

טהור

hebrew

Meaning

- Clean
- Pure

Adjective.

The word טהור (from the root טהר) can be used to describe physical, ceremonial or moral purity, depending on the context. It is contrasted with the word טמא which means unclean or impure.

Ceremonial and Ritual Purity

In Leviticus and Numbers, טהור primarily refers to ritual cleanness - the state required to approach God or participate in worship. Examples include:

- [Leviticus 10:10](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLeviticus 10:10

Hebrew וְלִהְיוּ בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֵל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר ESV You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, NIV You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, NLT ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῶν βεβήλων καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ἁκαθάρτων καὶ τῶν καθαρώων... - Priests are to distinguish between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean

- [Leviticus 11](#) - Animals fit for consumption are called “clean”; others are “unclean”
- Leviticus 13-15 - A person healed from leprosy or bodily discharge is declared clean after ritual purification
- [Numbers 19:19](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigNumbers 19:19

Hebrew וְהָיָה הַטָּהוֹר עַל הַטָּמֵא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְחִטָּאוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְכִבֹּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהַר ESV And the clean person shall sprinkle it on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. Thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean. καὶ οὐ καθαρὸς ἐπὶ τὸν ἁκάθαρτον ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ... - The ashes of the red heifer are used to cleanse a person who has become unclean through contact with a corpse

In ritual law, “clean” denotes a state of acceptability before God, achieved through obedience and purification rites.

Moral and Ethical Purity

Beyond ritual contexts, “clean” also refers to moral integrity and inner purity — especially in the Psalms and Proverbs. For example:

- [Psalm 12:6](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 12:6

Hebrew מִשְׁדָּה עֲנִיִּים מֵאֲנָקָה אֲבִיּוֹנִים עֲתָה אֲקוּם יֹאמֶר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁרֶת בְּיִשְׁעַי יִפְתָּח לִי ESV The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. NIV And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. τὰ λόγια κυρίου λόγια ἀγνάργυριον πεπυρωμένον δοκίμιον τῆ γῆ καθαρισμένον... (verse 7plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigאֲמָרוֹת יְהוָה אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת כִּסְף צָרוּף בַּעֲלִיל לֶאֱרָץ in Hebrew) – “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined seven times.”

- [Psalm 24:4](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 24:4

Hebrew לֹא יָבֵב אֶשְׁרָ לֹא נָשָׂא לִשְׁוֹא נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה ESV He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. NIV He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. χερσὶν καὶ καθαρὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν ἐπιματαίωτὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ δόλω τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ... – The one who may ascend God's hill is “he who has clean hands and a pure heart.”

- [Proverbs 15:26](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigProverbs 15:6

Hebrew בֵּית צַדִּיק חֵסֶן רַב וּבֵית בּוֹאֵת רָשָׁע נַעֲכָרָת ESV In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked. NIV The house of the righteous contains great treasure, but the income of the wicked brings them trouble. ἐν πλεοναζούσῃ δικαιοσύνῃ ἰσχύς πολλή οἱ δὲ ἀσεβεῖς ἐκ γῆς οἰκοῖς δικαίων ἰσχύς πολλή καρποὶ δὲ ἀσεβῶν... – “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are clean.”

Here, “clean” reflects a moral and spiritual quality — sincerity, truthfulness, and holiness that aligns with God's nature.

Physical Purity or Cleanness

Sometimes “clean” has a straightforward physical sense, describing clear or unpolluted substances:

- [Exodus 27:20](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 27:20

Hebrew וְאָתָּה תְצַוֶּנָּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָקְחוּ אֵלָיְךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לַמָּאֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד ESV “You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. NIV “Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. καὶ οὐ σύνταξον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ λαβέτωσαν σοῦ ἔλαιον ἐξ ἑλαίων καθαρὸν κεκομμένον... – “Pure olive oil” for the lamp

- [Leviticus 24:4](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLeviticus 24:4

Hebrew עַל הַמִּנְחָה הַזֹּהֶרָה יַעֲרֹךְ אֶת הַנִּרְוֹת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד ESV He shall arrange the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold before the LORD regularly. NIV The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually. NLT Aaron and the priests must tend the lamps on the pure gold lampstand continually in the LORD's presence. ἐπὶ τῆς λυχνίας τῆς καθαρᾶς καύσετε τοὺς λύχνους ἕναντικυρίου ἕως τὸ πρῶν... – “Pure gold” used in

the tabernacle

- [Ezekiel 22:24](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigEzekiel 22:24

Hebrew לֹא גֶשֶׁמַּה בְּיוֹם זַעַם ESV “Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. NIV “Son of man, say to the land, ‘You are a land that has had no rain or showers in the day of wrath.’

υἱἄνθρωπου αὐτῆς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ὕψις τοῦ βρεχόμενου οὐδὲ ἐπὶ σέξεν ἡμέρα ὀργῆς... – “Rain that is clean (or unmixed)”

In these cases, the emphasis is absence of contamination - the literal sense underlying its ritual and moral uses.

Spiritual or Symbolic Purity

Prophets and poets often use “clean” symbolically for spiritual renewal:

- [Psalm 51:10](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 51:10

Hebrew תְּשִׁימֵנִי שִׁשְׁוֹן וְשִׁמְחָה תִּגְלִלָּה עֲצָמוֹת דָּבָרִית ESV Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. NIV Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. NLT Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

καρδίαν καθαράν κτίσον ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πνεῦμα ἐγκαίνισον ἐν τοῖς μου... (verse [12](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigבְּקִרְבִּי יְהוָה יִבְרָא לִי אֱלֹהִים יְרוּחַ כָּכֹן חֲדָשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי in Hebrew) – “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” linking purity with inner transformation

- [Ezekiel 36:25](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigEzekiel 36:25

Hebrew וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֶטְהַר אֶתְכֶם ESV I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. NIV I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

καὶ ἐφύψω ὑμᾶς ὕδαρ καθαρόν καὶ καθαρίσθησθε ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀκαθαρσιῶν ὑμῶν καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν εἰδωλῶν ὑμῶν... – God promises, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean,” a metaphor for forgiveness and spiritual renewal

This later prophetic use anticipates New Covenant imagery, where external purification points to inner cleansing by God's Spirit.

New Testament Connection

The Greek καθαρός, used in the Septuagint to translate טהור, carries these same meanings. Take for example, Jesus' teaching in [Matthew 5:8](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMatthew 5:8

Greek μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται. ESV “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. NIV Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. NLT God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. KJV Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God., “Blessed are the pure in heart,” which directly echoes [Psalm 24:4](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 24:4

Hebrew תְּשִׁיבָה לִּי לֵב טָהוֹר וְרוּחַ יָשָׁר עֲצֵמָה דְּכִיָּת ESV Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. NIV Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. NLT Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.
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Lexical Table

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