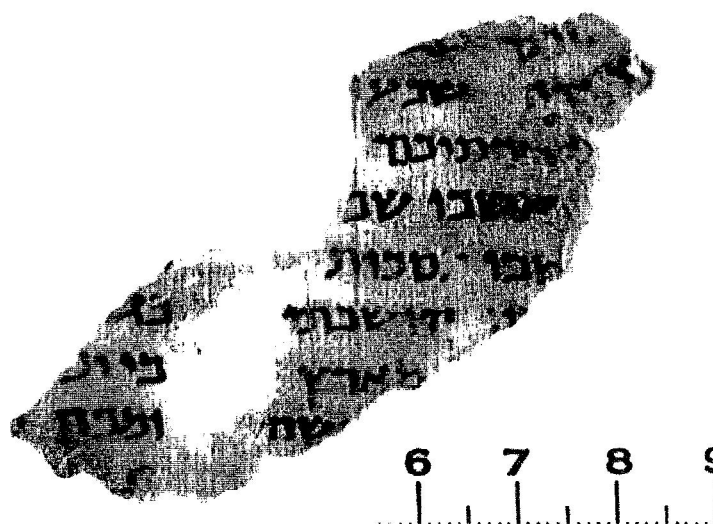


FRAGMENTS OF A LEVITICUS SCROLL (ARUGLEV)
FOUND IN THE JUDEAN DESERT IN 2004

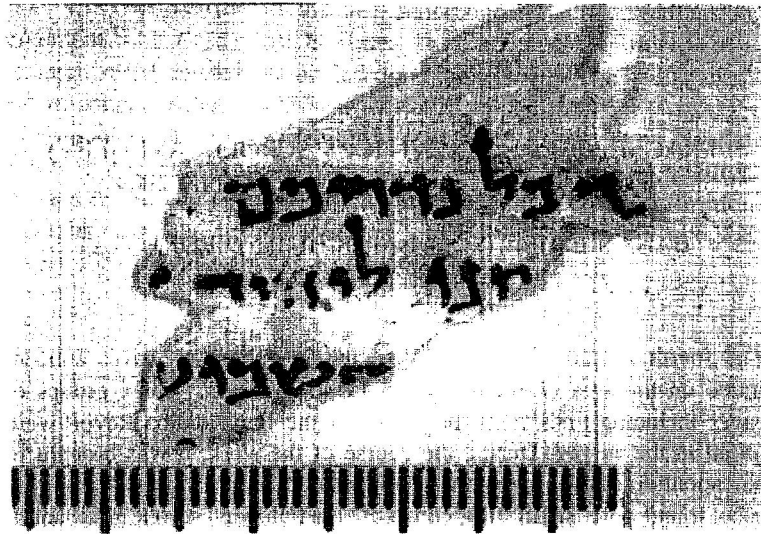
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The fourth season of our survey of the Judean desert caves concentrated on the area of Nahal Arugot (Wadi Areijeh).¹ Three groups of caves including finds from the period of the Bar Kokhba Revolt were found in the survey. During the course of the work, it was brought to our attention that in the summer of 2004 Bedouin from the Rashaidah tribe found four small fragments of a parchment scroll in a small,



¹ On previous seasons, see R. Porat, H. Eshel and A. Frumkin, "New Finds from four Bar-Kokhba Refuge Caves North of Ein-Gedi," *Judea and Samaria Research Studies* 13 (ed. Y. Eshel; Ariel: College of Judea and Samaria, 2004) 79–116 (Hebrew).



nearly inaccessible cave in Nahal Arugot.² It is the easternmost of a group of four small caves on the southern bank of the wadi, under the large waterfall (map ref. 18286/09708).³ These four caves also yielded pottery and textiles from the period of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.⁴

The scroll fragments include fragments of verses from Leviticus 23 and 24. Ascertainable on the basis of the remains of the scroll is the width of two columns and the fact that the scroll was written with 36 lines on each column—both features indicating that the scroll included only the book of Leviticus and not the entire Pentateuch. The fragments were first photographed in August 2004, while still in the possession of the Bedouin and before having been cleaned. A first preliminary report on the discovery was published on the basis of these photographs.⁵ In March 2005, we were able to buy these fragments

² For a summary of the finds from Nahal Arugot known before the present survey, see G. Hadas, "Arugot, Nahal," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 1.67–68.

³ These caves are located in the territory that was under the control of the Jordanian government before the 1967 War.

⁴ The Bedouin relayed that, in the 1950's and 1960's, bronze Bar Kokhba coins were found in the three other caves of this group.

⁵ H. Eshel, Y. Baruchi and R. Porat, "Fragments of a Biblical Scroll from the Judean Desert," *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls* 3 (2005) 259–260 (Hebrew).

and hand them over to the State of Israel before they found their way to the international antiquities market.⁶ After the fragments were cleaned, some details previously indiscernible came to light.⁷

Of the four small scroll fragments, Fragment A consists of part of the upper margin of a column. Fragments B and C are physically connected, and together include the remains of two columns.⁸ The fourth piece is a 3.5 × 1.8 cm cluster of miniscule fragments. The cluster was found covered with dirt, under which no ink remains were initially discernable. However, once the fragments were acquired, the cluster was examined under infrared light and traces of ink were revealed, but of letters written in differing directions. The attempt to separate the adhered fragments of the cluster was not helpful, as the separated fragments were so small that the largest of them contained only two letters. Thus the cluster is to be considered as an indecipherable fragment.

Physical Description

The parchment of Fragment A is light brown in color, while Fragments B and C are darker. The ink is black. The parchment is 0.35 mm thick. The upper margin of the scroll is at least 12 mm high. Our reconstruction indicates that the scroll had 36 lines in each column. The space between columns ranges from 10 to 14 mm. The lines and columns were marked on the scroll with a sharp instrument. The ruling is evident in Fragments B and C—for example, above lines 10–13 of Column A, and in the space between the columns of lines 13–15; also distinguishable is a vertical line sketched to mark the beginning of Column B. Column A includes between 27 to 33 spaces per row, while Column B is narrower, with 25 to 30 spaces per line. The scroll is written in a formal script typical to the period after the destruction of the Second Temple, and similar to that of the Psalms Scroll found in the Cave of Letters.⁹

⁶ The fragments were bought with the assistance of the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University. Their publication is courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

⁷ The fragments were cleaned by Marina Rasowsky of the chemical laboratory of the Israel Museum. They were photographed by Superintendent Leizer Sin-David of the photography lab of the Israel Police. We extend our thanks to both.

⁸ When we first saw and photographed the fragments in August 2004, Fragments B and C were separate. Later they were glued together, perhaps by the Bedouin, but more likely by an antiquities dealer who had been shown the fragments by the Bedouin.

⁹ See F.M. Cross, "Palaeography and the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

Text

Fragment A includes remains of Leviticus 23:38–39; its size is 3.5 × 3.5 cm (Photo 2). Visible on it are the remains of four lines of fragmentary script, and part of the column's upper margin, 12 mm high. It appears that the complete upper margin is not preserved.

Fragment A (Leviticus 23:38–39), Top of a Column

upper margin

1. [ומל]כד כל נדחיהם [ומלכד כל נדחיהם]
2. [אשר ח]תנו ליהוה א[ך בחמשה עשר]
3. [יום לחדש] השביעי באספכם את הבואה
4. [האדץ חתנו א]ח ח[ן יהוה שבעה ימים]

Fragments B and C are joined together into one piece, 6 × 5.5 cm (Photo 1). The joint between the two fragments is distinguishable in the middle of the word בסכות in Line 12. The fragments include parts of verses written on two columns. Of the first column, the top of which is preserved on Fragment A, eight fragmentary lines remain, consisting of parts of Leviticus 23:40–44. Of the second, five fragmentary lines remain, consisting of Leviticus 24:16–19. The margin between the two columns ranges from 10 to 14 mm. According to our suggested reconstruction of the first column, three lines are missing between Fragment A and Fragments B and C, thus we have begun numbering the lines of the latter fragment from Line 8.

Fragments B and C (Leviticus 23:40–44, 24:16–19)

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| | 8. [חל ושמחתם לפני יהוה אל]היכם שב[עת] |
| | 9. [ימים וחתם אתו חל]י יהוה vacat שבעה |
| | 10. [ימים בשנה הקדש עולם] ללדתיכם [בחדש] |
| | 11. [השביעי חתנו אתו בסכות] חשבו שב[עת] |
| | 12. [ימים כל האדצה בישראל] ישבו בסכות |
| | 13. [למען ידעו הדתיכם כי בסכ]ות את חשבתו |
| | 14. [את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם] מארץ |
| | 15. [מצרים את יהוה אליהם וידבר] משה |
| | 16. [את מערי יהוה אל בני ישראל] |
| מ[את ימים חמש ידגמו בו כל הדעה] | |
| כנ[ך באדצה בנקבו שם ימים ואיש] | |
| כי יב[נה כל נפש אדם מזה יומה] | |
| ומכה [נפש בהמה ישלמה נפש] | |
| ח[תה נפש ואיש כי יתן מים ...] | |

after Fifty Years (eds P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 1.388–89, Pl. 10, line 9; P. Flint, "5/6HevPsalms," *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaean Desert* (eds. J. Charlesworth et al., DJD 38; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 141–66 Pls. xxv–xxvii.

Notes on the Reading

Line 8—A short line connects the base of the *sin* with the base of the *bet*.

Lines 8–9—The right side of the scroll slants upward, so that the two first words of these lines are not straight.

Line 13—The lower part of the right leg of the *he* at the beginning of the word *הַשְּׁכֵת* is missing. A thin line connects this letter with the *vav*.

Summary

The pottery found in the Nahal Arugot cave together with the paleographic data attest that this scroll was brought to the cave at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (i.e., in the summer of 135 CE). These new fragments, similar to the rest of the Bar Kokhba scrolls found in the Judean desert between 1951 and 1962, are very similar to the Masoretic Text.¹⁰ This similarity can be explained by the fact that, starting from the first century CE, there was significant effort expended in creating a unified text for the books of the Pentateuch. The success of this endeavor is reflected in all of the known biblical fragments of the Bar Kokhba period.¹¹ Hence it appears that the Pentateuch used in Judea in the first third of the 2nd century CE was nearly identical to that of the Masoretic Text. Indeed, the partial verses found in the Nahal Arugot fragments discussed here are identical to the Masoretic version, with one exception: the word *בְּשֻׁכּוֹת*, which appears in Fragments B and C (Column 1, line 12) with a *waw*—while in the Masoretic Text of Lev 23:4 it appears defectively.¹²

Until now, fragments of the four other books of the Pentateuch from the Bar Kokhba period had been found, while Leviticus had not. And to the best of our knowledge, the fragments published here are the first parchment scroll fragments discovered in the Judean Desert

¹⁰ For an analysis of all the biblical scrolls from the Bar Kokhba period found in the Judean desert, see Y. Baruchi, "Fragmentary Biblical Scrolls from Bar-Kokhba Revolt Refuge Caves," *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls* 3 (2005) 177–190 (Hebrew).

¹¹ See E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 32–35.

¹² The version of "*besukkot*" with a missing *holam*, as in the Masoretic Text, is actually used for a halakhic interpretation in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 6. 12.

since the conclusion of the Masada excavations in 1965. Papyri were found at Ketef Jericho in 1986 and 1993, and in the Har Yishai cave near Ein Gedi in 2002. But these documents deal with money matters, and are not religious texts written on parchment.¹³ The discovery of the fragments published here shows that there is still a chance of finding scrolls and documents in the Judean Desert caves, despite the widespread plundering of the caves since the first scrolls were unearthed at Qumran in 1947.

¹³ For the fragments found at Ketef Jericho, see H. Eshel et al., "A. Ketef Jericho," in Charlesworth et al., DJD 38.3–113. Two Greek manuscripts found in the small cave next to Ein Gedi in 2002 will be published in Volume 35 of *Scripta Classica Israelica*, to be released in 2006.