

San'ā' & Aden: Arabic Writing in 'carpet pages' of Hebrew Illuminated Bibles

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Fig. 1



The phenomena of Arabic writing in 'carpet pages' of Hebrew Illuminated Bibles in Yemen has never been researched. I wish to point on that phenomena and to try to understand what is its origin?

Three examples are known so far. The two from San'ā', dated to 1469 and 1475, show the name of the donor in big, bold colored Arabic writing in the horizontal zones of the pages (Figs. 1, 2). The other example is probably from Aden in the 13th century or earlier, following its style. To the best of my knowledge, this example was not researched yet. Here, the Arabic writing, or, pseudo Arabic writing, appears in the frame and surrounds the Hebrew writing (Fig. 3). The 'Arabic writing' here might be for beauty only, as it looks hard to read. This is a unique and rare presentation of a juxtaposition of the Hebrew writing and the Arabic writing in a context of a 'carpet page' in Hebrew Illuminated Bible in Yemen.

What is the origin of the Arabic writing in 'carpet pages' of Hebrew Illuminated Bibles in Yemen? Is it a Jewish source, or Arabic? Is it originated in Yemen, or outside Yemen? Why in 'carpet pages' of Hebrew Illuminated Bibles? What we can conclude out of it about the relationships between Arabic writing and Hebrew writing in Yemen? I hope the special session on the development of Arabic as a written language will help to shed light on this unique phenomena.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3