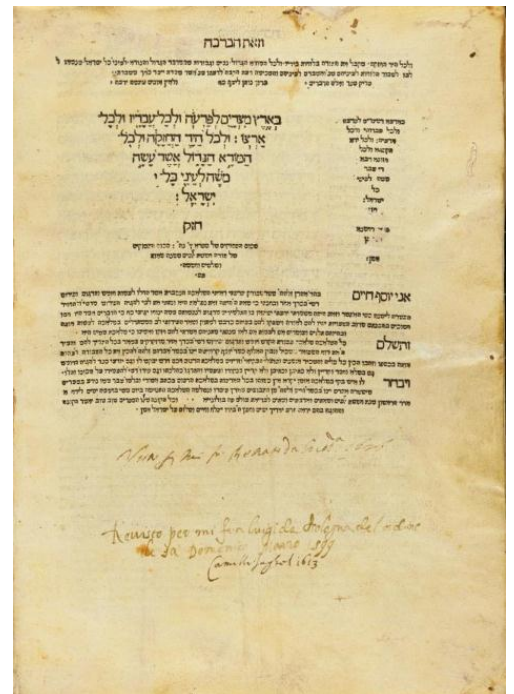


CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | PARIS | 11 March 2014

AN EXCEPTIONAL TORAH TO BE AUCTIONED ON 30 APRIL 2014



Paris – The Department of Books and Manuscripts is pleased to announce the auction of an exceptional printed Torah (or Pentateuch: the first five books of the Bible) at their sale on 30 April 2014.

A major turning point in the history of printing in general and of Hebrew books in particular, this rare incunabulum, whose value is estimated at €1,000,000-1,500,000, will undoubtedly be the highlight of the sale. Printed in Hebrew in Bologna in January 1482, the volume represents the very first appearance in print of all five books of the Pentateuch as well as the first to which vocalisation and cantillation marks have been added. It is equally the first time that the printed Biblical text is accompanied by Rashi's commentary and the paraphrase in Aramaic (*Targum Onkelos*). The significance of this edition is demonstrated by the fact that this format is still in use today when printing the Torah.

Essential to reading and chanting the text of the Torah, the addition of vocalisation and cantillation marks represented a considerable challenge for 15th century printers. Abraham ben Hayyim of Pesaro was the first to overcome this technical difficulty during the printing of the present Pentateuch. Having overcome this first hurdle, he also had the talent and intelligence to frame the Biblical text with Rashi's commentaries in order to facilitate the parallel study of the text. The majority of the copies were printed on vellum in accordance with the precepts of the Law.

The back of the present copy bears the signature of three 16th and 17th century censors, testifying to its presence in an Italian library until at least the mid 17th century: Luigi da Bologna in 1599, Camillo Jaghel in 1613 and Renato da Modena in 1626. The censors had the task of examining and checking all books, both manuscript and printed, in order to authorise or ban ownership and distribution of the work: the text of the Rashi commentary here bears the marks of their work, having been erased or crossed out in a number of places.

Over the last hundred years only two copies of this rare edition have come to auction: the first in 1970, printed on vellum and complete, the second in 1998, printed on paper and missing eight pages. The Pentateuch to be presented next April is printed on vellum, complete (apart from the rear free end paper) and in exceptionally fresh condition.

Two years after the sensational price realised at Christie's Paris for a manuscript Mahzor in May 2012, which set a world record for an illuminated Hebrew manuscript, this is now the second occasion on which the Department of Books and Manuscripts has presented a Hebrew book of outstanding significance, considered by many to stand alongside the Gutenberg Bible as one of the monuments of the history of printing.



Sale : Wednesday 30 April 2014

Exhibition in New-York : 27-31 March & 1st April 2014

Exhibitions of the highlights in Paris: 10-12 April 2014

Public exhibition in Paris before the sale: 25, 26, 28 & 29 April 2014

Christie's : 9, avenue Matignon, 75008 Paris

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Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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