

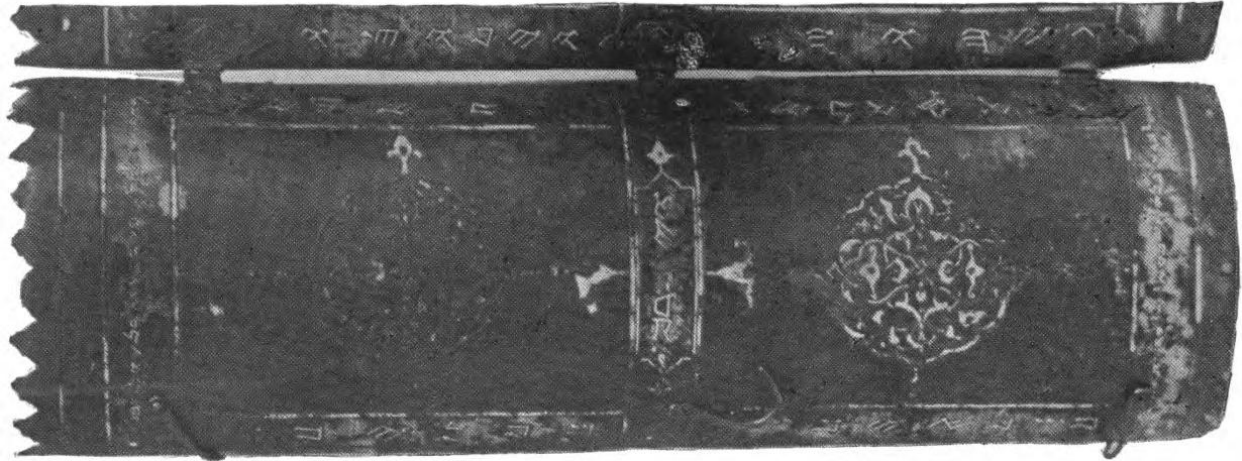
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Image placed between pages 104 and 105





(p. 105)

Description of the Case of the Roll of a Samaritan Pentateuch.—

By Hans H. Spoer, Ph.D., Meadville, Pa.

DURING the summer of 1905, at Jerusalem, I had an opportunity to examine the case of a Samaritan Pentateuch, brought to me by the son of the high priest at Nablus, who, owing to the impoverished condition of the little Samaritan community, was anxious to sell this,—one of their most treasured possessions. It has since been acquired by Mr. E. K. Warren, of Three Oaks, Michigan.

The case is cylindrical, twenty inches long, of brass, inlaid with silver. It consists of three sections, forming a circle of six and a half inches in diameter. The middle section of the case is connected with the others by three hinges on either side. That the present hinges may be of later date than the case itself seems probable from the fact that, in two places, they conceal letters forming part of the inscription. Several letters are also missing from the perpendicular inscription to the right of the lower central panel, where a fragment of the brass has been lost and a patch inserted. The top and bottom are closed by three segments of brass, forming a circle, so that the MS. was completely enclosed, for its better protection. It is secured by long brass hooks, fastening into faceted knobs, pierced with eyelet holes. The top is decorated with a turreted border.

Every section is divided, horizontally, into two panels, 5X7 inches, separated by a band outlined in silver. A geometrical design in silver decorates the center of every panel; it consists of arabesques contained in a circle running out into four ornamented spear-heads.

The dividing band is one and one-eighth inches wide, inlaid in silver with an inscription, in Samaritan characters, enclosed in a sort of cartouche ending in spear-heads. This inscription continues round the case, as does also a second in smaller characters, in a similar band top and bottom, while a third runs down either side of the panels in characters of the same size as those of the central band. Right and left of the

decoration of the lower central panel is an additional inscription, in small (p. 106) characters. All these inscriptions are in Hebrew, in the Samaritan alphabet. The words are divided by dots. The legend on the central band reads:

יברכך יהוה וישמרך

Yahweh bless thee and keep thee.

These words, from the Aaronic blessing (Num. 6:24), are of special interest, not only on account of the peculiar sanctity which they would possess for the Samaritans, but also because they are to this day regarded among Oriental Jews as efficacious against the Evil Eye, for which reason they are often inscribed upon articles of property and may have been used here with special intention.¹ The inscription round the top and bottom gives the data of its origin and reads as follows:

(around the top)

בשם יהוה עשה זה הארון למכתב הקדוש
בדמשק העבד המסכין נשיש בוראי אלה
אבי הפתח בן יוסף בן

(around the bottom)

יעקב בן צפר דמבני מנשה יהוה יכפר
[חט] אתו אמן בשנת שלשים ו תשע מאות
לממלכות בני ישמעאל על יד יצחק
ה * * * * *

In the name of Yah. This case for the holy writing was made in Damascus by the poor servant, the least of the creatures of God, Abu 'l-Fath ben Joseph ben Jacob ben Zophar, of the tribe of Manasseh. May Yah forgive his sin. Amen. In the year 930 of the kingdom of the beni Ishmael. Under the direction of Isaac . . .
2..

The perpendicular legend (Num. 10:35) reads:

ויהי בנסע הארון ויאמר משה קומה יהוה
ויפוצו [א]יביך וינוסו משנאיך מפניך

¹ See articles by the author in *Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 1904, p. 104 sq.; also *Occult Review*, London, 1905, p. 144 sq.

² The word looks like הפומה

(p. 107)

And when the ark started, Moses said: Arise, Yahweh! that thy enemies may be scattered, that they who hatethee may flee before thee.

The inscription within the lower central panel is as follows:

כתבו • פינחס • בן • אלעזר

Written by Phinehas ben Eleazar.³

According to the inscription, the case was made in Damascus in the year 930 of the Muhammedan era, = 1524 A. D.; and one Phinehas ben Eleazar was concerned in the making of it. In the year 1538, a high priest named Phinehas removed from Damascus to Nablus,⁴ and it may have been he who ordered this Torah case to be made in the place of his residence, then as now, famous for inlaid brass-work.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

This reference is #4567 listed in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005

Reverend Hans H. Spoer PhD wrote many articles, and a member of American School of Archaeology, Jerusalem.

Wrote The Origin and Interpretation of the Tetragrammaton [1899]

"On Bloody Sacrifices in Palestine" by Hans H. Spoer. Reprint from Journal of the American Oriental Society 27 (1906)

Many others!

³ I. e., he was the one who prepared these inscriptions for the case.

⁴ See Cowley, *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, art. "Samaritan," p. 679.