it ever please God to grant me the power to write them, believe I pledge myself to send you the M.S. to be printed or not according as your own judgement may decide when you have perused it-- but when this will be I can not promise for I could not undertake such a work unless I felt something within me telling

me I could accomplish it. Pray do not think me unkind in refusing to have my M.S. prayers copied. They do but breathe thoughts—associations feelings which none but my God should know—and God bless you my dear Friends accept my Mother’s best regards—and present mine to those of your family to whom they may be acceptable, and accept for yourselves accept the warmest regards and sincerest interest of your Friend

Grace Aguilar—

Mention me respectfully and affectionately to Miss Gratz and pray repeat to her what I have written concerning the volume for which she is so gratifyingly anxious—

* * *

[Letter 10, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen, 17 March 1846.]

1 Clarence Place

Tuesday 17 March/46

My dear Friends—

I had been wishing to hear from you some time before your kind and ever welcome letters appeared.... I was rather disappointed my dear Mrs Cohen that you did not mention the Shunamite as one of your favorite portions of the Women of Israel-- I fancied you would have found much to respond to in her delight of at length being a mother-- But I ought to be satisfied by your truly gratifying mention of your [delight] in the whole work-- I am glad your dear little niece Fanny comes to you for instruction otherwise I could almost have wished you had had a girl as well as boy. So much in my opinion depends on the present “Women of Israel” that I always hail with delight such character as yours, and long for you to infuse its spirit into [] Womanhood.—

...I have had the gratification of enjoying some American talent in seeing Miss Cushman in Ion, and her sister in Clemanthe.³⁷ I never was more delighted, nor more painfully afflicted. The play is such a favorite of mine and having read it thoro' four or five times I was half fearful, that the ideal which I had formed myself could not be embodied, but it was most perfectly-- Mrs. S. C. Hall and Mrs. Howitt are both personally acquainted with the Miss Cushmans and speak as highly of their amiability and intelligence in private life, as of their genius. I am most anxious to hear another American Family, the Huchinsons of whom Mrs Howitt speaks in the highest terms. I assure you American Talent is fully, and affectionately appreciated in England-- [pained] indeed shall I be, in common with all earnest feeling minds, if a War take place between our Countries.-- I scarcely think it will be for it is not the Spirit of the Age--

I am so very glad, you penetrated the Authorship of the "Hope of Israel" and liked the "Infant's Smile"³⁸-- It is a favorite poem of my own and I am quite disappointed that the Occident which contains it, has not yet reached me, for I am anxious to show it to a very dear Friend, the Mother of the little boy whose peculiarly stout smile when an infant nearly four years ago, inspired it-- I should very much like to see your essay my dear Mr Cohen.-- From what I saw of your pen in one of the early Occidents, I only wish that you contributed to it more--

I do not however share your severe strictures on the Christian Religion. I believe so firmly, it is doing God's work and preparing the Nations for that great and glorious day when the veil shall be removed, and all shall know the One Sole God of Israel, that I can bear with its strange mysteries, calmly and I trust with perfect charity. Perhaps these feelings may have arisen from my knowing so many truly, spiritually pious Christians—

and my perfect conviction of their acceptance before God. I belief [sic] doctrinal points of comparatively no importance, in the relation man bears to man. More it is the Spirit of a Religion which works and the Spirit of the Christian Religion is the Spirit of the Hebrew, for both owe their origin to, and acknowledge the same living oracles of God-- What does the New Testament teach but that, which we Hebrews knew and followed centuries before?--

I hope you will have another serious work from my pen my dear Friends, tho' I cannot exactly tell you when—as it is not yet completed.³⁹ It is a series of letters, to a young girl, brought by affliction to enquire into Religion, and embraces many topics, which I think essential for the foundation of a firm Religious hope, and principle-- In youth doubts and questions must arise. They cannot and ought not to rest satisfied with the Religion of their childhood and it is to satisfy these questions my present task is undertaken.-- Most earnestly I trust if I am permitted to complete it, that it may receive your sympathy as much as my other works. I very often wish you could read my lighter books but I suppose I must wait for that pleasure, until they are published by themselves (if I ever am so fortunate as to do so) and not as now in magazines--

As soon as you can give me any information my dear Mr Cohen, on the sales and receipts of my “Women of Israel” I should be so much obliged by a few lines, even if you have not time to give me a letter.-- I am so perfectly in ignorance, as to even the mode or agents of their sale—80 copies of each number I have sent over to America-- and I am naturally anxious for some account of them. Mr Leeser is not at all a regular correspondent-- In fact for business details I cannot depend on him at all-- Will you therefore my dear Sir, give me what information you can.

...[B]elieve me my dear Friends

Affectionately and cordially yours

Grace Aguilar—

* * *

[Letter 11, Grace Aguilar to Miriam Moses Cohen and Solomon Cohen, 2 April 1846.]

Clarence Place Clapton Square

Near London

Wednesday 2 April / 46

Mr and Mrs Solomon Cohen—

I write in the hope of being in time for the steamer my dear Friends, for I do not wish to postpone answering your most kind letter of 5 Feb. for two reasons, firstly, to offer you in my dear Mother's name and my own, our most affectionate and earnest congratulations, on the birth of a Son—and to say how fully and earnestly we can both sympathize in the [] happiness such a precious gift must bring-- May our Father in Heaven grant that he may be indeed both blessed, and blessing and be spared to lavish on his tender parents in their age all the affection and care they will lavish on his infancy and boyhood.

I long for you to read the "Shunamite" in my Women of Israel for there love more than in "Jochebed," you will I think find a still closer analogy to your stout heart-- It (the Shunamite) is one of my most favorite Scripture characters dwelling upon her feelings and the unexpected gift of a Son, after having been so long childless, has well enabled me to sympathize in your feelings my kind Friends--⁴⁰ My Mother can sympathize with you from experience—for she had no child for seven years and then I was born and an only

child for eight years without any hope of having brothers or sisters—and then my gifted brother Emanuel was granted her, and then my darling Sailor, Henry three years afterward, and my brother Emanuel is not 21 till next August (I am 29 in June) and already has with his playing and compositions been spoken of in several Gentleman's papers in terms of the very highest praise—and as [] at such proficiency in so very young a man—God in his infinite Mercy spare him to us to perfect, not only his glorious talent; but the domestic and manly duties, which [make] him so inexpressibly dear! I cannot wish you a dearer blessing, than that your eight year darling, may be to you like what my eight year brother is, to his Mother and myself...my dear Friends.

I am quite as egotistical as I wish you to be—.... [T]hank you for the bill of £6.4.15 which is duly accepted, and the cash received by me last Monday morning.... I waited in vain for a ship to Savannah and at last, only the second week in March was compelled to request Mr Samuel of Liverpool to forward them to Mr Leeser at Philadelphia—nos 1 to 8 completing the vol—and 50 copies of each number-- I requested him to retain the number he required and forward the rest to you but if you my dear Mr Cohen, can recommend me an Agent at New York perhaps you will receive this letter in time to oblige me by writing to Mr Leeser and requesting him send the number of copies which does not require, to New York instead of to you-- [Mrs] Higgerton and [Sale?] are Mr Leeser's friends I believe--are they Booksellers? And if so—can you recommend them as Agents? I should most thankfully abide by your advice, with regard to having an Agent at New York—but I know not whom to choose, and shall feel still more obliged if you can and will introduce me to some one gifted for such office—

Nos 11 and 12 I have sent thro' Longmans to Mr Leeser 80 copies instead of the usual 30 which including the 50 originally intended for Savannah—50 of Nos 9 and 10 were made up to go to Savannah—but not having been forwarded to Liverpool, did not go with the others to Philadelphia—but shall be forwarded to Mr Leeser, as soon as I can determine how--

I can scarcely tell you my dear Friends the delicious feelings of grateful happiness, which your true warmhearted appreciation of my books and regard for myself (which judging from my own feelings towards you, I know to be sincere) always occasions me-- Mere praise, reviewers' praise—I read as calmly and unconcernedly as, if I were reading of some one else, for without being at all conceited, I know my own capabilities, my own faults, and yet more the difficulties of my task and the labors it demands, better than any mere critique,⁴¹ but your letters, when they come to my books, I never can read without tears stinging my eyes—and the grateful thanksgiving [], that thro' His own precious gift my Father in Heaven has given me such true appreciating Friends.-- You do not indeed know me personally but believe me you know me far more truly, than many who because we often meet, think they know me well-- I cannot write without throwing heart and mind upon my page—and only the electric kind of sympathy is struck, in personal intercourse. Neither mind, nor heart dare I reveal—

[P]erhaps your Friendship [seems] more valuable than ever, now that my heart, tho' composed still and even happy in the quiet routine of Home, yet...yearns to look once more on that beloved Friend and Father, whom since I last wrote, it has pleased my God to call unto Himself-- I would not call him back to Earth oh not for all tho' bliss it would be to feel his kiss or his dear voice once more-- I feel so convinced the exchange

to him is such perfect bliss—but all I have lost words can but faintly tell-- I have often looked [] (not only now but years ago) and seen none so blessed with such a Father-- Seventeen years ago, he was so ill as to be compelled to give up business and retire to Devonshire and from that [], our medical man assures us, it was a special Power that spared him to us and I feel it so, for had he been taken then I should scarcely have [] my Father and my Mother could not—and now I look back on those seventeen years and bless God for their [] memories and their fond associations—in every...pleasure in every employment he gave me sympathy—and such deep love-- You will imagine then the trial of our loss—and yet we have been consoled no[w] only by the fond conviction that he is happy, is [] as in Spirit---a conviction which never leaves us for a moment but that God spared him in His great Mercy, the suffering which had he been one week longer must have been most dreadful and his death was so calm, so blessed, that it was [] as if he had fallen asleep on my arm as he had so often done before-- We lost him the 18 Jany. Since then my brother Emanuel came to us from Germany....

The full direction is at the commencement of this letter-- I fear this will be but an uninteresting communication my dear Friends, but I will try and be more entertaining next time—pray do not allow so long a time to elapse without giving me the pleasure of hearing regards from you and with many hopes to your little boy—and your nieces if they know me, and kind regards to the other members of your Circle

believe me

Yours most cordially

Grace Aguilar—

My Mother desires her kind regards. In the top of W[omen] of I[srael] intended for Savannah, is the continuation of The Perez Family which I am very vexed at your not having--

¹ See Michael Ragussis, Figures of Conversion: the 'Jewish Question' and English National Identity (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Michael Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996) and "Engendering Liberal Jews: Jewish Women in Victorian England" in Judith R. Baskin, ed., Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, 2nd ed., (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp. 208-226; Cynthia Scheinberg, ed., Victorian Literature and Culture, Special Issue on Anglo-Jewish Literature (1999); Dianne Ashton, Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997); Lance J. Sussman, Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

² Miriam Gratz Moses Papers, Manuscripts Department Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Southern Historical Collection #2639, Series 1, Folder 8. All letters to Miriam and Solomon Cohen are from this collection.

³ Ps. 22:27.

⁴ The book is The Spirit of Judaism, Aguilar's meditation on the Sh'ma and her first major theological statement. It was the first book to be published by Isaac Leeser's Jewish Publication Society of America in 1842.

⁵ Aguilar's first completed manuscript of Spirit of Judaism was lost en route to the United States in 1840 and had to be rewritten. See Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, 138.

⁶ Aguilar is significantly altering Ps. 115:1: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Aguilar quoted the Psalm accurately in "Prayer for Grace," written prior to this letter and published posthumously in Aguilar, Essays and Miscellanies: Choice Cullings from the Manuscripts of Grace Aguilar, ed. Sarah Aguilar (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1853), held in the Center for Judaic Studies, Isaac Leeser Collection.

⁷ Miriam Moses Cohen has requested Aguilar to contribute articles to a bazaar, probably sponsored by the women's auxiliary of the Jewish congregation in Savannah to raise funds for its rabbi's salary.

⁸ Grace Aguilar, The Magic Wreath of Hidden Flowers, (Brighton, 1839). This was Aguilar's first book, thought lost for a century until I came upon a copy signed by her aunt in the general stacks of University College London in spring, 1998.

⁹ Aguilar contributed several reticules, needlecases, and pincushions.

¹⁰ Aguilar refers to the West London Synagogue for British Jews, the first Reform synagogue in Britain, whose members broke away from the existing Sephardic and Ashkenazic synagogues in 1841. The Chief Rabbi briefly excommunicated the congregation.

¹¹ Isaac Leeser's periodical, The Occident and American Jewish Advocate, began publication in April, 1843 and continued to appear until 1869. See Lance J. Sussman, Isaac Leeser, 296.

¹² “The Chamber of the Dying,” Occident 1 (1 May 1843): 84-86. All references to the Occident refer to the volumes held in the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Isaac Leeser Collection.

¹³ The Cheap Jewish Library was edited anonymously by Charlotte Montefiore, using as her agent Abraham de Sola. “The Birthday” (now lost) and “Caleb Asher” were tales written by Montefiore, the latter a satire on the hypocritical techniques of conversion societies. Aguilar’s contribution to the Cheap Jewish Library was “The Perez Family” the first representation of Victorian Jewish domestic life. See Michael Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, ch. 4.

¹⁴ Aguilar refers to Felicia Hemans (1793-1835), the most popular female poet and novelist of the early nineteenth century. The memoir of her life was published with her Works (Edinburgh, 1839). Aguilar modeled her domestic fiction and poetry substantially on Hemans’, and reviewers repeatedly compared their work.

¹⁵ Cf. 1 Samuel, ch. 1.

¹⁶ See Aguilar, “Sabbath Thoughts” Occident 1 (Aug 1843): 236-238; “An Hour of Peace” and “Song of the Spanish Jews” Occident 1 (Sept. 1843): 287-290.

¹⁷ Aguilar’s second scriptural work is Women of Israel, published in 2 volumes in 1844.

¹⁸ Records of Israel (London, 1844), contains two short historical romances, “The Edict—A Tale of 1492,” and “The Escape—A Tale of 1755.”

¹⁹ I.e. The Women of Israel (1844).

²⁰ Isaac Leeser published Aguilar’s Spirit of Judaism in 1842. Without prior warning to Aguilar, Leeser included his own editorial remarks in the footnotes, many of which

directly disputed her statements. See Galchinsky, Origin, 73-75; Sussman, Isaac Leeser, 133-134.

²¹ La Belle Assemblée was edited by Camilla Toulmine, one of Aguilar's acquaintances among women writers often accused of being "bluestockings." Other acquaintances included Mary Howitt (1799-1888), writer and co-editor with her husband of Howitt's Journal, which reviewed a number of Aguilar's works. Aguilar was probably reading James Russell Lowell, Poems (London, 1844).

²² Miriam Moses Cohen's aunt, Rebecca Gratz, has apparently written to request Aguilar to publish a volume of prayers suitable for women's everyday use and for classroom instruction. Such a volume was desired on both sides of the Atlantic, since Victorian Jewish mothers were frequently encouraged to be the moral instructors of their children. See Ashton, Rebecca Gratz, 187; Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, 176, 141. Aguilar's mother Sarah would eventually edit a posthumous collection of her daughter's prayers, meditations and sermons entitled Sabbath Thoughts and Sacred Communings (London, 1853).

²³ In regard to Spirit of Judaism, Aguilar is referring not only to Leeser's annotations but to the review by Jacob Franklin, an Anglo-Jewish traditionalist, in his periodical The Voice of Jacob, 1 April 1842.

²⁴ Aguilar's statement is mostly but not entirely accurate, as could be seen in the review of Women of Israel in the mainstream literary periodical Athenaeum, 23 Aug. 1845. Although mostly positive, the review characterizes as a "blemish" Aguilar's sporadic criticism of Christianity.

²⁵ Maria Edgeworth, Helen, A Tale (London, 1834), 3 vols. A noted Irish novelist and teller of moral tales for children, Edgeworth was known among British Jews for her negative depiction of a Jewish woman in The Absentee (1812), followed by her attempt at revising her vision of Jews in Harrington (1817). Walter Scott was best known to the British Jews for the historical romance Ivanhoe (1819).

²⁶ This was the basis for Aguilar's domestic novel, Woman's Friendship: A Story of Domestic Life, published posthumously in 1850.

²⁷ Felicia Hemans, Records of Women, 2nd ed., (London, 1828).

²⁸ The Leeser Collection retains no records of these financial transactions, but does include a statement of accounts for the Occident between 1843 and 1847, showing that Aguilar was the most frequent and most highly paid contributor, increasing her wage from £3.1.4 in June, 1843 to £11.7.10 in May, 1847. See Leeser Collection, Box 9, FF1.

²⁹ Leeser's review of Records of Israel appeared in Occident 2 (July 1844): 213-214 and (Aug. 1844): 260-264. He refers to the tales as "anti-Jewish" and as a "simulation of Catholicism," agreeing with an earlier review by Jacob Franklin, editor of the Anglo-Jewish periodical The Voice of Jacob. Aguilar's public letter to Leeser appeared as "Editorial Correspondence" in Occident 2 (Oct. 1844): 340-342. The private letter has not been preserved.

³⁰ Mrs. S[amuel] C[arter] Hall, also known as Anna Maria Hall, was a popular novelist and travel writer. She published a long memoir, "The Grave of Grace Aguilar," in her husband's periodical the Art Journal, which was subsequently reprinted in Marion Moss Hartog's periodical The Jewish Sabbath Journal in 1855.

³¹ English Jews neglected not only writing by Jewish women, but all early and mid-Victorian Jewish literature. See Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, 84.

³² The writing is very difficult to make out at this point. The number 70,000 possibly refers inaccurately to the number of Jews in the United Kingdom. The number was probably closer to 50,000.

³³ Cf. 2 Samuel 19:1.

³⁴ See note 27 above.

³⁵ Charlotte Elizabeth (1790-1846) was the author of conversionist tracts such as Falsehood and Truth (Liverpool, 1841), and Conformity (London, 1841).

³⁶ This statement contrasts with other statements by Aguilar and with the documented activities of conversion societies such as the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. See Todd Endelman, Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Ragussis, Figures of Conversion, ch. 1; Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer, ch. 1; Nadia Valman, "Speculating upon Human Feeling: Evangelical Writing and Anglo-Jewish Women's Autobiography," in Julia Swindells, ed., The Uses of Autobiography, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 98-109.

³⁷ Aguilar refers to Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876). See Mary M. Turner, Forgotten Leading Ladies of the American Theatre (McFarland and Co., 1990).

³⁸ "Infant's Smile" appeared in Occident 3 (Dec. 1845): 440-441. The publication of "The Hope of Israel" remains unidentified.

³⁹ The Jewish Faith, (London, 1846).

⁴⁰ Cf. 2 Kings 4:1-37.

⁴¹ The reference to “reviewers’ praise” probably refers to the reviews of Women of Israel which were just being published. See the review in the Athenaeum (23 Aug 1845): 829-830; and S. Solis, “Remarks on Miss Aguilar’s ‘Women of Israel’” in Occident 4 (April-June 1846): 22-30, 81-90, 131-138.