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Israeli researcher says ancient textile may contain elusive dye, the lost Biblical blue

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JERUSALEM – An Israeli researcher says she has identified a nearly 2,000-year old textile that may contain a mysterious blue dye described in the Bible, one of the few remnants of the ancient color ever found.

Naama Sukenik of Israel's Antiquities Authority said Tuesday that recent examination of a small woolen textile discovered in the 1950s found that the textile was colored with a dye from the Murex trunculus, a snail researchers believe was the source of the Biblical blue.

Researchers and rabbis have long searched for the enigmatic color, called tekhelet in Hebrew. The Bible commands Jews to wear a blue fringe on their garments, but the dye was lost in antiquity.

Sukenik examined the textile for a doctorate at Bar-Ilan University and published the finding at a Jerusalem conference Monday.