



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

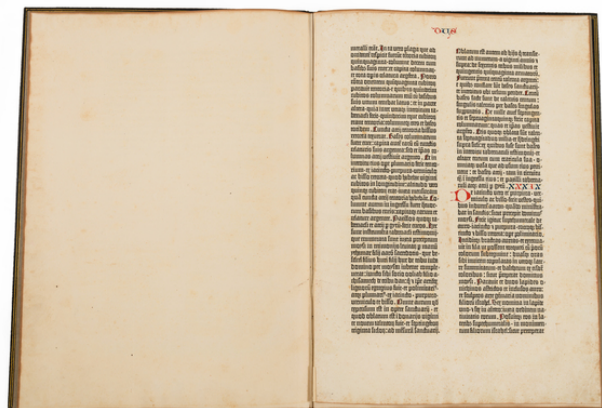
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## (Gutenberg Bible) [Original Gutenberg Bible Leaf - Book of Exodus] A Noble Fragment, Being a Leaf of the Gutenberg Bible, 1450-1455.

**Stock#:** 102960  
**Map Maker:** Gutenberg / Fust  
**Date:** 1455 circa (1921)  
**Place:** Mainz, Germany  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 11.25 x 15.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *Gutenberg Bible Leaf*

#### *An Extraordinary Leaf: The Story of Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land*

#### **From the Sulzbach — Mannheim — Munich — Curzon — Sabin copy of the 42-Line Bible**

An original Leaf from the Gutenberg Bible, the first book printed from movable type, and the greatest printed book in the world. The leaf is a typographical masterpiece, evoking the noble balance of the divine proportion with its impeccably spaced and shaped twin columns of text, set upon a cream-toned paper sheet with generous margins all around. The present leaf is highly important, being from the Book of Exodus, the Second Book of the Bible, specifically most of chapter 38, all of chapter 39, and the first few lines of chapter 40.

#### **A Defining Moment in the History of Religious Freedom**

The Book of Exodus speaks especially of a defining moment in the history of religious freedom and liberation in Jewish history when the children of Israel leave Egypt under threat to cross the desert to the Promised Land. The specific chapters contained herein (ch. 38-40) concern the building of the Tabernacle to the Lord, the making and completion of all that God had commanded after which Moses blessed the children of Israel and God appears in the cloud above the tabernacle. God then commands Moses to build the Tabernacle of the congregation and to place therein the Ark of the Covenant. These passages concern one of the seminal moments in the history of monotheism and Judeo-Christian history and are summarized



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below.

Exodus 38 of the Book of Exodus describes the construction of various furnishings for the Tabernacle, a portable earthly dwelling place of God among the Israelites during their journey through the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. This chapter, along with other parts of Exodus, provides many details on the construction and materials used. The Tabernacle served as the center of worship and communal life for the Israelites, symbolizing God's presence, guidance, and covenant with His people, highlighting its significance in ancient Hebrew culture and religion. The construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings was a communal project that involved skilled craftsmen, donations from the people, and leadership by Moses, following God's detailed instructions. This not only facilitated a central place of worship but also helped unify the Israelites around their shared faith and covenant with God. The Tabernacle's design and function reflected ancient Hebrew beliefs about God's holiness, the importance of atonement and purification, and the concept of God dwelling among His people. This sacred space set the pattern for later Jewish worship in the Temple in Jerusalem and has influenced Jewish liturgical and spiritual practices to this day.

Exodus 39, present in its entirety here, describes the making of the priestly garments, as God had instructed Moses on Mount Sinai. These garments were for Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, who served as priests. The significance of this chapter of Exodus rests in the importance of worship, the role of the priesthood, the value of divine instruction and craftsmanship, and the concept of holiness. It reflects the intricate relationship between God and the Israelites, mediated through the priesthood and the Tabernacle, serving as a constant reminder of their covenant and identity as God's chosen people. We can summarize through several key points:

1. **Sacred Craftsmanship:** Exodus 39 highlights the skill and dedication of the craftsmen, such as Bezalel and Oholiab, who were filled with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship to design artistic works. This underscores the value placed on craftsmanship and the divine inspiration behind religious art and objects.
2. **Divine Instruction and Obedience:** The detailed obedience to God's instructions in making the priestly garments reflects the broader theme of obedience to God's commandments within the Hebrew Bible. This obedience is not just in moral or ethical commands but extends to worship practices and religious observances.



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3. **Holiness and Separation:** The garments made for Aaron and his sons were meant to signify their holiness and separation for serving God. This includes the ephod, breastplate, robe, tunics, turban, and sash. These garments were described as "holy garments" for Aaron and his sons to minister in the priest's office, highlighting the concept of holiness and the separation between the sacred and the profane.
4. **Identity and Priesthood:** The elaborate descriptions of the priestly garments, along with the materials used (gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen), signify the importance of the priesthood in ancient Hebrew culture as mediators between God and the people.
5. **Covenant and Remembrance:** The garments and the Tabernacle serve as physical reminders of the covenant between God and the Israelites. For instance, the breastplate of judgment included the Urim and Thummim, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved on stones, symbolizing God's ongoing relationship with His people and His presence among them.

The leaf also includes the first few lines of Exodus 40, with an important reference to the Ark of the Covenant. Placing the Ark in the Most Holy Place within the Tabernacle, behind a veil, highlights its utmost sanctity and the seriousness of the covenant. The Ark contained the tablets of the Law, symbolizing God's guidance and the moral and religious foundation of Israelite society. Its placement was a culmination of the Tabernacle's construction, signaling that God's dwelling place among His people was now complete, reinforcing the themes of divine presence, guidance, and the sacred relationship between God and the Israelites. This act underscored the central role of the Law in communal and religious life, and the Ark itself became a focal point for worship and a reminder of the Israelites' duties and privileges as God's chosen people.

#### **First Printed Book**

The Gutenberg Bible, often referred to by bibliographers as the 42-line Bible, may be described without the slightest exaggeration as the greatest printed book in the world. It is the first book printed from movable type on a press, having been preceded by a few trial pieces, single leaves, almanacs, and grammatical booklets of which mere fragments remain.

*The first substantial book to be printed from movable types in the western world was, appropriately, the most influential of all books - the Bible... The first printed Bible is most commonly known as the*



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*Gutenberg Bible, but bibliographers call it the 42-line Bible (in reference to the number of lines in a normal column) in order to distinguish it from a rival edition, probably printed at Bamberg, c. 1458-9, with 36 lines to the column - Printing and the Mind of Man.*

The fact that the first book to be printed, at this time and place, in 1455, in the Rhine Valley, should have been the Bible, is significant.

*While Gutenberg and Fust were actually at work, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 announced the end of an old world and the dawn of modern thought. Did Gutenberg realize that by setting the Holy Text in type he was heralding one of the greatest movements of human thought in the history of civilization? - S. De Ricci.*

An extensive scholarly literature exists on the history of the Gutenberg Bible, the invention of printing, the design of the letters, the methods of printing, paper and ink brought to contact with a uniform pressure to make a clear impression. We are thus not going to delve into the intricate history already covered by printing experts. We should acknowledge, however, that earlier block printing and movable type printing (from pieces of clay) was practiced in China as early as the 9th century. Copper type was used in Korea in the 15th century. However, the nature of Chinese characters inhibited the invention of a true movable type, at least in the western sense. It would thus remain for Johann Gutenberg to develop a revolutionary and practical method of movable type.

#### **"The Golden Canon": the Typographical Divine Proportion**

We should not forget to mention that the 42-line Gutenberg Bible is one of the most beautiful books ever printed, a masterpiece of typographical art that has been celebrated for its aesthetic beauty for centuries. Its beauty lies not only in the craftsmanship of its printing but also in its seeming adherence to a sort of typographical divine proportion, called "the Golden Canon" by some printing historians. This so-called "secret" typographical Golden Proportion, fully evident in the Gutenberg Bible, is likely based on the formatting of medieval manuscripts. According to Raul Rosarivo, Gutenberg used the "golden number" or ratio of 2:3 to create the harmonic relationships between the various components of a printed page. While not exactly the famed Golden Ratio, usually stated as 5:8 or 0.618, Gutenberg seems to have set a standard of his own for pleasing typographical layout that stands unsurpassed to this day.

#### **"Noble Fragment"**

According to Don Cleveland Norman, who personally examined 44 of the extant examples of the Gutenberg Bible, the known single leaves from the Gutenberg Bible derived from two imperfect examples



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that were broken up by rare book dealers. One of the imperfect copies was owned by Scribner's, which contained 260 leaves of volume 2 of the Bible. The New York dealer Gabriel Wells acquired another wounded example from Joseph Sabin containing 593 leaves (lacking 48 leaves), which he decided to disperse. The present leaf and leaf book is from the Wells example. He first separated out intact whole books of the Bible, with the remaining single leaves issued in one of the first known leaf book editions, for which he commissioned A. Edward Newton, the author of a popular work on book collecting, to write an introductory essay to accompany the leaf.

According to a recent study and bibliography of leaf books by Joel Silver, the *Noble Fragment* is by far the most distinguished and sought of the genre.

*A Noble Fragment is considered the most desirable of leaf books among collectors today - Joel Silver, checklist in Disbound and Dispersed.*

#### **Extant Examples**

Gutenberg's press at Mainz, Germany, turned out between 180 and 300 Bibles before Aug. 15, 1456. Of these 47 are known to exist today, with the whereabouts of 45 known. Of the extant examples, 35 are printed on paper and 12 on vellum. Notable examples exhibited to the public include the Harkness copy, bought at auction by A.S.W. Rosenbach in 1926, which is on permanent display on the mezzanine of Yale's Beinecke Library. The Huntington copy (on vellum), bought at auction by George D. Smith in 1911, is often displayed in the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

#### **Interesting Facts Concerning the Gutenberg Bible:**

- The type invented by Gutenberg for his Bible was designed to imitate handwriting.
- The text was printed two columns per page, with each column comprising 42 lines of text, thus the moniker "42-line Bible."
- The complete Bible comprises some 1282 folio pages, which experts believe required the labor of six compositors over a two-year period.
- The Bible printing project nearly bankrupted Gutenberg: he could not meet the interest obligations on the loans for his unprecedented and capital-intensive project.

A rare opportunity to acquire an original leaf from the greatest printed book, and a leaf of extraordinarily important content.

#### **Provenance**



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Being a Leaf of the Gutenberg Bible, 1450-1455.**

The present leaf is from the Sulzbach - Mannheim - Munich - Curzon - Sabin copy of the Gutenberg Bible, broken up and dispersed as a leaf-book by the New York dealer Gabriel Wells. The leaf is housed in a copy of A. E. Newton's *A Noble Fragment*. New York, 1921.

Maria Elisabeth Augusta von Sulzbach (1721-1794, wife of Carl Theodore, Electoral Prince of the Palatinate, subsequently Electoral Prince of Bavaria),

Mannheim, Hofbibliothek,

Munich, Royal Library (duplicate released, sold in 1832 for 350 guilders),

Robert Curzon, Baron Zouche (1810-1873; and by descent until sold),

Sotheby's, 9 November 1920, lot 70, to Joseph Sabin, sold by him to

Gabriel Wells, who broke up the copy, dispersing it in single leaves and in larger fragments, many accompanied by A. Edward Newton's essay, as here, one of the first proper leaf books.

**This leaf:**

Roland Leslie Taylor (1868-1943), prominent Philadelphia banker. Inscribed to Taylor by A. Edward Newton on endpaper of leaf book,

George McMaster Jones, with his bookplate on front pastedown of leaf book binding,

A private California collection.

**Detailed Condition:**

Royal folio. Original Gutenberg Bible Leaf, printed in Gothic letter in 42-lines, on laid paper (no watermark). Headlines, two-line initial capitals, chapter numerals, and initial strokes hand-rubricated in red and blue. This leaf from the Book of Exodus (chapters 38-40). Leaf hinged into a full dark blue morocco binding by Strikeman, with [8] pages of printed text, being the title page and introduction by A. Edward Newton to the 1921 leaf book by Gabriel Wells. Gilt-titled upper board, with blind tooled border on both covers. Spine title in Gothic type: "Gutenberg." Spine ends slightly chipped. In the original boards slipcase (broken, with old black cloth tape repairs). Housed in an elegant custom full morocco clamshell box, raised spine bands. Gilt title to spine and top of box. With an autograph inscription by A. Edward Newton to Roland Leslie Taylor, on front free endpaper of the leaf book binding. The Gutenberg leaf itself



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in remarkably fine condition, a beautiful strong impression of the type in bold black ink on recto and verso, with only a touch of (mostly) marginal foxing and minor soil on the sheet.