

Ancient 10 Commandments Tablet to Be Auctioned, but There's a Hitch

A rare stone tablet inscribed with the Ten Commandments will be sold at an auction in New York Wednesday.

Sotheby's auction house anticipates that the tablet, which dates back to A.D. 300 to 800 and is carved in Paleo-Hebrew, will be auctioned for \$1 million to \$2 million.

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"This remarkable tablet is not only a vastly important historic artifact, but a tangible link to the beliefs that helped shape Western civilization," explained Richard Austin, Sotheby's Global Head of Books & Manuscripts. "To encounter this shared piece of cultural heritage is to journey through millennia and connect with cultures and faiths told through one of humanity's earliest and most enduring moral codes."

The marble slab is the oldest known tablet inscribed with the Ten Commandments. It weighs 115 pounds and stands two feet tall. The stone tablet was discovered in 1913 during railroad excavations along the southern coast of Israel. Initially, it was not recognized as a historically significant artifact.

"The significance of the discovery went unrecognized for many decades, and for 30 years it served as a paving stone at the entrance to a local home, with the inscription facing upwards and exposed to foot traffic," Sotheby's states on their website.

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“Fortunately, the text is all still legible, but it is most worn in the middle where people walked across it,” Selby Kiffer, the international senior specialist for books and manuscripts at Sotheby’s, told the New York Times.

In 1943, the tablet was sold to Jacob Kaplan, a scholar who recognized its value and importance to a “Samaritan Decalogue.”

What makes this tablet truly unique is the 20 lines of text incised on it that follow the Ten Commandments found in the book of Exodus. But apparently, due to its connection to the Samaritans, the engravings aren’t a perfect match to Scripture.

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