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**Pentateuch, including Genesis and Exodus, with commentaries, translations, and glosses
In Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic, manuscript on paper
[Yemen, late seventeenth or early eighteenth century]**

i + 139 + i folios, incomplete (collation: impractical due to fragility of later quires on sewing edge), thick Oriental paper, paper size 290 x 200 mm., written in a Yemenite square script in black ink, modern foliation in pencil, double column text in 26-30 lines, no framing or ruling (justification 242 x 75 mm), catchwords in lower left margin, marginalia in at least two distinct hands in brown ink throughout, several small pen drawing doodles of a "dreidel?" appear throughout, side-sewing visible on front and rear inside cover, f. 1 missing, ff. 24, 54, 101, loose singletons, f. 75 lower margin very broken and missing text, ff. 34, 59, 80 torn in lower margins, ff. 36 and 77 torn and effecting text, ff. 36, 55-56, 87, 128-129 and 133-136 mostly separated from quire, hole on f. 90 not damaging text, contemporary loose fragment located between ff. 43 and 44, paper repairs on ff. 36, 69, 87 and 136-140, mildew stains to margins on the first and last folios, heavy chipping and breaking on the first and last folios, separating folios show chipping at sewing edge, f. 2r has modern pencil catalogue information "David D[?]ger Yemenite circa 1575 (not after 1600)." Bound in twentieth-century green marbled paper over cardboard, half binding in black cloth, gilded title and decorations on spine, binding fore-edge and corners slightly bumped and slightly worn, modern heavy paper used as flyleaves and pastedowns, modern printed text in English used to reinforce binding. Dimensions 302 x 221 mm.

With excellent provenance, this manuscript contains a portion of the Hebrew Pentateuch, as is typical including commentaries and translations in Aramaic and in Arabic that encourage study of the rich, multi-lingual tradition of biblical exegesis in Yemen, where the continuity of the transcription of manuscripts persisted almost into modern times due to the late arrival of printing. A series of unidentified glosses particularly in the text of Genesis and based on Yemenite sources call for further study.

PROVENANCE

1. Paper, script, and language date this manuscript to the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century in Yemen, where this combination of texts were especially common among the Yemenite Jews. Yemenite Jews have a unique religious tradition that marks them out as separate from Ashkenazi, Separdi, and other Jewish groups. Yemen supported a robust community of Jews, the only non-Muslim minority. Because the art of printing was never practiced, the rich and ancient literature of Yemenite Jews continued to be transmitted in manuscript form from generation to generation, which explains the late vintage of many Yemenite manuscripts, such as the present example.

2. Hekhal Shelomo Museum, Jerusalem, from which it was deaccessioned along with most of their library (a microfilm copy prepared for the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts [IMHM] in the Jewish National Library includes the first leaf that is now missing in the present codex (copy supplied with manuscript).

3. Private Collection, USA.

TEXT

Includes the Biblical text of Genesis (beginning incomplete in the middle of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1: 11) and Exodus, with vowel points, accents (cantillation symbols), and, following each verse, the Aramaic translation by Onkeles without vowel points but with accents according to the Babylonian system and the Arabic translation of Saadiah ben Joseph of Fayyum (Saadiah Gaon) in Hebrew letters without vowel points or accents. There are numerous glosses concerning the massorah based mainly on Yemenite sources added by another hand, especially in the Book of Genesis. This combination of texts is common among the Yemenite Jews and codices including these texts in this format are called *Taj* (crown). These represent the oldest Yemenite manuscripts, their texts originally dating from the ninth century.

The Aramaic translation by Onkeles

These are Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament (*targum* meaning "interpretation, translation," from *targem*, "to explain, translate"; cf. Ezra 4: 7) prepared for use in the synagogue. They took their rise from the custom of repeating and explaining the Hebrew sacred text in the Aramaic tongue, which after the exile became the vernacular of the Jews in Palestine and elsewhere. At first the *targum* was a free oral exposition, then it gradually acquired fixed form, and at last was reduced to writing. It is frequently found in manuscripts following the Hebrew text verse by verse. The one on the Pentateuch is attributed in some passages of the Talmud to the helpers of Ezra. According to the Babylonian Talmud, Onkelos delivered it orally in Palestine. A better name for the "Targum of Onkelos," is the "Judaic Pentateuch-Targum." In the third century its text, which is quite literal, seems to have been considered fixed. The Hebrew text on which it rests is practically our Masoretic text, and it is of interest as representing the exegetical tradition of the Jews. The "Targum of Onkelos" was first printed in Bologna in 1452 with a Hebrew text and Rashi's commentary. See Barnheim (1896) on the text of the Yemen manuscripts.

Arabic translation of Saadiah ben Joseph of Fayyum (Saadiah Gaon)

Sa'adiah ben Yosef Gaon (882 or 892-942) (in Hebrew: **סעדיה בן יוסף גאון**, in Arabic: **سعيد بن يوسف الفيومي**) was a prominent rabbi, Jewish philosopher, and exegete of the geonic Period. He is known for his works on Hebrew linguistics (authoring a grammar), Halakha, and Jewish philosophy. He is regarded as a pioneer in the various fields in which he worked, especially his work on the Bible. His importance for Biblical exegesis is due primarily to his establishment of a new school of thought characterized by a rational investigation of the contents of the Bible and a scientific knowledge of the language of the holy text. His Arabic translation of the Bible is of importance for the history of civilization; itself a product of the Arabization of a large portion of Judaism, it served for centuries as a potent factor in the impregnation of the Jewish spirit with Arabic culture. In this respect, it may take its place beside the Greek Bible-translation of antiquity

and the German translation of the Pentateuch by Moses Mendelssohn. As a means of popular religious enlightenment, Saadia's translation presented the Scriptures even to the unlearned in a rational form which aimed at clarity and consistency. He treated each book of the Bible as a whole and showed the connection of its various portions with one another. For the Pentateuch he set forth not only an exact interpretation of the text but a refutation of those objections to it raised by heretics.

The "Taj" (Crown)

The oldest Yemenite manuscripts are those of the Bible, which the Yemenite Jews call "Taj" or "crown." They date from the ninth century, and each of them has a short Masoretic introduction, while many contain Arabic commentaries. The Masorah was highly valued by the Jews of Yemen.

LITERATURE

Aberbach, Moses and Bernard Grossfeld. *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: a critical analysis together with an English translation of the text*, New York and Denver [1982].

Berliner, Abraham. *Targum Onkelos*, Berlin, 1968.

Malter, Henry. *Saadia Gaon: His life and works*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921, with later reprints.

ONLINE RESOURCES

An Introduction to Hebrew Manuscripts (New York Public Library)
<http://www.fathom.com/course/72810016/session1.html>