

# Rashba Bible

## PROVENANCE

(1) Written and illuminated for Astruc ben Yitzhak ben Shlomo ibn Adret (Rashba), one of the leaders of Spanish Jewry in the fourteenth century and the grandson of the great Rabbi of Spain, Rabbi Shlomo ben Adret (known from his initials Ra.sh.b.A as Rashba), 1235-1310, author and Jewish statesman. Rashba's son was one of the signatories to the ban on the study of philosophy and was a leader of the Jewish community in Barcelona (F.Y. Baer, *Die Juden in Christlichen Spanien*, I, 1929, pp.208 and 426-9, and Engl.ed., 1960, I, p.443; *Encyc. Judaica*, II, cols.305-8).

(2) Chaim ben Gershon, with sixteenth-century inscription on pp.1 and 17.

(3) Ben Gerson ben Daniel Shoni (?), with inscription on p.17.

(4) Raphael Gershon, with inscriptions on pp.19, 23, 28 and 38.

(5) David Solomon Sassoon (1882-1942), his no.16 bought in December 1903, with his stamp on flyleaf and p.17, and his armorial bookplate; his sale in our Zurich rooms, 21 November 1978, lot 8, and subsequently on deposit at the British Library.

## TEXT

The text comprises Genesis (p. 18), Exodus (p. 76), Leviticus (p. 128), Numbers (p. 165), Deuteronomy (p. 216), Joshua (p. 263), Judges (p. 294), Samuel I and II (p. 324), Kings I and II (p.397), Isaiah (p. 474), Jeremiah (p. 525), Ezekiel (p. 590), Hosea (p. 646), Joel (p. 653), Amos (p. 656), Obadiah (p. 663), Jonah (p. 663), Michah (p. 665), Nahum (p. 670), Habakuk (p. 671), Zephaniah (p. 673), Hagai (p. 676), Zechariah (p. 678), Malachi (p. 687), Ruth (p. 690), Psalms (p. 694), Job (p. 752), Proverbs (p. 776), Ecclesiastes (p. 795), Song of Songs (p. 804), Lamentations (p. 808), Daniel (p. 813), Book of Esther (p. 831), Ezra and Nehemiah (p. 841), Chronicles I and II, ending with the colophon on p. 951.

An unusual feature of the text is the occurrence of Ruth before Psalms and Esther after Daniel, following the tradition of Maimonides but very rare in Spanish manuscripts and never found in Ashkenazi Biblical codices (cf. Maimonides, *Yad*, II, 'Laws Relating to the Torah', Ch. 7, 15; B.M. *Catalogue* no. 53, pp. 23-4; no. 57, pp. 28-9; no. 60, pp. 31-2; *Descriptive Catalogue*, nos. 82, 368 and 499, pp. 3-15).

## ILLUMINATION

THIS IS AN EXTREMELY RICHLY ILLUMINATED AND FINELY PRESERVED HEBREW MANUSCRIPT BIBLE, enhanced in its importance by being exactly dated and localised, and it is among the most important extant copies of the Bible in Hebrew. The elaborate illuminations throughout incorporate birds (e.g. pp.68, 154, 161, 397, 653, 665, 678 and 690) and include turkeys (pp. 294, 676 and 687), pelicans (p. 671) and a peacock and a toucan (p. 804). Others contain fish (e.g. p. 91), dragons (pp. 133, 137, 474, 663 and 804), animals and grotesques (pp. 227, 324, 646, 670, 776 and 841), a monkey (p. 663), a lion (p.678), human heads or faces (pp. 474, 525, 590, 656, 804 and 831), trees (pp. 23, 28 etc.), a spear (p. 221) and hanging lamps (pp. 119 and 233). Of especial interest is its decoration of micrographic script on pp. 18-19. Here the Masora is taken from Isaiah 42:5-43, Psalms 90-91, 145, 147 and 150, Exodus 14:39 and from Song of Songs, and from the Sabbath liturgical hymn *Nishmat Kol Chai*.

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