

## Badgers in the Bible

So, did badgers feature in the Bible?

**Badger Scripture** - Exodus 36:19 *And he made a covering for the tent [of] rams' skins dyed red, and a covering [of] badgers' skins above [that].*



**Badger Scripture** - Exodus 39:34 *And the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of badgers' skins, and the veil of the covering,*



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**Badger Scripture** - Numbers 4:25 *And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that [is] above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,*

Look up any words in blue and write a short meaning/explanation for each one.

There is no mention of the badger in the Douai Bible, but the Authorised Version mentions it as the English translation of *táhásh*. They often tell of 'skins of *táháshim* being used as an outer cover for the **Tabernacle** and other pieces of furniture. (Some translations said that *táhásh* meant the colour violet, but this is thought to be a mistake.)

Most of the bits about badgers are in the book of Exodus. They are instructions for the setting-up of the Tabernacle. The first mention is in Exodus Chapter 25, Verse 5. It tells the people of Israel to bring their offerings. It asks for brass, silver, linen goat's hair, skins of rams and badgers and shittim wood. These were all used in the building of the Tabernacle. In Chapter 26, Verse 14, it mentions the uses of badger skins. They were used to make the outer cover for the roof of the Tabernacle and covers for furniture, particularly when the people were moving around. They were also to be used on the table of **shewbread**.



So it might be the badger skin was used as a covering for the protection of expensive furniture, but we think that there is one example of a different use. In the book of Ezekeil, Chapter 16, verse 10, it tells us about Jerusalem. It says, of delicate and beautiful women, *"I anointed thee with oil; I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain upon thy neck, and I*

*put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head."*

If the badger skins were to be used for these purposes, it seems that they must have been quite rare, and very valuable to the Israelites. Of course, badger skins are not very big, and a number would need to be captured to cover much area. As a **nocturnal/crepuscular** and secretive animal, it would be difficult to catch one badger, but it does live in groups, which might make it a little easier to catch a number of animals at once. So it would be rare enough to make it a valuable product, but sufficiently plentiful to be able to provide enough skins.

So would badger skins have done the job? How well would they keep out the weather? If you have ever stroked our stuffed badger or felt a skin, you'll know that it would certainly have done the job. The fur is thick and long. The guard hairs are quite stiff and the hairs fit over one another to cast the rain.

Would it have been any use to make shoes? Badger skin is very tough! It would certainly have done the job for a delicate young lady, and would have kept her feet dry and warm!

However, it might be that the use of 'badger' skins is also wrong. Although the badger is fairly common in Lebanon and Israel, and might even occur in the wilderness, many people point to the fact that the badger is not found in large quantities in Arabia, Syria or Egypt. (Of course, it might be that **honey badger** skins were available in Africa.) They also say that its small hide would have been useless as a tent covering. They might have meant the **dugong**, which is a large **sirenian**, living in the **Red Sea**. (They resemble *Cetacea* (whales and porpoises), the *Sirenia* are really more allied to the *Ungulata*, or hoofed animals.)



Manatee

The manatee of the Atlantic and the dugong of the Indian Ocean are the only living representatives of the Sirenia. A third species, the sea-cow of Bering Sea, went extinct in the 18th century.

There are plenty of dugongs in the shallows of the **Indian Ocean** and along the **Red Sea** coast. They are between 3 ½ metres to 9 metres long, and look something like a whale and a seal. They are completely water-based, but very easy to catch. They eat seaweed. The dugong is known to naturalists as *Halicore tabernaculi*.

The skin is used even today by **Bedouin Arabs**. The Arabs of the **Sinai Peninsula** apply the name '*tucash*' to the seals and dugongs which are common in the Red Sea, and the skins of which are largely used as leather and for sandals.

However, the dugong skin used to make sandals today, which might be useful for walking across the hot deserts, might not be the sort of material that would suit a wealthy lady. Would it go with the fine materials of such a lady's



wardrobe?

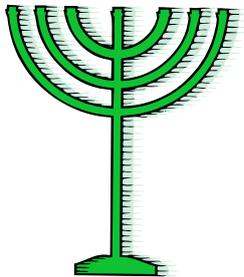
It would seem that everything used to construct the tabernacle had to be of the very finest quality. Would the fairly common and quite heavy and coarse skin of a dugong have been seen as suitable? Anything that was cheap enough for everyday life would not have been acceptable.

Others say it is the halicore, a fish found in the Red Sea, which is still used by the Arabs to make soles for shoes and such like; it is called '*dahash*' which is a bit like '*tachash*'. However, one doubt about the halicore is found in Leviticus 11:10; "*all that have not fins and scales in the seas.*" But that only means using them as food; besides, the '*tachash*' probably includes sea animals in general. Their skins were often made into "leather" and were ideal to protect against the weather



Yet others think it might be the stag goat, called '*thacasse*', related perhaps to '*tachash*', which is to be seen on some Egyptian monuments.

<http://www.lhnet.org/eurasian-badger/>



Can you find out about any of the Jewish items here?

(Although we are talking about badgers in the Bible, you should remember that the Old Testament refers to many events and beliefs of the Jewish religion, before the birth of Jesus.)

