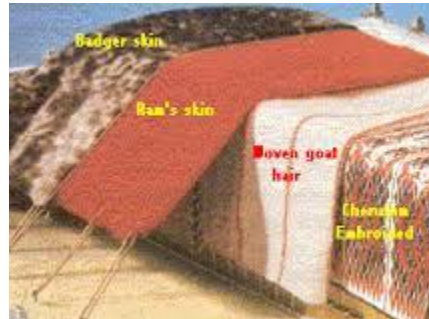


עורת עזים ותישים

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In the Book of Exodus we read that the tabernacle was made of ten **יריעת** (*yerio'th*): **אֶרֶץ הַיְרִיעָה הָאֶחָת שְׁמוֹנֶה וְעֶשְׂרִים בָּאֵמָה, וְרוֹחַב אַרְבַּע בָּאֵמָה הַיְרִיעָה הָאֶחָת; מִדָּה אַחַת לְכָל-הַיְרִיעָה.**

“The length of each curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall have one measure” (Ex 26:2; 36:9).

The understanding of **יריעה** (*yeria'h*), and **יריעת** (*yerio'th*) as a “curtain” and “curtains” respectively, by the Greek (and English) translators, hold also for several other verses (Ex 26:1, 3, 4, 5, 6; Is 54:2; Jer 10:20; 49:28).

However we also find:

וַעֲשִׂיתָ יְרִיעַת עֲזִים, לְאֹהֶל עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן; עֶשְׂתֵּי-עֶשְׂרֵה יְרִיעַת תְּעֹשֶׂה אֹתָם.

“And you shall make curtains of goats' [hair] for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains shall you make them” (Ex 26:7; 36:14).

The Greek translator wrote here: “goat-hair skins” and it is possible that he believed that here **יריעת** (*yerio'th*) is an order-type error of **עורת** (*o'roth*) - “skins” (e.g. Ex 39:34). However, a more accurate translation of **יריעת עזים** is: “curtains (or skins) derived from female goats.”

The understanding of **יריעת** (*yerio'th*) as “skins” by the Greek translator, holds also for other verses (Ex 26:8, 9, 10, 12, 13; Num 4:25; Jer 4:20; Ps 104:2; Cant 1:5; 1 Ch 17:1).

In addition to the tent of the tabernacle that was made of skins derived from female goats, we read about the two covers of the tent itself:

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מִכְסָּה לְאֹהֶל, עֹרֹת אֵילָם מֵאֲדָמִים, וּמִכְסָּה עֹרֹת תַּחְשִׁים, מִלְּמַעְלָה.

“And you shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red and a covering of sealskins above” (Ex 26:14; 36:19).

It is not known how the English translator determined that **ערת תחשים** (*o'roth thekhashim*) mean “sealskins” or how the Greek translator determined that its meaning is: “blue-dyed skins.” The content of these verses suggests that **ערת תחשים** (*o'roth thekhashim*) is a letter-substitution error of **ערת תישים** (*o'roth thiashim*) - “skins derived from male goats.”

In the Book of Exodus verses that contain **ערת תחשים** (*o'roth thekhashim*) are always associated with **ערת אילם מאדמים** - “rams' skins dyed red” (Ex 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 39:19, 34). These types of skins are not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

It should also be noted that in the Book of Exodus there is no **תחש** (*thakhash*), the supposed singular of **תחשים** (*thekhashim*). Although the singular **תחש** (*thakhash*) appears in the Book of Numbers several times, its plural form **תחשים** (*thekhashim*) does not appear in this book even once. Similarly to the suggestion made for **תחשים** (*thekhashim*), it is proposed that **תחש** (*thakhash*) is a letter-substitution error of **תיש** (*thaiysh*) - “he-goat” (e.g. Gen 30:35; 32:15; 2 Ch 17:11).

In the last chapter of the Book of Exodus we read that in the first day of the first month of the second year Moses finally constructed the tabernacle:

**ויקם משה את-המשכן, ויתן את-אדניו, וישם את-קרשיו, ויתן את-בריחיו; ויקם את-עמודיו.
ויפרש את-האהל על-המשכן, וישם את-מכסה האהל עליו, מלמעלה-כאשר צוה יהוה את-משה.**

“And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up its pillars.
And he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as *YHWH* commanded Moses” (Ex 40:18-19).

It is rather odd that here the ten **יריעת** (*yerio'th*) - “curtains” that made for the tabernacle are not mentioned. Furthermore, there is no mention here of the two layers of covering of tent itself.

In the Book of Numbers there are two references to this structure:

**ומשמרת בני-גרשון באהל מועד, המשכן והאהל; מכסהו-ומסך פתח אהל מועד.
“And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting the tabernacle, and the Tent, (and) the covering thereof, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting”** (Num 3:25).

We may wonder if indeed only one of the tent's coverings is mentioned here, or whether here **מכסהו** (*michsehu*) is a misspelled **מכסיו** (*michsav*) - “its coverings.”

The expression: **מכסה עור תחש** - “a covering of sealskin” (or a variant of it) appears several times in the same chapter of the Book of Numbers (Num 4:6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14), but nowhere else. Yet we also read in this book:

**ונשאו את-יריעת המשכן, ואת-אהל מועד, מכסהו, ומכסה [] התחש אשר-עליו מלמעלה;
ואת-מסך-פתח אהל מועד.**

“They shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting, its covering, and the covering of sealskin that is above upon it, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting” (Num 4:25).

Here, both coverings of the tent are mentioned, but we have to wonder why we are told here only about the material that made the outer layer of covering, and nothing about the materials of the inner covering of the tent. Furthermore, while previously **ערת תחשים** (*o'roth thekhashim*) was

translated to English as “sealskins”, now the word **תחש** (*thakhsh*) is translated as “sealskin” which suggests that the translator believed that word: **ער** (*o’r*) - “skin” is missing here.

The Greek translator wrote here: “blue veil” but this understanding is questionable. Furthermore, we have to wonder why this verse does not mention that the first cover of the tent was made of **ערת אילם מאדמים** - “rams' skins dyed red.”

According to chapter four of the Book of Numbers, **עור תחש** (*o’r thakhash*) is employed for making covers for (the transportation) of the following items: the “ark of the testimony”, the “table of showbread” with its “dishes, and the pans, and the bowls, and the jars”, the “candlestick of the light, and its lamps, and its tongs, and its snuff-dishes and all the oil vessels”, the “golden altar”, “all the vessels of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary”, “all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it [the altar], the fire-pans, the flesh-hooks, and the shovels, and the basins, all the vessels of the altar.” However, it is odd that these coverings are not mentioned in the Book of Exodus even once. While the English translator believed that **עור תחש** (*o’r thakhash*) is a “sealskin”, the Greeks translated it as “blue leather.” However, it appears more realistic to consider it as a “he-goat skin.”

As indicated above **יריעה** (*yeria’h*), and its plural form **יריעת** (*yerio’th*) are mentioned several times in several books of the Bible. In the Book of Chronicles we hear King David telling Nathan the Prophet: **הנה אנכי יושב בבית הארזים, וארון ברית-יהוה תחת יריעות** - “Lo, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of YHWH dwells under curtains” (1 Ch 17:1).

When this information appears in the Book of Samuel we find:

ראה נא, אנכי יושב בבית ארזים; וארון האלהים יושב בתוך היריעה - “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains” (2 Sam 7:2).

While the Greek translator of the Book of Chronicles wrote here “skins”, the Greek translator of the Book of Samuel wrote “tent” (see also: Hab 3:7). These translations suggest that the understanding of the account about the covering of the tabernacle that appears only in the Book of Exodus had faded away. It is therefore not surprising that the only mention of the word **תחש** (*thakhash*) beyond the Book of Numbers, was translated by the Greeks as: “blue” (Eze 16:10), which suggests that they assumed that this word is a corrupt version of **תכלת** (*thecheleth*) - “blue” (e.g. Eze 23:6; 27:7, 24).

It should also be noted that a deficient and somewhat modified version of the description of the covering of the tabernacle appears also in Exodus 36:8-19. For example, in chapter 26 of the book of Exodus we find the phrase: **אשה אל-אחתה** that was translated to English as: “one to another” (Ex 26:3, 5, 6, 17; see also Eze 1:9, 23; 3:13), but the literal meaning of this Hebrew expression is “a woman to her sister.” Yet in the parallel description in chapter 36 of the Book of Exodus this phrase is replaced by: **אחת אל-אחת** translated to English as “one to another” (Ex 36:10, 12, 13, 22; see also: Zec 8:21), and this translation indeed adhere to the Hebrew words. For these reasons it is suggested that the description of the coverings in chapter 36 of the Book of Exodus was written much later than that which appears in chapter 26 of this book. It

should also be noted that the “secondary” description of the covering of chapter 36 does not appear in the Greek version of the Book of Exodus.