

The Tabernacle

The Badger Skins - Part 1

Introduction

As the children of Israel began their sojourn to the Promised Land, their first stop was at Succoth (Ex. 12:37). There they were given certain commandments. From there they journeyed to Etham (Ex. 13:20) and for the first time we read of the Pillar of fire. The next stop was at Pi-hahiroth by the sea (Ex. 14:2) and it was there Pharaoh and his hosts came seeking to recapture them but God opened the sea and they passed over on dry land (Ex. 14:3-22). The Egyptians determined to get the children of Israel back and followed them into the sea but God rolled back the waters and Pharaoh and his best men were all drown (Ex. 14:24-28). Following the cloudy pillar their journey brought them to Elim (Ex. 15:27), then into the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:1-17:1), then to Rephidim (Ex. 17:1), then to the Desert of Sinai (Ex. 19:1).

The first major prolonged encampment was at the base of Sinai. It was there the children of Israel learnt God's legislation by which, as God's people, they were to live (Ex. 20:1-17). It was also where God commanded them to build Him a dwelling place. How great is the grace and love of God for He knew their future failings and rebellions, yet He graciously deigned to dwell among them, travelling with them, and living in a tent as they were. This dwelling place of God was called the "Tabernacle" and it consisted of three main sections:

- a) The first section was called the court of the Tabernacle, a large rectangular courtyard (Ex. 27:9).
- b) The second section was the Tabernacle, which was a smallish rectangular tent consisting of two rooms, the holy place, also called the first tabernacle (Heb. 9:2, 6, 8).
- c) The third was called the "most holy" (Ex. 26:33) or "The Holiest of all" (Heb. 9:3).

The framework for the tabernacle was forty-eight boards, possibly like "ladders". There were twenty boards on the South and north sides (Ex. 26:18, 20) and six boards along west side (Ex. 26:22). Covering these boards was a linen curtain (Ex. 26:1, 6, 13). Over this linen cloth there were three "coverings", the covering of goats' hair (Ex. 26:7) also called "The Tent" (Ex. 26:14), the covering of ram skins dyed red (Ex. 26:14), and the covering of badgers' skins (Ex. 26:14).

In our modern world with all its business it is all too easy to accept that which others teach without Biblical verification. We ought to review that which is taught and if it lines up with the scriptures, then accept it. We have a case history for this in the case of the Bereans. After Paul and Silas spoke to the people of Berea, the Holy Spirit commends them saying, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:10-11). They did not accept the teaching because the great Apostle Paul and his associate taught it. They searched the scriptures to test the accuracy of the teaching. That is, they scrutinized the scriptures, investigated the scriptures, and asked questions from the scriptures. This is what Luke did (Lk. 1:1-2), the Lord encouraged to do (Jn. 5:39), and the prophets did (1 Pet. 1:10). God expects His people seek to confirm or reject that which is said by man.

This response to the teaching of the scriptures is of major importance, especially regarding the badger skins. It is often written and said that the badger skins were drab and unattractive, and indicate the Lord in whom there was no beauty (Isa. 53:2). However, Isaiah 53:2 is not teaching His physical attractiveness, but their perception of what Messiah would be like. Certain questions come from this interpretation:

- a) What do the scriptures teach about badger skins?
- b) Were the Badger skins drab and unattractive?

What we do know about badger skins?

Since there are only thirteen references to "badgers' skins" in the scriptures, it is easy to read all the references and understand what badger skins were used for. Those references are: Ex. 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19; 39:34; Num. 4:6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 25; Ezek. 16:10.

- a) We know what linen is, or ram's skins or goat's hair, but what were the badger skins and why does God leave them in obscurity? There are several possible reasons:

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- i) When God leaves a matter in obscurity it is possibly because it is data which carries no spiritual blessing to us.
- ii) Perhaps it may be something He has reserved for His own pleasure, something only He can appreciate.
- iii) It may also be to heighten humanities fear of the impending judgment as when John was not permitted to write about the thunders (Rev. 10:4). God is entitled to have His own little secrets for the scriptures teach, “The secret things belong unto the LORD” (Deut. 29:29).
- iv) It may be that such data is irrelevant and would cause us to lose sight of the greater truth. What we do know is that this was a divinely chosen covering specifically made according to divine instructions for the glory of God.

b) Expanded:

- i) There are two ways in which badger skins were used in the scriptures:
 1. As a covering: In every reference to “tachash” (badger) except one, there is the thought of “covering” (Ex. 26:14; Num. 4:6, 8, 11, 12, 14)
 2. The second use is for footwear (Ezek. 16:10). God said concerning Israel, “I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk” (Ezek. 16:10). In Ezekiel 16 the Lord is speaking about Israel in the day of her betrothal to himself. On that day the Lord speaks of how she was dressed, and being beautifully dressed in her garments the Lord said, “I shod thee with badger’ skin”. These were not just the normal everyday shoes, they are the shoes of the bride. Now, in our lifetime we have seen many brides with beautiful tiaras and gowns, but I have yet to see a bride with common work shoes on! Her shoes befit the occasion and the clothing. When God describes how He dressed Israel, one can be sure that the badger skin shoes were beautiful to the evaluation and eyes of God.

What sort of an animal was the “badger?”

To assist us in what the “badger skin” was like, I will use an illustration. If I ask an individual, “Tell me about the ichthyostega, what colour was it, what was it’s hide like?” I expect the answer to each would be, “I do not know”. Now if I was to minister to the saints, intimating from that creature something of the Lord, it would not be accepted. Yet this is exactly what is done with the badger skin for we know nothing about that creature. What does the word “tachash” (translated badger) actually indicate?

a) Was it a land or sea animal?

- i) When it comes to being an animal, there are no less than seven different animals suggested, such as: “Sealskin; porpoise-skin; badger skins; goatskins; hides of sea cows; dolphin or porpoise skins; probably an antelope”. A dolphin, seal, sea cows and porpoise did not have fins or scales and therefore were unclean (Deut. 14:10). It could not have been a badger for it does not part the hoof and chew the cud (Deut. 14:6). It also was unclean. Each one of these was an unclean creature of which the people were not allowed to eat. The reality is, we do not know what it’s hide was like, therefore to say it was drab and unattractive is an assumption.
- ii) Could they have been used in a dwelling place? The answer is no, for the law stated:
 1. “The swine . . . is unclean to you . . . their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you” (Lev. 11:7-8).
 2. “All that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you: They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcases in abomination” (Lev. 11:10-11).
 3. “Every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean. And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even” (Lev. 11:26-27).

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4. The individual was not allowed to touch that which was unclean (Lev.11:8).
5. Since the entire camp had to be holy, there was to be seen “no unclean thing in thee” (Deut.23:14). No private dwelling place could have been made with the skin or hide of an unclean creature. Would God have commanded His people to build for the Lord a dwelling place which, in the building of it, they would have been made unclean? If a private dwelling could not have been made of such, God would never have allowed His dwelling place to be made of that which is unclean.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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