

## DIVINE GLORY IN THE PENTATEUCH – HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

### Abstract

This study explores the concept of ‘glory’ (Heb. *kabod*) in the Pentateuch, examining its appearance in Sinaitic theophanies, the establishment and operation of the mobile sanctuary (the tabernacle), and its roles in cult practice, law, and history. Combining a philological analysis of key passages from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, it offers a unified interpretation where *kabod* is not just a visual manifestation but also a performative sign: indicating Yahweh’s presence, legitimizing priestly authority, signaling sacred judgments, and supporting the remembrance of Egypt’s liberation. The research shows that the mobility of the tabernacle and the visibility of the glory are interconnected, and that the expressions of dwelling—*kabod*, cloud, filling of the sanctuary—form a coherent narrative-ritual system. By integrating philology of terms like *kabod*, *shekinah*, *miskan*, and *moed* with form criticism and comparison with post-exilic texts (Haggai, 1 Kings, Ezekiel), the study uncovers both continuities and nuances: the Pentateuch highlights a luminous, mobile glory, whereas some postexilic writings focus on material grandeur and temple fullness. Using literary exegesis, philology, and comparison, it identifies duplications and editorial insertions explaining textual differences. Overall, it presents *kabod* as a pragmatic marker of divine presence and cultic legitimacy, shedding light on the relationship between theophany, cultic institution, and priestly authority.



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## Introducere

This paper investigates the intricate concept of ‘glory’ (Heb. *kabod*) within the Pentateuch, emphasizing its manifestation in Sinaitic theophanies, the establishment and function of the portable sanctuary (the tabernacle), and its various cultic, legal, and historical roles. The study traces the development of *kabod*’s meaning and function across key biblical texts, examines the interaction among cloud, light, and divine presence, and illustrates how appearances of glory reinforce priestly authority, influence ritual practices, and uphold sacral and legal rulings. Through the analysis of essential passages from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, the research demonstrates that *kabod* functions not only as a motif of divine epiphany but also as performative acts, signifying Yahweh’s ongoing or temporary presence, affirming the cultic order, and indicating judgments and social distinctions via visible signs.

The study’s focus area intersects the religious history of ancient Israel with the theology of the sacred as depicted in Pentateuch literature. It begins with a detailed analysis of how glory appears in the canonical texts of the Pentateuch, examining each occurrence and how these are articulated within a cohesive model that connects theophany, sanctuary construction, and cultic practices. The innovative aspect of this approach is its attempt to synthesize these fragmented passages into a unified framework; while many prior studies have explored Sinai episodes, the motif of the hand/manna, or dwelling formulas separately, few have examined these elements through the prism of the pragmatic-theological role of the *kabod*. Consequently, the work offers an interpretation that highlights the relationship between the visibility of divine glory and the legitimacy of the priestly hierarchy, as well as the connection between the sanctuary’s mobility and the community’s perception of divine presence.

Current biblical research on the temple and theophany encompasses a diverse array of studies, including philological and historical-critical analyses of key terms (such as *kabod*, *shekinah*, *miskan*), detailed commentaries on Sinaitic passages, and examinations of Israelite cultic practices. However, the literature often leans either towards a historical focus—reconstructing cultic practices—or towards a theological perspective emphasizing the significance of epiphany. Few works integrate these approaches to demonstrate how theological meanings are embedded in ritual procedures and narrative forms. This work aims to address this gap through an interdisciplinary approach, linking textual interpretation with insights into ritual and historical-religious

reflections, highlighting both continuities and discontinuities between the Pentateuch traditions and post-exilic visions of Divine glory.

This study primarily relies on the Masoretic text of the Pentateuch (BHS/MT) for philological analysis, supplemented by critical translations and both recent and classical scholarly commentaries. To explore the appearances of glory, relevant prophetic and historical texts—such as Haggai, 1 Kings, and Ezekiel—were examined, along with secondary sources in religious history, Templar studies, and biblical hermeneutics. Essential philological resources include critical editions, biblical Hebrew lexicons, and studies of key terms such as *kabod*, *shekinah*, *miskan*, and *moed*. Additionally, recent research on Israelite ritual, comparative ritual models, and methodologies for analyzing form and source criticism was reviewed to explore theological continuities and potential editorial adjustments or literary expansions within the text.

The approach is multidimensional, integrating literary and philological exegesis with comparative and historical methods. Textual analysis examines the frequency, subtlety, and narrative context of terms linked to glory, dwelling, and each epiphany. Philology helps clarify lexical meanings and spot dialectal or editorial differences. Additionally, form and source criticism address textual variations, such as duplications in the account of the tabernacle's construction. The comparative method involves contrasting Pentateuchal formulations with post-exilic texts like Haggai, Kings, and Ezekiel, to show how the same theme varies across different theological and historical settings. The core focus is on uncovering the pragmatic roles of the Glory's appearances—such as priestly endorsement, signals related to the tabernacle's movement, judicial-sacral sanctions, and ritual remembrance of Egypt's liberation.

The study's structure promotes a gradual and integrated reading experience. It begins with an introduction, then moves into chapters that establish a terminological and philological foundation, followed by sections on the Sinaitic theophanies and the initial appearances of *kabod* in Exodus (such as Ex 14; 16; 24), linking these to the instructions for building the tabernacle (Ex 25–31). It continues with an in-depth exploration of the dwelling of glory within the tabernacle (Ex 29; 40), discussing its connection to the concept of *shekinah*. Subsequent chapters examine the cultic and legal roles of *kabod* in Leviticus and Numbers, including sanctification, priestly authority, and sacred judgments. Comparative analyses address the evolution of the luminous glory from the Pentateuch to post-exilic depictions. The concluding chapter synthesizes the findings, explores theological implications, and suggests future research directions,

such as reception in rabbinic and patristic sources and liturgical traditions. This approach blends close textual analysis with theological and historical insights, fostering a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of ‘glory’ in the Pentateuch.

### **Sinaitic Theophany and Sanctuary Construction—Glory, Cloud, and Tabernacle (Ex 19; 24; 25–31; 35–40)**

A key narrative in the Pentateuch vividly details the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14). This account is the first scriptural instance of the term *kabod*. God revealed His glory to Pharaoh (using the root כבוד, in niphal form), which led to Pharaoh’s hardened heart (McAfee 2010, 331–54). Consequently, Pharaoh sent his army after the Israelites, resulting in their being lost in the Red Sea’s waves. The divine purpose was to cause the Egyptian people to acknowledge God, while the Israelites recognized Yahweh as the living, true, and sovereign God.

At Exodus 16, God’s glory is visible from afar. Israel observes God’s glory not only in historical acts but also through the daily provision of manna. *Kabod* thus plays a key role in guiding Israel toward the knowledge of God and recognizing His deliverance. This understanding unfolds in three major steps: first, God’s almighty guidance; second, the transmission of divine words through Moses and Aaron and the distant vision of glory; and third, the miraculous provision of food, which further leads the people to recognize Yahweh (v. 12). The divine glory becomes more apparent at Exodus 24: 15b-18, where God instructs Moses to set up the tabernacle of testimony (Strupe 1988, 37). The divine presence intensifies with the appearance of glory on Mount Sinai and Moses’ forty days in the dark cloud (Kittel 1964, 628), bringing Moses into direct contact with divine glory and enabling him to receive divine teachings. This passage closely relates to the theophany in Exodus 19:16, where divine glory signifies how God meets Moses. Such encounters can be dangerous, especially for unbelievers or those unprepared spiritually, as evidenced by the visible phenomena. The theophany in Isaiah 30:27-30, during a storm, symbolizes a threat to unbelieving and malevolent individuals who can be scorched by divine wrath (Von Gall 1900, 17).

Exodus 24:15b-18 marks a new phase in revealing God’s divine glory before His dwelling in the sanctuary (Ex 40:34). It advances the narrative by introducing key elements: God speaks to Moses in His glory, providing instructions for building and blessing the tabernacle (Struppe 1988, 39), and once completed, He dwells among the Israelites. The visible fire is a new element that helps Israelites recognize Yahweh’s

presence more clearly. In Exodus 25, this theme of the holy tabernacle is revisited (Dohmen 2004, 208). When God shows His glory to Moses (Neher 2002, 29) and the Israelites, the fiery radiance is immediately seen by the people at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex 24:17). Therefore, divine glory appears as a fiery, visible manifestation in the theophany.

Exodus 16:10 and 24:17 depict how people can only glimpse God's glory from a distance, seeing it as a cloud that obscures direct view to prevent harm<sup>[1]</sup>. Similarly, Exodus 40:34 shows the glory veiled by a cloud as it leaves the tabernacle. *Kabod Yahwe* represented an abstract, personified element within the Temple. The light around and beyond the sanctuary demonstrated God's presence and vitality among the community. This highlights the link between the Exodus from Egypt and God's glorious revelation through historical events, emphasizing Yahweh's ongoing presence among His people (Struppe 1988, 39).

The passage in Exodus 29:38-46 highlights certain differences from other accounts of divine glory in the Pentateuch. Exodus 29 emphasizes God's sustained presence among His people, with the divine glory sanctifying the tabernacle (Westermann 1970, 255) and preparing it as God's dwelling. Unlike Exodus 40:34, this passage describes the shekinah (Skolnik 2007, 440-4), with the divine glory (*kabod*) serving solely to establish the sanctuary, thereby symbolizing the enduring divine presence. According to Exodus 24:15b-19, glory appears as a fire-like manifestation, indicating divine presence. Sanctification occurs through illumination of the sanctuary, into which the Lord will enter. The purpose of God's dwelling (Vollenweider and Janowski 2013, 16) is for the Israelites to recognize Him as the almighty Lord who freed them from Egypt, to be worshipped through daily sacrifices. Thus, God's residence in the sanctuary also functions as a remembrance of the Exodus, maintaining a perpetual memory of liberation.

The presence of divine glory in the tabernacle clearly signals God's presence through a luminous form. Unlike in Exodus 16:7,10, and Exodus 24:15b-18, where divine glory is associated with a theophany, Exodus 40:34 does not explicitly mention a divine manifestation. Divine glory functions as a symbol of divine presence. Additionally, this idea that the house is filled with glory can be seen from a text from the early post-exilic period (Hag 2:7-9).

This passage from God in the book of Haggai describes the filling of the temple's sanctuary with glory, which differs from the depiction in Exodus 40:34. In the Pentateuch,

*kabod* is represented as a glow symbolizing divine presence, whereas in Haggai 2:7-9, the filling of glory is associated with the offering of gold and silver<sup>[2]</sup>. Material wealth thus transforms the temple into a space of grandeur and honor. Despite these differences, the core idea remains the same: filling a space with glory renders it magnificent. The location where divine glory manifests is particularly special (Willi-Plein 2007, 33).

In Exodus 40:34, the description of God's divine presence and the dwelling of divine glory closely relate to His appearance and echoes the connection between God and His name: 'that My name may dwell there' (Mettinger 1982, 30). The depiction of the divine glory in the tabernacle resembles the tradition that considers the name as an abstract, personified element through which God manifests His presence in the temple (Wagner 2012, 91-92). While the name can be spoken and heard, *kabod* is a luminous phenomenon visible that illuminates the sanctuary (tent or temple). When the tabernacle is described as a sanctuary, it reflects aspects of prefigurative temple theology; *kabod* serves as a means through which God appears to His chosen people. The illuminated cloud covering the tent signified God's presence among the Israelites in their camp (Wagner 2012, 93). The Pentateuch emphasizes that God's presence is embodied in the splendor of the sanctuary, with the movement of the tabernacle symbolizing God's long-term dwelling, blending the dynamic act of moving with the static presence. *Kabod* embodies God's enduring presence through a mobile sanctuary.

The announcement of Yahweh God's presence in the tabernacle of the testimony (Ex 29:38-46) should be considered alongside the narrative of the sanctuary's construction. The instructions for the sanctuary's furnishings are clearly separate from the construction guidelines and are closely linked to the account in Exodus 36-40. The literary interruption seen in Exodus 27:19 no longer appears in this description (cf. Ex 39:1). Additionally, the fragment of Exodus 38:21-31 stands apart from the main story, with references to the holy ones breaking up the description of building the sanctuary. These references originate from the list of materials that the people were required to bring. Exodus 38:1-20 explains what will happen to the copper offered, while Exodus 39 details the making of priestly garments from blue, red, and purple. All of this aligns with the sequence in Exodus 35:4-9.

In Exodus 40, the repetition encourages us to explore a literary extension of the text. In Exodus 40:1-14, Moses observes the preparation of the tabernacle of testimony/meeting. Verse 2 states that the tabernacle should be set up on the first day of the first month, while verse 17 confirms that this command was carried out and the tabernacle

was pitched. Verse 18 notes again that Moses pitched the tabernacle, highlighting that its construction followed the vision Moses saw. This alignment aligns so closely with the instructions given in Exodus 25-31 for building the tabernacle that specific chronological details are omitted. In Exodus 40:18-33, the ritual washing in verse 31 is especially significant<sup>[3]</sup>.

While the phrase used was as God commanded in the arrangement of the objects (Ex 40:19, 23, 25, 29), the functions of these objects are not specified. Verse 31 emphasizes the lifting of the laver between the tabernacle and the altar, as Moses and the Aaronites were to wash there. In verse 33, like v. 17, a closing note appears, followed by the account of God's glory dwelling in the tabernacle. The double conclusion in v. 17 and v. 33 suggests that the second account, which lacks the washing party's ordination details, was the original conclusion of the building instructions (Ex 25-31). The fact that Moses, rather than the craftsmen, was to pitch the tent aligns with the initial directions. Overall, Exodus 35:1-9; 40:18-30; 33-38 largely constitutes the conclusion of the initial building account of the tabernacle (Wagner 2012, 57), with the dwelling of divine glory in Exodus 40:34 marking the completion of the sanctuary's construction and the divine presence.

Exodus 40:34 mentions two different ideas for the sanctuary (Wagner 2012, 86). The cloud rests on the tabernacle of assembly, while the glory is associated with movement—referred to as the 'tabernacle'<sup>[4]</sup>. These concepts have distinct meanings: the movement indicates the holy place mentioned in the building instructions from Sinai (Ex 25:9). As stated in verse 8, God will dwell there permanently: 'And they shall make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them.' Following this declaration, chapters 26 and 27 specify the dates, provisions, and surrounding space of the sanctuary. These details are revisited in chapters 35 and 39, where they are enacted. Ultimately, Exodus chapter 40 describes God's presence in the sanctuary by placing the cloud over the meeting tent and filling the space with divine glory.

The term *miskan* refers to the designation of a location where God's presence is continuously felt; it pinpoints the specific area in front of or within which worship activities occur (see Lv 8:10; 15:31; 17:4; Nm 1:50; 53, etc.). The concept of the tabernacle appears in the narrative concerning its construction (Ex 25-31), mainly in later sections that describe its layout and the priestly tribe's function, particularly in passages like Ex 28:43; 29:4, 10u; 30:32, 42, 44; 30:18, 20, 26) (Wagner 2012, 87). Concerning its endowment, the focus is on the tent of encounter, emphasizing the service offered to

God there rather than solely the sanctuary as His dwelling place. Consequently, both concepts are used in descriptions related to its construction (Ex 35-40). The term *miskan* specifically refers to the divine dwelling place, distinct from other parts of the sanctuary (see Ex 38:31). The Pentateuch uses *miskan* exclusively in a theological sense, linking the sanctuary's meanings to the service of God. Exodus 26 illustrates that *miskan* designates the space where the divine presence, expressed by the verb 'skn,' can be found (Owczarek 1998, 276).

Conversely, the term *moed* 'tabernacle of the assembly/testimony, tabernacle' consistently refers to the shape of the sanctuary and the types of ministries conducted within it (Owczarek 1998, 276). This distinction between the tabernacle of the testimony, the sanctuary where the Aaronites served, and the moving dwelling of God—meaning the space where God resides—is supported by all biblical references to the dwelling formula in Exodus 40:34.

Variants or formulas for this dwelling are seen in multiple Old Testament passages (Ex 40:34-35; 2 Chr 5:13-14; 7:1-3; Ez 44:4). These references collectively show that the formula used has a consistent purpose: to denote the dwelling of divine glory within God's chosen sanctuary. The term 'tabernacle of the testimony' appears only once in Exodus 40:34, whereas elsewhere, the temple of the Lord is called the house of Yahweh (Wagner 2012, 88). Consequently, the idea of 'moving' can be linked to the concept of the 'temple,' especially in its external form. However, the specific meaning of the dwelling varies with the context. Prophetic texts do not describe the cloud's appearance nor question its presence in the sanctuary; they simply affirm the presence of a temple where divine glory resides. In 1 Kings 8 and implicitly in Chronicles 5, the cloud and glory fill the sanctuary, and God's presence prevents the priests from entering. In the Pentateuch, cloud and glory are considered synonymous. Unlike 3 Kings 8; 2 Samuel 5 and 7, where the cloud is within the temple, Exodus 40:34 places the cloud above the tabernacle, linking it to the signs in Exodus 40:36-38 that mark the Israelites' ongoing wilderness journey. The cloud over the tabernacle signals the camp's readiness to set out.

The context of the dwelling formula emphasizes a long-term view of the cloud, symbolizing either rest or continued journey for the Israelites, and thus the cloud needed to be visible above the tabernacle. The mixing of temporary and permanent elements in Exodus 40:34 ties closely to the tabernacle's significance as indicated in the broader context. God's dwelling in the space built for Him is intended to be permanent, but its physical form depends on the circumstances of the narrative. During the wilderness

wandering, the Israelites' need to relocate meant their sanctuary was designed to be portable, symbolizing a transitional phase.

Considering how God's prolonged presence in the sanctuary was envisioned, a separation between glory and cloud was unnecessary. During the wilderness journey, divine glory lasted only under specific conditions. Whenever God permitted the people to proceed, the tabernacle was dismantled, and glory manifested as a cloud enveloping the sanctuary. Divine glory explains God's presence, while the cloud signifies the wilderness journey.

Exodus 40:34-38 concludes with instructions for building the sanctuary and a brief final report (Ex 35:1-9; 40:18-30, 33-38), which describes the tabernacle without mentioning other participants. In this final note, verse 34 mentions God's presence in the tabernacle of the testimony, asserting that divine glory resides there if the cloud rests on the tent. Linguistically, this note employs a verb clause and an inverted verb clause, shifting from imperfect to perfect tense, to express that the divine dwelling occurs simultaneously and duratively (Wagner 2012, 95). Two terms are used to refer to the tabernacle: *xhl moyd* and *mskn*. Among Old Testament dwelling formulas, *mskn* specifically designates the tabernacle as God's dwelling place, whereas *xhk* and *moyd* refer to its current, possibly temporary, exterior appearance.

Glory emerges from the sacred space, cloaked in clouds. Divine glory symbolizes an abstract, personified element within the temple. The term *sm* refers to a phenomenon that is heard and spoken, whereas *kbd* refers to a visible phenomenon. When the light *cxs xclt* illuminates the sanctuary, emanating from the tabernacle, it signals to the people that God is present. Therefore, there is a strong link between the Exodus from Egypt and God's glorious revelation through historical events, emphasizing Yahweh's constant presence with His people (Wagner 2012, 95).

The privilege of witnessing divine glory is exclusive to Israel. The *kabod*, as a visible sign, is not seen by the many Egyptians who drowned in the sea. The first appearance of *kabod* to the Israelites occurs in Exodus 16. In this passage, which describes the people's gossip in the wilderness, divine glory manifests over the desert as a sign of confirmation, accompanied by the food Moses announces. It is mentioned that the glory will be observed the next morning (vv. 7-10), but it appears that very evening. This appearance results from God's message to Moses that the people received food both in the morning and in the evening (vv. 11-13). In Exodus 16, this initial aspect of the divine presence is

evident and is further reflected in subsequent texts: *kvd* represents the visualization of God's presence through which He communicates with Moses.

From Exodus 16, it cannot be determined whether *kabod* and Yahweh are the same. The way divine glory's appearance triggers God's speech can be inferred from God's longest speech to Moses (Ex 25-31) (Wagner 2012, 116). In Exodus 24:15b-18, the instructions for constructing the meeting tabernacle are introduced by the divine glory's epiphany. Ultimately, Exodus 24:15b-18 concludes the giving of divine commandments to Moses on Sinai. Initially, this account was connected to the camp details in Exodus 16. After Israel camped before the mountain, the cloud covered Mount Sinai, and divine glory rested over it (Ex 24:15b-16). Over 40 days, Moses received instructions to build the tabernacle (Ex 25-31).

Only after giving the instructions did Moses return to the Israelites' camp to execute them (Ex 35:1-9; 40:18-30; 33-38). Once the sanctuary was completed, divine glory dwelled within it (Ex 40:34). This marks the arrival of the long-awaited divine presence among the Israelites. In Exodus 24:17, divine glory is described as a consuming fire—what people saw when God's glory appeared. They observed a bright, intense light that was too overwhelming to endure for long. To prevent harm to His people, God veiled His glory in a cloud, through which the divine presence was revealed to mankind.

Exodus 40:34 stands out as a key verse (Wagner 2012, 125; Noth 1948, 8). It signifies that God's glory resides in the tent of meeting. The verse's formula highlights the significance of the tabernacle. When compared to other Old Testament dwelling formulas (such as 1 Kgs 8:10; Ez 44:4; 2 Sam 5:14; 7:1), it shows that the tabernacle was a movable sanctuary during the wilderness journey, with movement explicitly included. This movement signified the location of God's enduring presence, referred to as the house of Yahweh in other texts. Since the word 'temple' can't be used here, the term *miskan* is employed to indicate the sanctuary. This term appears in the dwelling formula where other texts might use 'temple.' From this, we see that the tent of encounter served as a sustained divine dwelling for the wilderness generation, making the tabernacle a symbol of God's continual presence.

Glory signifies the divine presence within the sanctuary. It resides there, fills the tabernacle, and can depart if God requires the journey to continue. For Moses and the people, *kabod* is the visible indicator of God's presence. Its appearance also confirms God's presence. *Kabod* is often seen as a synonym for God's visible presence. In temple

tradition, the reason for the sanctuary being filled with divine glory is a luminous phenomenon connected to God.

Through radiant brilliance, humans perceive the divine presence. The tradition of the Pentateuch depicts Godhood concealed in cloud, later associated with glory. Divine glory is seen enveloped by clouds. The transient appearance ties God and His glory to the cloud; they are present only temporarily. This imagery is reflected in Exodus 40:34, where God's presence—both temporary and enduring—is linked to its dynamic or static state. When the tabernacle is set up, God and His glory are present for an extended period. As the people move on, the glory rises in the cloud at God's command, ensuring the sanctuary's mobility.

The cult represented God's dwelling among the Israelites, central to guiding their recognition of Him. In this context, the author elaborates on the phrase "I am Who I am!" While earlier formulas briefly introduced God, Exodus 29:46 combines His self-revelation with the exodus from Egypt and His dwelling place. It states, 'And they shall know that I am their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them and be their God.'

From a literary perspective, the narration of the Exodus is even more intimately linked with the ordination of the sanctuary through the successive visions of divine glory. The phrase, 'I am the Lord,' is supplemented by the apposition 'their God.' Through this, the people acknowledge the identity of the God who initiated the Exodus from Egypt; this recognition becomes the foundational object of faith, with the people acknowledging God and accordingly rendering Him daily worship. In this context, divine glory functions to ordain a specific location and characterize the service for the divine presence. Consequently, glory assumes a fundamental role in the ritual festivities at the sanctuary.

### ***Kabod* in Worship and Jurisdiction – Sanctification, Priestly Confirmation, and Judgment (Lv 9; Nm 14-20)**

In Chapter 9 of Leviticus, the concept of *kabod* assumes a significant role in the preparation of the cultic ministry. The sanctification declared in Exodus 29:43 is here exemplified through action (Neher 2002, p. 136). In Leviticus 9:4b-6, the people are assured that following the consecration of the priests (see Lv 8), divine glory would be manifested. This assertion is articulated in parallel with Exodus 16:7. The manifestation of glory in Exodus 16:7 functions as confirmation that the ordinance

regarding the sanctification of priests and the initial sacrifices has been carried out in accordance with divine directives. While in Exodus 16:10, glory appears more rapidly than initially announced, in Leviticus 9:4b-6:23, the proclamation and the manifestation are fully synchronized. After the offerings of the first sacrifice and the blessings pronounced by Moses and Aaron, divine glory was revealed. The presence of God among the Israelites, as announced in Exodus 29:45, is perceived as a bright light visible without a veil. From that point onward, the daily sacrifice may be offered. The narrative clearly demonstrates that divine glory serves to authenticate the legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood, as evidenced by the continuation of the account (Lv 10).

While the burnt offering described in Leviticus 9 was received by God Himself, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abiud, were slain by divine decree for presenting an inappropriate sacrifice. Consequently, for the first time within the Pentateuch, a clear distinction emerges among the various priestly tribes (Wagner 2012, 119). The text of Leviticus 9 emphasizes that only the Aaronite tribe, through Eleazar and Ithamar (cf. Lv 10:6; 12:16), possesses the exclusive right to officiate within the tent of meeting. This affirmation is reinforced by the people's perception, evidenced by the immediate appearance of divine glory following the initial priestly act.

In the passage from Numbers 16, the Aaronites' claim to be the exclusive nation authorized to present sacrifices to God is reaffirmed. This is illustrated within the context of the destruction of Korah's household. Alongside 250 other individuals, Korah opposed Moses and Aaron, asserting that they alone were entitled to serve God. Within this context resides the divine judgment leading to Korah's demise. Aaron's distinguished status relative to the other tribal leaders is ultimately evidenced by the placement of the staff before the ark. Unlike the staffs of the other tribal leaders, Aaron's staff was elevated, indicating his special standing within the sanctuary (Rendtorff 1961, 30).

In Leviticus 16, divine glory appears twice—once in the main text and again at its conclusion. His appearance signals a divine judgment proclamation. The message in Numbers 16:21, warning to stay away from this community to prevent their destruction, holds weight. Similarly, Numbers 17:10 repeats this warning but uses the verb *bdl* instead of *rmm*. The deliberate separation of Moses and Aaron from the crowd (Nm 16:6-22; 17:1-5, 16-28) highlights their distinction from the unclean. As a result, the wilderness event gains theological significance within the Pentateuch, portraying the crowd as unclean and subject to divine destruction. God's pronouncement functions as

a sacramental-juridical act, and divine glory's appearance confirms that this judgment scene is inherently cultic.

Glory manifests only after Moses and Aaron are spoken to briefly (Wagner 2012, 120). This glory emphasizes the divine pronouncement, which issues a warning about imminent punishment to Moses and Aaron. Notably, God addresses Moses and Aaron in His glory, shielding them from judgment. Although a divine punishment is announced, it targets only the rebels among the people, not the entire population (Schart 1990, 186–7).

In Numbers 14:10, the manifestation of divine glory is associated with a divine decree. The presence of God is perceived, and the manifestations of divine intentions, reinforced by glory, are manifested into action; that is, they become observable. As the luminous light appeared, the people recognized that God was addressing Moses. Divine communication includes a pronouncement of judgment. Verse 28 explicitly demonstrates that this pronouncement possesses a sacred-legal nature. The decree comprises formulas and fragments of a solemn oath, comprising elements characteristic of the sacral-legal domain. This decree announces the destruction of the 'generation in the wilderness.' Only through Moses' intercession is the punishment mitigated, and the generation in the wilderness is merely prohibited from entering the Promised Land. Moses herein acts as an intermediary for the divine message, unaffected by the punishment. He and the subsequent generation were permitted to enter the Promised Land. This passage highlights a connection between Numbers 13 and Numbers 16. While in Numbers 13, the punishment for rebellion against Moses and Aaron prevented the generation 'in the wilderness' from entering the Promised Land, in Numbers 16, those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron were slain. This illustrates a close relationship between the context of Numbers 16 and Numbers 14:8 (Wagner 2012, 121). While Moses delivered this message to the Israelites, guiding them toward the land flowing with milk and honey, Dathan and Abiron accused him of actually leading them out of a prosperous land and now allowing them to die in the wilderness: "You have brought us out of the land flowing with milk and honey and brought us to perish in the wilderness!" (Nm 16:13u). Moses and Aaron are both depicted as figures of special status in both texts, seemingly unaffected by divine punishments. They had the right to enter the Promised Land alongside the new generation. Immediately following the epiphanies, the appearance of divine glory introduces sacral-juridical procedures, with divine discourses being formally established.

Moses and Aaron ultimately lost their right to enter the Promised Land, as specified in Nm 14. Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-13 illustrate why both had to share the fate of the wilderness generation. In this story, Moses oversteps his authority by disregarding God's instructions: God asked him to speak to the rock to make it produce water, but Moses struck it with his staff instead, as described in Exodus 17:1-7. Due to this act of disobedience, Moses and Aaron were barred from entering the Promised Land.

Divine glory manifests in this text and is intricately associated with God's command to Moses to speak to the rock. It appears as a manifestation of demand, with the divine sentence following the deed. In other narratives set in the 'wilderness,' divine glory consistently appears when the people rebel against Moses and Aaron. This narrative pattern is also maintained in the revised version of the passage in Exodus 17:1-7. In this account, there is no longer any statement about God's subsequent dealings with the people; rather, Moses is assigned a task that again corresponds to the passage in Exodus 1:1-7 (Westermann 1970, 255). This preserves the motive—the literary procedure—of introducing a divine sentence through the appearance of divine glory. After Moses and Aaron were excluded from the group entitled to enter the Promised Land in Numbers 20:1-13, the divine glory was no longer manifested.

Not only did the people lose their closeness to God, but Moses and Aaron were also deprived of the divine protection and favor they once had, which God had provided through Moses to the (chosen) people (Wagner 2012, 112). The divine glory no longer manifests itself directly before them but is instead associated with Aaron's and Eleazar's worship and the cloud of Moses that rests on Joshua (Nm 14:6-9; 20:25-28; 27:12-23).

### Conclusions

This study's results highlight key insights and suggest directions for future research. Firstly, the analysis indicates that *kabod* in the Pentateuch is more than just a visual depiction of an epiphany; it functions as a performative element that affirms cultic structures, establishes priestly authority, conveys sacred judgments, and embodies the collective memory of the Exodus. In the examined texts—particularly Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers—glory, cloud, and sanctuary filling are interconnected within a cohesive narrative and ritual framework, where the movement of the tabernacle and the visibility of the glory mutually influence each other. Therefore, *kabod* serves as a pragmatic signal of presence, legitimacy, and occasionally, divine approval.

Additionally, the study points to a strong connection between the dwelling descriptions in the Pentateuch and post-exilic models, though with notable differences: the Pentateuch focuses on a luminous, movable, and visually striking image of glory, whereas some post-exilic writings, such as Haggai, highlight the material and majestic aspects of the temple filling. This variation indicates both thematic consistency and adaptations in theology and liturgy, shaped by the historical setting and the evolving roles of worship.

From a philological and editorial perspective, there are duplications and insertions that likely stem from traditional editing methods or layered revisions, such as repeated stories about tent construction and different uses of the *miskan/moed* terms. These features require careful editorial analysis to balance thematic consistency with potential perspective shifts. Methodologically, integrating philology with form criticism and comparing prophetic and historical texts has been effective in revealing the pragmatic roles of *kabod*.

In summary, *kabod* in the Pentateuch serves multiple functions but remains underutilized in understanding its ritual-theological and editorial contexts. Interdisciplinary methods could enhance both the semantic and historical comprehension of Glory and provide a more accurate reconstruction of how divine presence was experienced and enacted within the Israelite community.

### Notes

[1] Thomas Wagner, Moshe Weinfeld, and especially Claus Westermann acknowledged the ambivalent nature of the term *kabod* by demonstrating that divine glory could be harmful to both God's opponents and to Israelites who engaged in idolatry. However, it was advantageous when the elected people or even Gentiles carried out the divine will (Wagner 2012, 93–4).

[2] This passage highlights the prophet's reassurance to the despondent city, emphasizing that its final glory will surpass the first. He encourages the people to witness the city's transformation—from a ruined, hopeless place to one of brilliant beauty—and to recognize God's power in this renewal. The prophet urges them to share this testament of divine care and resilience, reminding them that God has always been our protector, defender, and shepherd (Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur 2011, 182)

[3] The first account of the Tabernacle of Testimony's endowment, found in Exodus 40:1-17, lacks this explanation. The ritual washings, prescribed in Exodus

40:31, were necessary for Moses, Aaron, and his sons to enter the tabernacle (Ex 40:11-15). These washings are connected to the anointing of priests and their priestly garments. However, Exodus 40:18-33 does not mention the anointing or priestly vestments.

[4] The term *miskan* is translated as ‘place of dwelling’ or ‘habitation.’ This dwelling is inherently permanent. R. Hendrix proposes a criterion for translating *miskan*: Exodus 24-40 describes an object (the tabernacle) composed of distinct, transportable components that still functions as God’s enduring dwelling. If the tent is set up in a specific location, it can be considered movable. The account indicates that the site was abandoned when the Israelites moved elsewhere to establish a new residence. Therefore, the concept of a dwelling place or dwelling is fitting for translating *miskan* (Hendrix 1991, 216).

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