

THE GLORY OF YHWH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL¹

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This study focuses on the use of כְּבוֹד in the Old Testament and especially in the book of Ezekiel. The specific approach of this study is not only to analyse כְּבוֹד itself but also its most important synonyms as well as its main equivalent in Aramaic, יְקָר. Biblical texts are approached from a canonical perspective, and the synchronic approach prevails over the diachronic.

Chapter 1. Besides surveys of the use of כְּבוֹד ordered according to several categories, overviews are given of the frequency and distribution of the verb כָּבַד and the nouns הִדָּר, הוֹד, יְקָר (Hebrew), תְּהַלֵּל and תִּפְאֶרֶת. Out of a total of 200 occurrences of כְּבוֹד, about one hundred are directly related to YHWH. Two verbs are used most frequently in relation to כְּבוֹד, namely רָאָה and מָלֵא. Related to the verb מָלֵא the word כְּבוֹד always has the meaning of hypostasis. Connected with רָאָה it can have the meaning of God's saving and judging activity in history and eschatology, but also in this case it has primarily the meaning of hypostasis. Chapter 2 analyses the semantic value of כְּבוֹד. The results underline the royal character of כְּבוֹד.

In Chapter 3 the occurrences of כְּבוֹד in the Old Testament with the exception of the book of Ezekiel are considered. In Exodus to Numbers the manifestation of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH is related to the knowledge that YHWH is God. The glory of YHWH is especially revealed in the exodus from Egypt. The ultimate goal of the exodus is the dwelling of YHWH's כְּבוֹד in the tabernacle. From Exodus 16 to Numbers 20 the כְּבוֹד of YHWH belongs to the centre of the narratives. The narratives make clear that the כְּבוֹד of YHWH that came down to Sinai took its

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permanent abode in the tabernacle. In Exodus to Numbers the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH must be interpreted as a hypostasis that has the appearance of fire and light. Apart from Exodus 33, the portrayal of the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH as hypostasis is abstract and cannot be visualised; but here, clearly, the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH has the appearance of a man.

In the Former Prophets we find almost all the occurrences of **כְּבוֹד** in the narrative of the ark's loss and return. The narrative's message is that the power and presence of YHWH and his glory cannot be completely identified with the ark as its physical symbol. According to the presentation of Israel's history in the book of Kings, since the ark was brought to Jerusalem the city became the place of YHWH's throne on earth. In the temple dedication narrative (1 Kgs 8:1–9:9) there is only one occurrence of **כְּבוֹד**. Just as when the tabernacle was dedicated, now too the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH fills the temple. The central place of **כְּבוֹד** in Isaiah cannot be understood apart from the vision of Isaiah's call for prophecy (Isa. 6). In it, the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH fills the earth. Chapter 35 can be read as a foretaste of chapters 40 onwards. The glory of YHWH is portrayed as manifested in the new exodus. The new exodus and its glory are connected with a complete renewal of nature; a theme specific to Isaiah, particularly its second part. In Isaiah 40:1–8 we find an extension of the vision of Isaiah's call as prophet. In chapters 40–55, we see a close relationship between the **כְּבוֹד** and name (**שֵׁם**) of YHWH and the praise (**תְּהִלָּה**) that ought to be given to him. Chapters 60–62 form the centre of Isaiah 56–66. In these chapters the restoration of Zion is foretold: Zion will bathe in the glory of YHWH, a glory portrayed in terms of the rising sun.

Within the Minor Prophets, Habakkuk, Haggai and Zechariah are especially important for the **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH theme. Haggai's theme concerns the rebuilding of the temple. The prophet tells his audience that the glory of the second temple will exceed the glory of the first, and that all nations will bring their glory to it. There are two occurrences of **כְּבוֹד** in Zechariah's third vision. In his glory YHWH will dwell in the restored Jerusalem.

In the Psalms the **כְּבוֹד** must be related both to YHWH's acts and to his attributes, and appears in several contexts. Usually it has to do with God's acts as manifested in creation, history and eschatology. In some cases it is possible to argue that the meaning of hypostasis is latently present. The **כְּבוֹד** of YHWH is especially related to the heavens and, in the eschatological future, will be manifested as such on earth.

In the Aramaic part of Daniel the occurrences of יְקָרָה all have Nebuchadnezzar as their object, with only one exception in Daniel 7:13. Here the ‘Son of Man’ receives יְקָרָה from God, designated as the ‘Ancient of days’. The ‘son of man’ may be seen as an individual who represents the oppressed Israelites. His receiving a throne beside the ‘Ancient of days’ is an indication that he somehow belongs to the identity of Israel’s God. Ezekiel 1 and 8 form the background of this ‘son of man’ portrayal and his divine identity.

Chapter 4. With the exception of 39:21 we find all occurrences of כְּבוֹד with YHWH as its object in chapters 1–3, 8–11 and 40–48. 39:21 is the only occurrence of כְּבוֹד related to YHWH where כְּבוֹד cannot be understood as a hypostasis.

The vision of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH and the prophet’s call for office (Ezek. 1–3). The way the כְּבוֹד of YHWH is described makes clear that whereas it is ultimately beyond description, paradoxically and at the same time it is actually and really seen by the prophet.

The departure of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH from the temple (Ezek. 8–11). The emphasis here is on the profaning of the temple. The כְּבוֹד of YHWH departs from the temple because of the people’s sins. ‘Purity’ characterises the ethic of Ezekiel: Israel’s moral sins are portrayed in terms of impurity. Chapters 8–11 have a chiasmic structure. The centre part is the actual departure of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH from the temple.

The preparation for the return of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH (Ezek. 34–39). The כְּבוֹד of YHWH can return only when Israel is spiritually pure. In chapters 34–37 Israel’s spiritual transformation is described. It is seen as solely the work of YHWH. We no longer come across the call to repentance in these chapters. It is YHWH himself who causes Israel to repent. It is remarkable that from Ezekiel 34 the name Jerusalem is no longer used.

Chapter 38–39 describe the attack of Gog king of Magog on Israel after the return of the exiles with references to memories of the past. The victory over Gog is YHWH’s work alone and Israel does not contribute to it. After this victory the כְּבוֹד of YHWH can return.

The return of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH (Ezek. 40–48). The message of the book’s final vision is that the heavens will come down to the earth. The temple described in Ezekiel 40–42 has a heavenly character. The aim of worship in it is to connect heaven and earth. Both the structure of the new temple, in which the square is of special importance, and worship in it reflect the holiness and the כְּבוֹד of YHWH.

The return is the crown and climax not only of the final vision but also of the book as a whole, since the כְּבוֹד of YHWH will never again leave the temple. It is remarkable that never in the description of the new temple and its worship is one of the synonyms of כְּבוֹד used. All emphasis here is on the כְּבוֹד of YHWH itself.

Chapter 5. Ben Sira's characterisation of Ezekiel as the prophet who saw God's glory is not based on the number of כְּבוֹד occurrences. In Isaiah the number of כְּבוֹד occurrences is higher, but the peculiarity of Ezekiel is that כְּבוֹד is used almost exclusively as a hypostasis of YHWH. Ezekiel's description of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH is more elaborate than any other Old Testament writer's, and it highlights the dual and paradoxical nature of the divine כְּבוֹד as both defying verbal description and being potentially visible. This research highlights especially the importance of the visible aspect.