

The Meaning of *ṭāhōr* in the Priestly Literature

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Recent discussions on cleanness–uncleanness regulations of the priestly literature have advanced our understanding of the conceptual relationships between cleanness and uncleanness, and between the holy and the profane.¹ However, it seems that not much understanding has been gained with regard to the very concepts of ‘unclean,’ ‘clean,’ and ‘holy.’ ‘Cleanness’ and ‘uncleanness’ have been, by and large, simply qualified by such terms as ‘cultic,’ ‘ritual,’ or ‘ceremonial,’ and hardly any attempt has been made to explore the meanings of those terms themselves.

In particular, various modern English versions of the Old Testament use a rather limited set of English terms for purity-related Hebrew terms. While Hebrew *ṭāhōr*, *zak*, and *bar* are generally rendered either ‘clean’ or ‘pure,’ most English versions do not seem to be entirely consistent. To the best of my knowledge, we must go back three decades or so in order to find a study devoted to this question.²

* Special thanks are due to Kyoritsu Christian Institute of Tokyo Christian University for providing a grant for this research.

- 1 See P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTS 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); W. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (JSOTS 140; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); M. J. H. M. Poorthuis & J. Schwartz, eds., *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000). Particularly see the articles by M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz, M. Douglas, and B. Schwartz in the last mentioned work. B. J. Schwartz, D. P. Wright et al., eds., *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (LHB 474; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2008).
- 2 I. Zatelli, *Il campo lessicale degli aggettivi di purita in ebraico biblico* (Quaderni di Semitistica 7; Firenze: Istituto di linguistica e di lingue orientali Università di Firenze, 1978). See n. 19 below.

and the phrase in Lev 24:4 has been taken by J. Milgrom to mean that it is an elliptical expression for ‘the pure golden lampstand.’⁵ Indeed, it has been almost universally accepted that here ‘golden’ is abbreviated, and that ‘pure’ refers to the physical purity of gold. The only exceptions, as far as the present writer knows, are JPS and NJB, in which *hamm^enōrâ haṭṭ^ehōrā* and *haššulḥān haṭṭāhōr* are simply rendered ‘the pure lampstand’ and ‘the pure table’ respectively. But these renderings also seem to lean heavily towards the understanding that *ṭāhōr* refers to the material aspect of the objects.⁶

Doubts can be raised against the above-mentioned traditional interpretation for two major reasons.

(1) Another term for purity, *zāk*, is used for *šemen zayit zāk kāūt* ‘pure oil from beaten olives’ in v. 2 and *l^eḥōnā zakkā* ‘pure frankincense’ in v. 7. If by *ṭāhōr* the degree of purity or the quality of the gold itself is intended, what is the difference in meaning between *ṭāhōr* (24:4, 6) and *zāk* (24:2, 7) in the very same legislation? It appears that, if ‘pure gold’ connotes the degree of physical purity in the mind of the legislator, the purity of the substance would be better expressed by *zāk* (see below).

(2) *ṭāhōr* appears in Leviticus in ritual contexts (e.g., chs. 10–16), and it is ordinarily rendered ‘clean.’ In what sense does the usage of this term in Lev. 24:1–9 differ from that of *ṭāhōr* in ritual contexts? Could it not be that Lev. 24:1–9 should also be regarded as a ‘ritual’ context? Could it be that both should be regarded as ritual contexts?

The question of whether ‘the pure lampstand’ and ‘the pure table’ are elliptical for ‘the pure golden lampstand’ and ‘the pure golden table,’ respectively, is

5 J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27* (Anchor Bible 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2090. See also F. Maass, ‘זָהָר,’ in *THAT I* (1984, 4 Aufl.): 650 (‘schlackenfreies Gold’).

6 In *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), the annotator B. Schwartz comments: “The pure lampstand, an ellipsis meaning ‘the lampstand made of pure gold’” (267). I also have adopted this understanding in my own commentary, so I intend to remedy it in this work.

inseparable from the view that *zāhāb ṭāhōr* in the tabernacle account in Exodus means ‘pure gold.’ A correct understanding depends heavily upon whether this phrase and Leviticus 24:1–9 are to be regarded as belonging to the same ‘ritual’ context as Lev. 10–16.

To answer these questions we first turn to differences between *ṭāhōr* on the one hand and *zāk* and **zkh/*zkk* on the other, and then to various problems that the phrase *zāhāb ṭāhōr* (‘pure gold’) involves, and to their solutions.

II. *zāk*, **zkh*, **zkk*, and *ṭāhōr*

An extensive discussion of these terms is not possible here due to space, but it is still necessary to point out how *ṭāhōr* differs from *zāk*, **zkh*, and **zkk*, setting aside the question of how these should be translated. In clarifying the possible differences between them, it is convenient to start from the general features of **zkh* and its by-form **zkk*, since it is agreed that these terms refer to the process of gaining purity.⁷ So the adjective *zāk* appears in the phrases *šemen zayit zāk kāṭīt* (‘pure beaten oil,’ Exod. 27:20; Lev 24:2) and *l’ḥōnāh zakkā* (‘pure frankincense,’ Exod. 30:34; Lev. 24:7). That the process of refinement is at issue is particularly evident when its verbal forms appear in a moral or ethical sense. The following four passages, that employ **zkk*, speak about the process and/or degrees of purification (quotations are from ESV).

Job 9:30 If I wash myself with snow

and cleanse my hands with lye,

Job 15:15 Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones,

and the heavens are not pure in his sight;

Job 25:5 Behold, even the moon is not bright,

and the stars are not pure in his eyes;

7 Cf. A. Negoita-H. Ringgren, ‘זכה’, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977), Band II, 569–71; ‘זכה’ ‘זכך’ in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), vol. 1, 1073–75.

Lam. 4:7a Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk;

In particular, Job 15:15 and 25:5 provide cases of comparing man's or heaven's purity with God's purity, while Lam 4:7 compares the prince's purity with snow. These comparisons indicate that the root *zkk* refers to different degrees of purity or the process of cleansing.

Another root, **zkh*, which appears 8 times in an ethical sense (Isa. 1:16; Mic. 6:11; Ps. 51:6[4]; 73:13; 119:9; Job 15:14; 25:4; Prov. 20:9), also exhibits similar features; the process of cleansing/purification and physical cleansing act as its base. Of particular significance is the fact that its *Piel* and *Hithpael* forms, as with the cases of *zāk*, and **zkk*, speak about cleansing/refinement as a human endeavor, and never as God's act.

Setting aside the phrase *zāhāb tāhōr* for later discussion, we will observe the features of *tāhōr* by comparing *zāk*, **zkh* and **zkk* in terms of the above-mentioned features, that is, the (*physical*) process of purification. First, it is generally agreed that *tāhōr* does not refer to the lack of unnecessary *physical* things like dirt. Not only *tāhōr* but also its *Piel* verb *tihar* concerns the state that is free from uncleanness, as well as purification of sins and uncleanness (e.g. Lev. 16:19, 30) that are invisible, or spiritual.⁸ Second, the following three instances sufficiently suggest that *tihar* does not describe the process of purification—though, depending on the context, the latter may be in the background—and that the result of the act of *tihar*, that is, *tāhōr*, describes the state of being clean before God.

- (1) Some objects qualified by *tāhōr* do not imply any act of purification or refinement (e.g., 'a spring or cistern' in Lev. 11:36; certain conditions of leprosy in Lev. 13:13, 37; 'birds' in Lev. 14:4).
- (2) A healed leper in Leviticus 14, while going through some stages of purificatory rites, is never described as being *cleaner* than in the previous stage(s) (see vv. 9, 20); the declaration 'He is clean' simply comes at the end of each rite.

8 In Lev. 13 the verb is not factitive but has the declarative sense of 'to pronounce clean.'

- (3) The holy of holies and the holy place that have been defiled are to be purified on the day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. While it is debatable how the ceremony on this day is related to purification rites on other days (cf. Lev. 12–15), the neglected fact is that the Israelites become *tāhōr* on this day (Lev.16: 30); they are not said to be *cleaner* than on other days.⁹

Thus, the *Piel* of **thr* designates the state of things and persons *after* the process of purification/refinement;¹⁰ it designates the change of states, i.e., from an unclean state to a clean state.

Thus, with regard to the adjectives *zak* and *tāhōr* in the priestly literature, it is concluded that *zak* can be rendered ‘pure,’ and the purity is that of the *material* state resulting from the *process* of purification/refinement, whereas the adjective *tāhōr* can also be rendered ‘pure,’ but the purity is that of an invisible/spiritual state, not necessarily having purification rites as the background.

Lastly, with these observations in mind, we turn to a passage that appears at odds with the position that *tāhōr* has no physical process of purification in view, namely, Malachi 3:3.

וַיֵּשֶׁב מְצַרְףָּה וּמְטַהֵר כֶּסֶף וְטַהֵר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי וְזָקַק אֹתָם כְּזָהָב וְכֶסֶף
וְהָיוּ לִיהוָה מְגִישֵׁי מִנְחָה בְצִדְקָה:

And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. (NASB)

Does the fact that silver is the object of **thr* indicate that the meaning of the

9 It should be remembered that the antonym of *tāhōr* is *tāmēʿ*, while the antonym of *qōdeš* is *hōl* (cf. Lev. 10:10); ‘Intensification’ of cleanness does not lead to holiness.

10 There are verbs such as *hittēʿ* and *kipper* that concern the process of purification itself in the priestly literature. See Exod. 29:36; Lev. 8:15; 14:49.

verb is no different from **zqq*?¹¹ Granted that these appear synonymous in this context, in the first place it is not appropriate to draw any inference about the general semantic relationship between them from such a poetical passage. In order to assert that these are synonymous one must have knowledge of the precise sense of **thr* in other literary genres such as laws. Second, not only ‘refining [*ziqqaq*] humans’ but also ‘purifier of silver [*m^ctahēr kesep*]¹²’ is unique in the OT, and all this comes from the statement that the Lord is ‘a smelter’ (*m^cšārēp*). Thus both ‘refining humans’ and ‘purifier of silver’ are neither ordinary diction nor literal expressions. So this passage suggests nothing definitive about the meaning of **thr*. However, in view of our findings mentioned above, and considering that the Levites are the ultimate object of purification (N.B. ‘like silver and gold’), it is still possible to say that here, too, *tihar* refers to a change of states, that is, from uncleanness to cleanness; it does not refer to the purifying process. Therefore, each Hebrew verb should be rendered by different English terms as in NASB.

Thus the differences between *tāhōr* and *zak* are generally clear, except for the phrase *zāhāb tāhōr*, to which we turn next.

III. Does *zāhāb tāhōr* Mean ‘pure gold’?

Starting with Exodus 25:11, the phrase appears 27 times in the Old Testament. In the Pentateuch it appears 24 times and is concentrated in the section for the tabernacle and its utensils in Exodus 25-39; it is not found in the rest of the Pentateuch. The so-called ‘pure gold’ is used for overlaying the Ark, Ark-cover or mercy seat, and the Table (25:23). Utensils such as plates, dishes

11 It occurs 7 times (Isa. 25:6; Mal. 3:3; Ps. 12:6[7], Job 28:1; 36:27; 1 Chr. 28:18; 29:4), and has exclusive reference to refinement of silver and wine, and distillation of water. The idea of tangible things being the objects of purification is common in the priestly literature. See Lev. 14:48; 16:19; Ezek. 43:26.

12 In Malachi 1:11 as well, *tāhōr* uniquely appears in the sense of ‘a pure offering.’ It is unusual to be called this way, since an offering is holy. This is probably because the people have defiled their offerings (see Mal. 1:7-8, 10).

for incense, bowls, the lampstand along with calyxes and their branches (25:31, 36), and tongs and trays (38) are to be made of ‘pure gold’ (25:29). On the other hand, various appurtenances for transportation are to be made simply of ‘gold.’ With regard to the priestly garments, items such as ‘two chains’ (28:14), ‘twisted chains for the breastpiece’ (28:22), and a ‘frontlet’ (28:36) are made of *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, while items such as ‘frames’ (28:11, 13), ‘filigree’ (28:20), ‘two cords’ (28:24), ‘two rings’ (28:26, 27), and ‘bells’ (28:3) are without *ṭāhōr*. Such a distinction is quite similar to that between holy objects such as the Ark and the incense altar on the one hand, and their appurtenances on the other, as seen in chs. 25–27 (see above).

However, in the tabernacle account there are cultic objects overlaid with gold but not qualified by *ṭāhōr*. Those objects include priestly garments (Exod. 28:15, 24, 26, 27, 33), frames (28:13), the holders for poles (30:4), poles (30:5), clasps for coupling curtains (36:13), and pillars (36:36, 38). In the traditional understanding of *zāhāb ṭāhōr* this non-mention of *ṭāhōr* indicates that the gold is ‘plain’ gold because these items are less important. However, this is hardly a sufficient explanation, for gold is used for making priestly garments that are called *holy* (see Exod. 28:4).¹³ It is unlikely that the phrase *zāhāb ṭāhōr* is used for objects of higher degrees of holiness, because not all the things inside the holy of holies are qualified by *ṭāhōr* (e.g., cherubim).¹⁴ So the rationale for the use of *ṭāhōr*, if any, lies not in the importance of items *per se*, but somewhere else.

One wonders if the ancient Israelites evaluated the degrees of gold as precisely as moderns, though Malachi 3:2b–3 refers to the process of refining gold and silver. In fact, outside the legal stipulations one can find collocations such as ‘*zāhāb* is *ṭōb*’ (Gen. 2:12), *zāhāb sāhūṭ* (1 Kgs. 10:16, 17; 2 Chr. 9:15,

13 Cf. D. P. Wright, ‘holiness,’ in *ABD* III: 240.

14 H. Ringgren appears to hesitate in taking a definite position on this matter, and he says it is uncertain whether there was a difference between *zāhāb* and *zāhāb ṭāhōr*. Yet, he adds that, because these terms are used for cultic objects, it is undeniable that there may be overtones of ‘cultic purity.’ H. Ringgren, ‘*ṭāhar*,’ in *TWAT* Band III (1982): 309–10.

16), *zāhāb mûpāz* (1 Kgs. 10:18), and *zāhāb sāgûr* (1 Kgs. 6:21). Also, frequent mentions are made about geographical locations from where gold is obtained ('Ophir' in 1 Kgs. 10:11, 1 Chr. 29:4, 2 Chr. 9:10; 'Uphaz' in Jer. 10:9). These collocations are equivocal with respect to the evaluation of gold's quality in terms of the concept of *ṭāhōr*, but they may suggest that in ancient Israel the quality of gold was evaluated by ways other than the criterion of whether it is *ṭāhōr* or not. Above all, 'pure gold' appears to be the most fitting translation of *ḡaz* (Ps. 21:4; Song 5:15; Lam. 4:2; Ps. 19:11; 119:127; Job 28:17; Prov. 8:19; Isa. 13:12).¹⁵

Carol L. Meyers, who worked on the symbolism of the lampstand in the 1970's and commented on the phrase *zāhāb ṭāhōr* in some detail, makes a distinction between the cultic and the non-cultic, and labels the phrase's meaning as a metallurgical 'terminus technicus.'¹⁶ She takes a clue of this from Malachi 3:2b-3, where the process of refinement is described for silver and gold. However, because of the parallelism in the verses, it is difficult to ascertain the exact sense of *ṭihar* in v. 3. Notwithstanding, in the latter part of her work she raises the possibility that *ṭāhōr* means 'brightness' as in Ugaritic *ṭhr/zhr* in line with Exod. 24:10 and Ps. 19.¹⁷ As her contribution in this matter highly merits further exploration, I shall re-examine those 'non-cultic' texts below.

Furthermore, in the framework of Exod 25-40, incense is also said to be *ṭāhōr* in two places: Exod 30:35 and 37:29.

Exod 30:35

וְעָשִׂיתָ אֹתָהּ קְטֹרֶת רֻחַח מִנְעֻשָׁה
רוֹזְמַת מִמְלֶלֶת טְהוֹר קֹדֶשׁ

15 Cf. *keṭem ṭāhōr* in Job 28:19.

16 Carol Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult* (American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 2; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 28-30.

17 Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah*, 167-68.

For instance, JPS translates 30:35 as follows:

“Make them into incense, a compound expertly blended, refined, *pure*, sacred.” (italics mine)

And ESV reads as follows:

“and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, *pure* and holy.” (italics mine)

In what sense is the incense ‘pure’? Here again the question is whether or not the commonly translated ‘pure’ refers to the degree of physical purity. However, it is not clear if the ‘pure’ in the above translations is used in a physical sense or a ritual one. Either way, if gold can be qualified by *ṭāhōr* in the ritual sense, incense can also be qualified in the same ritual sense inasmuch as both are materials for ritual use. More importantly, the prescription in the previous verse (v. 34) that one of the three ingredients for making incense, namely, frankincense, must be *zakkā* (‘pure’) suggests that *ṭāhōr* in Exod. 30:35 is different in meaning from ‘pure’ in the physical sense, just as in Lev. 24:6–7.¹⁸

As mentioned at the outset, scholars have not paid sufficient attention to possible different nuances that *ṭāhōr* may have over against *zāk*. One of the chief hindrances in exploring the above question is the distinction often made in the study of Levitical legislation, that is, between the ceremonial and the ethical. It is a general question requiring an extensive discussion that is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, we could address the issue by restricting ourselves to the definition of *ṭāhōr* in *HALOT* for our purpose at hand. *HALOT* classifies its meaning in the following way:

- (1) **pure.** gold Ex 25:11-39, etc.
- (2) **ceremonially clean.** Lev 10:10, Dt 12:14, etc.
- (3) **ethically clean.** For (3) it lists such passages as Hab 1:13 (eyes), Job 17:9 (hands), Ps 12:7, Prov 15:26 (words), 51:12 (heart), 19:10.

18 Cf. M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 242. Haran takes *zāhāb ṭāhōr* as referring to ‘pure gold’ in the physical sense (see pp. 163–64).

To the present author, this definition appears to be no more than a classification according to the criterion of whether the context is ceremonial or ethical to the exclusion of *zāhāb t̄āhōr*. In particular, it is not intelligible why sense (1) is not ceremonial. Also it is not clear why *t̄āhōr* in Ps. 19:10[MT] comes under (3). Above all, why is Lev. 24, where the term *t̄āhōr* is often taken to mean ‘pure golden,’ not to be regarded as ceremonial? Is the sense of ‘pure gold’ excluded from the ‘ceremonial’ context because Exod. 25–40 is not a context that addresses actual ceremonies, or just because of the phrase alone? If the latter is the reason, then the case for incense cannot be explained fully. Indeed, allowance should then be made for the traditional understanding because no directions would have been given about what kind of gold ought to be used if *zāhāb t̄āhōr* were not ‘pure gold.’ However, it is doubtful that the biblical author is concerned about the physical quality of gold in the same way as moderns when he mentions *zāhāb*. The distribution of *t̄āhōr* across ‘ceremonial’ and ‘ethical’ contexts suggests that such a distinction should not be primary in determining the basic sense of the term. Certainly, this is not to reject categorically the very use of ‘ceremonial’ and ‘ethical.’ But it should not be the determining factor in the exploration and description of the lexical meaning. Moreover, such a definition falls short of showing more essential aspects, if any, of the word, not to mention its possible different nuances over against *zāk*. In other words, it is doubtful whether *t̄āhōr* in *zāhāb t̄āhōr* differs in sense from *t̄āhōr* in so-called ‘ceremonial’ context such as that of Lev. 10–11.

IV. A Proposal

In order to see more clearly the exact meaning of *t̄āhōr*, we must pay attention to a few passages that are outside the ‘ceremonial’ context, and consider the possible relations between them. They are Exodus 24:10, Psalms 19:10[MT].

In 1968 J.H. Eaton proposed that *t̄āhōr* in Ps. 19:10[MT] means ‘brilliant,’ and he rendered it ‘clear–shining’ or ‘radiant.’¹⁹ Independently, Carol L. Meyers also

19 J. H. Eaton, “Some Questions of Philology and Exegesis in the Psalms,” *JTS* 19 (1968), 604-605. Also note J.L. Palache’s view that **thr* initially had the meaning of ‘translucent,

argued that *ṭāhōr* means ‘brightness’ on the basis of Psalms 19:10[MT] and Exodus 24:10, and she also raised the possibility that the meaning of *ṭāhōr* in *zāhāb ṭāhōr* could well be the same as that in the Exodus and Psalms passages.²⁰ I add to these passages Gen. 7:2, 8, and 8:20, and I would like to propose that, with due consideration concerning contexts, the term can apply to those cases in which it occurs in the so-called ‘ceremonial’ contexts.

A. Exodus 24:10

It is generally accepted that *ṭōhar* in Exodus 24:10 has the meaning of ‘clearness.’ The scene that the Israelites saw was what was under the feet of the God of Israel, and it looked as if “it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness” (ESV). This description suggests that the term *ṭōhar* has the semantic component of ‘being transparent.’ Furthermore, Exod. 24:17 says, “Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel” (ESV). As Meyers observes, fire or light seem to have accompanied God’s glory. It is not clear how the scene described in v. 10 is related to that in v. 17, but *ṭōhar* is not incongruous with the light or fire.

Notice should be taken of the fact that ‘pure’ gold is mentioned in Exod. 25 (v. 11) immediately following chapter 24, which speaks about the space beneath God’s feet being like sapphire pavement *for clarity*. In other words, though *ṭōhar* is a noun in chapter 24 and an adjective in chapter 25, both concern minerals. For the sake of the argument below, it should be pointed out that this scene at Mt. Sinai is a miraculous event; the people have seen something that they cannot see in their ordinary life. Therefore, the distinction between the physical and the spiritual/invisible in terms of purity may not be meaningful at least for

bright or shining,’ and that its ethical and ritual meanings were later developments (*Semantic Notes on the Hebrew Lexicon* [Leiden: Brill, 1959], 35; reference from Sheri L. Klouda, “The Dialectical Interplay of Seeing and Hearing in Psalm 19 and Its Connection to Wisdom,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10.2 [2000], 188, n. 35). *Classical Hebrew Dictionary* also mentions the possibility that *ṭāhōr* in Ps. 19:10 means ‘radiant.’

²⁰ See n. 10 above.

this scene.

Nevertheless, assuming that *ṭōhar* in Exod. 24 refers to physical clearness of the mineral, that does not apply to *zāhāb ṭāhōr* in Exod. 25 onwards. For gold is not physically transparent or translucent even if *ṭāhōr* is taken to refer to its physical quality. On the basis of this consideration, together with the above-mentioned likelihood that ‘pure gold’ is not a precise rendering of *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, I propose that *ṭāhōr* as used in such cases as *zāhāb ṭāhōr* is a term that describes the relationship between God and objects such as gold, the Table, and the Lampstand, and that it probably means ‘clear’ or ‘transparent’ *before/in the sight of God*.

B. Psalms 19:10 [MT]

Psalms 19:10 [MT] may confirm our postulation that *ṭāhōr* can be translated ‘clear,’ so that the purity is one that is grounded upon clearness. Psalms 19:10 reads,

יְרֵאָת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמְדָת לְעַד

A basic exegetical question is whether the Tetragrammaton is subjective or objective in the phrase ‘the fear of the Lord.’²¹ The presence of the same syntactic construction in vv. 8-10[MT] suggests that in v. 10[MT], as well, ‘the Lord’ is subjective. Yet it is obvious that the Lord does not ‘fear’ himself. Thus, the fear of the Lord means a kind of fear that the Lord perennially bears towards his creatures, above all, human beings regardless of the degree to which they may or may not fear him (see Ps 90:11). Therefore, it can be surmised that the expression ‘the fear of the Lord is *ṭāhōr*’ means that his fear is one that cannot be *beclouded* by anything. This is largely supported by the fact that at the end of the previous section, i.e., vv. 1-7[MT], the psalmist has introduced the sun.²²

21 For various proposals for emendation see Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 179. With Craigie, I also retain *yir’at*. Eaton renders the phrase as “the religion commanded by Yahweh, a synonym for his הַיְרֵאָת” (“Some Questions,” 605).

22 “In Psalm 19 there is no suggestion that the sun is divine, but its power and its ability to shine light on dark places make it a vivid metaphor for the law. ‘There is nothing hidden

While the sun itself is not one of the appellations of the Law, vv. 9–10[MT] fittingly speaks about the brightness of the Law. Furthermore, this inference could be corroborated by the sense of another purity term, *bār*, in v. 9[MT]. The present author has discussed the meaning elsewhere and concluded that it means ‘bright’ in this context.²³ At any rate, the meaning ‘clear’ suits the context in which vv. 8–10[MT] follows the mention of the sun (v. 5[MT]) that illuminates everything on earth. Since the fear of the Lord is at issue, it seems that this ‘clear’ is spiritual or figurative, and not physical.

We might also observe that in both Exod. 24 and Ps. 19 *ṭāhōr* occurs in reference to God. Thus it is highly likely that this term intrinsically has God in view; it is not used simply for describing the nature of things without reference to God. My proposal is that this meaning of ‘clear’ or ‘transparent’ also applies to the instances of *ṭāhōr* in ‘ceremonial’ contexts.

C. Gen. 7:2, 8, and 8:20

After the Lord’s general command to bring every living creature into the Ark by pairs (Gen. 6:19–20), Noah was specifically commanded by the Lord to take “seven pairs of all *clean* animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate” (ESV 7:2; italics mine). It is striking that the quality of the clean animals is not specified here, nor is the term *ṭāme*’ used. Although there has been the tendency to read into this passage the qualification that is made in Leviticus, that is, being without blemishes, not only does the passage make sense without the qualification,²⁴ it also seems important not to presume the qualification rule for this passage. The proposed sense of ‘clear’ (before God) indicates that some of the animals would

from its heat’ (v. 6).” G. J. Wenham, *Psalms As Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 80.

23 N. Kiuchi, “The Meaning of *bar lebab* in Psalm 24:4 and Psalm 73:1” (Japanese with English abstract), *Exegetica* 23 (2012), 39–70.

24 Cf. G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), 176–77. As Noah was *ṭāmim* and offered clean animals, one may raise the possibility of whether *ṭāhōr* (or *ṭāme*’) has a human-oriented function even when it qualifies physical objects such as animals. However, this should be discussed separately.

be potentially used in the future in reference to God, and indeed they were after the flood (8:20).²⁵ In other words, the use of the expression ‘not clean’—and not ‘unclean’ (*tāmē*)—is grounded on the premise that *tāhōr* is a term that intrinsically points to *ritual use*.²⁶ This in turn requires an examination of how *tāhōr* and *tāmē* are used in Leviticus, which is a topic that must be pursued elsewhere.

With regard to the phrase *zāhāb tāhōr*, it can be inferred, based on our proposal for *tāhōr*, that there is no distinction between *zāhāb tāhōr* and *zāhāb* as long as the material aspect of gold is in view. This is also supported by the fact that the text simply says ‘gold’ when mention is made about preparation for making holy objects or about the very materials (Exod. 25:3; 28:5). Thus it only remains to explain why *tāhōr* is added in particular cases and not in others.

V. The Rationale for the Use of *tāhōr*

With the above inference in mind we will reconsider some unsolved questions set out in section III above. In the tabernacle account there is ambiguity regarding the use of *tāhōr*, if *tāhōr* is assumed to refer to the physical degree of the gold’s purity. However, the ambiguity surrounding the difference between *zāhāb tāhōr* and *zāhāb* can be cleared by our proposal that *tāhōr* means ‘clear’ with reference to a spiritual state before God. In the following discussion, I will attempt to verify this postulate by showing that it can explain all the instances where *tāhōr* occurs, while exploring the more exact nature of it. In doing so, I will draw distinctions among three situations in which *tāhōr* is used.

[1] Cases in which certain *materials* are said to be *tāhōr* as in *zāhāb tāhōr* or with respect to the incense

[2] Cases in which certain *completed* items are directly qualified by *zāhāb*

25 Wenham provides an explanation for the absence in Gen. 7 of the mention of *tāhōr* in regard to birds that “are let out to reconnoiter the earth (8:7–12)” (ibid.)

26 It should be pointed out that the edible creatures in Lev. 11 are not called *tāhōr*.

ṭāhōr, as in *m^enōraṭ zāhāb ṭāhōr* (Exod. 25:31) and ‘bells’ (Exod. 39:25)

- [3] Cases in which certain *completed* items are directly qualified by *ṭāhōr* without *zāhāb*, such as *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā*

These distinctions may appear too fine, but they are necessary because the phrases *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā* and *haššulḥān haṭṭ^eṭāhōr* have been interpreted as elliptical expressions for ‘the pure golden lampstand’ and ‘the pure golden table’ respectively.

In regard to usage [1], attention should be paid to the fact that, in the tabernacle account, what is qualified by *ṭāhōr* is not just gold but ‘incense’ as well (Exod. 30:35; 37:29). Most items inside the Tent belong to this category, such as the Ark, *kapporet*, etc. The difference between [1] and [2] will be discussed in section V below. In regard to usage [3], the fact should be kept in mind that, while various completed objects and utensils inside the tent are overlaid with gold, only *m^enōra* (the Lampstand) itself is said to be *ṭāhōr* in the tabernacle account.²⁷ Though overlaid with *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, the *kapporet* in the holy of holies is never described as *hakkapporet haṭṭ^ehōrā*, nor is the incense altar in the holy place ever described in such a manner.

Why are particular objects called *ṭāhōr* while other objects are not? I would propose here that, given the sense of *ṭāhōr* being ‘clear’ in reference to the Lord, certain objects are so called because they will be used in a ritual. If they are not to be used, they are not qualified that way. In other words, the mention of *ṭāhōr* is conditioned by the criterion of whether the item in question has a role in a ritual or not. Yet this requires qualifications. Below, let us consider the nature of this postulate more precisely, with Leviticus contexts in view.

First of all, if the mention of *ṭāhōr* is grounded on the principle that the holy objects which are overlaid with *zāhāb ṭāhōr* are used in a ritual and the term means ‘clear,’ it is highly unlikely that the term carries a physical connotation; seeing the holy objects therein is, as Lev. 16:12–13 shows, strictly prohibited. The term must then be taken in a spiritual sense, and the focus of the meaning

27 Meyers highlights this fact in some details in *The Tabernacle Menorah*, 169–70. In Lev. 24 the Table is called so, but this case will be addressed below from a different angle.

lies in God's seeing, that is, 'before or in reference to God.'

The possibility that the term *tāhōr* in ritual contexts concerns spiritual, and not physical, visibility may be enhanced when the function of the Lampstand is compared with that of the incense altar or incense. The incense altar is located in the holy place alongside the Lampstand and the Table. Burning incense is a daily priestly duty (Exod. 30:7–8). When Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he is to burn a regular incense offering (v. 8). However, the same timing of burning incense and lighting lamps compels us to ask how the function of incense smoke is related to that of light. Leviticus 16:12–13 conveys that at least part of the smoke's role is to counteract clarity, preventing Aaron to have direct eye-contact with the items in the holy of holies. Thus it can be postulated that the smoke is related to invisibility while the light is related to visibility. However, it is hasty to infer from this that what is illuminated by light is qualified by *tāhōr*. In Lev. 24:1–9, it is only the Lampstand and the Table that are qualified by *tāhōr*, and not other items. At any rate, it appears that the visibility and invisibility cannot be restricted to their physical sense.

Now, although in Lev. 16:12–13 the smoke of the censer physically screens Aaron's sight lest he dies, this would be another way of saying that the smoke functions symbolically to screen God's sighting of human sins and impurities. Considered this way, both the incense altar and the Lampstand have spiritual dimensions—the former in preventing God's sighting and the latter in enabling it. In terms of the purpose of the regular ritual in the holy place, it can be envisaged that the expected communion at the Table follows the screening of God's sighting of human sins. Thus the visible features of the ritual are instrumental in conveying the invisible dimensions of divine presence.²⁸ At any rate, all this means is that it is simplistic to assume that the physically visible is all that the ritual is about; the physical arrangement of the ritual in the holy place is ultimately intended to convey the spiritual. Thus, these considerations lead to the following three points. (1) The mention of *tāhōr* is prompted when a certain item is assumed to have a role in the ritual, enabling God to view it. (2)

28 Haran (in *Temples*) does not discuss the symbolic dimensions of the ritual in the holy place.

The meaning of *ṭāhōr* must be something opposite to invisibility. As proposed in section IV above, the sense ‘clear’ suits the context. (3) The visibility here is not visibility in the physical sense after all. Even if the inner holy objects are physically visible, they are not necessarily said to be *ṭāhōr*.

Indeed, these postulates still cannot explain why in Lev. 24 only the Lampstand and the Table are qualified by *ṭāhōr*. But, at least, they can explain nearly all the cases where *ṭāhōr* is used. Some examples from the tabernacle account may be explained by these principles, as follows.

The Ark (Exod. 25:10–16): It is to be overlaid with *zāhāb* *ṭāhōr*, but in Exod. 25:11–12 the molding of gold (v. 11), four rings (v. 12), and poles (v. 13) are without *ṭāhōr*, probably because appurtenances and various parts for transportation appear to be regarded as immaterial for rituals.

Cherubim (Exod. 25:18–19): It is to be made of gold (v. 18). The absence of *ṭāhōr* probably derives from the assumption that cherubim do not play a part in the ritual.

Table (Exod. 25:23–28): It is made of *zāhāb* *ṭāhōr* (v. 24), but similar to the case of the Ark, the Table’s appurtenances and items for transportation are simply described as ‘gold’ (vv. 25, 26, 28). But in Lev. 24:6, ‘Table’ is directly followed by *ṭāhōr*. This literary phenomenon will be addressed in section V, below.

Lampstand (Exod. 25:31–35): Among the holy objects in the holy place and holy of holies, the Lampstand is emphatically stressed as being made of *zāhāb* *ṭāhōr* (Exod. 25:31; 31:8; 37:17; 39:37). Moreover, as will be discussed, the Lampstand is the only utensil in the tabernacle account for which *ṭāhōr* qualifies its entirety (Exod. 31:8; 39:37). In the rest of the cases where *zāhāb* occurs without *ṭāhōr*, it refers to various parts of the Lampstand, or it describes its location (Exod. 25:31, 32, 33, 34, 35; 26:35; 30:27; 37:17, 18, 19, 20; 40:4, 24). That the Lampstand alone is being qualified by *ṭāhōr* (in usage [3]) in the tabernacle account may adumbrate some ritual in which light has a major role (see section V, below).

Ephod-related objects (Exod. 28): The Breastpiece (v. 36) containing Urim

and Thummim (v. 30), a frontlet with the inscription ‘Holy to the Lord,’ and the two (twisted) chains (vv. 14, 22) are made of *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, but the rest of the items are simply said to be made of ‘gold,’ probably because they are regarded as secondary or irrelevant in terms of the ritual’s purpose. It is striking, then, that the ephod itself is not said to be *ṭāhōr*, which probably stresses that it is the breastpiece and the frontlet that are the target of God’s sighting. In fact, it is said that Aaron’s breastpiece and frontlet must always be visible before the Lord when he enters the holy place bearing the guilt of the Israelites in regard to their offerings (v. 38). If so, this accords with the above proposal that it is *spiritual visibility* and not physical visibility that accounts for the occurrences of *ṭāhōr*, because the whole ephod is physically visible.

Bells: Bells are simply said to be made of ‘gold’ (Exod. 28:33, 34; 39:26), but only once does the term occur in the form *pa^amōnē zāhāb ṭāhōr* (Exod. 39:25). To be noted is the fact that while the phrase contains *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, this belongs to usage (2) and is not the same as, say, *pa^amōnīm ṭ^ehōrīm* (usage [3]). Such a situation has been interpreted as an indication that there is no distinction between ‘pure gold’ and ‘plain gold’ on the assumption that *ṭāhōr* refers to the degree of physical purity. However, the single occurrence of *ṭāhōr* in regard to the ‘bells’ can be taken as an indication that the addition of *ṭāhōr* in Exod. 39:25 reflects the lawgiver’s awareness that it is going to function in the ritual soon. Incidentally, the same tendency may be observed about *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā* in the same chapter (Exod. 39:37; 31:8; see below).

Recognition of facts such as those seen in the above data—e.g., that only the Lampstand is directly qualified by *ṭāhōr* in the tabernacle account, and that the Table and the Lampstand are both called *ṭāhōr* in Lev. 24—make it necessary to examine how and why these cultic objects are described differently in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. This will engage us below.

In conclusion, it seems that not only is the adjective *ṭāhōr* attached to gold for a specific reason, but also, when it is attached, it is so because of the functionality of the items in the ritual, that is, their visibility in God’s sight.

VI. The Light, the Bread, the Lampstand, and the Table in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

If *zāhāb ṭāhōr* means ‘clean gold,’ the phrases in question in Lev. 24 can simply be translated ‘the clean Lampstand’ and ‘the clean Table.’ However, the legislation focuses on what to do not only with these objects but also with the Light and Bread. Furthermore, as is well known, these four ritual components are described differently in Exodus and Numbers. Consider the following:

One may judge the variety of combinations of the terms as arbitrary or without significance, but when one reads in the direction from Exodus to

Exod. 25-39	Lev. 24:1-9	Num. 4:7
לֶחֶם פָּנִים	לֶחֶם/תָּמִיד	לֶחֶם הַתָּמִיד
מִנְרֵת זָהָב טָהוֹר הַמִּנְרֵת הַטְּהוֹרָה	הַמִּנְרֵת הַטְּהוֹרָה	
מִנְרֵת הַמְּאֹר	מְאֹר	מִנְרֵת הַמְּאֹר
הַשֻּׁלְחָן	הַשֻּׁלְחָן הַטָּהוֹר	שֻׁלְחַן הַפָּנִים

Numbers, there appear to be some latent intentions on the part of the authors/editors concerning each relevant section. This kind of literary reading is commended at least for our subject, for, as suggested above, the tabernacle account appears to anticipate a ritual performed in the holy place, accompanied by the presence of a light.

In what follows, we will take a closer look at the literary features of ‘Light,’ ‘the Bread,’ ‘the Lampstand,’ and ‘the Table’ largely with reference to Exodus 25-39, Leviticus 24:1-8, and Numbers 4:7 *seriatim*. In doing so, we will see that modern translational variations in the terms for these items have occurred partly because of scholars’ failure to see the four ritual items as a set.

a. The Four Items in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

The tabernacle account in Exod. 25–31 is especially concerned with rituals in the holy place, and particularly light. This is reflected by the fact that the section in Exod. 27:20–21, which enjoins Moses to have the Israelites bring pure oil to kindle a lamp in the holy place, is located after all the instructions regarding the items in the Tent, and is repeated at the beginning of Lev. 24 (vv. 2–3). The tabernacle account’s concern for the coming ritual—a matter that has been under-appreciated until now—is also reflected in qualifiers such as *tāhōr* and *pānīm* (see below), which refer to divinity, and in the fact that objects so qualified are meant to be used in the ritual.

Among the four items, it is *mā’ōr* and *leḥem pānīm* that constitute the essential elements of the ritual in the holy place. Self-evidently, the light is the final product of the Lampstand, as *m^enōraṭ hammā’ōr* indicates. Though no mention is made within the tabernacle account about the use of light itself, the commandment in Exod. 27:20–21 aims at procuring the material for lighting.

Next, a few words are in order regarding the translation of the phrase *leḥem pānīm*. This has been rendered as ‘the shewbread’ or ‘the bread of display’ or ‘the Bread of the Presence.’²⁹ The former two focus on the functional aspect of the Bread. However, *pānīm* literally means ‘faces,’ so it is probable that the Bread symbolizes the divine presence. De Boer sees some redundancy in ‘the bread of the Presence before Me,’ and he proposes to translate it ‘facial bread.’ However, the question pertains to the semantic aspect of the genitive *pānīm*. It can be taken as expressing the purpose of the Bread. Therefore, though not a literal translation, I consider ‘the Bread of the Presence’ to be the nearest in meaning to the Hebrew phrase among the three options. It is not to say that the Bread itself is the Presence, but that it symbolizes the Presence *par excellence*.

If the phrase is so understood and translated, it implies some kind of fellowship with God. While in Exodus the purpose of the supposed ritual is suggested by *pānīm*, no specifications are made about ‘the Table.’ In Leviticus

29 *leḥem pānīm* Exod. 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; 1 Sam. 21:7 (Eng. 6); 1 Kgs. 7:48; 2 Chr. 4:19. For a discussion on the translation of this phrase, see P. A. H. De Boer, “An Aspect of Sacrifice,” in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTS XXIII; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 27–47, here 32–35. De Boer favours the translation ‘facial bread.’

prescriptions are given concerning what to do with the Bread, while the ‘Table’ is qualified as *ṭāhōr* for the first time, but never again. And in Num. 4:7 the purpose of the Table is said to be *pānîm* (see below). It is striking that already in Exodus the Bread’s purpose is so designated, and the Lampstand is qualified by *ṭāhōr*, while in Leviticus the Table is qualified by *ṭāhōr*. Thus it is likely that, if *pānîm* designates the purpose of the Bread, the four objects are viewed in the descending order of urgency, which is reflected in the way qualifiers such as *pānîm* and *ṭāhōr* are added to them: the Light, the Bread, the Lampstand, and the Table on which the communion is to be held. Other characteristics or possible editorial intentions are considered below.

With all the above in mind, note how the wording regarding the Lampstand shifts within Exodus 25–39. In the Pentateuch *m^enōrā* appears 22 times, with the first occurrence found in Exod 25:31.

וַעֲשִׂיהָ מִנְרַת זָהָב טָהוֹר

Then, in Exod. 31:8 the phrase *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā* appears for the first time, and in Exod 37:17 this nominal phrase is rephrased as

וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת־הַמִּנְרָה זָהָב טָהוֹר

In Exod. 39:37 the phrase *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā* appears again, and the same collocation is taken up in Lev. 24:4. The Lampstand stands out among the holy objects inside the Tent in the way it is described. Exodus 25:36 and 25:39 emphatically state that all the parts of the Lampstand are to be made of *zāhāb ṭāhōr*. One may say that the differing phraseologies adduced above are fortuitous. But its first appearance in the construct chain *m^enōrāṭ zāhāb ṭāhōr* (Exod. 25:31) differs from that of the other holy items, about which *zāhāb ṭāhōr* appears simply as the means to overlay them (‘You shall make a Lampstand by means of *zāhāb ṭāhōr*’). Moreover, *zāhāb ṭāhōr* appears when the context concerns the very act of making the Lampstand (Exod. 37:17) just as with other holy items. In light of this, the phraseology *m^enōrāṭ zāhāb ṭāhōr* (Exod. 25:31) is

one that refers to the *last stage* in the process of making it, and the wording fits this context. Therefore it is reasonable to take *hamm^enōrâ haṯṯ^ehōrâ* as meaning that the Lampstand itself is *ṯāhōr*, being ready for ritual use, that is, not as an ellipsis for ‘pure golden.’

A similar shift of wording is found in the prescription concerning ‘the Table.’ The close relationship between the Bread of the Presence and the Table is hinted at in Exod. 25:30.

וַיִּתֵּן עַל־הַשֻּׁלְחָן לֶחֶם פָּנִים לְפָנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

However, the Table is never directly qualified as *ṯāhōr* in the tabernacle account. It is so qualified for the first time in Lev. 24:6, and in Num. 4:7 it appears as *šulḥan happānîm*. If the gradual change in wording is intentional, the postulate that guaranteeing the divine presence is the purpose of the ritual appears to be corroborated by Num. 4:7 (see C below).

b. The Lampstand and the Table (Lev. 24:1–9)

While the mentions of the Light, the Bread, the Lampstand, and the Table are distributed in the tabernacle account of Exodus as they come under different commands of making the tabernacle utensils and its execution, the four elements converge for the first time in Leviticus 24, which begins by referring to Exod. 27:20–21. Whereas the Table was not labeled as *ṯāhōr* in the tabernacle account, it is in Lev. 24 for the first time. This belated ascription of *ṯāhōr* to the Table bespeaks the latter’s lesser urgency, as compared to the Lampstand, but the Table is now an indispensable object for the whole ritual.

Why are the Lampstand and the Table in Lev 24 qualified by *ṯāhōr*?³⁰ For, if the Bread in Lev. 24 is the Bread of the Presence (*pānîm*), with the Exodus passages being assumed, the same may well apply to the Table and the Lampstand. But the Bread is simply called *leḥem*, and the Light is simply called

30 Not only does the phrase ‘the Lampstand of the Presence’ not appear in the Pentateuch, it does not appear in the entire Old Testament. For a possible reason see below.

māʾōr.³¹ And yet it is evident from the use of *lipnê YHWH* in vv. 4, 6, 8 that the purpose of the ritual lies in guaranteeing the divine presence. This question is highlighted even more by the fact that the ‘pure’ frankincense, which could be regarded from Exod. 30:34–35 as *ṭāhōr*, is not called *ṭāhōr* in Lev. 24. So it would be safe to conclude that Lev. 24:1–9 basically concerns the procedure of how the Presence should be guaranteed in referring to the functional aspects of the Bread, the Lampstand, and the Table. In other words, the prescription aims to achieve the very presence of God in the holy place, an intent already suggested in the tabernacle account’s mention of *leḥem pānīm*. For this purpose both the Table and the Lampstand function just like sacrificial animals; both make the divine presence possible. The supposed visible scene is quite natural in that the Lord symbolically holds a communion meal with priests and with the Israelites at the Table with light from the Lampstand.³² So it follows that in Lev. 24:1–7 the physical aspects of the ritual elements are mingled with spiritual aspects of the divine presence. But the double usage of *ṭāhōr* as a direct qualification of the Lampstand and the Table suggests that the whole ritual obviously orients itself towards the spiritual.

If it is possible to apply to this context our proposed sense of *ṭāhōr* that can be discerned outside legal contexts such as Exod. 24 and Ps. 19, and I believe it is, then a similar relation between light and clarity can be observed in the ritual of Lev. 24:1–9 as well. It is only by the light that the Table can be made visibly clear, though the ‘visible clarity’ in this case is of a spiritual nature, as argued above. This explains why the Light (*māʾōr*) is not said to be *ṭāhōr*; it is the source of clarity, just as the foot of God is clear under the glory of God (Exod. 24), or the fear of the Lord is ‘clear’ as the Lord himself is like the sun (Ps. 19). By adding *ṭāhōr* to the Lampstand and the Table, the lawgiver of Lev. 24 appears to convey that these serve to create a setting for the divine presence, the purpose of the regular ritual in the holy place. Thus, the reason why only the Lampstand and the table are qualified by *ṭāhōr* in Lev. 24 would be that this

31 Cf. *mʾnōraṭ hammāʾōr* in Exod. 35:14 and Num 4:9.

32 It is to be noted that in Ps. 19 a similar relation is found between the sun (vv. 5–6) and the fear of the Lord (v. 9), which is said to be ‘clear’ (see above).

latter term, with its basic sense of ‘clear,’ is used when the object in question has a *preparatory/circumstantial* role in the ritual, as opposed to that of major items such as the Light and the Bread.³³

To recognize that the mention of *ṭāhōr* implies the presence of (spiritual) light is important. By saying *zāhāb ṭāhōr*, from Exod 25 onwards the legislator already implies that mentions will be made about light later on. And in fact, prescriptions concerning *hamm^enōrā haṭṭ^ehōrā* occur together with those concerning lamps and light, and all this in Exodus. This explains why, already in the tabernacle account, the Lampstand (and incense) is often qualified by *ṭāhōr*, and the Table is not yet so. And yet, ‘the *clear* Lampstand’ still connotes a light; it needs a (spiritual) light. For a full prescription concerning the ritual complex that refers to the four items, i.e., the Light, the Bread, the Lampstand, and the Table, one must wait until Lev. 24.

It is not my intention here to argue that the Pentateuchal laws are homogeneous. Yet, in the Pentateuchal laws as they stand, there seems to be certain intentions on the part of editor(s) to focus on a certain ritual such as that prescribed in Lev. 24, the purpose of which lies in guaranteeing the divine presence, symbolized by the Light and Bread with the background of the Lampstand and the Table. According to this supposed literary intention, *ṭāhōr* in the phrase *haššulḥān haṭṭāhōr* in Lev 24:6 appears to designate a certain characteristic of the Lord’s presence,³⁴ that is, clarity or transparency, and not the physical material from which the Table was made. In other words, it seems unnecessary to assume that the phrase in Lev 24 is an abbreviated expression for the Table of pure gold, all the more so if ‘pure gold’ is not the right translation for *zāhāb ṭāhōr*; it is already mentioned in Exodus that the Table is of gold. The Table being overlaid with *fine* gold may well be in the background, but the term *ṭāhōr* itself does not refer to the degree of physical purity but clearness in the spiritual sense.

33 This seems to be applicable to animal sacrifices when they are said to be ‘clean.’

34 Meyers thinks that the qualification of the Lampstand by *ṭāhōr* here is influenced by the preceding case of the Menorah. Meyers, *Tabernacle Menorah*, 195, n. 9.

c. Numbers 4:7

The phrase *leḥem pānīm* appears for the first time in Exod. 25:30 and twice thereafter in Exodus (35:13; 39:36). In Leviticus it does not appear for some reason (see below), and in Numbers the word *pānīm* is used for the Table for the first time (Num. 4:7). It is suggested above that the phrase *šulḥan happānīm* reflects the author's/editor's understanding that guaranteeing the divine presence is the aim of the ritual in Lev. 24:1–9.

It is interesting that *šulḥan happānīm* in Num. 4:7 has also been frequently understood as an abbreviated expression for the table of the *Bread* of the Presence,³⁵ just as *haššulḥān haṭṭāhōr* has been taken to mean *šulḥān (hazzāhāb) haṭṭāhōr*. But this is unlikely. Note that the two phrases *šulḥan happānīm* and *leḥem hattāmīd* appear in the same verse. In Lev. 24 *tāmīd* does not appear in a phrase with *leḥem* but is used adverbially, while in Num. 4:7 *tāmīd* appears as a noun with the definite article. Also *haššulḥān haṭṭāhōr* in Lev. 24 is replaced by *šulḥan happānīm*. One can see that the author/editor of Numbers utilizes the phrases *leḥem pānīm* found in Exodus and *haššulḥān haṭṭāhōr* found in Lev. 24.

In view of the presence of the phrase *leḥem hattāmīd* in Num. 4:7, the very verse where *šulḥan happānīm* appears, it is inappropriate to assume that *leḥem* is invariably connected to *pānīm*. Thus, *šulḥan happānīm* should be rendered 'the table of the Presence' rather than 'the table of the bread of the Presence.' If so, it can be surmised that the author of Num. 4:7 has not simply replaced the *haṭṭāhōr* of Lev. 24 with *pānīm*. Given that the goal of the whole ritual in Lev. 24 is to guarantee the divine presence, and given that the Table is the last to be qualified by *ṭāhōr* or *pānīm* in the sequence of the Bread, the Lampstand, and

35 For examples, see KJV ("upon the table of shewbread"), ESV ("the table of the bread of the Presence"), Zürcher Bible ("über den Tisch der Schaubrote"). On the other hand, NIV (2011) renders it "over the table of the Presence," and NJB "Over the offertory table." "The fuller terms for this object is the table of display bread, so-called because every Sabbath twelve loaves of bread arranged in two rows were displayed on a table before God in the sanctuary (Lev. 24:5–9)" (J. Milgrom, *Numbers* [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia/New York: JPS Publication Society, 1990], 26).

the Table, the author/editor of Numbers probably aims to highlight the goal of the whole ritual in the holy place by mentioning *šulḥan happānîm*, a designation that symbolizes actualization of the Lord's fellowship with the people.

Conclusion

The traditional understanding that *ṭāhôr* in *zāhāb ṭāhôr* refers to the degree of physical purity is highly unlikely. The approach to its translation that such an understanding seems to reflect, that is, drawing a distinction between ceremonial and ethical contexts in determining its lexical meaning, and the failure to take into account non-ritual contexts, should be judged as inadequate. Rather, when we carefully consider the various contexts in which *ṭāhôr* occurs, including Exod. 24 and Ps. 19, we can correctly interpret its basic sense and translate it into English as 'clear' (in God's sight).

This sense is also applicable to the 'gold' in the tabernacle account, inasmuch as gold is not physically 'clear' or 'transparent.' The mention of *ṭāhôr* appears to be motivated by the intention to connote that the holy objects inside the Tent are to be ritually 'clear,' that is, having a preparatory or circumstantial role before God. The ritual in Lev. 24 can be seen in this light. Therefore, the term *ṭāhôr* does not designate the physical degree of purity, so the traditional translation 'pure gold' must be discarded.

However, as regards the translation of the phrase *zāhāb ṭāhôr*, it may be better rendered 'clean gold' partly because 'clear' or 'transparent' suggests the degree of physical purity, and partly because this understanding of 'clean' would be consistent with its use in ceremonial contexts.

I have not discussed in much detail the term *ṭāhôr* in ceremonial contexts such as Lev. 11–16, but if my proposal holds good, then it has far-reaching implications not just for the concept of unclean/uncleanness, but also for the concept of holy/holiness.