

THE KENNICOTT BIBLE



ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ILLUMINATED
HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS IN EXISTENCE

השמים להבדיל בין הים ובין
 והיו לאתגולמו יעדים ולימים
 והיו לאורת ברכי עשמיסל
 על הארץ ויהי כן ויעש אלהים
 שני המארת הגדלים את המא
 הגדל למי שלת היום ואת המא
 הקטן למי שלת הלילה ואת המ
 ויתן אתם אלהים ברכי עשמיס
 להאיר על הארץ ולמישל ביום
 ובלילה ולהבדיל בין האור ובין
 וירא אלהים כי טוב ויהי ערב
 ויהי בקר יום רביעי
 ויאמר אלהים ישר עו המים ישר
 נפש חיה וצוף יעופף על הארץ
 פני רכי עשמיס ויברא אלהים
 התננס הגדלים ואת כל נפש הד
 הרמיש את אשר ישר עו המים למי
 ואת כל יצוף כנף למינהו וירא
 כי טוב ויברך אתם אלהים לאב
 פרו ורבו ומלאו את המים בכימם
 ירב בארץ ויהי ערב ויהי בקר
 חמישי
 ויאמר אלהים יצא הארץ נפ
 למינה בהמה ורמיש וחיית ארץ
 ויהי כן ויעש אלהים את החיה
 למינה ואת הבהמה למינה ואת
 רמיש האדמה למינהו וירא
 כי טוב ויאמר אלהים נעשה א
 בעלמנו כדמותנו וירדו בדגת
 ובעוף השמים ובבהמה ובכל

ויאמר אלהים יצא הארץ נפ
 השמים ואת הארץ והארץ
 היתה רוח אלהים מרחפת על
 פני המים ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי
 אור וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב
 ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך
 ויקרא אלהים לאור יום ולחשך
 קרא לילה ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום
 אהרן
 ויאמר אלהים יהי רכי עבתוך המים
 ויהי כדיל בין מים למים ויעש
 אלהים את הרכי עובדל בין המים
 אשר מתחת לרכי עובין המים אשר
 מעל לרכי עניהי כן ויקרא אלהים
 לרכי עשמיס ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום
 שני
 ויאמר אלהים יקו המים מתחת
 השמים אל מקום אחד ותרא
 היבשה ויהי כן ויקרא אלהים ליבשה
 ארץ ולמקוה המים קראימים וירא
 אלהים כי טוב ויאמר אלהים תשא
 הארץ דשא עשב ומזרע זרע עץ
 פרי עשה פרי למינהו אשר זרעו בו
 על הארץ ויהי כן ותוצא הארץ דשא
 עשב ומזרע זרע למינהו ועץ עשה
 פרי אשר זרעו בו למינהו וירא אלהים
 כי טוב ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום שלישי
 ויאמר אלהים יבאר ברכי

Folio 9V. BERASHIT, the beginning of the Old Testament. Part of one of the two intricate cut-out paste downs is just visible.

THE LIMITED FACSIMILE EDITION



In reproducing the Kennicott Bible, Facsimile Editions, in close co-operation with the Bodleian Library, have achieved a quality hitherto unattained in any other facsimile. This quality has been largely due to the excellent condition of the original manuscript, but to a greater extent to the undiminishing quest for perfection at every stage of its reproduction.

PRINTING



Facsimile Editions sought out a company in Italy that for generations has practised the Master Printer's craft. Luigi Canton regarded the reprinting of the manuscript as a supreme challenge in which his entire workforce would strive to produce a book of unparalleled consummate beauty. His ingenuity, dedication and integrity ensured perfect reproduction of the lavish



gold and silver and the intricate yet vibrant colours of the hundreds of illuminated pages. Many processes and materials were used in unusual combinations to produce these effects.

First the Bodleian's photographic department overcame seemingly insoluble problems inherent in photographing the manuscript within its box-binding.

As the artist used as many as 24 different colours in a single square inch of design, computer-controlled laser scanners were used to produce the finest colour separations. As many as four sets of proofs were made and compared against the original in Oxford in order to achieve perfect



colour fidelity before printing. Gold and silver metal leaf were applied by hand to each illumination by seven craftsmen working simultaneously for 4 months. Moreover, while printing, the publishers stood at the press to check every sheet to ensure the quality of colour and accuracy of detail.

VELLUM

Similarly, the publishers were not satisfied merely to reproduce the appearance of vellum. The original folios were studied and measured for their thickness, weight and opacity. One of the oldest mills took over a year to produce a paper with the unique *transparency, presence and feel* of vellum.

Copying the binding was most difficult. Embossed in minute detail on all six surfaces, its style is extremely rare, but it is this binding that has preserved the manuscript's beauty for over half a millenium.

After painstakingly tracing the box's detailed design, hand made dies are used to emboss the soft morocco goatskin. The edges of each leaf are gilt with 23 carat gold.



This very time-consuming and costly process is carried out by master craftsmen in their small atelier outside Milan, thus adding the finishing touches that make the facsimile worthy of the original.



LIMITED EDITION

Each copy is discreetly numbered. Limited to 550 copies worldwide, the certificate accompanying each facsimile carries the stamp of the Bodleian Library.

The facsimile of the Kennicott Bible has been made from the finest materials. As the entire Bible and grammatical notes are clearly legible it is the publishers' sincere hope that generations to come will be able to enjoy using the Kennicott Bible and revel in its glorious artistry.

THE INTRODUCTION

The study of the Kennicott Bible and its illuminations was carried out and written especially for this facsimile by Professor Bezalel Narkiss and Dr Aliza Cohen-Mushlin.



The introduction to the Kennicott Bible deals with the physical description of the manuscript, and tells the story of its creation and programme. The illuminations are studied for their style and origin. The unique artistry of Joseph Ibn Hayyim is discussed in a special chapter interpreting his relations to older and contemporary art of Spain.



A fascinating story is told in a popular manner, with the thorough knowledge of the experts augmenting the understanding of the original Kennicott Bible for laymen and scholars alike.

The Introduction is produced with many additional illustrations as comparative material in a separate volume the same size as the facsimile, bound in the finest morocco goatskin to complement the Bible. The two volumes are enclosed in a presentation portfolio box.



Folio 305R. JONAH being swallowed by a large fish.

THE ORIGINAL

A MASTERPIECE OF HEBREW ILLUMINATION



One of the most beautiful Medieval Spanish manuscripts in existence, the famous Kennicott Bible, has recently been published as a sumptuous facsimile. At long last one can enjoy reading the text of this completely vocalised and massorated Bible, hand-written in beautifully clear Sephardi script of the Middle Ages, lavishly illuminated, and placed in a morocco goatskin box binding embossed on all six sides.

THE ORIGINAL

The Bible, together with Rabbi David Kimchi's (RaDaK) grammatical treatise, was copied by the scribe Moses Ibn Zabara in 1476 at the



commission of Isaac, the son of Don Solomon di Braga of La Coruña in north-western Spain.

Executed almost twenty years before the final expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, at a time when they were already being harassed by the Spanish Inquisition, this manuscript shows what great importance the Jewish communities attached to the perpetuation of their heritage by investing in the production of an accurate and beautifully adorned Bible.

ARTIST AND SCRIBE

From its inception the manuscript was planned as a lavish work. 238 of the 922 pages of the Bible are illuminated with lively colours, burnished gold and silver leaf.

The highly stylized figures — almost modern in their abstract rendering — delight the eye with the

richness of their colours and their varied compositions. The zoomorphic and anthropomorphic letters in the artist's colophon are a manifestation of his rich imagination.

Joseph Ibn Hayyim created in his own individual and distinct style a unique masterpiece. King David on his throne, Jonah being swallowed by a fish, or Balaam as an astrologer consulting an astrolabe, are but a few of the text illustrations in the Kennicott Bible. Even the RaDaK's treatise SEFER MIKHLOL was not copied as an austere text, but written within magnificently decorated arcaded pages, placed at the beginning and end of the Bible.



The illuminator's colophon: 'I Joseph ibn Hayyim illustrated this book, and I finished it' (folio 447r). This ingenious type of zoomorphic lettering is similar to another Hebrew Bible, illuminated at Cervera in 1300 by Joseph the Frenchman and now in the National Library at Lisbon, which was owned at Corunna in the 14th-15th century.

BINDING



The contemporary leather box binding is beautifully blind-tooled and embellished with coloured leather on the inside. It carries motifs similar to the intricate, colourful carpet pages which divide the Bible into its three main sections: The Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa.

The production of the entire manuscript, from the preparation of the vellum leaves to the ultimate phase of binding, bears witness to the close co-operation between the scribe, the illuminator and the patron.

Cecil Roth considered it "A Masterpiece of Medieval Spanish Jewish Art..." and thought it to be "one of the finest Hebrew manuscripts in existence."

PROVENANCE

MS Kennicott 1 is named after Benjamin Kennicott, the English Christian Hebraist who was educated and worked most of his life (1718–1783) in Oxford.

A Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, he continued the English tradition of studying the Hebrew bible. His pioneering work, comparing text variants of hundreds of Hebrew manuscripts world-wide, was published in his *Dissertatio Generalis*. In the course of his work he acquired this manuscript



for the Radcliffe Library from where it was transferred to the Bodleian in 1872. In 200 years, only 30 art historians and scholars have been privileged to study the Kennicott Bible, one of the Bodleian's greatest treasures.

SPECIFICATION

CODICOLOGY

922 pages, 238 illuminated pages with gold and silver
24 canonical book headings
49 parashah headings structured with gold in different motifs featuring zoomorphic figures in many colours
9 fully illuminated carpet pages
150 psalm headings, numbered and illuminated with gold and silver

BINDING

Fine morocco goatskin over specially prepared boards. Interlacing geometric designs on all six sides are embossed with hand made dies. Before binding, the facsimile's edges are gilt with 23 carat gold leaf. The binding is carefully constructed to withstand constant use.

Size 320mm × 262mm × 100mm
(12½" × 10⅜" × 4")

PRINTING AND GILDING

Printed offset litho in eleven colours. Up to four proofs were made of each page and perfect colour matching was achieved by constant comparison to the original manuscript in Oxford. Whilst the facsimile was being printed the publishers lived in Italy and personally supervised the production of every sheet. The lavish gold and silver was reproduced by applying a metal leaf by hand to each illumination.



Folios 443R and 442V from the SEFER MIKHLOL.
An army of cats attacking a castle defended by mice.

PAPER

The 'vellum' which has been the subject of considerable research and development has been specially and exclusively milled in Italy. Care has been taken to make this paper with a neutral pH. Its average opacity, feel and thickness are almost identical to that of the original manuscript.

SHIPPING

The facsimile and introductory volume are enclosed in a specially made, velvet lined, portfolio box. This is placed inside a carton which is surrounded by polystyrene within another heavy-duty outer container. Delivery by Air and Insurance are included.

EDITION

Strictly limited to 500 numbered and 50 'ad personam' copies. Each volume, discreetly numbered by hand inside the leather binding using minute steel dies, is accompanied by a numbered certificate carrying the stamp of the Bodleian Library.

Once all copies have been bound, the printing plates will be buried, according to Jewish tradition, thus protecting the significant investment value of each copy.

INTRODUCTION

The fully illustrated scholarly treatise is bound in the same fine morocco goatskin to complement the facsimile.

Size 319mm × 263mm × 22mm
(12½" × 10⅜" × ⅞")

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