“INTEGRITY”—A Closer Look

What the Hebrew Scriptures Can Tell Us about Integrity

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Introduction

The intent of this study is to explore the meaning of integrity as scripture uses the term—a meaning that may not align neatly with how the English word is commonly understood today. Two Hebrew words, *tummah* and *tom*, are regularly rendered "integrity" in English translations, and a close reading of these words in their contexts is necessary to explore their scriptural sense.

Rather than beginning with a predetermined definition of integrity and searching for it in the text, this study lets the occurrences of the words sort themselves according to their target—that is, according to what the word is actually describing or modifying in each instance. Three domains emerge from this sorting, and together they provide a structural roadmap for the study.

The first domain includes a small number of occurrences referring to measurable fullness—a complete measure of time, degree, or physical condition, such as a "full year" or "full vigor." The second domain, by far the most common, associates the word with the heart, conduct, or a person's inner orientation, and is most often translated “integrity,” though occasionally “blameless” or “upright.” The third domain is the most striking: a handful of outliers that resist easy placement in either of the first two domains. Some of these are translated in ways that might suggest an entirely different Hebrew word lies behind them—“innocence” in one case, “at random” in another—yet on closer examination they share the same underlying term and warrant treatment as a domain in their own right.

Following this introduction, each domain will be treated in turn: first with a brief overview of the domain as a whole, and then with a close examination of the individual records within it. The aim throughout is not to impose a definition of integrity onto the text, but to let the full range of usage disclose what *tummah* and *tom* are communicating in scripture.

Brief Lexical Background

Both *tummah* (fem.) and *tom* (masc.) are from the verb *tamam* (v. 61x). This is a primitive root—to complete, literally or figuratively. It is an action that brings something to its full and proper end—whether a resource, a period of time, a work assignment, or a person’s earthly life.[1] The adjective forms, *tamim* or *tam*, describe that which is whole, sound, or complete—covering the physical, moral, ritual, and theological spheres—“flawless one” for human beauty, “blameless” for persons, “without blemish” for offerings, and “perfect” for the ways and works of God.[2]

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[1] https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8552.htm. Just by way of example, in the NASB *tamam* (v.) is most commonly translated as “consumed” (4), “destroyed” (6), “ended” (3), “finished” (7), “meet their end” (4), “perished” (4).

[2] https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8549.htm and https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8535.htm. Just by way of example, in the NASB, *tamim* (adj.) is most commonly translated as “blameless” (22), “without blemish” (12), “without defect” (36). In the NASB, *tam* (adj.) is most frequently translated as “blameless” (5), “guiltless” (3), “complete” (2).

Despite the varying contexts in which *tummah* and *tom* occur, the core sense remains as "completeness" or "wholeness." Their combined occurrences, however, fall within three distinct domains—though *tummah*'s five occurrences remain confined to just one of the three. Domain, as used here, refers to what the word is applied to—its input or target rather than a meaning of the word itself. When *tummah* or *tom* are attached to a year, the domain is a span of time; when attached to a heart, the domain is a person's inner disposition; when attached to a person's awareness of an act, the domain is their intent. The meaning of the words does not change across these cases—only what is being measured.

Three Domains

The occurrences of *tummah* or *tom* can be divided into the following three domains. Many of these occurrences will be handled individually, but these domains provide a structural roadmap for the exploration of the individual occurrences.

The first domain includes verses that refer to **measurable fullness**. The three occurrences in this domain are Leviticus 25:29 (v. 30 has the adjective), Job 21:23, and Isaiah 47:9. In each case, there is a "complete extent," either in time, degree, or physical condition. Leviticus refers to a "full year," Job refers to "full vigor," and Isaiah refers to a "full measure" of destruction.

The second domain is the most common and refers to verses that involve heart, conduct, a way of life, or a person's inner orientation: 1 Kings 9:4; Job 2:3, 9, 4:6, 27:5, 31:6; Psalms 7:8, 25:21, 26:1, 11, 41:12, 78:72; 101:2; and Proverbs 2:7, 11:3. Most of these occurrences are translated as "integrity."

The third domain is somewhat striking and includes the following: Genesis 20:5 and 6, 2 Samuel 15:11, and 1 Kings 22:34 (same record in 2 Chronicles 18:33). A cursory look at two of these might lead a reader to assume the use of different Hebrew words since the translation in 2 Samuel is typically "innocence" and in 1 Kings "at random." The record in Genesis could fall into the second domain but as will be shown, it more appropriately belongs in this domain.

A frequently associated word is the adjective "*yashar*" which denotes level or straight. In its various forms, it occurs with "*tom*" numerous times: Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Psalms 25:21, 37:37; 1 Kings 9:4; Proverbs 2:7, 21; 11:3, 5; 28:10; 29:10. Every occurrence pairs the two roots as complementary near-synonyms describing the same person or persons—never as contrasted or opposed terms. *Tom* and *yashar* aren't in tension or divided. It is not the case that *tom* is inner and *yashar* outer. Rather, scripture portrays them as two facets of one integrated character (e.g., Proverbs 2:7). The complimentary nature of these two words can be demonstrated by a building which can be plumb but not complete; or complete but not plumb. Ideally, a building is both plumb and complete. Applied to a person's morality, a person can be wholeheartedly dedicated to a cause—like Paul before conversion—but have the wrong objective; or a person can follow the rules—strict adherence like the Pharisees—but not be wholehearted.

Domain 1

This domain refers to measurable fullness. In the following verse the extent is a year.

Leviticus 25:29 and 30

29 "If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he may redeem it within a year of its sale. For a **full** [*tom*] year he shall have the right of redemption. **30** If it is not redeemed within a full [*tamim*] year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee.

In v. 29, the ESV chose to translate the Hebrew word *tom* with the adjective "full." A literal translation would be "the completion of a year."[3] This highlights an important point that will be evidenced throughout this study. The word "full" is a gloss. A **gloss** in the context of this study refers to an English word or phrase chosen to render a term from the source language into a translation. It is more of a *label* than a precise representation of the actual word. The use of a gloss can make the text more readable but it can also suffer from diminishing or hiding the significance of the particular word. In this case any gap between the meaning of *tom* and "full" is relatively minor, but later examples will reveal more dramatic gaps. The core meaning of *tom* is completeness or wholeness or, more generalized, totality. This meaning should be kept in mind throughout the study.

The word "full" in v. 30 is a gloss of the Hebrew adjective *tamim*, which shares the same verb root as *tom*.[4] Perhaps, the translators chose "full" in both places for reading consistency. The choice of "full" here is relatively common among the modern translations.

Here, as well as moving forward, it is important to consider the context in which *tom* occurs. These verses are part of the Mosaic Law, which can be viewed as God's righteousness being codified. In other words, what God considers to be "right" is presented in these laws. The one-year period described in these verses provided an opportunity for the original owner to gather the necessary resources to redeem (buy back) the property. It is assumed in this context that the seller did not want to sell but for whatever reason had to sell. The one-year timeframe provides an opportunity for the seller, or a relative of the seller, to acquire the necessary resources to be able to buy back the property. This timeframe reflects God's concern for justice and mercy, allowing individuals time to recover from financial hardship. It is important to note that the word *tom* does not have its own morality aspect, but the context provides that undercurrent.

This law may sound unusual but the same concept is still in play. One example is when a property owner fails to pay property taxes, the county can sell a tax lien or tax deed at auction. The original owner then has a statutory redemption period (time to buy back)—commonly one to three years, varying by state—to pay off the delinquent taxes, interest, and fees and keep the property. If they don't, the buyer can eventually get clear title. Several states use exactly a one-year window for this—a striking echo of the biblical text.

The next verse we will consider in this domain is in Job.

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[3] Young's Literal Translation: And when a man selleth a dwelling-house in a walled city, then hath his right of redemption been until the completion of a year from its selling; days -- is his right of redemption;

[4] See footnotes 1 and 2 for various translations of the verb and adjective.

Job 21:23

23 One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure.

Berean Literal Bible

This one dies in the bone of his **perfection** [*tom*] all of him at ease and at rest.

The expression "in the bone" is idiomatic in Hebrew and understood as "very."[5] Based on the context, see v. 24 in the NIV—"well nourished in body, bones rich with marrow," translators take *tom* as referring to physical wholeness or general well-being. For v. 23, the NASB has "in his full strength;" and the HCSB has "in excellent health." The variety of glosses here reflects genuine translator disagreement on how best to render the idiom, unlike Leviticus (above) and Isaiah (below) where modern translations converge. This occurrence can be taken literally as "wholeness" physically.

Throughout this chapter, Job is countering his friends' simplistic theology (wicked = punished, righteous = blessed, visibly and predictably). He argues that this doesn't match observable reality. Verse 23 specifically addresses this by pointing to the wicked man who dies at the peak of ease and security—the opposite of the "sudden calamity" his friends insist happens to the wicked, while the righteous may "die in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity."

In this context, *tom* is referring to literal well-being, hence this verse has been placed in Domain 1. There are various glosses noted above for the word and for the entire phrase. As with the Leviticus reference, the morality associated with *tom* is not lexical but comes from the context.

The third verse in this domain is in Isaiah.

Isaiah 47:9

9 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure [*tom*], in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.

This occurrence of *tom* is literal and is referring to Babylon's destruction. It is a qualitative statement concerning the fact that the destruction will be total or whole or complete. The gloss "full measure" is consistent across most modern translations. The only potential issue with this gloss is that readers may take it as describing *how much* destruction occurs, rather than *how complete* it is.

As with the previous two references, the moral aspect associated with *tom* comes from the context, which is obvious in this case because the destruction is due to Babylon's evil ways.

Domain 2

Domain 2 associates the word *tom* with the heart, conduct, or a person's inner orientation. It is most often translated "integrity," though occasionally "blameless" or "upright." Twenty occurrences fall into this domain. These twenty can be divided into three groups: those that

[5] See NET note 60 concerning this expression.

relate to Job, those that relate to David, and those that occur in Proverbs. Through examining these records, we should be able to gain valuable insight into the nature of *tom*.

Throughout this section it will be important to remember the role of glosses, that they don't necessarily communicate the meaning of the word being translated and that *tom* is not inherently a moral term but is colored by the moral contexts in which it occurs.

We will first consider Job.

> **Job 2:3**
> 3 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless [*tam*] and upright [*yashar*] man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his **integrity** [*tummah*], although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." 4 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face."

In v. 3, "integrity" is a gloss for the Hebrew word *tummah*, which is the feminine form of *tom*. The adjective *tam*, here glossed as "blameless," is from the same root family as *tummah* and *tom*, so the two are not merely similar but grammatically the same word in different forms—an adjective and its noun.

Throughout the Book of Job, his friends are endeavoring to convince him that he has some hidden sin and that is why calamity has befallen him. The scene has the feeling of a courtroom where Job is a defendant being accused by various prosecutors. He repeatedly denies any such sin and in that sense he is claiming to be innocent. So, we might be inclined to say that Job was holding fast his "innocence." However, there are other Hebrew words that communicate that aspect of what's going on (e.g., forms of the root *tsadaq*, "to be righteous, justified"). In fact, a primary thread throughout the book is the question of Job's righteousness—a forensic status—which is a distinct thread from the question of his character that "tam," "yashar," and "tummah" describe. There's a potential gap between moral integrity and forensic vindication.

Here, we should just be a bit cautious. When we read that Job "held fast to his integrity," it's easy to hear the word "integrity" in the modern sense—Job didn't lie, didn't cheat, stayed honest. But the word behind "integrity" carries an older and richer idea: wholeness, being undivided, all of one piece. In fact, the English word "integrity" itself comes from the Latin word for "whole" or "untouched"—the same root we still hear in "integer" or "intact." That's closer to what's actually being claimed about Job. The Adversary's challenge back in Chapter 1, vv. 9–11, was essentially that Job's devotion to God might be conditional—that it depended on his prosperity and would crack the moment life fell apart. What God affirms here in v. 3 is that Job's character hasn't split under that pressure. He's the same man, through and through, whether blessed or suffering. So "integrity" is a reasonable choice, but it's worth reading it the old way—not merely "he stayed honest," but "he remained one undivided person, all the way through."

The gloss "blameless" for *tam* (v. 3) presents a related difficulty. This word also occurs in Job 1:1, "that man was blameless [*tam*] and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." This is repeated here in Job 2:3 as confirmation from God concerning Job's character under pressure—he had lost his family. The issue with "blameless" is that it severs the visible

connection to “integrity” established above. “Blameless” has a forensic sense—there’s a verdict of acquittal—not guilty. While this is true concerning Job and flows with the forensic nature of the book as a whole, this choice is not the sense of the Hebrew word which has more to do with Job’s character. There’s no clear choice of a gloss for *tam* in this context, but the words “whole” or “sound” are closer to what the word communicates. Unfortunately, we don’t think of a person being “whole and straight.” We might think of a person being “sound and straight,” the way we’d speak of a sound structure—no cracks, solidly constructed. Perhaps “integrated” might work, but English doesn’t extend “integrated” to people. We don’t generally speak of a person being integrated. However, the underlying idea is the same: Job is a person of sound character. The word *tam* in Job 1:1 and 2:3, as well as *tummah* here in Job 2:3, sits alongside “upright” and “fearing God,” which are ethical and relational descriptors and not forensic statements. So “blameless” isn't wrong, but it’s worth hearing it as “sound”—not merely “not guilty,” but whole all the way through. This is the gap noted above: *tam* and *tummah* describe who Job is, not whether a court would acquit him.

The other word to note is the Hebrew word *yashar*, another character word, which occurs regularly in the context of *tom*. This word literally means straight (as in a straight path), level (as in level ground), or upright (as in standing upright). Beyond the literal sense, this word carries the moral sense of being “right”—not measured by human custom, but oriented toward God, which is exactly what the next phrase spells out—Job fears God and turns away from evil. This phrase helps to color the words *tam* and *yashar*. “Fears God” frames the whole phrase around Job’s God-centered inclination. That God-centered inclination is then evidenced in him turning away from evil.

So, we see that *tummah* in this context is deeper than Job just being honest or trustworthy. By God’s own declaration, Job is the kind of person whose devotion to God doesn’t bend or break under pressure.

The next occurrence of *tummah* is worth taking a look at.

> **Job 2:9**
> 9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your **integrity** [*tummah*]? Curse God and die.”

Here Job’s wife recognizes Job’s *tummah*. This quality isn’t something only God can perceive. God could see Job’s “heart” and declare he is genuinely God-fearing, but his *tummah* was also recognizable by a person close to him.

Traditionally, Job’s wife is viewed as another antagonist along with Job’s friends. However, it’s possible to view her as being compassionate. At this point, Job and his wife have not only lost their children, but Job is now afflicted physically in a horrible way. Seeing her husband suffer like this, she may have thought he would be better off dead. A radical thought—but a thought that some have had when watching a loved one undergo extreme suffering. Consider that at the end of the book, God reproved the friends and had Job pray for them. God did not reprove Job’s wife and she went on to bare multiple children. Whatever her intent, what matters here is that she saw his *tummah*.

In this context, Job's *tummah* is manifested in his unwillingness to turn away from God. "Cursing" God or blaming God when unexplained suffering occurs is not an uncommon reaction. But Job remained whole and undivided in his God-oriented stance.

The following verse reinforces the previous verse.

> **Job 4:6**
> 6 Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the **integrity** [*tom*] of your ways [*derek*] your hope?

In verses 2–5, Eliphaz, the first friend to speak up, recounts that Job has been the one instructing others, strengthening weak hands, upholding those who were stumbling, giving words to feeble knees. It's a real compliment. These descriptions are at least in part what Eliphaz sees as evidence of Job's "integrity."

Here, "integrity" is the gloss for *tom*, the masculine form of *tummah*—there is no significant difference in meaning between the masculine and feminine forms of the word. Like Job's wife, Eliphaz acknowledges Job's "integrity" based on what was observable. Very quickly, however, Eliphaz raises the issue of retributive justice in declaring (v. 7) "Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?" Thus begins the accusation that Job has some hidden sin that is the source for these calamities in his life. In the face of these accusations, Job never says he hasn't sinned. He only holds that he is and will continue to be God-oriented through and through. This is clearly stated in Job 27:5, "…till I die I will not put away my integrity [*tummah*] from me."

This is an important aspect concerning *tom* or *tummah* in contexts such as this. It does not communicate sinlessness. It communicates an unrelenting God orientation on the part of the individual.

What's new here is the word translated "ways" from the Hebrew word *derek*. This noun occurs some 700+ times, so it is among the most common words in the Hebrew scriptures. We will see this word in conjunction with *tom* in various places. One topical lexicon describes the word this way:

> *derek* spans the concrete and the abstract. In its plain sense it denotes a road, highway, track, or journey, but the word quickly widens to express a course of action, a habitual pattern, moral choice, or even the providential direction of God Himself. From Genesis to Malachi, the term carries the reader along literal caravan routes, through moral decision-points, and into prophetic visions of the "way of the LORD."[6]

In this context, "way" is referring to Job's habitual pattern of behavior. Tying it back to "fear of God," it implies that Job's habitual pattern was not arbitrary but aligned with God's way. Deep into the book in Chapter 31, Job presents an argument in the form of a series of "if" statements. He says, "if I have done X (something contrary to God's way), then let me be cursed." Each of these could be framed in a positive statement and would reflect what God considers good. That chapter is a comprehensive statement about what a godly life, a godly "way," or a life of

[6] https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1870.htm.

"integrity," looks like and is worth taking the time to read and consider. This pairing of *tom* and *derek* will recur in significant ways throughout this study.

An overall picture of the book of Job is that Satan and Job's friends either believed that Job's life was just for show or that his pro-God stance was only because life was good. Both were proven wrong in the end because Job never turned on God. He questioned, he demanded, as will be seen in the next reference, but he never turned away or turned on God. Previously, we saw that God acknowledged Job's "integrity," his wife acknowledged it, then Eliphaz acknowledged it, now, in the next verse, Job declares it of himself. The following verse will be the last one considered in this section on Job.

> **Job 31:6**
> 6 (Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my **integrity** [*tummah*]!)

It sounds as if Job thinks God doesn't know his soundness and wholeness, so he is demanding a "fair hearing." As mentioned earlier, this chapter reveals much about Job's way of life and how it demonstrated his God-orientation. His testimony is recognized as an ANE (ancient near east) legal genre where the accused enumerates what he hasn't done and invites judgment if he's lying.[7] Stated in a positive format it reads like the following.

> He has kept his eyes and heart pure, refusing to look lustfully at a woman. He has walked in honesty and transparency, avoiding all forms of deceit and falsehood. He has treated his servants justly and with dignity, recognizing their common humanity before God. He has been generous to the poor, the widow, and the orphan—opening his hand to those in need rather than hoarding his resources. He has not put his trust in wealth or made gold his security. He has not secretly worshiped the sun or moon, keeping himself free from idolatry in any form. He has not rejoiced at his enemy's misfortune or wished harm on those who opposed him. He has opened his home to strangers and travelers, practicing hospitality freely. He has not concealed his sin out of fear of public opinion but has been willing to be accountable. He has treated the land with care and has not exploited it unjustly.

Taken together, Job's life as described here is not merely a list of avoided sins—it is a portrait of someone whose "way," his habitual way of living, was consistently oriented toward God and toward the dignity of others. This is what *tom*/*tummah* looks like in practice, but it comes from a serious inward orientation of fear/respect of God. Job's life could be viewed as an example of someone who fulfilled the first, great commandment: "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength" [Deuteronomy 6:5], as well as, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [Leviticus 19:18]. Since Job did not have the Mosaic Law as a "roadmap," this indicates that *tom*/*tummah* represents something deeper than law-keeping—it is a wholehearted orientation toward God that naturally expresses itself in righteous treatment of others. This testifies to the possibility of being godly apart from any written law, that is, being observant of and obedient to "natural law."[8]

In this next section, we will focus on David, and we start with the following.

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[7] Michael Brennan Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 41 (1979): 42, 47.

[8] See Romans 1:19 and 20

1 Kings 9:4

4 And as for you [Solomon], if you will walk [*halak*] before me, as **David** your father walked [*halak*], with **integrity** [*tom*] of **heart** [*levav*] and uprightness [*yosher*], doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, **5** then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father…

Job and David are two individuals whose integrity God himself affirms in direct speech (Job 1:8; 2:3; 1 Kings 9:4). At this point, David has died, and God now holds him up to Solomon as the model of "integrity."

There are several words to consider here: "walk" [*halak*], "heart" [*levav*],[9] and *yosher* (the noun form of *yashar* noted previously). "Walk" occurs frequently in the Hebrew scriptures. It can refer to the simple act of walking but can extend to a person's life direction. So, David is being held up as an example of someone whose life direction is worth imitating—he walked before God—an expression worth taking a moment to consider.

"Heart" occurs regularly along with "integrity," and is also worth considering. In modern English, "heart" tends towards emotions/feelings. In Hebrew thought it's the whole inner person; a person's center of thought, will, memory, emotion, and moral loyalty (closer to "mind" or the "whole inner self" in current English). The "heart" is where thinking, deciding, remembering, and valuing all happen together. In negative contexts, a heart can be opposed to God or it can be "divided" (Hosea 10:2 [*chalaq*]; Psalm 12:2; 1 Kings 18:21 (same concept, expressed as limping between two opinions rather than heart-language); James 1:8 and 4:8 [*dipsuchos*]; Matthew 6:24. These are different idioms, but all describe the opposite of a heart of integrity, which is wholeness—the kind of heart David demonstrated. "Heart" is not a moral word by itself. It takes on moral quality based on its context. When it takes on a positive moral quality, like in this section from 1 Kings, the implication is that the heart is informed by and directed towards God and godly things and is not based on the individual's personal feelings or emotions.

David walked before God meaning he habitually lived with a conscious awareness of God's presence and under his authority. "With integrity of heart and uprightness" implies that his walk was not mere obedience or a show of obedience; it was wholehearted and straight before and with God.

This next section of scripture reveals much about David's "integrity" and warrants a close look.

Psalm 26:1 and 11

1 Vindicate [*shaphat*] me, O LORD, for I have walked in my **integrity** [*tom*], and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. **2** Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart [*levav*] and my mind [*kilyah*]. **3** For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. **4** I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. **5** I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. **6** I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, **7** proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds. **8** O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. **9** Do not

[9] This may appear as *lebab*—an older or more conservative transliteration convention that renders "v" as "b."

sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, **10** in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. **11** But as for me, I shall walk in my **integrity** [*tom*]; redeem me, and be gracious to me. **12** My foot stands on level ground [*mishor*]; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

It is uncertain whether this psalm reflects the following law, though its references point to it as a possible example. There is nothing in the psalm itself that indicates a particular situation David was addressing.

1 Kings 8:31 and 32

31 "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, **32** then hear in heaven and act and judge [*tsadaq*] your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

In v. 32, *tsadaq* ("judge") means specifically "to declare innocent," a narrow, courtroom-style verdict. David doesn't use that word in Psalm 26:1. Instead, he asks God to "vindicate" [*shaphat*] him. *Shaphat* can also be translated as "judge," but it's a broader term for taking up a case and acting on it. The difference matters: David isn't only asking to be pronounced innocent. He's asking God to take up his whole situation and set it right. David doesn't stop at a verdict. He goes on to ask for deliverance from the fate of the wicked (v. 9) and for redemption and grace (v. 11). His request is bigger than acquittal; it's for God to act as his judge in the fullest sense, ruling in his favor and following through on it.

David asking God to vindicate him says much about his heart that perhaps isn't immediately obvious with a cursory reading. He had the confidence first to go to God, and second to say to God, "judge me." This reflects a very personal relationship between David and God. Not only does David say, "vindicate me," he invites God to examine him thoroughly. Three verbs stack up in v. 2: "prove" (*bachan*, to examine or assay[10]), "try" (*nasah*, to put to the test[11]), and "test" (*tsaraph*, to refine or assay as in a furnace[12]). Their meanings overlap, and together they express a request for the most searching scrutiny, aimed at his "heart and mind." David is confident that such an examination will confirm his "integrity."

The following statement might be questioned: "I have trusted in the LORD without wavering." Bathsheba and Uriah might come to mind. The Hebrew verb *maad* ("waver") is used elsewhere for a foot slipping or stumbling. The claim is best read as steadfastness of allegiance, not sinlessness. The denial isn't a statement of never missing the mark but a statement about never defecting—David hasn't slipped over to the side of the wicked, joined the hypocrites' table, or abandoned worship. So, the expression should prompt a question not about whether David sinned, but about whose side David is on. Consider Psalm 51:4, "…against you, you only have I sinned." "Integrity of heart," a phrase from 1 Kings 9:4 covered previously, isn't sinless perfection, it's a provable direction towards and with God.

[10] See Psalm 17:3; Jeremiah 12:3; and Psalm 139:23.

[11] See Gen. 22:1 and Exod. 16:4.

[12] See Psalm. 66:10; Zechariah 13:9; Jeremiah 9:7; and Psalm 17:3.

Note the three occurrences of “walk”: v. 1, “I have walked,” v. 3, “I walk,” and v. 11, “I shall walk.” These three describe a life-pattern: what he has done, what he does, and what he resolves to do. There is also a contrast in vv. 5 and 12. David hates “the assembly (singular) of evildoers,” but in “the great assembly” (the text reads, “assemblies” or “congregations” (plural)), he will bless the LORD. He rejects one company and embraces the other, an important mark of a heart of integrity.[13] Finally, “level ground” (*mishor*, v. 12) shares a root with *yosher* (“uprightness”) in 1 Kings 9:4, so the psalm ends with David standing on the very ground that the “integrity and uprightness” pair describes.

This psalm shows what a heart of integrity looks like: wholehearted trust, a life lived before God's love and faithfulness, separation from the wicked, love for worship, and, in the end, dependence on God's redeeming grace.

The next occurrence of “tom” is similar. The context provides a more detailed picture of something David was faced with.

> **Psalm 41:12**
> But you have upheld [*tamak*] me because of my **integrity** [*tom*], and set me [*natsab*] in your presence forever.

“Heart” does not occur in this verse but it is implied. This is the second to last verse in the psalm so it’s helpful to consider what’s gone before. Following is a summary.

vv. 1–3—A General Principle—David opens with a general statement that isn’t about him personally—not yet. “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him.” He’s describing a type of person and what God does for that type of person. Notably, v.3 already mentions a sickbed—sustaining and restoring the person who lies ill—before David has even introduced his own situation. He’s setting up a principle first so he can appeal to it later as the basis for his own request.

“Considering the poor” is the specific act of faithfulness named here. Job 31 offers a useful parallel—Job’s extended personal defense covers virtually the same ground: care for servants, the poor, widows, strangers. Even without a written covenant, these obligations were apparently known and practiced. In Psalm 41, “considering the poor” isn’t an abstract virtue—it’s the kind of concrete, visible act of faithfulness that can actually be pointed to.

v. 4—David Makes it Personal—When David shifts to “As for me...have mercy...I have sinned...heal my soul,” he’s stepping into the category he just described. He’s essentially saying: that person just described who considers the poor—that’s me, and I’m bringing my situation to you on that basis.

He’s not claiming to be sinless. He admits sin and asks for mercy. But he is claiming a basic, sincere faithfulness to God—not perfection, just genuine commitment—and that’s what he’s resting his case on. The two things sit side by side without contradiction: “I have been faithful in this way” and “I have also sinned and need your mercy” can both be true at the same time.

[13] Compare Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 101:4–7.

Was David literally sick? Probably not—there's no other place in Scripture that records David being ill. It's more likely he was in a state of deep despair, not unlike Job who reached the point of wanting to die, or Jesus who said, "My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38). The sickbed language in v.3 doesn't require an actual illness—it describes the felt experience of someone whose world has collapsed, which is something the body registers just as much as a disease would.

vv. 5–9—The People Around Him—These verses fill in the picture of what David was dealing with. The people around him were behaving about as badly as people can:

- v. 5: Openly wishing he would die and be forgotten
- v. 6: Visiting him and acting concerned, while privately storing up things to say against him later
- v. 7–8: Whispering together, imagining the worst for him, and pronouncing what amounts to a curse over him
- v. 9: His closest friend—someone he trusted, someone who shared his table—turning on him

On v.8—most translations reach for the word "disease" or "deadly thing," but the Hebrew doesn't actually say that. The phrase *dabar beliyaal* means literally "a word/matter of worthlessness or destruction." There's no Hebrew word for sickness in it. The Berean Literal Bible reads it as a curse being spoken over David: "Let a thing of destruction be poured into him, and he who lies down shall not rise up again." The Douay-Rheims reads it as a false verdict: "They determined against me an unjust word." Both of these are truer to what's actually happening in context—the people around David aren't diagnosing his health, they're speaking destruction over him and declaring he won't recover. That's a very different thing. And it's that false declaration that the end of the psalm will answer.

v. 10—David Turns to God—"As for you, O Lord, have mercy on me and raise me up, that I may set the matter right with them."

Most translations have something like "pay them back," which sounds like revenge. But the Hebrew verb *shalam* is actually a word about wholeness and restoration—making something complete or even, not striking back at someone. Given what we've seen about David's situation—false accusations, a verdict of ruin spoken over him—what he's really asking is to be restored to the position where that false verdict can be answered. His recovery itself, whatever form that might take, will be the answer. He's not asking for a chance to harm these people; he's asking to be raised up so his restoration proves them wrong.

v. 11—He Sees it Happening—The sign of God's favor isn't some dramatic event—it's simply that the enemies' declaration won't come true—"the enemy will not shout in triumph." They said he wouldn't rise. He's rising. That's the whole point. In the Old Testament, this is what vindication looks like—not an argument won, but an outcome that speaks for itself, visibly, in front of everyone who was watching.

v. 12—The Verdict—"you have upheld me because of my integrity." It's reasonable to argue that "upheld" (perfect tense) functions as a prophetic perfect—not a report of what God has already

done, but the psalmist speaking with such assurance about God's future action, i.e., vindication. On that reading, "you will have upheld me... and will have set me" (or simply "you will uphold me") fits the flow from v. 11 better than the past tense does.

So, in this verse we see David claiming "integrity" and believing that God, knowing his heart, will vindicate him. Neither his circumstances nor his enemies will prevail against him. Of course, a person's *claim* to integrity is no guarantee of it—but that's precisely why David isn't asking to be taken at his word. He's standing before God and expecting God himself to provide the vindication.[14]

The last two references to David's "integrity" are found in Psalm 78:72 and Psalm 101:2. These two will be addressed together as they complement each other.

> **Psalm 78:72 (Berean Literal Bible)**
> **72** And he tended them with the **integrity** [*tom*] of his heart [*levav*], and by the skillfulness of his hands he guided them.

> **Psalm 101:2**
> I will ponder the way that is blameless [*tamim*]. Oh when will you come to me?
> I will walk with **integrity** [*tom*] of heart [*levav*] within my house;

Psalm 78 paints "integrity" by negative image. Israel is described almost entirely by what it did not have or do: a heart not steadfast [*kun*], a spirit not faithful [*aman*], a people who did not keep God's covenant, did not believe, did not remember. The result was a pattern of testing, rebellion, and treachery. Yet God stayed faithful, showing mercy and justice. Against this backdrop, verse 72 introduces David, who shepherded Israel "with the integrity of his heart" [*tom levav*]. The psalm's principle is simple: a heart that is not whole produces actions that are not reliable. A divided heart yields a divided life.

Psalm 101 supplies the detail Psalm 78 only hints at. David begins not with self-improvement but with worship, and "integrity" flows from devotion to God rather than from willpower. He then commits to private maintenance "within my house" (v. 2) where no one is watching: guarding his eyes, his affections, his heart, and what he allows himself to become familiar with (vv. 3 and 4). That private discipline then becomes public practice, shaping whom he keeps close, whom he excludes, and what he tolerates in his sphere of influence (vv. 5–8). While David was a king with specific authority and responsibilities, this easily scales down because every person has a "house" (v. 2b) and a "circle" (v. 6), even if it's a family and a handful of friendships rather than a court. Public integrity is never manufactured at the moment of decision; it is the overflow of what has already been settled in private.

Two words sharpen the picture. *Tom*—complete or whole—is negated by division: "a heart and a heart" (Psalm 12:2) or a heart "not wholly true" to the Lord (1 Kings 11:4). *Yashar*—upright or straight—is negated by crookedness (*iqqesh*), a bending away from God's standard. Together *tom* and *yashar* describe a person who is undivided inside and aligned outside. Note however,

[14] We are focused in this study on the Hebrew word tom. The concepts of wholeness or completeness do have a part in the NT in light of becoming Christ-like, but the concept of vindication takes on a very different scope, primarily eschatological.

that *tom* is not strictly "inward" and *yashar* strictly "outward." Both are used independently at times to include both inward orientation and outward demonstration.

"Integrity of heart" is never merely an internal state. Every biblical use of *tom levav* is tied to action, whether a single deed (Genesis 20:5–6) or a whole way of life (Psalm 101:2; 1 Kings 9:4). The "blameless way" (*derek tamim*) is the outward counterpart of the "integrity of heart," two sides of one undivided character. It is even the phrase David uses of God's own way (Psalm 18:30), making God's conduct the standard for blamelessness.

Integrity is intentional. David did what Israel failed to do: he remembered, meditated on, and pondered God's works and word (Psalms 63:6; 143:5; 1:2). The heart is shaped by what the mind feeds on. Loving God from a whole heart means conducting life by His standards, learned chiefly from His word, and deliberately excluding evil. That love, worked out in conduct, produces and sustains *tom*: moral wholeness, an undivided consistency between what is professed and what is lived.

This second domain closes out with eight verses from Proverbs that speak to integrity.

Proverbs 2:7
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright [*yashar*]; he is a shield to those who walk [*halak*] in **integrity** [*tom*],

Proverbs 10:9
9 Whoever walks [*halak*] in **integrity** [*tom*] walks [*halak*] securely,
but he who makes his ways [*derek*] crooked will be found out.

Proverbs 10:29
29 The way [*derek*] of the Lord is a stronghold to the **blameless** [*tom*], but destruction to evildoers.

Proverbs 11:3
3 The **integrity** [*tummah*] of the upright [*yashar*] guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.

Proverbs 13:6
6 Righteousness guards him whose way [*derek*] is **blameless** [*tom*], but sin overthrows the wicked.

Proverbs 19:1
1 Better is a poor person who walks [*halak*] in his **integrity** [*tom*] than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.

Proverbs 20:7
7 The righteous who walks [*halak*] in his **integrity** [*tom*]—blessed are his children after him!

Proverbs 28:6
6 Better is a poor man who walks [*halak*] in his **integrity** [*tom*] than a rich man who is crooked in his ways [*derek*].

Following is a summary of these occurrences.

Integrity is a way of life. Proverbs never treats *tom* as a private feeling. Again and again the writer speaks of those who "walk in integrity" (2:7; 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6), where "walk" stands for the whole direction of a life. The blameless "way" (13:6; 10:29) is the visible counterpart of a whole heart.

Whole and straight, and why both matter. Two words work together. *Tom* means complete, the opposite of divided. *Yashar* means straight, the opposite of crooked (*iqqesh*). God's way is both, because God is both. A building offers a physical picture of the concept. To be wholly acceptable, a building must be both plumb (straight) and complete (having all its parts). If either is lacking, it cannot be relied on. A plumb building with missing parts is not fully functional, and a complete building that leans will not stand. The same holds for a person. Amaziah did what was right "yet not with a whole heart" (2 Chronicles 25:2): straight but not whole. Paul, before Damascus, was sincere and undivided in zeal but aimed at the wrong standard (Philippians 3:6 and regarding Israel in his day Romans 10:2): whole but not straight. Integrity as Proverbs presents it needs both wholeness of heart and alignment with God's standard.

How it is built. Proverbs 2 locates the source in receiving and treasuring God's words (vv. 1–5). Wisdom then enters the heart and knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul (v. 10). This is the house built on the rock: the upright person builds soundness (*tummah*) by internalizing truth, and that soundness then guides them (11:3). The opposite path is chosen too. People who suppress what God has revealed end up twisted (Romans 1:21 and 22). Righteousness and God's "way" are learned, and the learning is deliberate.

How it is maintained. Integrity is kept by staying under God's word and under correction. Proverbs offers no clean internal test, because it distrusts self-assessment. The fool is not unintelligent; he is closed to correction, sure that his own way is right (12:15). The person of integrity welcomes counsel and examination and has nothing to hide. That is why the one who walks in *tom* "walks securely," while the one who perverts his ways "will be found out" (10:9).

Why it matters. The proverbs promise real protection and real consequences.

- God is "a shield" to those who walk in integrity (2:7), and His way is a stronghold to the blameless but ruin to evildoers (10:29). This is both a moral order God built with consequences in it and a God who actively sustains it.
- Righteousness guards the blameless, while wickedness overthrows the sinner (13:6).
- Integrity guides the upright; crookedness destroys the treacherous (11:3).
- Integrity is worth more than wealth or status: better a poor man who walks in it than a rich man who is crooked (19:1; 28:6).
- It outlasts the person: "blessed are his children after him" (20:7).

The point. Taken together, these verses show that *tom* is received, practiced, and protected. It begins with taking God's word into the heart, shows itself in a straight and undivided walk, is kept by humility toward correction, and yields security, guidance, and a legacy. It is the opposite of the fractured, crooked life that Psalm 78 described in Israel.

Domain 3

There are three records that fall into this domain. Each of these is somewhat unique with respect to *tom*. The first record is in Genesis.

Genesis 20:5 and 6

[1] From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. [2] And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. [3] But God came to **Abimelech** in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." [4] Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent [*tsaddiq*] people? [5] Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the **integrity** [*tom*] of my **heart** [*levav*] and the innocence [*niqqayon*] of my hands I have done this." [6] Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the **integrity** [*tom*] of your **heart** [*levav*], and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

This record provides valuable insight into the concept of integrity. When Abraham entered the territory of Gerar, he was concerned that these people were ungodly and would kill him in order to take his wife, Sarah (v. 11). Abraham decided to tell these people that Sarah was his sister and Sarah consented to that plan (v. 13). Based on the idea that Sarah was Abraham's sister, Abimelech took Sarah into his household. God then came to Abimelech in a dream and pronounced that he was a dead man.

After being confronted by God, Abimelech uses three words: v. 4 "innocent" [*tsaddiq*]; v. 5 "integrity" [*tom*]; and v. 5 "innocence" [*niqqayon*]. He stacks three overlapping claims, but God's reply picks up only "integrity of heart" and confirms it. Concerning both [*tom*] and the expression "integrity of heart," these are the first two occurrences of both in the Hebrew canon and worth a closer look.

What is different about this record, and why it's in Domain 3 rather than Domain 2, is that it centers on a specific act, whereas, in the case of Job and David, integrity was more about a way of life. The fact that this record centers on a single act is revealing with respect to our overall understanding of the concept of integrity. The record raises a question the others didn't: what happens when integrity is tested by a single, isolated act rather than displayed over a lifetime?

"Integrity" in this record still means wholeness or completeness, but it's not in respect of a life lived but in respect of a single act. The difference is in the content of what a person is undivided about. The word still takes on a moral quality because of the context but it's not always, as in this case, a statement about a person's life with respect to God and godly matters. Abimelech was clear that if he had known Sarah was Abraham's wife, he would not have taken her. So, on that point of adultery, he was undivided and God recognized that in his heart. This is the interpretive key the record establishes: integrity of heart is bounded by knowledge. A person cannot be undivided about a wrong they don't know they're committing.

We note that Abimelech's integrity did not exempt his household from danger. Even as God credited him with an undivided heart, God had already closed the wombs of Abimelech's household, wife and slave women alike because of Sarah (vv. 17–18). The closed wombs meant no children could be conceived in the household. In this respect, death, albeit slow, was already at work. If there are no children, eventually there will be no heir, and Abimelech's line would be as good as dead.

This is worth pausing on: integrity of heart explains why Abimelech wasn't guilty of adultery, but it didn't exclude consequences. Those are different questions, and the record keeps them separate. Guilt is settled by what a person knows; danger and consequence are not. Abimelech's undivided heart secured his innocence before God, but it didn't undo what had already been set in motion. Sarah still had to be returned, and Abraham still had to intercede.

We also note that Abimelech, along with Abraham and Job, lived well before the Mosaic Law. Nevertheless, there were standards of behavior apparently understood apart from written law and Abimelech was held accountable before God.

The next record to be considered is in 2 Samuel.

> **2 Samuel 15:11**
> **10** But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" **11** With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their **innocence** [*tom*] and **knew nothing**. **12** And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

This occurrence of *tom*, here glossed as "innocence," is similar to the one just covered in that it entails a single episode rather than a lifetime. It's different from all the other occurrences we've covered in that it involves a group of people rather than an individual. It also differs in a more basic way: this is *tom* alone, not tom *levav*—"heart" drops out entirely. Some background context will be helpful here.

Amnon was David's first son. Absalom was David's third son. They were half-brothers. Tamar was Absalom's sister. Amnon raped her, and Absalom hated Amnon because of this. David, the king, knew about the rape but did nothing. Absalom was displeased with David's inaction, but it is not recorded that he said anything to his father. After two years of apparently harboring his hate for Amnon, Absalom murdered him and fled to Geshur.

After three years, Joab, David's military leader, knowing that David still loved Absalom, contrived a plan to get David to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem. David consented to his return but refused to see him for another two years.

Once back in Jerusalem, Absalom sought to usurp David's throne by gaining popularity among the people. During this time, he was plotting a military overthrow of David. Part of his plot was to be declared king at Hebron, where David had previously been declared king. He told David he wanted to fulfill a vow to God by going to Hebron to worship, and he invited two hundred men to go with him. We presume these were men of standing in the community whose presence

would lend legitimacy to Absalom's subsequent claim to kingship. These men, however, were unaware of Absalom's subterfuge. This is made clear by the statement that they "knew nothing" of the plot (v. 11).

In this context, "innocence" is a reasonable gloss, since the men had no knowledge of Absalom's plan. *Tom* here communicates "wholeness or completeness" in the sense that the men had **no intention** to be involved in treachery. A complete **absence** of evil intent is what *tom* is describing here.

Two things distinguish this record from Genesis 20. First, there is no forensic tone here. Genesis 20 unfolds as an evaluative exchange: Abimelech makes a claim of integrity of heart, and God, as the offended and authoritative party, confirms it. Here, *tom* is simply the narrator's own aside to the reader. No one makes a claim, and no one renders a verdict. It is descriptive not something adjudicated.

Second, and consistent with what Genesis 20 already established, this record confirms the same principle even more plainly: integrity of heart is bounded by knowledge. The narrator states it almost as a definition, "they went in their *tom* and **knew nothing**," collapsing the two ideas into a single clause. Their *tom* consists entirely in what they did not know.

What Genesis 20 does not answer for us here is what became of that innocence. Abimelech's "integrity of heart" was met with active protection: God kept him from sinning further and shielded him from immediate consequence. In this record, these two hundred men received no such statement. They are not mentioned again in the narrative once the conspiracy unfolds and Absalom's revolt eventually collapses (2 Sam 18). That silence may mean their innocence spared them from the reckoning that follows, or, as minor characters, they were dropped once they had served their purpose in the account. The text raises the issue of their ignorance but does not tell us what became of it, which is itself part of what makes this occurrence an outlier: *tom* without a forensic setting, and *tom* without a stated outcome.

It is also worth noting how their ignorance came about. Absalom was, by the narrator's own account, strikingly good-looking (2 Samuel 14:25) and had spent time deliberately cultivating public trust, intercepting people at the city gate with sympathetic promises until, as the text puts it, he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Samuel 15:2–6). The two hundred men's *tom* was not simply a gap in their information; it was the product of someone working to produce exactly that gap. Innocence, in this case, was manufactured by another party's design, which makes the absence of any stated consequence for them feel less like an oversight and more like the narrative arguably placing the moral weight where it belongs, on Absalom, not on the men he deceived.

Finally, that *tom* is applied here to a group is unique. Elsewhere in Scripture, the opposite of *tom* is regularly attributed to a group, as in Psalm 78, where the children of Israel are described in various forms of dividedness and unfaithfulness. Even there, the description concerns a people's way of life, not, as here, a single occasion.

The final occurrence to be addressed in this domain is in 1 Kings.

1 Kings 22:34

34 But a certain man drew his bow at **random** [*tom*] and struck the king of Israel [Ahab] between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." **35** And the battle continued that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, until at evening he died.

This record is repeated in **2 Chronicles 18:33**.

This occurrence of *tom* is perhaps the most challenging to grasp since "random" bears no apparent association with "integrity," "innocence," or "blamelessness," let alone wholeness or completeness.

What ties this occurrence to the record in 2 Samuel is that *tom* is defined by **absence** rather than by **presence**—an absence of evil intent in the 200 men, an absence of any specific intent at all in the archer. But the two absences are not quite the same. The 200 men who followed Absalom had a genuine intent: to accompany him, to worship at Hebron. What they lacked was a single piece of knowledge that, had they possessed it, would have redirected that intent entirely. Their *tom* describes innocence relative to something they didn't know. The archer's case is different. He isn't lacking knowledge that would have changed his aim, he has no aim to begin with. He draws his bow "at random," not at a person he mistakenly believed to be someone other than Ahab, but at no one in particular. This is not ignorance redirected; it's the complete absence of direction. In that respect, this occurrence pushes *tom* past the boundary of its moral sense altogether and back toward its bare root meaning: wholeness or completeness, here expressed as a shot that is entirely itself, undirected, without a target, rather than aimed and mistaken.

That shift matters for how we read the archer. He isn't best described as "innocent," which implies a moral status relative to a known wrong avoided. He is simply undirected. There was no target he might have spared had he known better, because there was no target at all. This is the occurrence throughout this study where *tom* carries the least moral freight and the most literal one, completeness as randomness, wholeness as a lack of particularity.

There's no statement in the text that God directed the shot itself. But the outcome sits inside a chain the text has already made unmistakable: Elijah pronounced Ahab's end in 1 Kings 21:19, Micaiah renewed the warning in 22:17 and 28, and Ahab went into battle in disguise, apparently trying to slip past his own prophesied fate (1 Kings 22:30; 2 Chronicles 18:29). What actually kills him is the one act in the entire episode with no human intent behind it at all, an arrow shot at no target, landing in the one gap in his armor. The most undirected act in the story turns out to be the most exact. Whatever role divine providence played in guiding the arrow is a fair question to leave open, but the narrative structure itself makes the irony hard to miss: Genesis 20 shows God halting an act that was fully intended before it could become sin; this record shows God's word fulfilled through an act that carried no intention whatsoever.

Conclusion

This study set out to let *tummah* and *tom* disclose their own meaning rather than importing a modern definition of "integrity" and searching for confirmation. What emerged instead was a single, stable core sense—completeness, wholeness, undividedness—stretched across three very different domains, with the differences lying not in the word but in what the word was attached to.

Domain 1 showed the word in its most literal register: a full year, a body at full vigor, a complete measure of judgment. Nothing moral inheres in *tom* itself here—Leviticus 25, Job 21, and Isaiah 47 all borrow whatever moral weight they carry from context, not from the word. That observation turned out to matter for everything that followed, because it meant the "integrity" of Domain 2 was never a different word taking on a different sense—it was the same totality, now applied to a heart instead of a year.

Domain 2 filled out that idea across two full lives. Job's *tummah* was not sinlessness but a devotion that refused to crack under the worst pressure—the same man before God whether blessed or stripped bare. David's *tom* of heart was likewise not moral perfection (Psalm 41 and Psalm 51 rule that out explicitly) but an unbroken loyalty—never slipping over to the side of the wicked, never abandoning worship, even while genuinely guilty of specific sin and openly saying so. Proverbs then generalized both examples into a pattern available to anyone: integrity as something received (by internalizing God's word), practiced (as a way, a walk, not a feeling), and protected (by welcoming correction rather than avoiding it). Throughout Domain 2, *tom* kept pairing with *yashar*—whole paired with straight—and the study's recurring image, a building that must be both plumb and complete to stand, turned out to be the clearest single picture of what these two roots do together that neither does alone. Amaziah was straight without being whole; Paul before Damascus was whole without being straight. Scripture's "integrity" asks for both.

Domain 3 pressed the word to its limits and, in doing so, sharpened the whole picture rather than blurring it. Abimelech's *tom* and the two hundred men's *tom* both showed that this wholeness can attach to a single act rather than a lifetime, and both established the same boundary: integrity of heart is bounded by knowledge. A person cannot be undivided about a wrong they do not know they are committing. That principle explains why Abimelech's integrity secured his innocence but not his household's safety, and why the two hundred men's *tom* is described but never adjudicated or resolved—innocence manufactured by someone else's deception still leaves the moral weight where it belongs, on the deceiver. And the archer at Ramoth-gilead pushed *tom* past the moral sense altogether, back to bare completeness—a shot that is entirely itself, undirected, without a target—which is precisely why it lands with such force in a narrative built on prophecy and evasion. The most intention-less act in the account turns out to be the most exact.

Taken as a whole, then, *tummah* and *tom* never described a person's flawlessness, and they never described mere honesty in the narrow modern sense of "not lying." What they consistently described—whether applied to a year, a body, a heart, a single decision, or a single unaimed shot—was the absence of division: a thing, or a person, that is entirely what it is, all

the way through, rather than split between competing claims. Applied to a heart, that wholeness needs a right object to be worth anything—which is exactly the role *yashar* plays throughout—and it needs to be renewed deliberately, through what a person feeds their heart on, rather than assumed as a fixed possession. Job held fast to it; David asked God to examine it; Proverbs commended it as something built. In every domain, the word points to the same thing scripture keeps returning to as the deeper issue beneath conduct: not whether a person has kept every rule, but whether they are, in the most literal sense, one thing rather than two.

A Glance Toward the New Testament

This study has stayed inside the Hebrew text by design. But the concept it traces—wholeness, undividedness, a heart that is one thing rather than two—doesn't stop at Malachi. It surfaces again in different words: the "single eye" that fills the whole body with light against a heart trying to serve two masters (Matthew 6:22–24); the *dipsuchos*, the "two-souled" man of James, unstable in all his ways because he is not one thing (James 1:8; 4:8); the *haplotés* Paul appeals to as the ground of his own confidence before the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:12), a "single-foldedness" that reads like a Greek cousin of David's plea in Psalm 26; and *teleios* itself, ordinarily flattened into "perfect," but rooted in the same idea of a thing brought to its intended completeness that stands behind *tamam*.

None of these Greek words simply inherits *tom* the way a translation inherits a source term—that would be too easy, and this study has spent its length warning against exactly that kind of shortcut. But the pattern is there to be tested: a concept that begins as a single, unglamorous Hebrew root applied to a year, a body, a heart, and a single act, and ends up sounding remarkably like the New Testament's own diagnostic for the human condition—not "are you good enough," but "are you divided."

That is a study for another time. This one simply wanted to leave the door open to it.