

FROM WEIGHT TO WORSHIP: THE MULTIFACETED MEANINGS OF KAVOD IN BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CONTEXTS

Abstract

This study investigates the term *kavod*, translated as “glory”, within the Old Testament and its broader implications in ancient Semitic languages. By examining its rich semantic field, the research delineates both the theological and cultural dimensions associated with *kavod*, which signifies not only divine glory but also human honour and social status. In the Old Testament, *kavod* encapsulates the visible manifestations of God’s presence, particularly during theophanic events, which are represented by light and fire. The comparative analysis extends to other ancient Semitic languages, such as Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician, revealing a common linguistic root (*kvd*) that conveys meanings of weight, importance, and authority. This multifaceted nature emphasizes the dual role of *kavod* as both a reflection of divine majesty and a measure of human dignity, highlighting the interplay between the sacred and the social. The study also explores specific instances of *kavod* in biblical narratives, illustrating its connections to concepts of power, reverence, and worship. It discusses how human achievements and status are viewed through the lens of divine glory, with implications for social dynamics in Ancient Israel. Ultimately, this research sheds light on the evolution of *kavod* as a term that encapsulates complex theological meanings while simultaneously underpinning cultural practices related to honour and authority in the ancient Near Eastern context. By doing so, it enhances our understanding of the spiritual and social fabric of biblical society, demonstrating how concepts of glory intersected with collective identity and divine reverence.



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Introduction

The term *kavod*, commonly translated as “glory”, serves as the cornerstone for exploring the multifaceted meanings associated with divine and human honour in both the Old Testament and broader Semitic literature. This study aims to elucidate the complex semantic landscape of *kavod*, revealing its theological weight and cultural significance within ancient Near Eastern contexts. *Kavod* is deeply interwoven with concepts of authority, reverence, and worship. In the Old Testament, it designates not only the glory of God but also the transient glory afforded to humanity. This duality encapsulates how *kavod* reflects God’s impressive manifest presence through phenomena such as light and fire, while simultaneously embodying the honour and esteem attributed to human beings based on their status and actions. By tracing the etymology and usage of the root *kvd* across various ancient Semitic languages, including Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician, the study reveals a rich tapestry of meanings tied to prominence, authority, and respect.

The study is organized into four key sections. The first section delineates the terminological and semantic meanings of *kavod*, exploring its theological and profane aspects. The second section examines the representations of divine glory and sacred objects in the Ancient Near East, considering how cultural artifacts signal authority. The third section delves into the cultural implications of glory within the Jewish environment, analysing how social norms reflect divine principles. Finally, the fourth section thoroughly investigates the occurrences of the root *kvd* in the Old Testament, dissecting its verbal, nominal, and adjectival forms to showcase its diverse meanings and significance in relation to divine worship.

In exploring *kavod*’s comprehensive meanings, this study aims to provide insights into the spirituality of ancient Israel, elucidating how notions of glory shaped both individual and collective religious identities and practices. This exploration enhances our understanding of divine and human relationships within the broader context of the ancient Near East, emphasizing the adaptable and evolving nature of language in relation to profound spiritual concepts.

***Kavod* (glory) – terminological and semantic delimitations. Meanings of the root *kvd/ kbt* in the Semitic area – theological and cultural implications**

In the Old Testament, the term *kavod*, translated as “glory”, designates that which has “weight”, “importance”, that which is “imposing” and/ or “impressive” (Botterweck

1986, 30). The term is used in both in a theological and a profane sense. On the one hand, *kavod* refers to the glory of God, understood as a visible and impressive manifestation of His presence within creation. Throughout the history of the Old Testament, several theophanic events reveal the invisible God manifesting His holiness and divine power in a visible and perceptible form to man. In the context of those events, the expression “the glory of the Lord” (*kavod YHWH*) is frequently used, which man perceives as light or fire, sometimes of such an overwhelming brightness that it is shrouded in a dark cloud. On the other hand, *kavod* refers to the transient glory of human beings; in such instances, the term is associated with a person’s honour, wealth, or importance in their life. The Old Testament also speaks of the fact that man is called to give glory to God, that is, to recognise His presence and His redeeming action in creation and to glorify Him (Wagner 2012, 17).

While a general reading may identify the meanings, it isn’t easy to establish how the concept of *kavod* developed. The term’s polysemy suggests a complex evolution. In tracing this development and grasping the idea in its full richness, research in comparative Semitic philology offers essential insights. The root *kvd* is not exclusive to Hebrew but appears in other ancient Semitic languages, such as Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician. A comparative analysis of the meanings and usages of the *kvd* root in these languages reveals both cultural and semantic similarities and differences, helping clarify the biblical notion of *kavod*. Such an analysis enables a better understanding of how *kavod* came to signify both divine glory and human honour, and of its significance in the spirituality of ancient Israel.

In the Akkadian language, the root *kvd* gives rise to the term *kabattu(m)*, whose concrete meaning is “liver” – considered, alongside the heart, one of the most vital organs of the body. The term also carries the meaning of “weight” in the physical sense, used for instance to describe the heaviness of an object. From this notion of physical weight, abstract meanings developed, such as “importance”, “social position”, “temperament”, or even “adoration (of divinity)” (Von Soden, 1985, 416; Wagner 2012, 17). The term *kabattu(m)* often appears in ritual contexts, referring to festive meals offered to the gods. This helps explain why, in ancient Israel, *kavod* was used not only to describe the presence and glory of God but also the human act of worship and veneration toward the divine.

The adjectival form *kabtum*, also derived from *kvd*, means “heavy”, “massive”, or “honourable”. Literally, a stone may be called “heavy”, while abstractly, a tribute may be

“heavy” (difficult to pay), an illness “heavy” (hard to endure), or a punishment “heavy” (difficult to expiate). Thus, *kabtum* refers both to material weight and to a spiritual or moral burden – something “respectable”, “imposing”, or even “overwhelming”. This dual usage offers a crucial parallel for understanding why *kavod* is used in sacred texts: the manifestation of divine power may be perceived as a spiritual “weight”, inspiring reverence and respect (Von Soden 1985, 418).

Another Akkadian derivative from the same root is *kubuttu(m)*, which denotes the “honour” or “esteem” accorded to both deities and humans, thereby emphasising the relational dimension of glory. Similarly, in the Hebrew context, the term *kavod* expresses the manifestation of the divine presence, as well as the relationship established between the person experiencing this presence and God. In the Akkadian language, we also find two adjectives that can help us understand this notion even better: *kabittum* and *kibittum*. Both terms have a military connotation and refer to the idea of authority of the “bearer” of glory. Through these terms, one can deduce the concept that divine glory implies not only the idea of “weight” and “relation”, but also that of “authority”, thus completing the semantic and theological richness of this notion.

In Ugaritic literature, the root *kvd* illustrates the notion of a solemn “honouring” or “veneration.” A clear example of this use can be seen in the myth of the consecration of the god Baal as supreme king. Here, the *kvd* expresses the celestial court’s respect and adoration for the newly established divine ruler. This narrative illustrates how the surrounding culture understood the concepts of authority and power, which are primarily attributed to the gods, but also to kings, who often possessed a similar “glory”.

In addition to the social and devotional dimensions of the noun, *kvd* also has a special meaning – that of “liver”. Beyond its physiological dimension, the liver was considered in many ancient cultures as the seat of emotions and, above all, the source of vitality. This association with the principle of life emphasises the importance and influence of the organ upon the entire person. In this perspective, the concept of glory goes beyond the interpretation of social power, to also refer to the ontological force, the essence, and the inner energy that springs from vitality.

In his study of the root *kvd* in Ugaritic texts, Von Soden interprets it as meaning “to be heavy, to become weighty”, highlighting the symbolism of both physical and social weight, as well as the association with divine and royal authority (Von Soden 1985, 416). He sees the root *kvd* primarily as expressing a position of respect and poise, reflecting social and divine hierarchies. In contrast, Tropper adopts a functional approach,

interpreting *kvd* in economic contexts as referring to “increase” or “addition”, and thus as a term indicating arithmetic operations. He challenges the notion of “weight” as the principal meaning in textile or economic texts and argues instead that *kvd* designates an action of accumulation or unification. The fundamental difference is that Von Soden sees *kvd* as a symbol of authority and respect in religious and mythological rites. In contrast, Tropper interprets it as a technical term used for measurements and economic calculations. Thus, the first vision emphasises the symbolic and spiritual value, while the second highlights the pragmatic and numerical use of the root (Wagner 2012, 21-23). These main features individualise the notion of glory in Ugaritic literature (Hoftijzer; Jongeling; Steiner; Porten and Moshavi 1995, 484).

In Northwest Semitic languages, such as Phoenician, *kvd* appears as both a noun and an adjective, with meanings that resonate strongly with those found in Hebrew. Similarly, in Punic, the language spoken by the Carthaginians, *kvd* functions as a masculine and feminine noun, denoting “pomp” and “honour”. This Canaanite matrix provided a favourable framework in which the concept of *kavod* developed, influencing perceptions and formulations of prestige, honour, and glory in religious texts and traditions. In particular, the Punic meanings of “pomp” and “honour” likely played a fundamental role in the later development of the meaning of *kavod* in the context of divine glorification, the manifestation of royal prestige, or the expression of personal dignity.

Nevertheless, in the Old Testament, *kvd* acquires unique dimensions, referring specifically to the glory of God, often manifested through epiphanies. This semantic evolution suggests a reinterpretation influenced by the religious and cultural context of Israel. The original meaning of “weight” probably underpins the description of the overwhelming and impressive presence of divine glory, an idea that transcends the merely physical perception of a spiritual reality. Thus, the term *kavod* takes on distinct theological significance. This transformation highlights not only the adaptability of language but also the way in which religious concepts develop profound meanings. That is why the present notion becomes a symbol of the divine presence in the theological and spiritual context of the Old Testament (Wagner 2012, 24-25).

Divine glory and sacred objects in the Ancient Near East

In antiquity, the symbol of spiritual and political leadership was represented artistically by a light, a halo encircling the head, signifying elevated status and divine

power. The connection between mystical radiance and authority appears across various cultures, indicating that the concept of divine power transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. In Ancient Egypt, the pharaohs' crowns symbolised both kingship and the sacred bond between ruler and deity, serving as a visible sign of the sovereign's spiritual and political authority. The pharaoh was perceived as a god on earth; his divine power over the people was bestowed through the crown, granting absolute authority and evoking both reverence and fear among the populace.

The luminous tiara known as *melammu*, worn by Assyrian kings, was not merely decorative but embodied divine power and virtues. The concept of divine radiance is also present in Greek literature, in descriptions of deities – Athena, for instance, is said to bestow upon Achilles an aura of fire to instil fear in his enemies. Similarly, the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar (Inanna) is enveloped in an aura of light, inspiring dread and exuding energy and wrath, as described in the Sumerian hymn of Enheduanna.

The presence of God is described similarly in the Holy Scriptures, through dramatic natural phenomena akin to those in the traditions described (Porrino 2016, 22). One of the most common biblical symbols representing divine presence and holiness is fire, most notably the consuming fire on Mount Sinai (Botterweck 1986, 30), which evoked fear among the populace. Other examples include the consecration of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Lev 9:23) and of Solomon's Temple (2 Chr 7:1), where divine approval is signified through the descent of fire. In contrast, when sacrifices are offered inappropriately, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lv 10:1), the fire consumes them. During the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, God's glory is revealed amidst the light of fire in response to rebellion and doubt, serving as a disciplinary measure and showing that they too can receive punishment (Ex 16:7–10; Nm 14:10, 16:19). This gives rise to the concept of holy fear, a sacred experience that elicits both reverence and fear amongst the people.

In biblical literature, sacred objects – crowns, priestly garments, temples, thrones – were attributed a halo of glory, a term expressed in Hebrew as *kavod*, indicating divine presence. Similarly, in Mesopotamia, crowns, sacred weapons, and temples surrounded by *melammu* highlighted a sacred dimension. This depiction of divine glory and of the splendour that envelops the cosmos appears in both the Bible and in Mesopotamian literature.

The Scriptures speak of the glory of God filling both heaven and earth, revealing that His presence transcends the physical bounds of creation – mirroring messianic

texts that similarly describe the radiance of gods. One also notices that God's entrance into the Temple or the Tabernacle fills the space with glory, transforming it into a sacred sanctuary (Botterweck 1986, 29).

Cultural implications of glory in the Jewish environment

In biblical society, public recognition of high status, reputation, and prestige was manifested through respectful salutations, laudatory speeches, and bowing, while clothing and adornments were key indicators of social rank (Wagner 2012, 7). A pertinent example of *kavod*, expressing dignity and public recognition of spiritual authority, is found in the description of the high priest Eli's seat, which was "clothed in glory" (1 Sm 2:8).

In the Old Testament, glory could be attained through birth into a prestigious family or through official recognition of heroic deeds – military victories or acts of bravery – highlighting an analogy between divine majesty and social honours, even if the latter were often transient (Wagner 2012, 10). The prestige of such individuals persisted beyond death: royal funerals were elaborate events, whereas burials without honour were considered shameful (Dietrich 2009, 436). Nevertheless, human dignity, viewed as a fundamental characteristic of man, is seen as a divine gift deriving from each human being's relationship with God.

From a linguistic standpoint, no significant distinction is made between human and divine glory; God is often depicted as a king clothed in splendour, akin to an earthly ruler, thus establishing a symbolic connection. Beyond this, divine glory is revealed through theophanies – moments that draw God's presence closer to people (Struppe 1988, 132).

The relationship between Kavod and Divinity

In the Old Testament, *kavod* finds its most profound manifestation in relation to God. Divine glory is not only a mere attribute of God but a mode through which the faithful can perceive and experience divine presence. For instance, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, we find mention that "the glory of the Lord filled the sanctuary" (2 Chr 7:1), reinforcing the idea that God's presence is not only real but overwhelming. This manifestation of *kavod* is often associated with light, fire, or cloud – symbols of God's transcendence and holiness. Notably, the concept of glory is not exclusive to the

God of Israel but constitutes a broader motif within the religious thinking of the entire Semitic region.

Kavod does not pertain solely to divine glory but also encompasses the social dimension of human honour. This is evident in Semitic cultural traditions, where social status, rank, and dignity were frequently symbolised through grandeur and opulence, and these traits were seen as reflections of God's own glory. Hence, individuals of high rank were often perceived as divine representatives, entrusted with the responsibility of reflecting this divine glory through their conduct. Human glory, though finite, remains intrinsically linked to divine glory. This duality is essential for understanding the cultural and religious dynamics of Semitic societies. Biblical wisdom, for instance, highlights that true "glory" does not derive from external achievements but from the fear of the Lord. In his prayer, Solomon also receives divine glory through wisdom without actively seeking it out, inspiring a deeper understanding of both interpersonal and divine relationships.

Contrary to perspectives that emphasise external power and wealth as indicators of success, biblical wisdom brings a profound critique of the idea of material glory. Exemplified by Solomon's writings, the Old Testament affirms that a life grounded in the fear of God is the trustworthy source of human dignity. This view challenges contemporary values, suggesting that worldly honours are empty without a solid spiritual foundation. In this sense, the dual use of *kavod* in both divine and social contexts exemplifies the interaction between the two realms. Divine glory functions as a standard for human behaviour, urging individuals to aspire to a dignity that reflects God's glory. Thus, glory is not merely about elevated status, but about integrating divine values into everyday life.

In religious practice, *kavod* becomes central to worship and ritual. When people glorify God through praise and service, they engage in a synergistic relationship with the divine. This is evident in hymnography and offerings, where worship is not merely symbolic but a means of encountering God and acknowledging His greatness. Theophanies – such as the divine encounters at Mount Sinai or in Solomon's Temple – are instances where God's *kavod* is tangibly manifested, transforming sacred spaces into meeting places between heaven and earth. People are invited to participate in these manifestations actively, strengthening the connection between the individual and the divine.

The relationship between Kavod and Royal/ Sovereign Authority

In Semitic societies, the term *kavod* was frequently used to denote the king's glory and dignity. The king was not perceived merely as a political leader but as a divinity on earth. As such, he held a sacred status, and God's *kavod* was reflected in royal power. In Old Testament texts, the king of Israel is portrayed as God's anointed, entrusted with the mission of leading the people both on earth and in relation to divinity. A prime illustration of this relationship is the depiction of the throne of David or Solomon, shrouded in radiant light that conveyed power and prestige.

The connection between *kavod* and authority is evident in acts of worship and in times of war, where the king's *kavod* inspired loyalty and fervour among his subjects. The king's profound relationship with the divine was demonstrated mainly in moments of crisis, with military victories seen as evidence of the king's glory. This was reinforced through consecration rituals, where the king renewed his covenantal commitment to God and the people. A significant example is the consecration of Solomon's Temple, where "the glory of the Lord filled the house" (2 Chr 7:1), underscoring Solomon's religious as well as political authority and reflecting a symbiosis between the sacred and the profane.

Despite the high regard for royal *kavod*, biblical wisdom discourages idolisation of royal splendour. Proverbs and sapiential teachings maintain that true glory and dignity are rooted not in wealth or earthly power but in the fear of the Lord and in wisdom. This critical perspective reveals a paradox: the more the king demonstrates his dependence on divine authority, the more authentic his *kavod* becomes. Failure to do so causes practical consequences to occur, as in the case of Saul's arrogance and disobedience, which resulted in the diminution of his glory.

Within Semitic society, a close link exists between *kavod*, royal authority, and social structures. All the honours and adornments bestowed upon the king reaffirmed his status and legitimised his actions. Royal prestige was expressed through ostentation and pomp. The legal provisions and social norms of the Old Testament provided a framework for exercising royal authority, emphasising the sovereign's obligations: protecting the vulnerable, upholding justice, and honouring the covenant with YHWH. The king's royal glory thus became a moral and ethical benchmark.

The correlation between *kavod* and the king's authority in the Semitic cultural sphere rests on a complex system of universal links between sanctity, power, and responsibility. *Kavod* serves as a connecting point between the earthly kingdom and

divinity, illustrating that royal glory is more than status – it is virtue and adequate moral behaviour, which reveals a spiritual calling towards elevation to divine standards. This perspective remains relevant today, informing contemporary discussions on power and responsibility in modern societies. Teachings on *kavod* affirm that proper authority is revealed through humility, service, and the acknowledgement of the source of authority in divinity – an example for all leaders who seek a conduct rooted in moral and spiritual values.

Artistic Representations of Glory

In Semitic traditions, the perception of authority was intrinsically linked to the concept of *kavod*, to power and prestige. Art played not merely an aesthetic role, but also served to express cultural, spiritual, and social values. Artistic representations of divine glory promote an idealised vision of the power and legitimacy of earthly rulers, becoming a central motif in the creative works of this cultural region.

The sacred nature and divine presence were often conveyed in Semitic art through visual symbols such as light, radiance, and halos, as seen in depictions of deities in wall paintings and bas-reliefs. These representations sought to convey the holiness and majesty of the divine. In biblical tradition, God's *kavod* was frequently associated with natural phenomena such as light, clouds, and fire – artistically rendered as golden clouds, grey tones, or red flames - creating a sacred atmosphere that evoked deep religious sentiment and powerful spiritual experiences.

Kavod played a key role in portraying Semitic rulers as powerful intermediaries between the divine and their subjects. Sculptures, reliefs, and paintings from palaces and temples depicted kings in majestic light, wearing crowns, sceptres, and regal robes. In Ancient Egypt, pharaohs were often shown with ritual beards or mitres, emphasising the union of royal and priestly functions, and signifying that royal power was a visible expression of divine will. Artistic elements captured religious rituals, in which divine glory was manifest in reverent ceremonies, transforming art into a form of visual theology.

Architectural monuments, such as Solomon's Temple, also symbolised divine glory on earth through their artistic representation. The use of gold and precious wood was emblematic of Semitic prosperity and veneration. The royal palace and temple were focal points of communal life, illustrating the close bond between the people and their deity.

The meaning and occurrences of the root *kvd* in the Old Testament

To determine the semantic meaning and significance of the root *kvd*, one needs to examine the verbal, adjectival, and nominal forms in which it appears and subject them to analysis. The meanings of the term *kavod* encompass both non-theological and theological senses, related to verbal forms denoting something grand or worthy of honour, as well as adjectival and nominal forms that refer to characteristics such as “imposing” or “honourable”. They reflect aspects of social status and honour conferred by the people, which recognise the person’s value and contributions to the community.

The theological meanings of the verbal forms of the term *kavod* describe the glorification of God within Israelite worship. In this light, verb forms are used to describe the glorification of God in Israelite worship, while the noun *kavod* refers to the divine glory of YHWH. Ioan Chirilă distinguishes non-theological usages, which pertain to the human realm, and theological usages, which refer to the glory of God. The detailed analysis of the term *kavod* in its various forms enriches our understanding of the connection between human honour and divine glory, providing a solid basis for comprehending the message of the Old Testament (Chirilă 2015, 20).

Verb form of the root *kvd*

The verb form *kvd* is the basis of the entire semantic family of related Hebrew terms ^[1]. The *qal* form conveys the meaning “to be heavy,” with both positive and negative connotations. Often, the *kvd* root is linked to realities such as war and punishment, denoting oppressive heaviness; other times it is also related to the notion of tribulation: “the burden of slavery” and “the difficulty of service”, or to expresses the weight of the soul because of afflictions on a psychological level (Ps 37:4). The root *kvd* also has positive meanings of “honour”, “abundance”, “wealth” (Jb 14:21; Is 66:5; Ez 27:25) (Gesenius 1905, 522).

In the *hifil* form, *kvd* expresses active causation, as in the Exodus narrative where it describes “the hardening of the heart” (Ex 8:15 and 28:9). This form also denotes the burden of the work imposed by kings, in the historical books (1 Kgs 12:10; 14; 2 Sam 10:10-14; Neh 5:15), bearing a negative sense.

The *pual* and *hitpael* forms amplify and nuance the base meaning. In Prv 13:18, *pual* describes a man honoured for obedience and receptiveness to reproof. In Neh 3:15, we find its antithetical sense, which attracts judgment, because it shows that glory comes either from God or one’s fellow men, not from oneself. The examination of the

nuances produced by the verb forms that show the semantic polarity of the root *kvd* – oscillates between the authentic glory that comes from God and the vainglory that is the fruit of self-glorification. Scholarly opinion diverges regarding the interpretation and connotations of *kvd*. Edmond Jacob argues that the root *kvd* primarily expresses the idea of “weight” or “importance”, associating objective value with the feeling of respect and honour elicited by that which possesses weight – whether material or symbolic – including divine glory (Jacob 1955, 63). In contrast, some researchers (Kittel 240; Von Ernst and Westermann 2001, 796; Gesenius 1905, 522) believe that *kvd* possesses more diverse, contextual meanings, such as the weight of the soul, pain, or physical or mental burdens, including the burden of slavery or affliction, emphasising negative aspects and suffering. Furthermore, some interpreters consider the root *kvd* to have moral or religious meanings, such as glory, honour, and esteem, often within ritual or social contexts, not necessarily related to literal “weight” or spiritual respect. Thus, the fundamental difference is that, for Edmond Jacob, *kvd* implicitly and symbolically signifies a positive understanding of prestige. In contrast, other authors emphasise the term’s heterogeneity and diversity of meanings, including negative and material aspects.

Nominal and adjectival form of the root kvd

Apart from the verb forms, we also find numerous nominal and adjectival forms of the *kvd* root in the Old Testament. The verbal forms denote a quality or state, or the weight of an object, simultaneously signifying a burden or significance, or even oppressive events ^[2]. *Kavod* could also carry the meaning of “numerous” or “rich”; while elsewhere, the noun referred to the “liver” (Von Ernst and Westermann 2001, 794) – the heaviest organ – or even wealth. Therefore, it denotes attributes as well as cultic, social and material realities.

As previously noted, Edmond Jacob argues that the radical *kvd* mainly expresses “weight” or “importance”, both physical and moral, and often refers to social status, glory, and divine glory, a concept with double meaning – material and spiritual. On the other hand, Ioan Chirilă distinguishes between a non-theological meaning, where *kvd* indicates a “heavy being” or “honourable”, linked to physical and social characteristics, and a theological sense, in which *kvd* designates the glory and glory of God, highlighting the divine aspects (Chirilă 2015, 24). Thus, Edmond Jacob emphasises the symbolic and religious aspect of glory. In contrast, Ioan Chirilă distinguishes between the social and divine meanings, interpreting *kvd* as both a human attribute and a manifestation of

divine glorification. In conclusion, the former interpretation prioritises the symbolic and morphological aspects, while the second makes a clear distinction between the secular and religious applications of the term.

Thus, the noun *kavod* also signifies a high social standing accompanied by the honour granted due to a person's status or deeds, including honour, renown, dignity, and objects associated with rank, such as garments, royal insignia, etc, which convey a sense of prosperity and exaltation above others. This superiority sometimes places the people thus honoured – such as princes or kings – above everyone else, even in the spatial, visual representation of status.

Associating the concept of kavod with other Hebrew terms

The Hebrew term *kavod* specifies the mode of divine glory's manifestation. We also mention such terms as: *oz* – “power, strength, honour”; *osher* – “wealth”; *panim* – “face”; *chai* – “life”; *yesha/ Yeshua* – “salvation/ Saviour”; *or* – “light”; *anavah* – “humility” and *tehilah* – “prayer” (Chirilă 2015, 24). Their association with *kavod* contributes to a fuller understanding of the concept of divine glory in the Old Testament.

A telling example of the semantic richness of the term is given in chapter thirty-three of the book of Exodus, where Moses expresses the desire to see the glory of God, and the Lord refuses, explaining that seeing His Face is not possible. Here we see the apparent connection between *kavod* and the “face” (*panim*). Theophanies of the Lord are understood as revealing acts of God through which He opens the way for man to know Him, to be in communion, and to communicate with Him.

A crucial semantic nuance arises from the association with the word *yesha*, which means “salvation”. “Deliverance” is the most appropriate term to describe the glory of God, particularly in passages that refer to the action through which He saves His people from death due to enemy attacks or famine, as found in Exodus and Numbers, particularly during the journey through the wilderness. When discussing the glorification of God, *kavod* is correlated with *anavah*, meaning “humility, modesty”, and *tehilah*, meaning “prayer”. The most appropriate association of the term *kavod*, however, is with *or* – “light”, because light most aptly expresses the manifestation of God's glory (Chirilă 2020, 77-78).

Below is the explanation of this term, offered by the renowned Old Testament biblical scholar, Edmond Jacob:

“The fundamental notion expressed by the radical *kvd* is that of weight/gravity. *Kavod* designates everything that has weight/importance and that is said in relation to wealth (Gn 31:1; Is 10:3; Hg 2:7; Ps 49:17); to success (Gn 45:13; 1 Kgs 3:13) and to beauty (Is 35:2). Just as what is weighty inspires respect and honour, the concept of *kavod* refers not only to an objective reality, but also to the feeling of reverence towards everything that deserves respect. This double meaning is particularly evident in the pedagogical approach God offers humanity in the context of the manifestation of His glory. God reveals His glory and desires that every creature actively participate in this process, bringing Him glory in response, as we see in Ps 29:1; Jo 7:19; Is 42:8; 48:11.” (Jacob 1955, 63).

In this way, we learn to recognise and respond to His immense grace, developing ourselves spiritually and morally through divine teachings. This not only enriches our relationship with divinity but also guides us in building an interpersonal community based on respect and honour. Top of the form

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the multifaceted meanings of *kavod* as a central theme in both the Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern contexts. By examining the term's semantic richness across various Semitic languages, it becomes evident that *kavod* serves as a vital link between the divine and human realms. The investigation reveals that *kavod* encompasses not only the transcendent glory of God manifesting through theophanic events but also the honour and dignity associated with human status and achievements.

By contextualizing *kavod* within its cultural milieu, the research illustrates how ancient societies perceived the interplay of divine glory and human honour, whereby individuals of high rank reflected divine attributes through their actions and societal roles. Furthermore, the exploration of *kavod* emphasizes the relational aspect of glory, underscoring the responsibility borne by both divine and human figures to uphold moral and ethical standards.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how notions of glory inform the spiritual and social fabric of biblical society, inviting contemporary readers to reflect on the implications of glory in their own lives. The dual essence of *kavod* continues to resonate, demonstrating that true honour is intertwined with humility, worship, and an acknowledgment of divine authority. As such, the exploration of *kavod*

enriches our understanding of the enduring values that shape human interactions with the divine and define spiritual community across cultural contexts.

Notes

[1] Hebrew has seven primary verb forms: *Qal* – the basic form, most common; *Nifal* – reflexive or passive form; *Piel* – intensive (active) form; *Pual* – passive/reflexive form corresponding to *Piel*; *Hyphilia* – causative form; *Hofal* – passive form corresponding to *Hyphilis*; *Hitpa'el* – reflexive form. Each of these forms expresses specific semantic nuances by altering the basic meaning of the verb in the *Qal*. For example, *Hyphilis* expresses the causal, *Piel* the intensification of action, etc.

[2] Weight should not be understood only in the literal sense, as objective information; *kvd* signifies weight as a burden, weight in its function (Preuss 1995, 168).

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