

## New Dead Sea Scroll Fragments



**There is only one place on earth where an unending stream of evidence substantiating the Bible is discovered year after year. Granted, it's been 40 years since the major discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls thrilled biblical archaeologists and others who love the Word of God.**

The latest discovery—two small fragments of animal skin, brown with age, with Leviticus 23:38-39 and 43-44 inscribed in ancient Hebrew—are now in the hands of the *Israel Antiquities Authority* (IAA). How they got there is an intriguing story in itself. About a year ago, Professor **Chanan Eshel**, an archaeologist at *Bar Ilan University* in Tel Aviv, was summoned to an abandoned police station near the Dead Sea for a clandestine meeting with a Bedouin Arab. After explaining that he'd been offered \$20,000 on the black

market, the man asked Eshel to evaluate the fragments. It would be hard to describe the emotions that surged through the professor's heart as he examined the skins. "I was jealous that he had found them instead of me," said Eshel, who has worked in the Judean Desert for nearly 20 years. "I was also very excited, though I didn't believe I would ever see them again." Months later, after learning that the fragments had not left the country, Eshel bought them with \$3,000 provided by Bar Ilan. The skins were turned over to the IAA, which is now testing them for authenticity. They are the 15th find in this area and date to the Second Revolt against the Romans under Bar-Kochba.

The discovery sparked renewed hope among biblical archaeologists that the Judean Desert has much yet to yield. "No scrolls have been found in the Judean Desert since 1965," said Eshel. "This [find] encourages scholars to believe that if they bother to excavate, survey and climb, they will still find things in the Judean Desert. The common perception has been that there is nothing left to find there, but that is clearly wrong."

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