

Lessons in Contempt

Poul Ræff's translation and publication in 1516 of
Johannes Pfefferkorn's *The Confession of the Jews*



JONATHAN ADAMS

UNIVERSITETS-JUBILÆETS DANSKE SAMFUND

LESSONS IN CONTEMPT

Jonathan Adams has a BA in Scandinavian Studies and an MA in Medieval Vernacular Languages and Literatures from the University of Hull, an MSt in the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations from the University of Cambridge, and a PhD in medieval Norwegian and Swedish Birgittine manuscripts from University College London. He is an elected fellow of the Society for Danish Language and Literature, and the Young Academy under the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. He has published on medieval Scandinavian language and literature, modern Faroese, and early modern Hebraism. He is currently researching the portrayal of Muslims and Jews in medieval Scandinavian texts for the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities at Uppsala University, Sweden. Jonathan lives in Frederiksberg, Denmark.

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Jonathan Adams

Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund, Copenhagen
University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense
2013

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Printed in Denmark by
Tarm Bogtryk A/S

ISBN: 978-87-7674-680-3

Issued as number 581 in the series of
Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund, ujds.dk
University Press of Southern Denmark, universitypress.dk

Supervisor: Marita Akhøj Nielsen

The book has been subject to anonymous peer review

Published with the support of The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, Niels Bohr Fondet, Den Hielmstjerne-Rosencroneske Stiftelse and Svend Grundtvigs og Axel Olriks Legat.

The illustration on the front page is a detail from Poul Ræff's woodcut on fol. a1^v of *Iudeorum Secreta*. The picture is not a portrait of Pfefferkorn as such, but rather a recycled woodcut that he found among the printing equipment that he had purchased from Matthæus Brandis (see p. 190). The background is taken from fol. a3^r of the same book.

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Acknowledgements

I should like to record my gratitude to Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund (UJDS) for agreeing to publish this work, and to the Society for Danish Language and Literature (DSL), and in particular its former director, Prof. Jørn Lund, for unfailing support of my projects during my years in Denmark. In the spring of 2012, I moved to a research post financed by the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation at the Department of Scandinavian Studies at Uppsala University in Sweden. My colleagues here have been most welcoming and helpful, and I would particularly like to express my very great appreciation to Prof. Henrik Williams and Prof. Staffan Fridell for their support and guidance. My work has also been encouraged by the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. Thanks to a generous scholarship in 2010–12, I was able to follow their part-time research degree in the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, which provided me with an array of skills, resources and knowledge that I was sorely lacking. I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Dr Edward Kessler MBE, Dr Lars Fischer, Dr Emma Harris, Dr Helen Spurling (University of Southampton), and to my dissertation supervisor Prof. Ora Limor (The Open University of Israel). The Institute is at the forefront of the academic study of interfaith relations, and its work and staff are truly an inspiration.

Research grants from The Politiken Fund and the Danish-Israeli Study Fund in Memory of Josef and Regine Nachemsohn afforded me precious time in spring/summer 2010 to take leave and complete necessary research for this book in Jerusalem at the Hebrew University (HUJI), the Jewish National Library, and Hebrew Union College; the Danish section of The Letterstedtska Society provided a grant for a research trip to Skokloster Library in Sweden, and The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, Niels Bohr Fondet, Den Hielmstjerne-Rosencroneske Stiftelse and Svend Grundtvigs og Axel Orlriks Legat all generously funded the publication of *Lessons in Contempt*.

Many people have helped me in the preparation of this book and a number of words of appreciation are in order. In particular, it is a pleasure to acknowledge my most sincere thanks to Dr Yaacov Deutsch (HUJI) for very valuable comments on the manuscript at an early stage that not only improved the text greatly but also deepened my understanding of the complexities of early modern Jewish-Christian relations; for his kindness during my stay in Jerusalem, and for encouragement and suggestions on how to develop my work; to Prof. Robert

Chazan (New York University) for finding the time for an inspiring and thought-provoking conversation on a spring day in Manhattan; to Elisabeth Westin Berg (Skokloster Castle) for her hospitality and sharing information and ideas about the Skokloster copy of Ræff's work; to Yotvat Rieder Aviram (Tel Aviv) for indispensable help with parts of the Hebrew, and to Dr Peter Zeeberg (DSL), who was extraordinarily generous with his time and expertise, and who skilfully guided me through various Latin abbreviations, translations and marginalia.

I am also very grateful to the following who have also offered assistance or advice on specific points: Dr Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev); Rabbi Tirzah Ben-David (Kfar Hanasi); Niels Krause Brix-Thomsen (Frederiksberg); Niels Clemmensen (Vrå); Rebecca Hyde Parker (University of East Anglia, Norwich); Dr Eva Maria Jansson (Royal Library, Copenhagen); Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris (Leo Baeck College); Prof. Robin May Schott (Danish Institute of International Studies: Holocaust and Genocide); Dr Avner Shamir (Roskilde University); Dr Marc B. Shapiro (University of Scranton); Prof. Sacha Stern (University College London); Dr Vibeke Winge (DSL); Laurel Wolfson (Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati), and Prof. Israel Yuval (HUJI).

One of the many joys of working at DSL was the vibrant scholarly environment and the intellectual camaraderie of a number of talented colleagues. I should like to thank my former colleagues in *Diplomatarium Danicum* for their understanding and cooperation during my research leave, and also the Society's other 'medievalists' and 'early modernists', particularly at *Gammeldansk Ordbog*, for their support and sharing with me their valuable expertise. As always in these circumstances, it is the author who is responsible for any remaining inaccuracies or poor judgement.

Staff at the Royal Library in Copenhagen (especially at the Oriental and Judaica Collection and the Centre for Manuscripts and Rare Books); at The Jewish National Library in Jerusalem; at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and Jerusalem; at Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster and Munich University Library, both in Germany, and at Skokloster Library in Sweden have all offered unstinting assistance throughout this project.

Finally, thanks also go to Dr Marita Akhøj Nielsen of UJDS for generously commissioning the book and, together with Dr Simon Skovgaard Boeck, for guiding it through to publication, to staff at University Press of Southern Denmark and Tarm Bogtryk for attentively seeing to the details of production, and to the anonymous reviewers and readers of UJDS who commented most helpfully on the text.

Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> = Roberts and Donaldson 1866–72.
ChrPed. <i>Skr.</i>	<i>Christiern Pedersens Skrifter</i> = Brandt and Fenger 1850–56.
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> .
Dan.	Danish.
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> = Skolnik <i>et al.</i> 2007.
GdO	<i>Gammeldansk Ordbog</i> , the name of the Old Danish Dictionary project at the Society for Danish Language and Literature.
<i>GG</i>	<i>Gammeldansk Grammatik</i> = Brøndum-Nielsen 1928–74.
Heb.	Hebrew.
<i>JE</i>	<i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> = Singer, Adler <i>et al.</i> 1901–06.
JPS	Jewish Publication Society = <i>JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh</i> . 2nd edn. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.
<i>KLNM</i>	<i>Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder</i> = Karker <i>et al.</i> 1956–78.
<i>Lib. I</i>	Book I of St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Revelations</i> in Latin = Undhagen 1978.
<i>Lib. II</i>	Book II of St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Revelations</i> in Latin = Undhagen and Bergh 2001.
<i>Lib. IV</i>	Book IV of St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Revelations</i> in Latin = Aili 1992.
<i>Lib. VI</i>	Book VI of St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Revelations</i> in Latin = Bergh 1991.
<i>Lib. VII</i>	Book VII of St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Revelations</i> in Latin = Bergh 1967.
LN	Lauritz Nielsen's <i>Dansk Bibliografi</i> = Nielsen 1996.
MLG	Middle Low German.
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> = Migne <i>et al.</i> 1844–1905.
prep.	preposition.
pron.	pronoun.
<i>Quat. Or. Δ</i>	St Birgitta of Sweden's <i>Quattuor Oraciones</i> = Eklund 1991 (Delta manuscript).
<i>Rev. Ex.</i>	<i>Revelationes Extravagantes</i> = Hollman 1956.
vb.	verb.
<i>WA</i>	<i>Weimarer Ausgabe</i> = Luther 1883–2009.

A Note on Quotations and Transliterations

Biblical Quotations

Quotations from the Hebrew Bible are taken from the second edition of the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999), which bases its Hebrew text on the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. New Testament quotations are from the *King James Version*, as are those from the Old Testament if used in a specifically Christian context. Talmudic references are to the Babylonian Talmud (Soncino edition) unless otherwise stated.

The transliteration of Hebrew

For well-known or established words, the common English spelling is used; for example, Rosh Hashanah, kosher, Yom Kippur and so on. However, for transliterating Hebrew text in book titles, biblical quotations and lexical items where a greater precision is deemed necessary, the following system has been used:

א	’	ל	l
ב	b, v	מ	m
ג	g	נ	n
ד	d	ס	s
ה	h	ע	’
ו	w	פ	p, f
ז	z	צ	z
ח	ḥ	ק	q
ט	ṭ	ר	r
י	y	ש	š, ś
כ	k, ch	ת	t

Transliterations of Hebrew are printed in italics. For example:

יְשָׁא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיִשֶּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

Yiša' YHWH [/'Adonai] panaw 'eleicha, weyašem lecha šalom

'The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace!'

Vowels are written *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u* according to their pronunciation in Modern Hebrew; thus, for example, *qamez*, *pataḥ* and *ḥatef pataḥ* are all written *a* (and *qamez heh* as *ah*). The *ševa na* is indicated by *e* (*qedošim*), and the final combination *yud* + consonantal *waw* as *aw* where appropriate (*panaw*).

Yud is represented by *i* when it occurs as a vowel (*qedesim*), *y* when it occurs as a consonant (*Yešu*), and *yi* when it occurs as both (*yimah*). *Waw* is indicated by *w* when consonantal (*kawanah*), and either *o* or *u* when a vowel (*yom*, *'aleinu*).

Dageš remains unmarked in the transliteration unless it affects pronunciation; for example, *sidur* (not *siddur*), but *šabat*. Personal names and place names are transliterated with a capital initial letter.

Quotations from Medieval Texts

In some of the quotations from medieval Danish works, it has been necessary to amend the text. This is shown in the following way:

dome[t>r] t in the original should be read as r.

The lineation of the original has only been preserved in quotations from poetry, otherwise it is unmarked. The symbol || marks a page break. Abbreviations are italicised in transcriptions of vernacular texts, but not Latin, and rubrics are in bold.

English translations of these quotations are in italics with explanatory comments contained in square brackets.

For the editorial principles applied in the edition of *Iudeorum Secreta*, see chapter 5.

Alphabetisation

In the biography and index, words are listed in the order of the English — not the Danish — alphabet. The letters 'æ', 'å' and 'ä' are treated as 'a', and 'ø' and 'ö' as 'o'. Furthermore, 'aa' comes at the beginning, not the end, of the alphabetised lists.

Introduction

Befindis nogen Iøde her i Danmark/ uden Geleits-Breff/ hand hafver der med forbrut et tusinde Rix daler.

Frider. 3. Dat. Hafn. 6. Febr. Anno 1651¹

When I was twenty, and travelled to Europe, the first country I visited was Denmark. As a Jew who had read extensively about the Holocaust since my teenage years, it was the only country in Europe toward which I felt unambivalent affection. Many other Jews I know have expressed the same sentiment.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin (2001)²

The story of how countless Danish men and women, at great risk both to themselves and their families, saved their Jewish neighbours from being arrested and deported to the camps of central and eastern Europe during World War II is well known, and rightly so. The so-called rescue action of 1943 saved nearly the entire Danish Jewish population by evacuating them across the Øresund strait to neutral Sweden. Along with Bulgaria who also succeeded in saving a substantial portion of her own Jewish population from deportation, Denmark and the Danish people constitute one of the very few lights of humanity and hope from the dark years of the Holocaust. The rescue of the Danish Jews is described in numerous books (fiction and non-fiction), re-enacted in films and television programmes, included in exhibits at the Danish Resistance Museum and the Danish Jewish Museum (both in Copenhagen), commemorated by the sandstone monument at Israels Plads (Copenhagen) presented by Israel to Denmark in

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1. Weylle 1652: 49: 'If a Jew is found here in Denmark without an entry permit, he is to be fined 1000 rigsdaler'. This was, incidentally, the maximum fine that could be paid for any crime under King Frederik III's national law of Denmark from 1651.
 2. Telushkin 2001: 415.

1975, as well as in the Garden of the Righteous among the Nations at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.³

However, the relationship between the Christian Danes and the Jews has not always been so cordial, and in recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest concerning the perception of Jews in Denmark, in both the medieval and the modern eras.⁴ This edition of the Danish translation of Johannes Pfefferkorn's *Nouiter in lucem data: iudeorum secreta* ['Recently brought out into the light: The secrets of the Jews'; hereafter *Iudeorum Secreta*] from 1516 presents not only one of the first books to be printed on a Danish press, but also what has been referred to as the first antisemitic work in the Danish language.⁵ Published over a century before Jews were officially permitted to settle in Danish lands, the appearance of this libellous tract, translated, printed and distributed by the canon and university rector Poul Ræff, raises a number of questions: Why was the work translated from Latin into Danish at all? Who was the intended readership? What interest did Poul Ræff have in propagating its hateful contents? In what ways did he rework the text during translation to address his audience?

In this edition, the background to *Iudeorum Secreta* is presented and discussed. The book is put into its literary historical context by means of an investigation of the depiction of Jews in earlier Danish works in the vernacular from runic inscrip-

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3. For popular accounts in English of the story of Bulgaria's Jewish population during World War II, see Bar-Zohar 1998, and on the rescue of the Danish Jews, see Pundik 1999. The story of the 1943 Danish rescue appears, for example, in the film *Miracle at Midnight* (Walt Disney, 1998), the popular Danish television series *Matador* (Danmarks Radio, 1978–81) as well as in the novels *Night of Watching* by Elliot Arnold (1967) and *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989). The Danish Resistance movement as a collective — rather than as individuals — is honoured at Yad Vashem.
 4. See, for example, Martin Schwarz Lausten's comprehensive history of the relationship between Jews and the Church in Denmark (1992, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007a, 2007b and 2012; cf. also reviews in Weinholt 2003 and 2008). Studies focusing on the modern age include the collection of articles edited by Michael Mogensen (2002), Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson's work from 2005 on the Danes' attitude towards and treatment of Jewish refugees in the 1930–40s, the short book to accompany the exhibition on antisemitism in the media at the Museum of Media in Odense (Stræde 2009), and Sofie Lene Bak's publications on the experiences of the Danish Jews during the Second World War (2010 and 2012).
 5. Rafael Edelmann (1948: 10) describes *Iudeorum Secreta* as 'det første antisemitiske Skrift, der er trykt paa Dansk [*the first antisemitic publication printed in Danish*]', and in Birkelund *et al.* (1949: 7), we read that *Iudeorum Secreta* 'nyder den tvivlsomme Ære at være det ældste danske antisemitiske Skrift, der kendes [*enjoys the dubious honour of being the oldest Danish antisemitic publication of which we know*]'. More recently Henrik Horstbøll (1999: 368) wrote that this work is an early example of 'et antisemitisk gejstligt progandaskrift [*an antisemitic clerical piece of propaganda*]'.⁶

tions and religious poetry to pilgrimage guides and visionary literature. The lives and careers of Johannes Pfefferkorn and Poul Ræff are described, and their works, *The Confession of the Jews* and *Iudeorum Secreta*, are examined as ethnographic accounts of religious traditions during the Days of Awe (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) couched in virulent anti-Jewish polemic. The language of Ræff's translation is also described, whilst the text itself appears with a critical apparatus and commentary. The Latin text of the 1508 edition (the Cologne version with the Nuremberg text used for variants), from which Ræff made his translations, is also provided in the edition for comparison. Furthermore, there is an English translation of the Danish text for those readers not familiar with Old Danish, and foreign (particularly Hebrew) and technical words are explained throughout. I am aware that I am addressing several audiences with this book: one interested in Jewish history, another in the Christian past, and yet another in the history of Danish language and literature. I beg readers for forgiveness and understanding if I supply what is to them self-evident or superfluous information — I am merely trying to provide explanations of technical or religious terms and phenomena for whom-ever might need them. For those interested in following up some of the themes in this book, a comprehensive bibliography has been provided.

It is the author's intention that in addition to making this unique Danish source from the dawn of the modern period accessible to an international readership for the first time, *Lessons in Contempt* will provide its readers with useful insights into the Jewish, Christian and human conditions. With its account of how Jews are represented in medieval Danish writing, this work will be of use to both students and researchers of Danish language history, social history, the history of antisemitism, and Jewish-Christian relations.

CHAPTER 1

Enemies of God

The depiction of Jews in medieval vernacular writing in Denmark

*Ingen Medynk var at finde,
Ja mit gandske Huus-Gesinde
Pakke dig kun i en Fart,
Dig paa Korset kand vanære,*

*Han utrøstet maatte gaae,
Raabte: Hen til Golgotha,
At vi der paa Jødisk Art
Som du paa din Ryg mon bæere.*

Anon. (early eighteenth century)¹

Si le juif n'existait pas, l'antisémite l'inventerait.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1946)²

Af alle Nationer, som ere fundne paa Jorden, er den Jødiske den allerforunderligste; Dens Historie begynder fra Verdens Skabelse, og gaaer lige til vor Tiid, da 100 andre store Nationer imidlertid ere adspredede, og igien uddøed. Deres Fata ere selsomme, og saadanne, som ikke findes hos noget andet Folk; Thi man seer derudi intet, som er middelmaadigt, men lutter Extremiteter. Nu seer man dem at være en Favorit-Nation, og, (om det er tilladt saaledes at tale,) GUds Kiæledegge, saa at deres Historie er ikke andet end en Kiæde af Mirakler, og Verden synes at være skabt for deres Skyld aleene; Nu igien seer man dem nedsiunkne udi saadan Elendighed, saa at intet Folk paa Jorden kand lignedes med

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1. *En sandfærdig Beretning om Jerusalems Skoemager, Hasverus...* (Dal and Edelmann 1965: 34): '[5.] There was no sympathy to be found, He had to walk without consolation. Indeed, my entire household shouted, "Up to Golgotha! Get a move on, so that we — in Jewish manner — can disgrace you there on the cross that you have to carry on your back!"'
 2. Jean-Paul Sartre (*Réflexions sur la question juive*, 1946: 13): 'If the Jew did not exist, the antisemite would invent him.'

dem, saa at de, som tilforn var misundede af alle Folk, blive forvandlede til Verdens Skumpelskud, forhadte, forfuldte og forhaanede af alle Mennesker, og dog, dette u-anseet, ere ikke alleene endnu bleven ved lige, men opfyldte alle Jordens Ekker og Hjørner.

Ludvig Holberg (1742)³

Jews were admitted into Denmark for the first time by royal decree in 1622. The first Jew we know of who is registered in the kingdom is, however, from a little earlier, *viz.* Jochim the Jew in 1592 in Helsingør, Sjælland.⁴ Yet the lack of a permanent Jewish presence in Denmark did not mean that Jews were also absent from Danish artistic and literary works; indeed, Jews were very much part of cultural, literary and theological life in Denmark, albeit as fantastical, fabricated beings. Depictions and descriptions of Jews were everywhere, especially within the religious sphere, and they give the impression that hatred of

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3. Ludvig Holberg (*Den Jødiske Histories Femtende Bog, cap. 17*, 1742; Holberg 1933: 532–33): ‘Of all the nations that are found on Earth, the Jewish people is the most singular; their history begins with the creation of the world and continues to our time, while in the meantime a hundred other great nations have been scattered and died out. Their fates are mysterious, and of a kind that cannot be found among any other people, because one cannot see anything mediocre in them, just sheer extremities. They are seen as being a favourite nation, and (if it is permissible to speak in such a way) as God’s little darlings, so that their history has been nothing but a series of miracles, and the world appears to have been created for them alone; then they are seen as being sunk in such misery that no other people on Earth can be compared to them, so that those who once were the envy of all people, have turned into the world’s outcasts, hated, persecuted and mocked by all people. And yet, in spite of this, they have not only continued to maintain their numbers, rather they fill every corner and cranny of the Earth.’
 4. On Jochim the Jew, see Christensen 1987 (cf. also Heimann 1982). There are also a number of people with the byname ‘Jew’ in medieval Danish records, although they may well not actually be Jews: ‘Hr. Johannis Jødis’ (Voer hundred, 1248); ‘Jacobus Jøthæ’ (Copenhagen, n.d.); ‘Jacob Jothe’ (1425, Lund), ‘Anders Iøe’ (Tranekær, 1500–02); ‘Matz Iøæ’ (Tranekær, 1500–02); ‘Morthen Iude Kellæreswen’ (1495, Sjælland); ‘Iacop Yode’ (between end of fourteenth and the Reformation, bell-founder in Landskrona). See Knudsen, Kristensen and Hornby 1949–64: 524.

The first official Jewish congregation was established in Copenhagen in 1684 by Israel David and Meyer Goldschmidt. The first synagogue was opened in Fredericia in 1719, and the first synagogue in the capital city was founded in Læderstræde in 1763, although it burnt down soon after in the city fire of 1795, and was replaced a number of years later by the great synagogue in Krystalgade. Despite there being under seven thousand Jews in Denmark today, there are no fewer than three Jewish congregations in Copenhagen: *Mach-sike Hadas* (orthodox), *Det Mosaiske Troessamfund* (orthodox) and *Shir Hatzafon* (reform/liberal).