1997

The Laying on of Hands on Joshua: an Exegetical Study of Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9

Keith Edward Mattingly

Andrews University

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ON JOSHUA: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF NUMBERS 27:12-23 AND DEUTERONOMY 34:9

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Keith Edward Kriehoff Mattingly

December 1997
THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ON JOSHUA: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF NUMBERS 27:12-23 AND DEUTERONOMY 34:9

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

by

Keith Edward Krieghoff Mattingly

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ABSTRACT

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ON JOSHUA: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF NUMBERS 27:12-23 AND DEUTERONOMY 34:9

by

Keith Edward Kriehoff Mattingly

Adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan
Title: THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ON JOSHUA: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF NUMBERS 27:12-23 AND DEUTERONOMY 34:9

Name of researcher: Keith Edward Krieghoff Mattingly

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan, Ph.D.

Date completed: November 1997

This study investigates the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the laying on of hands (נָשָׁמָה) in the installation of Joshua to the position of Israel’s leader as presented in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9.

The Introduction reviews the purpose, delimitations, and methodology of the dissertation and also provides a review of the different and sometimes conflicting opinions regarding the significance of Joshua’s installation and of the significance of his receiving the laying on of hands.

Chapter 1 offers a study of the ancient Near Eastern cognates and related terms of נָשָׁמָה and נָחַל in a representative sample of literature from the ancient Near Eastern world. This study indicates that hand symbolism in the ancient Near Eastern world was
very rich and had broad application but that laying on of hands in leadership-transfer scenarios outside the Bible appears to be limited to one incident in Egypt.

Chapter 2 offers a study of הַנְפִּיָּה, לָבָא, and לֶבֶן הַנְפִּיָּה in the Old Testament. The Old Testament world shared in the rich hand symbolism of the world around it, but adds unique understanding to the phenomenon of laying on of hands in transfers of leadership.

The main focus of chapters 1 and 2 limits the study of hand symbolism to the perception, projection, and change of status. Hand symbolism plays a significant role in each of these three areas in both the ancient Near Eastern and biblical worlds. This role enhances an interpretation of the usage of Moses’ hand in Joshua’s installation to leadership.

Chapter 3 provides an exegetical study first of Num 27:12-23 and second of Deut 34:9. Each text is analyzed in the following order: first, it is studied in its relationship to the book in which it is found; second, its structure is analyzed; third, its uniqueness is studied; fourth, analysis is given to its elements which accompany the laying on of hands. The chapter then draws conclusions that apply to the laying on of hands in both texts. Areas of uniqueness, disagreement, and agreement between the two passages are reviewed. The chapter finally draws conclusions from the exegetical study with respect to the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of Moses laying hands on Joshua.

Finally, a summary and conclusions bring together the major findings of this research. This dissertation concludes that Joshua’s reception of the laying on of hands played a critical, necessary, and significant role in his ordination to the office of
Israel's leader. The evidence indicates that יֵצֶר הָנָּבֵאע is central to the essence and purpose of ritual investiture as described in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. This essence and purpose permeate the procedural details, the symbolic meaning, and the tangible results of יִתְנַהַנֶּפ. While the other elements of the installation ritual are important, the laying on of hands is indeed the strong identifying mark that binds them all.
Proverbs 18:22

He who finds a wife finds something good and receives favor from YHWH.
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHW</td>
<td>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJSL</td>
<td>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJT</td>
<td>The American Journal of Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANET</td>
<td>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>The Broadman Bible Commentary</td>
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<td>BC</td>
<td>The Broadman Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCOT</td>
<td>Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSC</td>
<td>Bible Student's Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BST</td>
<td>The Bible Speaks Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BStyC</td>
<td>Bible Study Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW</td>
<td>Bibeltheologisches Wörterbuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BO</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Orientalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBSC</td>
<td>The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>The Communicator's Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTM</td>
<td><em>Concordia Theological Monthly</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td><em>A Dictionary of the Bible</em></td>
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<td>DSB</td>
<td>Daily Study Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBC</td>
<td>Expositor's Bible Commentary</td>
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<td><em>Expository Times</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HAR</td>
<td><em>Hebrew Annual Review</em></td>
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<td>HAT</td>
<td>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td><em>The Interpreter's Bible</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>IDB</td>
<td><em>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</em></td>
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<td>IJT</td>
<td><em>Indian Journal of Theology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ISBE</td>
<td><em>The International Standard Bible Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Ancient Oriental Society</em></td>
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<td>JB</td>
<td>Jerusalem Bible</td>
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<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
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<td><em>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</em></td>
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<td>JEA</td>
<td><em>The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JQR</td>
<td><em>The Jewish Quarterly Review</em></td>
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JRAS  The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTS  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements
JTS  The Journal of Theological Studies
KJV  King James Bible
LBC  Laymen's Bible Commentary
LGB  The Literary Guide to the Bible
LTP  Laval théologique et philosophie
LXX  Septuagint
MIO  Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung
MT  Masoretic Text
NAB  New American Bible
NASB  New American Standard Bible
NBD  New Bible Dictionary
NCB  The New Century Bible
NEB  New English Bible
NKJV  New King James Version
NICOT  The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV  New International Version
NRSV  New Revised Standard Version
OTL  Old Testament Library
OTM  Old Testament Message
<table>
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<td>RE</td>
<td>Review and Expositor</td>
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<td>REJ</td>
<td>Revue des Études Juives</td>
</tr>
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<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
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<td>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</td>
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<td>SJT</td>
<td>Scottish Journal of Theology</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Samaritan Pentateuch</td>
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<td>Studies in Religion</td>
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<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
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<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<td>ZA</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Solomon reminds us that "better is the end of a thing than its beginning,"
Eccl 7:8 (RSV). I praise God, King of the universe, for bringing me to the end. For
this end, O LORD my God. I will give thanks to You forever.

I express my deep gratitude for the guidance of my adviser, Dr. Jacques
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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Because Christian investiture rites regularly involve the imposition of hands, scholars of the Church generally recognize the importance of understanding this practice. Instituted early in the church's development and thus in close proximity with its Jewish origins, scholars have proposed that the imposition of hands most likely stems from Old Testament roots. Eduard Lohse suggests that these Old Testament roots are authenticated by the linguistic relationships evident between Hebrew and Greek expressions for the imposition of hands.

While it is clear that these roots have had their impact on Christian installation practice, existing studies of the imposition of hands from an Old Testament perspective

---


3Eduard Lohse, Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), 18 (hereafter referred to as Die Ordination). Lohse points out that the origin of early Christian ordination cannot be found in religious history but without doubt comes from the Old Testament and Rabbinic Judaism. He connects the Greek New Testament phrase ἐπίθεσις τῶν χειρῶν with ś' mikān and argues that this linguistic relationship clearly indicates the Jewish origins of early Christian ordination rites.
do not offer clear and convergent conclusions. Eduard Lohse¹ and Everett Ferguson² find no unified explanation for the imposition of hands in the Old Testament, while Fernand Cabrol suggests that “it is difficult to make all these gestures of the imposition of hands to mean the same thing.”³ David P. Wright, listing thirty-two authors who have addressed questions of hand placement in the Old Testament, remarks that “despite all this inquiry, there has been no general consensus regarding the significance of the gesture.”⁴ Even the existence of an original meaning to the gesture is questioned. While Johannes Behm⁵ believes a gesture like this must be unambiguous and have a definite meaning, Ferguson⁶ takes the view that there is “no significance save the sacredness which age imparts.”

¹Ibid., 25.


⁶Ferguson, 127.
David Daube points out that much of the confusion concerning the laying on of hands in the Old Testament can be traced to inadequate treatments of the Hebrew phrase for the imposition or the laying on of hands, תְּנַשְׁפּ. Indeed, the diverse elements are many. תְּנַשְׁפּ (to lean on, lay on) is the verb most frequently used in connection with the imposition of hands in the Old Testament and may be associated with variant subjects, actions, and direct and indirect objects. The subject may be singular or collective, priestly or lay. The action may indicate transference, identification, association, blessing, support, or separation. Combined twenty-five times with תְּנַשְׁפּ, the substantive יָדָ (hand), as the direct object, appears in singular or dual form; as the indirect object, יָדָ may be animal or human, common or holy. Réne Péter criticizes authors who make general assertions about תְּנַשְׁפּ which do not account for the above essential differences of meaning that derive from the variant usages of the verb and substantive. It is his opinion that many authors make analytical

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2The phrase תְּנַשְׁפּ (םָמֵאַבְּנַ) is used throughout this dissertation to delineate biblical usage. Other correct grammatical forms of the phrase, such as the construct, are not used due to possible confusion with the rabbinical technical term for ordination, שְׁמִיקָה.

3Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 8:14, 18, 22; 16:21; 24:14; Num 8:10, 12; 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9; 2 Chr 29:23; Ps 37:24; Amos 5:19.
presentations which do not bring out the possible couplings between diverse elements of ָיֵם ְכֻלּוּ. 1

Types of occasions when the phrase ָיֵם ְכֻלּוּ is used provide a categorization model which aids in sorting out the above diversities. ָיֵם and ָי occur together on six types of occasions which can be organized into the following categories: (1) the resting of a hand on a wall, 2 (2) the general support of Yahweh for righteous men, 3 (3) the performance of sacrifice, 4 (4) the conviction of a blasphemer, 5 (5) the consecration of Levites, 6 and (6) the investiture of Joshua. 7

While an understanding of each of these categories may lead to an understanding of Old Testament laying on of hands in the installation of an individual to an office, only two have direct bearing on the subject. Two of the categories do not apply to ritual, categories one (resting a hand on a wall) and two (general support). Category three describes laying hands on animals, not humans. Category four refers to

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1 Péter. 48. Nine authors are cited.
2 Amos 5:19.
3 Ps 37:24.
4 Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 8:14, 18, 22; 16:21; Num 8:12; and 2 Chr 29:23.
5 Lev 24:14.
6 Num 8:10.
7 Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9.
a gesture in a judicial setting which indicates guilt. Only categories five and six describe installation ceremonies.

Category five describes the role of hand laying in the installation of the Levites as substitutes for the firstborn duties of service and as workers to provide assistance to the priests in the Tabernacle. This category contributes significantly to an understanding of hand laying in at least three areas: first, in the installation of a group of people to an office; second, in the role that a large group may play in the actual laying hands on the ones to receive office; and third, in providing an interpretive link between animal sacrifice and installation ceremonies. These contributions emerge from three observations: first, an entire tribe is set aside to its responsibilities through the gesture of laying on of hands: second, the “children of Israel” (נְפָדוֹת אֶדֶם) placed their hands on the Levites: and third, the Levites were to lay their hands on the heads of bullocks for a sin offering (עַל נְפָדוֹת) and a burnt offering (עַל נְפָדוֹת). 1

Only in the case of Joshua’s installation (category six) is the laying of hands on a person associated with investiture for leadership. 2 This category conveys the only clear convergence of נְפָדוֹת with transference of authority to an individual, an authority with both political and spiritual ramifications. Only this category contributes a description of the details of an individual person’s installation ceremony. Also, category six has been treated as the prototype for investiture in both the Jewish and

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1Lev 8:12.
Christian traditions. By focusing on this one category, and yet recognizing the relevance of the other five categories, in particular that of the Levites, this study can contribute to the Old Testament understanding of ת'ג and investiture.

The direct prototypical potential of Joshua's investiture is of particular interest since accounts of other appointments to office in the Pentateuch are vague with respect to the concrete details of installation ceremonies. While qualifications for office are clearly expressed, ceremonies installing qualified individuals are not. When judges are appointed by Moses,¹ the qualifications are clearly set out. The men are to be God-fearing, truthful, and haters of unjust gain. But the details of installation are absent. When seventy elders are called to supplementally assist Moses,² transference is implied³ but the details are not articulated. The "spirit of Moses" is transferred,⁴ but it is not clear how or if Moses effects the transfer. However, in the accounts of Joshua's installation as related in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9, the act of transference is explicitly described. Transference is effected through the laying on of hands. God instructs Moses to "take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your

¹ Exod 18:13-27 is the first appointment to office found in the Scriptures.

² Num 11:16-27.

³ God "took of the Spirit that was on him [Moses] and put the Spirit on the seventy elders." Num 11:25 (NIV).

hand (נַחֲנָה, נַחֲנָנָה) on him. Joshua is invested with Moses’ “authority” and is “filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him.”

Differences with respect to דֹּרֶם between Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 warrant clarification. An example of such differences in the two pericopes is the timing of hand imposition with respect to reception of the Spirit. Numbers states that Joshua is to receive the laying on of hands because he is already full of the Spirit while Deuteronomy states that Joshua was full of the Spirit of Wisdom because hands were laid on him. Not only is the timing different, but also the usage of the word ‘spirit.’ Numbers describes Joshua as a man in whom there is Spirit, while Deuteronomy describes Joshua as full of the Spirit of Wisdom. Another example of difference is the number of hands used for the action of דֹּרֶם. Numbers indicates both the usage of one and of two hands, and Deuteronomy indicates the usage of two hands exclusively. Further differences emerge with respect to transference. Numbers indicates a passing on of authority, while Deuteronomy does not address the authority

1Num 27:18 (NIV).
2Num 27:20.
3Deut 34:9.
4Num 27:18.
5Num 27:18.
6Vs. 18 indicates the usage of one hand and vs. 23 indicates the usage of two hands.
7Num 27:20 (NIV), “Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.”
issue at all. Instead, Deuteronomy mentions the passing on of wisdom, a subject that Numbers skips. Differences also distinguish the treatment of leadership. Numbers indicates that after the laying on of hands, Israel was to 'listen' to or obey Joshua and Joshua was to lead Israel 'in' and 'out'\(^1\) while Deuteronomy indicates only that the children of Israel 'listened' (past tense) to Joshua. Also, Numbers places limitations on Joshua's authority by requiring him to confer with Eleazar, while Deuteronomy is completely silent on the subject. The impact of יְהֹוָה in Joshua's ordination can only be clarified once the differences between the two pericopes describing his ordination have been addressed in careful study.

What happened when Moses laid hands on Joshua? Could Joshua have become Israel's next leader without this action? Did Moses convey or transmit something special through this action that could not be conveyed in any other fashion? Or was the action merely a public recognition of an already established call of Joshua? Was the action a necessary part of commissioning and authorization, or was it merely incidental? Were one or two hands necessary?

**Statement of the Purpose**

This study answers the above-mentioned questions through an exegetical investigation into the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of יְהֹוָה in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. When investigating procedural techniques, this study examines the texts to discover how יְהֹוָה is executed. It addresses

\(^1\)Num 27:17, 21.
questions of physical setting, administrative context, participants, the number of hands used, and accompanying words and gestures. When investigating symbolic meanings, this study examines the texts to ascertain what תֶּפֶל" accomplish symbolically. Does it symbolically pass authority, confirmation, succession, affirmation, or designation? When investigating tangible effects, this study examines the texts to determine what תְפֶל" accomplish tangibly. Does it contribute to any changes in leadership skills or personality? Are there physical manifestations such as ecstasy, supernatural power, or wisdom, and if so, are these apparent manifestations of the Holy Spirit?

**Literature Review**

Though there are numerous works which treat ordination, the laying on of hands in general, and the laying on of hands as it relates to ordination, very little literature is dedicated to the specific usage of תֶּפֶל" in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. No dissertations have taken an exegetical approach to the specific subject of Moses’ ordination of Joshua as recorded in these texts; however, a few provide helpful background information.¹ In 1963, J. Roy Porter pointed out that Num 27:15-23 is a

¹Two dissertations that focus on “ordination” in more general terms also address issues raised in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. Everett Ferguson, “‘Ordination in the Ancient Church’: An Examination of the Theological and Constitutional Motifs in the Light of Biblical and Gentile Sources” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1959), paints a broad picture of ordination. Eduard Lohse’s dissertation, Die Ordination, after brief references to Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9, discusses the rabbinic interpretation of the two texts, early ordination rites of Rabbinic Judaism, and ordination in the New Testament. Other dissertations are more remote in their contribution. After briefly studying various biblical roots which include Joshua’s
"passage which has never adequately been discussed."1 Two journal articles, of which only one was written after 1963, directly address the texts which mention Joshua’s installation, otherwise journal articles address the more general topics of Joshua’s succession or laying on of hands and ordination.2 The bulk of available literature can be found in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries under the general headings of “ordination,” “hand,” or “laying on of hands.” Laying on of hands in sacrifice ordination, Allen Howard Podet analyzes ordination in Rabbinic sources, “Elements in the Development of Rabbinical Ordination in the Codes” (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, 1964). Richard Fairman exegetes New Testament texts that have indirect application to Deut 34:9, “An Exegesis of ‘Filling’ Texts Which Refer to the Doctrine of Filling” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986). Richard Lloyd studies how Deut 34:9-12 functions within the Hebrew canon with the intention not of discovering the importance of the passage in “simple exegesis” but to discover how the passage relates to Deuteronomy, the Pentateuch and the Hebrew canon, “The Canonical Function of Deuteronomy 34:9-12” (Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985). Foster McCurley provides necessary background material for understanding the broad metaphorical and semantic usage of “hand” ( [('), “A Semantic Study of Anatomical Terms in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Biblical Literature” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1968).


receives the most attention while to a lesser degree laying hands on the Levites, the blasphemer, and Joshua receive approximately equal attention. Because scholars do not always agree, several issues emerge from focusing on the hand-laying gesture in Joshua’s installation. The following sections review scholarly opinion relative to Joshua’s installation and the role of laying on of hands in that installation.

Significance of Joshua’s Installation

Jewish Tradition

The feasibility of attaching prototypical significance to Joshua’s installation is supported by a large number of scholars. Many Jewish exegetes and Pentateuchal critical scholars adopt the view that ordination was performed for the first time when Moses ordained Joshua with "Semikhah [sic] of later times." Newman defines *semikhah* (or "smikah"), a derivative of "ordination between teacher and pupil." Paul Galtier further proposes that "this mode of investiture was considered by Jews as the ‘prototype’ of all following

1Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 29.

2Newman, 6.

3As transliterated in harmony with *Andrews University Seminary Studies* transliteration standards.

4Newman, 3.
rites for the granting of various public functions.¹ Daube adds that “for the Tannaites, Joshua’s installation by Moses was the prototype of ordination,”² while H. Revel states that Moses’ method of ordaining Joshua by placing his hands on him became the standard mode of ordination until the Hadrianic persecutions (135 C.E.).³ Ferguson writes that “the halakic midrash to Numbers (Sifre Numbers) understands the installation of Joshua as an example of Rabbinic ordination”⁴ while M. H. Shepherd, Jr., and Allen Podet add that Joshua’s ceremony of ordination was adopted later for ordination to the rabbinate.⁵ After reviewing several Rabbinic sources. Allen Podet concludes that the ordination of Joshua “was to become an underpinning of subsequent rabbinic ordination.”⁶ J. Roy Porter suggests that Joshua’s installation provided the prototype for the installation of Israel’s kings.⁷

J. K. Parratt and Lawrence Hoffman take the minority contrary view. Parratt argues that “the commissioning of Joshua has not exercised a normative influence upon


²Daube, 208.


⁴Ferguson, “Ordination in the Ancient Church, Part I,” 128.


⁶Podet, 51.

either Judaism or Christianity.”¹ Hoffman agrees that Moses’ ordination of Joshua with laying on of hands has been “taken incorrectly as sufficient evidence to establish a parallel rabbinic custom.”² Anthony Hanson addresses the issue from the perspective of relating Joshua’s installation to that of the priesthood and states unequivocally that no allusion to priestly ordination can be found in Joshua’s experience.³ In spite of these detractors, majority opinion supports the prototypical nature of Joshua’s installation.

**Christian Tradition**

While there is general agreement as to the prototypical relationship of Moses’ laying hands on Joshua and smikāh, scholars do not agree as to the impact of smikāh on Christian ordination.⁴ Henry Smith felt that this event “can hardly have given rise to the apostolic rite in all its varieties.” concluding that the church’s rite of laying on of

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hands "has been influenced by gentile custom."¹ Parratt proposes that the Levitical experience of hand laying influenced Christian practice more than Joshua's experience, while T. F. Torrance suggests both experiences provide precedent for Christian laying on of hands.² Ferguson sees a "separation of the Christian rite from a background in *semakh* [*sic*],"³ a conclusion with which Spicq agrees and adds that the rites of the early Christian Church are "an invention of the primitive church."⁴

But Behm proposes that rabbinic *s'mikāh* was the bridge between Num 27:18-23 and the Christian rite of ordination.⁵ Both Joseph Coppens⁶ and Frank Gavin⁷ support Behm, while Lohse adds, "Christian ordination was structured on the model of the Jewish teacher, but it was filled with new life by early Christianity."⁸ More recently,


⁵Behm, 142.


R. Alan Culpepper notes that "the appointment of Joshua exerted a profound influence on later practices [of ordination]." However, the influence of Old Testament examples on Christian ordination had been seen by Arnold Ehrhardt to be direct, rather than channeled through rabbinic smikāh. "In the matter of ordination the Church and the Synagogue appear not in the relation of son and mother, but as half-brothers, . . . both in their way appropriating the Old Testament example." Thus is underscored the powerful influence of the Joshua installation precedent on Christianity.

Significance of Laying on of Hands

Because the purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the meaning of laying on of hands in the experience of Joshua, a brief overview of scholarly opinion is now presented in order to give an indication of the variety of interpretations.

Perhaps the most discussed interpretation of laying on of hands is that of "transference." What was transferred to Joshua when Moses laid hands upon him? Scholarship offers a variety of answers to this question. H. Wendland proposes that it

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1R. Alan Culpepper, "The Biblical Basis for Ordination," Review and Expositor 78 (1981): 472. He also stated on p. 471, "the appointment of Joshua as Moses’ successor, the installation of the seventy elders, and the ordination of priests, Levites, and prophets must all be considered as precedents for Christian ordination."


3Heinz-Josef Fabry provides a succinct summary of the various interpretations of laying on of hands, "7JQO samak," TWAT (1986), 5:883.
was the Spirit that was transferred, while Henry Smith, Everett Ferguson, M. H. Shepherd, Jr., and J. Coppens argue that it cannot be the Spirit that was transferred since Num 27:18 states that Joshua already possessed the Spirit at the time of his ordination. According to J. Lauterbach, "a portion of Moses' spirit" was transferred exclusively by the laying on of hands, and according to Lohse, the *hôd* (honor) of Moses was transferred, while H. Lesetre suggests that laying on of hands enabled Joshua to participate in Moses' dignity. But Nikolaus Adler, Philip Budd, H. Cremer, F. Huey, Jr., Anthony Hanson, J. A. MacCulloch, and B. J. van der Merwe see leadership and the office itself as transferred. W. D. Stacey proposes a transmission

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2Smith, 60.


4Shepherd, 324.

5Coppens, 633.


7Lohse, *Die Ordination*, 20.


of personal virtue and vitality, as well as the dignity and authority necessary for high office. Other scholars submit that power, authority, personality, responsibility, or duties were passed on by the laying on of hands. P. R. Ackroyd, N. Adler, J. C. Cooper, and Silva New see the passage of power or grace implied by the contact of one person with another. Instead, I. H. Marshall, M. C. Sansom, M. H. Shepherd, Jr., and B. Zlotowitz sees a transfer of authority or commissioning, and Daube adds that this transference authorized the recipient to enunciate teachings, deliver judgments, and sit on a special chair like Moses.

To Daube, the mode of hand imposition links each generation of spiritual leaders to the preceding one into an uninterrupted chain of authority. Daube also sees personality transferred, a pouring of one personality into another, but Culpepper

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3Daube, 208.
counters that it is not personality but responsibility that is transferred.¹ M. Bernoulli agrees with Daube on transfer of personality when hands are laid on an animal for the sacrificial cult but suggests that for Joshua, laying on of hands became a means by which God transmitted responsibility and a spirit of wisdom to Joshua.² Stoltz simply assumes Moses transferred his duties to Joshua by placing his right hand upon his successor.³ H. B. Swete proposes that laying on of hands as transference plays a secondary role to laying on of hands as identification.⁴ D. P. Wright, J. Milgrom, and B. J. van der Merwe state that the spoken word rather than the laying on of hands effected any transfer in the installation of Joshua.⁵

Scholars have borrowed from an interpretation arising out of the laying on hands for animal sacrifice, that of identification or designation; laying on of hands designates the recipient of the gesture for a particular purpose or identifies the hand layer with the gesture recipient.⁶ For Joshua, laying on of hands marked him for some special destiny or commission.⁷ Sansom proposes that the laying on of hands is an

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¹Culpepper, 471.


⁵Wright and Milgrom, 885-6; Van der Merwe, 38.


"acknowledgment or identification." Everett Ferguson and Ralph Alexander claim that the laying on of hands is a commissioning and authorization (Num 27). Claud Chavasse suggests that when Moses commissioned Joshua as described in Num 27:12-23, Moses sent him to work while Deut 34:9 describes the strengthening of Joshua for that work. Cremer writes that "the act meant the marking out of a special destiny." Scholars also disagree on whether the laying on of hands indicate substitution or representation? Wenham maintains that the recipient of hand imposition became the substitute or representative for the executor. Daube stresses that "samakh [sic] signifies 'to lean'" and that "by leaning your hands upon somebody you were pouring your personality into him, or in other words, you were making him into your substitute." As already mentioned, Culpepper disagrees and counters "that the rite signified the passing on of responsibility rather than the transfer of personality" and

1 Sansom, 326.


4 Cremer, 433.


6 Daube, 225.

7 Culpepper, 471.
thus does not imply substitution. Torrance also disagrees, accusing Daube of "giving samakh [sic] a psychological interpretation."1

Scholars also present various interpretations relative to the significance of the number of hands used and should this number impact an interpretation of the gesture. David Wright2 and R. Péter agree that one must distinguish two different rites in form and significance which are dependent on the number of hands used.3 Péter concludes that two hands are used on people to designate the recipients of some ritual action and that one hand is used on sacrificial animals to designate the association of the executor's attributes with the animal. Wright argues that in sacrifice laying on of hands only shows the offerer's ritual "ownership" of the animal. A number of scholars disagree. Stoltz4 and Vogels5 do not see that the difference of number indicates a difference of meaning, while Sansom warns that "the discrepancy [between one and two hands] may perhaps warn us against putting too much weight on the number of

1Torrance, 236.

2David P. Wright, "The Disposal of Impurity in the Priestly Writings of the Bible with Reference to Similar Phenomena in Hittite and Mesopotamian Cultures" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), 433. References for this study are to Wright's dissertation. This dissertation has also been published under the title The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rights in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987).

3Péter, 54.

4Stolz, 161.

5Vogels, 5.
hands, at least in this particular context.”¹ Everett Ferguson comments that “it would seem that no distinction was made.”² George Gray concludes that “the use of one or two hands in the rite as applied to persons must remain an open one.”³

**Delimitations**

Though the phrase נָּשָׁבַת itself is used twenty-five times in the Old Testament, this study focuses on its usage in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. The intent of this study is to understand and exegete these two passages from a synchronic rather than a diachronic point of view in order to focus on the content of the story associated with these texts, rather than its historicity. B. S. Childs points out, "The usual practice of evaluating the material of Numbers according to its degree of historicity runs the acute risk of misunderstanding the major theological categories into which biblical writers have cast their material."⁴ Childs later adds, "The canonical approach to Old Testament theology is insistent that the critical process of theological reflection takes place from a stance within the circle of received tradition prescribed by the affirmation of the canon."⁵ To circumvent problems potentially associated with determining

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¹Sansom, 325.


"degrees of historicity" and maintain a canonical approach, this study assumes the present, received canonical form of Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9.

Methodology

While it is the purpose of this research to conduct an exegetical study, it does not presume to be a comprehensive exegesis of Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. Rather, it employs exegetical methodologies to investigate the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of קֵקֵקָה in these texts.

Chapter 1 reviews hand symbolism in the ancient Near East by focusing on its symbolism connected with three elements of status: perception of status, communication of status, and transference of status. Chapter 2 reviews hand symbolism in the Old Testament by focusing on its connection with the same three elements of status. In each of these chapters, conclusions are made with respect to the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of laying on of hands.

Chapter 3 reviews Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 as they fit into the overall scheme of the book in which they are written. The delimiters and structure of each passage are clarified after translation which will take into account a careful analysis of the Masoretic Text. Structural indicators, key words, and phrases are studied in light of their impact on an understanding of the usage and meaning of קֵקֵקָה in each of the passages. Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 are then compared to discover their unique and common contributions to an understanding of קֵקֵקָה on Joshua. Conclusions are
then made with respect to the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of laying hands on Joshua.

Finally, a summary of the study is presented as well as final conclusions and implications.
CHAPTER I

HANDS AND STATUS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Understanding the ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu of the Old Testament could clarify the technique, meaning, and effect of דְּרֵי פָלָפָל, “laying on of hands,”¹ in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. Consequently, studying ancient Near Eastern hand usage in transfers of authority and in cultic or royal installations to office may uncover a historical link to the biblical laying on of hands by one person on another. To this end, two constraints have been adopted.² First, only cognates and otherwise related terms of both פָלָפָל and דְּרֵי are considered. No effort is made to record every known usage of these terms in the ancient world. The languages from which the terms are

¹ פָלָפָל literally means “he laid a hand.” This study uses the phrase in a technical ceremonial sense, depicting the concept of “laying on of hands.”

² The purpose of this dissertation is to exegetically study the laying on of hands on Joshua in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. This chapter represents but one step to arriving at a total understanding of the above passages. Another dissertation dedicated to a study of ancient Near Eastern hand symbolism would be appropriate to test the findings of this survey. Mayer I. Gruber, in the revision of his 1976 dissertation presented in the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures of Columbia University (Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East, Studia Pohl 12/1, 2 vols. [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980]), presented a seminal and important study of nonverbal communication in the ancient Near East. His study covered a broad spectrum of nonverbal expressions which included only four hand gestures (open the fists, open the hands, lift the hands using two different verbs). Gruber’s study is helpful, but limited, when looking exclusively at ancient Near Eastern hand symbolism.
considered include Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Egyptian. These terms are analyzed in a representative sample of ancient Near Eastern literature in order to justify a reasonably informed conclusion. Second, a thematic approach is taken when evaluating the usage of terms. There are many similarities between the various ancient Near Eastern cultures in regard to hand usage and symbolism, therefore a thematic approach is more effective than one organized by geographic zone. The overarching theme, status, is subdivided into three areas: perception, projection, and change, or when an individual’s status moves up, down, or horizontally.

Cognates and Synonyms

Cognates and Synonyms of סָמַק

Samak is a western Semitic word whose nearest cognate in the ancient Near Eastern languages is the Akkadian (or Assyrian) samāku. The primary meaning of samāku is that of covering over, overlapping, concealing, or veiling. Other meanings of samāku include: (1) to dam a canal, (2) to reject or to remove, (3) to chase away or to remove, and (4) to become clogged. Similar terms include samku, sumuktu, and simku(?) which refer to a cover or the act of covering over. The Ugaritic smkt has an unclear meaning and appears to have no connection with Hebrew. This study did not

1Akkadian includes Mesopotamia as well as Assyria.


3AHW, Wright, and Milgrom use the term überdecken.
discover any usage of the כַּפֶּה cognates with the cognates and related terms of יָד. It therefore appears, from a survey of dictionaries and literature, that the phrase יָד כַּפֶּה has no equivalent in any of the ancient Near Eastern cultures, and thus there is no other example of the phrase referring to the transfer of authority or installation to cultic or political office. Thus this chapter emphasizes the study of the following ancient Near Eastern cognates and related terms for יָד.

Cognates and Synonyms of יָד

Akkadian

Akkadian has several words that refer to hand or hand action in either the physical or metaphorical sense. The most common meaning of יָד as “hand” is shared by the Akkadian words qātu (Assyrian, qātu and often written gātu) and rittu.


2Ackroyd, 5:400.


4AHW (1972), s.v. “rittu(m)” ; Von Soden, 5:397. The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Society of the University of Chicago (Chicago: Oriental Institute) has yet to publish on the letter r.
The more metaphorical meaning of "P as "side," "near," or "power" is shared by the Mesopotamian word *idu*, which has the primary meaning of arm, yet maintains a strong affinity with "P. Two other Mesopotamian words relate to "hand" in a less direct fashion. The first, *upnu*, though not the equivalent of the Hebrew word "P, is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *ṭān*, meaning "hollow of the hand" or "clenched hand" (i.e., fist). The second, *sabātu*, is a common verb used along with *qātu* and *idu* to mean seize, grasp, hold, or be joined. The causative form is occasionally used in installation ceremonies.

**Hittite**

Hittite literature does not manifest the same emphasis on hand and hand symbolism as does Akkadian literature. Of interest is the fact that the Hittites employed the Akkadian cuneiform system of writing, which in turn facilitated multiple linguistic combinations. Sumerian and Akkadian words and phrases are liberally used along with Hittite words in writing Hittite texts. Thus, in Hittite literature, three words

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1Ackroyd, 400-1.

2Delitzsch, 303-4; *CAD* (1960), s.v. "idu"; *AHW* (1965), s.v. "idu(m)"; Von Soden, 5:396-7.

3Von Soden (5:396) points out that *idu* has history that goes back to the Proto-Semitic noun *yad*. Dhorme (138-41) supports this affinity with four arguments.

4*AHW* (1981), s.v. "upnu(m); Von Soden, 5:397.

are used for hand: (1) Sumerian ŠU; (2) Akkadian QÂTU; and (3) Hittite kessar¹ or kessara-,² neither of which has yet received thorough coverage in glossary or dictionary word studies. No dictionaries have addressed examples of Akkadograms and Sumerograms for Hittite words under the Hittite word because, as of yet, none have published a volume on the letter k.³

Ugaritic

The Ugaritic cognate for 𐤋𐤋 is yd.⁴ The word yd can mean "left hand" when it occurs parallel to ymn, "right hand."⁵ As in Hebrew, Ugaritic has several meanings for yd besides "hand."⁶ These additional meanings include various concepts such as

¹Sturtevant, 36-41; Christel Rüster, Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 101, 123.
²Harry Angler Hoffner, Jr., The Laws of the Hittites (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1988), 187; Johann Tischler, Heititisch-Deutsches Wörterverzeichnis (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1982), 37; Sturtevant, 36, spells the Hittite word as kesar.
³The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute has published on only two letters of the Hittite language (L-N) and does not cover the letter k. The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, ed. Hans G. Güterbock and Harry A. Hoffner (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1989). Neither has Johannes Friedrich treated k, Hethitisches Wörterbuch (Heidelberg: Winter, 1975.)
⁴Three hundred fifty-five entries in Richard Whitaker, A Concordance of the Ugaritic Literature (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 296-301.
⁶For the definition "hand": Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 57-8, 101, 383, 408-9; Stanislav Segert, A Basic
"portion" or "share" (cf. Akkadian qātu),1 "supervision,"2 "love" and "affection,"3 or "penis."4 The word yd can also be used in the sense of the conjunctions "with" or "because"5 or the preposition "beside."6


2In administrative texts, bd “in the hands of” can mean “under the supervision of,” Gordon, 383.

3From The Palace of Baal 3 3 1-33, “[She takes her lyre in her hand, she] puts corals on her breast, she sings of her love for mightiest Baal, of her affection (lit. hand) for Pidray daughter of mist,” Gibson, 48. From The Palace of Baal 4 iv 38, "Or does affection (lit. hand) for El the king move you.” Gibson, 60.

4Gordon, 408-9; Segert, 188.

5Gordon, 101; Segert, 188. In the royal land-grant, šd ‘field’ is followed by yd gth, yd [k]rmar, yd [k]lkh ‘with its wine-press, with its vineyard, with all-that-pertains-thereto’.

6In Keret 14 54; Gibson, 83.
Egyptian

The usual word in Egyptian for hand, *drt*, is a periphrastic expression that describes the part of the human body that is the “grasper.”¹ The original word for “hand” commonly used in the various Semitic languages had become taboo in colloquial speech, thus because of this proscription it had little impact on Egyptian. The only correspondence to ב in Egyptian is preserved in the hieroglyph for *d*.² Altenmüller claims that the taboo resulted from the Egyptians’ high regard for the value of the hand and subsequent attempts to protect it from name abuse.

As is common for the other ancient languages, the Egyptian word *drt* has a wide range of uses ranging from “human hand” to “elephant’s trunk” to “the paw of a cat.” While “hand” and “arm” are not distinguished from one another, *drt* usually represents an outstretched hand rather than a clenched hand or fist.³

Survey

The results of an informal survey of expressions associated with the word “hand” in Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Egyptian are given in Table 1. These expressions are classified in terms of whether “hand” functions “statically” or


²Altenmüller, 2:938.

³Bergman, 394. “Usually” because either a *drt* or a *ḥf* (fist) can hold a scepter, seize the enemy, or have power over human life.
TABLE 1
HAND SYMBOLISM IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression or Depiction</th>
<th>Akkadian</th>
<th>Hittite</th>
<th>Ugaritic</th>
<th>Egyptian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hand&quot;</td>
<td>Salary (III)</td>
<td>Portion (I)</td>
<td>Phallus (I)</td>
<td>Phallus (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rent (III)</td>
<td>Inheritance (I)</td>
<td>Phallus (I)</td>
<td>Memorial (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memorial (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hand&quot; (painted on building)</td>
<td>Protection (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Protection (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;My hand&quot;</td>
<td>Self praise (I, II)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Power (I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Many hands&quot;</td>
<td>Ability (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creative (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Strong hand (arm)&quot;</td>
<td>Confidence (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strength (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weakness (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In the hand&quot;</td>
<td>Possession (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Control (I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;By the hand of&quot;</td>
<td>Responsibility (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility (I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hand-in-hand&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closeness (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ready hands&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty (II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Take into the hand&quot;</td>
<td>Guarantee (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helpfulness (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hold in hand&quot;</td>
<td>Vigilance (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vigilance (I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readiness (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Readiness (I)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Action (I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Put hand to (on)&quot;</td>
<td>Beginning a task (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Control (I)</td>
<td>Conquest (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Fill the hands&quot;</td>
<td>Appropriateness (II)</td>
<td>Control (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: (I) = Status Perception, (II) = Status Projection, (III) = Status Change
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression or Depiction</th>
<th>Akkadian</th>
<th>Hittite</th>
<th>Ugaritic</th>
<th>Egyptian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Point finger (hand)”</td>
<td>Accusation (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accusation (II)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Take the hand”</td>
<td>Protection (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Take by the hand”</td>
<td>Escort Guidance (I)</td>
<td>Escort Guidance (I)</td>
<td>Escort Guidance (I)</td>
<td>Escort Guidance (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lower hand”</td>
<td>Obeisance (II) Slackness (II) Submission (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obeisance (II) Slackness (II) Submission (II)</td>
<td>Greeting (II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Give one’s hand”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ask for one’s hand”</td>
<td>Acceptance (Request of) (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hold to the side (hand of)”</td>
<td>Loyalty (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Extend” or “stretch out the hand”</td>
<td>Strength (I) Goodwill (II) Favor (II) Obeisance (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goodwill (II) Favor (II) Respect (II) Acceptance (II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Record” or “Write”</td>
<td>Comfort (I) Threat (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grasp hem”</td>
<td>Supplication Justice (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lay hand on”</td>
<td>Healing (III) Exorcism (III) Ownership (I) Substitute (II) Transfer (III)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transfer (of (authority) (III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Clap”</td>
<td>Happiness (II) Jubilation (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Happiness (II) Jubilation (II)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: (I) = Status Perception, (II) = Status Projection, (III) = Status Change
“dynamically” in the meaning of the expressions. When “hand” is associated with a transitive verb in an idiomatic expression, it functions “dynamically,” as in the expressions “to raise the hand” or “to lay the hand.” Otherwise, when “hand” is associated with prepositions or modifiers (adjectives or possessives), it functions “statically,” as in the expressions “in the hand” or “strong hand.” “Dynamic” and “static” expressions can each be used either literally or figuratively. The term “figurative” is used to signify that a “hand” is not literally or physically involved but rather that the word “hand” conveys an abstraction. Every instance must be analyzed to determine whether hand is being used statically or dynamically, literally or abstractly, in order to extract its intended meaning.

The far left column of Table 1 indicates whether the expression is static or dynamic. The next column to the right lists the various expressions. The remaining columns list by language group the connotations of the various meanings of the expressions. Subcategories of the overarching theme—status—are also assigned: perception (I), projection (II), and change (III). This thematic approach in tabular form makes it easier to see where the four language groups share common meaning.

**Hands and the Perception of Status**

This section focuses on ancient Near Eastern hand usage in two areas necessary to establishing a perception of one’s status: (1) hand symbolism in the act of possession or wealth, and (2) hand symbolism in strength and direct action.
Ancient Near Eastern ownership was an act of the hand. Akkadians referred to possessions in terms of the formula, "that which is in the hand."1 The rights that accompany possession are the rights of control. To possess something is to seize its control with one's hand and thus establish ownership. The correlation between hand and ownership became so strong in Ugarit that ḳd or "hand" also took the meaning of a possession, namely a "portion" or "share." In Mesopotamia, the phrase "my hand" was often used as a symbol of "self-laudatory commemorations."2 On the other hand, in Egypt humility could be indicated by recognizing that one is in the hand (control) of another, "[I am] in thy hand like mud."3 The expression "filling the hands" refers to the appropriation of whatever filled the hand4 or to the placement of an individual, population, or royalty back under the control of someone.5

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1Dhorme, 147-8. The Akkadians had the ideogram nigšū, translated as ša qātī, "that which is in the hand."

2Abraham Malamat, Mari and the Early Israelite Experience (London: The Oxford University Press, 1989), 118. Malamat points out that Gilgames and Enkidu penetrated the depths of the cedar forest on Cedar Mountain and cut down the sacred cedar guarded by Huwawa the ogre. "After slaying Huwawa, they set out to hew the trees of the forest. A recurrent phrase in this part of the epic is, 'my hand I will poise and will fell the cedars, a name that endures I will make for me.'"


4Malamat, 76.

5Dhorme, 146.
But holding something in the hand for the Babylonian also symbolized the responsibilities of ownership as well as ownership itself. In Egypt, some of these responsibilities included provisions for aid—in particular, protection and restoration. For the Egyptian, stretching out the hand indicated willingness to accept these responsibilities and to provide care. In fact, the availability of aid was indicated in terms of one's nearness to the owner's hand and thus whether one was within reach of that hand. In much the same way, friendships were verified in terms of hand-holding, thereby setting a distance scale for the relationship. The act of "stretching out the hand to those in misery" indicated to the Egyptian one who takes care of others.

The hand was a prevalent symbol of protection. Aiding someone in distress is expressed in Akkadian ritual by sabātu qāṭā or "to take the hands" in order to prevent

1 G. R. Driver and John C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* (London, Oxford University Press, 1955), 2:11. From the Code of Hammurabi, Column ixa, line 1: "If he detains that slave in his house (and) afterwards the slave is caught in his possession [literally, in his hand], that man shall be put to death."

2 Mercer notes in a pyramid text (1:140): "Thou layest hold of the hand of the imperishable stars." He then comments (2:360) that the farthest removed of all the stars of heaven, of which the deceased king would join, is here represented as sufficiently within the reach of the king, as to be able to be greeted by a handshake.

3 Bergman, 395; Altenmüller, 938-9. Hand in hand indicated closeness of couples or friends. Mercer quotes a pyramid text (1:78): "The hand of N. is in the hand of Re: Nut takes his arm."

4 As was said of Bekenkhons, a contemporary of Ramses II and high priest of Amon, who was considered a "good father of his subordinates, trained their successors, stretched out the hand to those in misery, fed the poor and acted nobly in his temple." Adolf Erman, *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. S. Griffith (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907), 71.
one from falling.\(^1\) The phrase, “take by the hand.\(^2\)” indicated in much of the ancient Near East the idea of escort or guidance. The two words \(qātu\) and \(sabātu\) used in tandem in Babylon or Assyria describe taking a person’s hand in order to lead him or her to safety or to conduct images or sacred objects in a ceremonial way.\(^3\) In an

\(^1\)Dhorme, 147; A. Sachs, trans., “Akkadian Rituals,” in *Religions of the Ancient Near East: Sumero-Akkadian Religious Texts and Ugaritic Epics*, ed. Isaac Mendelsohn (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955), 133. Sachs notes that in the New Year’s festival, the king prays to the goddess Beltiya: “Grant mercy to the servant who blesses you, take his hand (when he is) in great difficulty and need! Present him with life when he is sick and in main, (so that) he may constantly walk in happiness and joy.”

\(^2\)Mercer, 1:144, 150, 172, 224, 226, 237, 243, 259, 260, 267; Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. T. Hallett (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 258. 9: “In Egypt, the newly consecrated king was led by two gods before the highest god. This taking by the hand also plays a role in Babylonian and Hittite royal ritual. A saying on the clay cylinder inscription of Cyrus derives from the Babylonian tradition. It reads: ‘[Marduk] sought a righteous prince, so that he might take his hand.’ In several Hittite reliefs, a god of superhuman size places his arm about the king, grasps his hand, and thus escorts him in safety. In these instances we are faced not with a presentation scene, but with the representation of a more general kind of leading.”


\(^3\)CAD, s.v. “sabātu,” sa-ab-ta-at qá-as-sú kīma [ummim] ireddīsu, “holding him (Enkidu) by his hand, she leads him like a mother.” Or, as a royal privilege and duty he defeated Elam and (SU *EN Is-ba-ta ana Bābili issā) “led Bel in a procession to

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Egyptian musical context, hands lead singers safely through their songs by indicating pitch with relative gestures.¹

A Sumerian prayer thanked the moon god *Nanna-Suen* "who holds the life of the whole country (protectively) in his hand."² The hand was also to the Sumerian an attribute of the Great Mother as bounteous giver as well as protector.³ In Egypt, the hand was used to guide the moon god *Nanna-Suen*.⁴

The formula *sabātu* or *tamāhu qāa*, "to take the hand" of a god, represented a rite performed by the Babylonian or the Assyrian kings at the New Year festival. Dhorme (146) maintains that this act of the king was not an end in itself but rather an invitation at the time of departure to join the procession; the king grasped the statue by the hand in order to guide it.

Mark Cohen states that the expression "to escort Bel" (literally, "to grasp the hand of the Bel") is the Babylonian chronicler synecdoche for holding the New Year festival. This act was the essential ceremony overriding all other events of the festival for it superimposed the basic theme of the festival, namely, the reenactment of the triumphal moment when the god first entered and claimed his city. Cohen rejects the theory that "to take the hand of Bel" was a symbolic gesture by which Marduk granted the king authority to rule for another year, but sees it rather as connoting escorting the deity from one location to another. Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1993), 306-7, 404, 438-40, 450-1.

¹Bergman, 395; Altenmüller, 938-9.


³Cooper, 79.
‘hand of god’ usually denoted saving power that protected from misfortune. A hymn to Amun, composed soon after the Amarna period, stated:

You are Re who arises in the heaven. Atum, who created men. Who hears the prayers of the one who calls on him, who saves a man from the hand of the violent, who brings up the Nile for those who are in him, the perfect guide for every man. . . . May he grant a fair burial after old age, so that I am safe in his hand (italics mine).²

A raised hand became an Egyptian gesture of protection³ and became such a strong symbol of protection that amulets in the shape of miniature hands, opened or clenched or portraying an outstretched finger, were worn about the neck to ward off evil.⁴


²Brunner, 40-1. From the pyramid texts Mercer (1:24) quotes a prayer: “O N., the hands of thy ka are before thee; O N., the hands of thy ka are behind thee.” Mercer then comments (2:16), the ka was an entity of each human and divine personality. It was born with one, as a kind of double and remained as such through life, when a human being died he was said to have gone “with” his ka and “to” his ka. The deceased is protected by his ka before and behind.

³On a relief in the temple of Hathor at Denderah the body of Osiris lies on a lion-shaped bier. At the head of the bier stands, with one hand raised and the following inscription, “Isis, the great, the mother of the god, the mistress of Denderah who protects her brother.” Eberhard Otto, Egyptian Art and the Cults of Osiris and Amon (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 60, Figure 5.

⁴Altenmüller, 939; Jacq, 56; and Maurice Arthur Canney, Givers of Life and Their Significance in Mythology (London: A. & C. Black, 1923), 99-100. Jacq (56)
Another wide-ranging custom of hand as protection was that of either painting hands on buildings, or taking a hand dipped in blood and impressing it on a building, especially on or above the door. Memorials or votive stelae were also erected in the form of hands. In either case, painted hands or hands as memorials, the hand had perhaps an apotropaic purpose, a provision of power to protect against the evil eye, witchcraft, or to prevent the entrance of malicious beings.¹

In view of its protective function, hand imagery was used in conjunction with guarantees. In the Mesopotamian court system, the formula qāta or qāṭāti leqū, literally meaning to “take the hand(s)” of someone, actually meant “to stand surety for, or to guarantee.”² The same basic meaning, with little added nuance, is given by the word sabātu when used with qātu so that taking a person’s or god’s hand indicates help, assistance, or making a guarantee.³

points out, “Some amulets are surprising, such as the ‘hand of Atum,’ a goddess who drove the tempest from the sky and who reminds us of the primordial masturbation of the creator. This hand, called ‘Powerful,’ helps the light to banish the demon of darkness. She drives away suffering and impurity. It is also she who, in the absence of the mother or nurse, places an amulet in a child’s hand to protect it. She is none other than ‘the hand of Isis’ who watches over her son Horus and procures his health and well-being.”

¹MacCulloch, 6:495; Canney, 88-103. MacCulloch points out that this custom ranged throughout ancient Babylon, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Israel.

²Walter Baumgartner, “Yād in the Shemitta-Law,” VT 4 (1954): 198. In Old-Babylonian documents the guarantor himself is designated as qātu, “hand” or refers to the “withdrawing of the hand” to the release of the debtor. In Assyrian documents the guarantor is called bēl qāta.


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Noting that pursuit of justice includes punishment as well as protection, the hand of a god could indicate either punishment or saving power. When the power of a god was used positively, salvation resulted and the hand symbolized the giving of life. When the power of a god was used negatively, punishment resulted and the hand symbolized the taking of life. Various gods were described in acts of laying hands on kings, other gods, and dead children. These acts signify their ability to restore life. But ‘the hand of god’ could also be an object of fear as it signifies the ability to take life as well as to restore it. The hand was often used as a symbol of punishment.¹ The comfort and fear that accompany the anticipation of judgment are symbolized by a hand recording events—comfort when deeds of kindness are recorded and fear when deeds of transgression are recorded.² Such recording ability gave the ancient Near Eastern mind another reason to see the hand as a symbol of the possession of power.

Diseases in Akkadian were indicated in terms of hand symbolism, such as the ‘hand of Utu’ or then ‘hand of Ištar’, and thus can be understood in terms of a particular god’s responsibility.³ Therefore, healing, which can be understood as well in terms of repair and salvation, is effected by the responsible hand. In Babylonia, (to the king) that PN₃ and his children (will not run away to another country).”

¹Sinuhe (line 262) describes his anxiety in the presence of the king, saying “it is like the hand of God, it is a fright that is in my body.” See also Yahuda, 65.


healing and exorcism were effected by laying the hand on the head of sick people\(^1\) and petitions to Ea were made to smite the toothache worm "with his strong hand" (\textit{ina dannati ritt\(\bar{i}\)-su}).

**Strength and Direct Action**

Already, it is clear that possession was not seen as an end in itself, but rather the antecedent for responsible action. However, only actions mandated by ownership have been considered. But overt action, the accomplishment of tasks independent of ownership, is also symbolized by the hand.\(^2\) As in ownership, to act on an object (concrete or abstract), the hand must make contact with that object as in grasping or holding. Egyptians used the hand and items it grasped to indicate man's vigilance and readiness to act.\(^3\) In Akkadian, the hand is that which grasps and holds, and the hand is the primary symbol of action. "To put the hand to something" signified the beginning of a task's execution. The formula, "hand of god(dess)," sufficed to express that a particular god authored a given event.\(^4\) Thus hands took on the symbolism of performance and accomplishment.

As in many cultures, the most significant accomplishments are acts of creation (in the realm of the gods) and procreation (in the realm of both humans and gods).

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\(^1\)MacCulloch, 494.

\(^2\)Such as using a weapon for battle, John Gray, \textit{Near Eastern Mythology} (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1985), 77; or working with a fish net, Caquot, 199.

\(^3\)Altenmüller, 938.

\(^4\)Dhorme, 144.
Thus, in Egyptian as well as Ugarit, the epitome of hand symbolism involves
references to the hand as the instrument of creation, the giver and source of life,¹ and
the divine phallus.² Cooper notes that the “hand of the Egyptians depicts the union of

¹Canney, 62-64.

²The god Kheperā (the form of either Atum-Rē or Osiris for the purpose of
creation) says: “I gathered together my members which came forth from my own
person after I had union with my hand, and my heart came unto me from out of my
hand. The seed fell into my mouth, and I sent forth from myself the gods Shu and
Tefnut.” E. A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians or Studies in Egyptian
Mythology (London: Methuen, 1904), 1:302, and Canney, 99-100. “The gods of
Atum were created from his semen and from his fingers.” John D. Currid, “An
Examination of the Egyptian Background of the Genesis Cosmogony.” Biblische
Zeitschrift 35-1 (1991): 27. Shu speaks to Atum-Rē: “This was the manner of your
engendering: you conceived with your mouth and you gave birth from your hand in the
pleasure of emission.” R. T. Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt
(London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 44.

Ugaritic minds easily jumped from yd as power to yd as a euphemism for the
phallus. Keret’s son suggests that kingship depends on personal ability and physical
prowess, “You have been brought down by the collapse of your power (lit. “your
hand”). You do not judge the cause of the widow, you do not try the case of the
wretched; you do not put down those who despoil the child of the poor. You do not
feed the orphan before you, nor the widow behind you. Come down from your
kingship that I may be king, from the throne of your dominion that I may sit on it.” It
is possible the literal term ydk (‘your hand’) is a euphemism for the male organ, and
that the suggestion is that Keret’s virility is declining with his physical strength.
Adrian Curtis, Ugarit (Ras Shamra) (Cambridge, England: Lutterworth Press, 1985),
85.

In the Canaanite Poem of the Gracious Gods, El excites the admiration and
passion of two females as they come to the seashore to get water for home chores.
They remark: “Look you, how long-limbed (lit. hand) is El, how far-reaching like the
sea, look you, how his limb (lit. hand) extends ever farther like the main! El has
shown himself long-limbed (hand), his limb (hand) extending like the sea, ever farther
like the main!” Theodore Gaster comments that these women are alluding to El’s
extended hand as a reference to his far-reaching power but are using a “ribald double-
entendre, such as would readily have amused a popular audience.” Thespis: Ritual,
Gray (The Legacy of Canaan, 100) and Gibson (125) agree, and for this sense of yd
refer to Isa 57:8, although Gibson (148) in his index uses the term membrum verile.
male and female."¹ Canney maintains that most of the hand symbolism scattered throughout the world finds its explanation in the ancient Egyptian creation story of Atum-Rê.² Thus as a symbol, the hand is inextricably intertwined with concepts of creation and procreation. Egyptians indicated possessing creative power with the phrase "having many hands."³ Such notions found visual expression through the Amarna depiction of Aten or the sun disk, "lord of the sun's orbit, lord of the heaven, lord of the earth," whose many rays terminate in human hands as a show of his creative ability.⁴

The physical strength necessary to accomplish tasks performed by the hand was recognized by the primary symbol of the extended hand.⁵ In Mesopotamia, strength was represented by á-gal ("one who has the arm") or á-tug ("one who has force"). A strong person is represented by á-kal ("strong arm") and one who is weak by á-kal nu-

Caquot (204, 286) notes other areas of yd carrying the metaphoric meaning of penis, which he translates as "membre."

¹Cooper, 78.
²Canney, 62-4.
⁵Dhorme, 139-40; AHw (1972), s.v. "qātu," 2:911. Esarhaddon stated, "Mit eigner Hand werde ich deine Feinde vernichten" (With my own hand I will destroy your enemies). Gressmann, 282.
tug ("the one who has no strong arm").¹ But the concept of physical strength was often co-mingled with language of the power and control that often accompany physical strength, particularly in contexts of conquest. To talk about the hand of an individual in Mesopotamia as well as in Egypt was to talk about that individual’s power² in terms of his physical strength in battle. Thus, the expression “hand of god” is the equivalent of referring to divine conquest as in “thou puttest thy hand on the land: thy warrior-arm is over the great region.”³

**Hands and the Projection of Status**

The hand, as an agent of exchange and communication, can be understood to be an indispensable tool for bonding the various elements of society, be they concrete or abstract. Thus the hand is necessarily involved in symbols that allude to the specific relationships between these elements. Recognition of these relationships is the essence of social function. Of particular interest to this study are those relationships that pertain to leaders, be they human or divine. Hands played a major role in the ritual

¹Dhorme, 139-40.

²MacCulloch, 492.

³Mercer, 1:118, line 574b. Mercer comments (2:280) that putting a hand on the land (that is the kingdom of the dead) is in the sense of controlling it. Also, “Thy head is in the hand of Horus; thy tail in the hand of Isis.” Mercer, 1:213. “O lord of the house; thy hand is upon thy property.” Mercer, 1:280. From a votive stele of the worker Nefer-abu during the 19th dynasty (about 13th century BCE), “An ignorant man, a fool, does not know good from evil. I did the deed of wickedness against the peak and she punished me. I was in her hand by night and by day.” Brunner, 35.
recognition and clarification of leadership, whose successful function can be measured in terms of successful communication.

Position and Relation

Communities expect their leader to pursue the cause of justice for them, a many-faceted role that goes far beyond formal judicial duties. Pursuing justice generally involves discerning truth, consistency, and the relative merits of various courses of action in relation with community goals, and protecting social values by offensive as well as defensive measures. The latter role is very similar to that of an owner who affords protection to his or her possessions. Because the protective role of an owner and its relationship of hand symbolism has already been discussed, it is not repeated here. The former role, involving the discernment of truth, consistency, and relative merits, invokes the necessity of continually communicating approval or disapproval. Thus it is that hand movements played a major role in the function of a leader in the ancient Near East. Not only did hand gestures accompany speech, they could actually replace verbal communication. A leader spoke “by his [own] hand.” But he also sent greetings, invitations, approval and favor, as well as messages “by the hand” of intermediaries, equivalent in all respects to the leader’s spoken word. Effective communication demanded effective use of the “hand.”

Gruber, 1:17-21. The ancient Near Eastern world incorporated references to gestures in order to convey the ideas which were communicated by gestures. In fact, body movements functioned in nonverbal communication as phonemes do in verbal language.
Obviously, hand symbolism predominates in accounts of message-passing. In Mesopotamia, an intermediary between the one who has given a message and the one who received it is introduced by the expression *ina qātā* "by the hand" or *ina qātā* "by the hands."¹

Particular hand gestures indicated greeting. In Egypt, "giving" one's hand to another signified a friendly greeting.² And a southern Mesopotamian picture is described by Keel in the following way: "A priest or lesser deity leads a worshiper before an enthroned god. The suppliant dare not come alone nor speak. He only raises his hand in greeting, as do the god and goddess conducting him."³

Similarly, hand gestures often replace verbal invitations. The formula, *sabātu* or *tamāthu qātā*, "to take the hand," represented a rite performed by Babylonian or Assyrian kings at the New Year festival by which the king invited the god to join the New Year’s procession.⁴

Mesopotamians indicated the favor of their gods and goddesses in terms of their extended hands. For example, the formula *tiris qātā*, meaning "direction of the hand," indicated the one who is the object of divine favor.⁵ In Mesopotamia, asking for one's

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¹Dhorme, 149.
²Bergman, 395; Altenmüller, 938-9.
³Keel, 311.
⁴Dhorme, 146.
⁵Ibid., 148.
hand indicated a request for acceptance. On the other hand, by raising their hands, Mesopotamian leaders at times indicated threat or even oppression.

Egyptians employed a variety of hand positions to indicate recognition and respect. In Egypt, a ceremony of considerable importance accompanied a royal appointment to high civil or military office. These ceremonies took place in the presence of the king seated on a throne. Attendants clothed the appointee with appropriate robes of office along with a recognized, official necklace. Upon receiving these distinctions, the appointee held forth his hands in a token of respect to the king and verbally expressed his fidelity to the king as he raised the emblems of his new office above his head. At times, the king took a ring from his hand and placed it on the appointee’s hand or held out his own hand to be either touched or kissed by the appointee.

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¹Mercer, 1:264, with commentary on 3:813, 1:300.

²A. Leo Oppenheim. “Idiomatic Accadian.” JAOS 61 (1941): 269. A revolt developed “on account of the chieftains who [raised their hands] oppressed them.”

³“Kings and priests either stood with uplifted hands, or knelt before the statue of the god. They bowed before it in token of respect, ‘lowering the hand to the knee;’ which, Herodotus says, was their manner of saluting each other when they met. They also put the hand upon the breast, or bowed down with one or both hands to the level of the knee; and sometimes placed one hand over the mouth (to keep the breath from reaching the face of a superior). But the usual mode of standing in the presence of a superior was with one hand passed across the breast to the opposite shoulder; they then bowed, lowering the other to the knee; and the same position of the hand upon the shoulder was adopted when deprecating punishment.” Wilkinson, 3:425.

⁴Ibid., 3:370-1. In a tomb at Thebes is an instance of investiture to the post of fan-bearer in which two attendants are engaged in clothing him with the robes of his new office. One puts on a necklace, the other arranges his dress, a fillet being already bound round his head, and he appears to wear gloves upon his uplifted hands. In the
In a similar but opposite way, certain hand gestures symbolized something negative. For example, the washing of hands could indicate the legal function of disassociation from a relationship or dissolution of a contract.\(^1\) Lifting the hands could mean begging or repelling in the sense of refusing.\(^2\) Finger pointing was in fact a hand gesture that was always negative. In the case of a request for divorce in Mesopotamia, finger pointing indicated accusation of marital infidelity,\(^3\) a break in loyalty, and a sign of guilt. In Egyptian references to the 'finger' of their god, nothing positive was ever indicated. Instead they always denoted a source of threat and terror.\(^4\) Other Egyptian

next part of the same picture the individual, holding the insignia of fan-bearer and followed by the two attendants, presents himself before the king, who holds forth his hand to him to touch or perhaps to kiss.


\(^2\) Oppenheim, 269.

\(^3\) Driver and Miles, 50-53. From the Laws of Hammu-rabi. Col vb, §127, line 28: “If a man has caused a finger to be pointed (*tarāsu*) at a high-priestess or a married lady and has then not proved (what he has said), they shall flog that man before the judges and shave half his head.” Also, Col vb, §131-2, lines 68-80: “If the husband of a married lady has accused her but she is not caught lying with another man, she shall take an oath by the life of a god and return to her house. If a finger has been pointed (*tarāsu*) at the married lady with regard to another man and she is not caught lying with the other man, she shall leap into the holy river for her husband.”

\(^4\) The ‘finger of Seth’ was from an old source of threat and terror, especially for the dead who were exposed to all the vicissitudes suffered by Osiris and Horus at the hands of Seth, so the special spell-formulae had to be applied in order to avert a similar danger from Seth and other gods. Yahuda, 67.
negative gestures include the lifted hand as a sign of resolute stubbornness and arrogant courage.¹

Power and Intermediary Action

Hand imagery is also central in the expression of loyalty by the community to its leader. Mesopotamians expressed loyalty in terms of “holding one’s self to the side”² of another. “Side” is, of course, intimately related to “hand” as discussed earlier. In Egypt, loyal helpers of the king received the title “Those with ready hands.”³ In Mesopotamia, lifted hands indicated loyalty in the sense of willingness to help, a willingness also expressed as “to go to the side of somebody.”⁴

Loyalty oaths were referenced in terms of the Akkadian word niš qāš meaning literally “the lifting of the hand.” Babylonians and Assyrians used niš as an abbreviation of niš qāš to also mean “an oath” taken in the name of various gods. The

¹The War God Min was called “he with the uplifted arm” because by lifting up his arm he invested the warriors with courage and bravery. Other expressions include “my hand was not high in the house of the lord,” “I did not lift up my hand (or arm) in the house of the arm-lifter” and in the Song of Thutmosis, “the arms of my majesty uplifted.” Ibid., 68.

²CAD, 16:18.


⁴Willingness to help, Schmökel, 106: “O lord, who decides destinies in heaven and on earth, whose saying no one can alter, who holds water and fire in his hands, who guides living creatures. Who among the gods is as you are? Wherever you [look] as a friend, there is grace. wherever you raise your hand [to help] there is . . . .” To go to the side of, Oppenheim, 268.
man who took an oath lifted his hand to call heaven and the gods as witnesses.\textsuperscript{1} Hands were also used in other ways when taking an oath. At times, a hand was placed on generative organs or oaths were confirmed by shaking hands.\textsuperscript{2} In a similar vein, Egyptian hand gestures included closing business deals.\textsuperscript{3} Thus loyalty was closely identified in terms of the function of the hand.

Generally in the ancient Near East, petitions and requests for mercy could be indicated merely by stretching out one’s hand.\textsuperscript{4} The grasping of the hem of a deity’s garment in Assyria became a gesture of supplication.\textsuperscript{5} But this supplication could be in terms of bringing someone to justice as well. “PN seized me by the hem of my garment and made [me] come along [to the judge].”\textsuperscript{6} In Mesopotamia, stretching out the hand was sometimes an act of obeisance.\textsuperscript{7} Putting one’s hands on an individual’s feet or folding one’s hands at his waist expressed humility, contrition, or submission.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{1}Dhorme, 145; Gressmann, 311; Hoffner, 160. In Hati a soldier to whom the loyalty oath was being administered was instructed to hold up the contents of his hand before his face.

\textsuperscript{2}MacCulloch, 497.

\textsuperscript{3}Bergman, 395; Altenmüller, 938-9.

\textsuperscript{4}Gressmann, 284.

\textsuperscript{5}\textit{CAD}, s.v. “sabātu.”

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 16:17-18.

\textsuperscript{7}Gressmann, 284.

whereas in Egypt the gesture of lowering the hands indicated slackness, pusillanimity, in addition to humble submissiveness.¹

But the Akkadian word *niš qāti*, which was used in the context of expressing allegiance by means of “the lifting of the hand,” also is the common word for “prayer.” In the worship of the divine, the “uplifted hand is intended to draw the attention of the god to the worshiper or is a physical expression intended to help carry the voice of his supplication to the divine throne.”² While prayer is often understood in terms of petition, its primary function can be understood in terms of allegiance and the recognition of its demands. The usual attitude of prayer in much of the ancient Near East involved some form of stretching out or lifting up one’s hands;³ however, there is variety in the direction of the palms and the positions of the fingers.⁴ Babylonians and Assyrians used the expression *našū qāta* or *qātā* “lift the hand(s)” to describe the attitude of one praying. Raising the hands in Hittite culture had the same

¹Submissiveness and humility that one should display towards a superior were indicated by the phrase, “lower thy hands, bend thy back before him.” Submissiveness is indicated in the Aton Hymn of Ekhnaton when Ekhnaton addresses Aton-Re saying, “Thy beautiful countenance causes the hands (of the enemy) to sink” (to surrender abjectly). As a rule, the enemy is represented with lowered hands, thus depicting their fear and despair. Yahuda, 68.

²Keel, 311.

³Dhorme, 145; Driver and Miles, 2:11; Sachs, 132; Schmölkel, 104; Gressmann, 297, 317, 320; Gruber, 60-89; Langdon, *Babylonian Epic*, 40-1.

nuances for prayer as for the Mesopotamian culture. In Ugarit, washing and lifting hands in prayer were closely related. In Egypt, lifting the hand(s) above the head demonstrated proper prayerful attitude. The goddess Mert also embodied cultic jubilation in her characteristic posture in the hieroglyphs with hands upraised for clapping and beating time. In Assyria, a scene appears on a wall in which women and children, clapping their hands in rhythm, follow after a band of musicians playing at the enthronement of Ummanigash. But in all ancient Near East cultures, uplifted hand(s) in prayer could as much be “an expression of joyous excitement. of goodwill

1O. R. Gurney. *The Hittites* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books. 1961), 66: “It is in his capacity as priest we most often find the Hittite king represented on the monuments. We see him at Laja Huyük worshiping with hands raised in greeting before the image of a bull (weather god).”


3In adoration of a deity, ancient Egyptians raised both hands with palms facing the shrine of the deity. Denny, 6:189.

4Keel, 335. Keel comments on these Egyptian and Assyrian practices.
and of blessing as of lamentation. Other indicators of prayer included the open hand or fist, or kissing the hand.

Loyalty may be offered to an abstraction as well as to a physical or divine leader. So loyalty to an ethic is just as appropriate to consider as loyalty to a person. This, in fact, was a particularly easy extension to make in the ancient Near East due to the ease with which concrete and abstract concepts merged. Thus ceremonial washing as a symbol of purity as well as a claim of innocence had great importance throughout the ancient Near East.

Hands, in particular, were points of contact with the unclean and thus symbolized the primary avenues for uncleanness. Demons were perceived to enter the body through the hands. In Babylonia and Assyria, the washing of hands in pure spring water was perceived to rid one of the power of evil spirits. While the ritual cleansing of the whole body was important in both Egypt and Babylonia, special emphasis was placed upon the hands. Cultic officials washed their hands often in order to appear before their deity with "pure hands." For that matter, the ritual of most Hittite festivals involved the king and queen washing their hands with water from a

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1Ibid., 311.

2Bergman, 395; Altenmüller, 938-9.

3Gruber, 1:50-9; Langdon, "Gesture in Prayer." 541, 544. The open hand indicated supplication to either gods or mortals.

4MacCulloch, 498.

5Bergman, 396. Not only were the officials to appear with pure hands but also "with open hand (generosity)," "with friendly hand," and "with knowing hand."
golden jar.¹ Hittite purificatory ceremonies associated with a woman about to give birth began with her washing her hands.² In Ugarit, Anat washes her hands before playing a lute, an old custom of purification before playing holy instruments.³ In all ancient Near Eastern cultures, clean hands became the symbol of innocence through their association with the washing away of possible guilt.

**Hands and the Change of Status**

Thus far, this study has reviewed two areas of hand symbolism as it relates to status: first, its role in symbolizing the perception of status, particularly in the act of possession and in the ability to act; second, its role in symbolizing the projection of status, particularly in the act of one in power communicating and the response to that communication. What role did hand symbolism play in transferring status from one person to another or in the change of a person's status? Because the ancient Near Eastern mind was used to objectifying the abstract, status could be seen as something concrete and thus transferrable by a gesture. Even though specific references to hand usage during ancient Near East events where transfer of status took place are few, it is instructive to review areas that give insight into the ancient mind. Thus, this section surveys hand gestures and the transference of status in three areas: (1) hand as a 

¹Gurney, 153-4.


³Kinet, 105-6.
medium of transfer: (2) hands and installation to public office; and (3) laying on of hands in cultic and installation rituals.

Medium of Transfer

Obviously, transferring power from one individual to another would be expected to be expressed in the idiom of “carrying” that power from one individual to another. As the primary physical instrument of “carrying” in the ancient Near East, it is natural to expect the hand to play a pivotal symbolic role in formal transfer ceremonies. It is natural as well to expect the hand to play a significant role in signifying the transference of the prerogatives of power—namely, authority, mastery, and control. But while authority, mastery, and control were symbolized by the hand holding recognized symbols of power,¹ the transfer of wealth and office (well-

¹Keel, 214-5. This is especially true of the gods. In an 8th-century relief from the Taurus mountains the storm god holds in his left hand four ears of grain and in his right hand the end of a vine twining around his body. Two functions are clearly discernible: he subdues the powers of Chaos and grants fertility to the fields. Gurney, 133-4: “The deities are usually distinguished: (a) by a weapon or other implement held in the right hand; (b) by a symbol carried in the left hand; (c) by wings or other adjuncts; and (d) by a sacred animal on which they frequently stand. In Syrian art the weather-god often stands alone, wielding an axe and a symbolic flash of lightning."

Bergman (395) points out that items to indicate power and authority include lash and scepter in the hands of the pharaoh and Osiris, ankh and scepter in the hands of the gods, and staff of office or writing implements.

See also, Sven Tito Achen, Symbols Around Us (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1978), 131; Dhorme, 146: to the Babylonians the moon god is “the one who holds in her hand the life of all the country.” To the god Ninouria, the magician would say tērit kullat ilāni qāṭukka tamḥat. “the hand holds the command of the totality of the gods.” Akkadians often used the expression paqādu ana qāṭā, “to entrust into the hands” of someone not only function, duty, or mission but also control of people.

From Ba’al et la mer III AB. A lines 11-13, “(Alors) Kothar fabrique deux
recognized measures of authority, mastery, and control) was nearly absent from ancient Near Eastern hand symbolism. Akkadian legal texts do allude to the transfer of hard currency using the word for hand *idu* in the context of "rent."1 Thus, occasionally the hand symbolized money transferred from one to another.

Transfer in the ancient Near East included the world of magic. In magical rites and doctrine, the position of the hand in relation to the body and the arrangement of the fingers carry precise symbolic notions2 irrespective of whether physical contact ensued. In ancient Babylon, a sorcerer’s or witch’s pointing hand or finger could bring about as much harm as his/her touch. Conversely, a well-wisher could effect good from a distance as well as upon contact of the properly positioned hand.3

massues et il proclame leurs noms: ‘Ton nom est Yagrush. Yagrush. chasse Yam. chasse Yam de son trône. [Na]har du siège de sa domination. Puisses-tu t’élancer de la main de Ba’al comme un épervier d’entre ses doigts.” Caquot, 136-7. Yagrush had the power to remove himself from the “hand” (control) of Ba’al.

From *The Epic of Krt* (Gordon, 44-53). Gordon translates, “Thou has let thy hands fall into error.” Curtis (96-8) translates as “You have been brought down by the collapse of your power.” Caquot (572) translates as “tu as laissé choir ta puissance sous les coups du halheur.”

From *Baal and Yam* 2 iv 1, “[my] power (lit. “hand”) is shattered.” Gibson, 43. And from *Keret* 16 V 32, “You have been brought down by your failing power (lit. ‘the drooping of your hand[s]’).” Ginsberg, 101.


2Cirlot, 137.

3MacCulloch, 76:495.
Similarly, installations into public office in the ancient Near East occasionally included hand symbolism, but only in minor if not insignificant roles. Some rare and oblique connections to hand usage in official installations can be found in the use of one of the Mesopotamian verbs often used in conjunction with the hand. The causative form of the verb sabātu, šusbutu, had both concrete and symbolic usage. When installing someone to a feudal holding, office, or responsibility, this causative form was used in the metaphoric sense, while the usual meaning involved an injunction to physically seize someone. However, the positions referred to in these installations include gardener, watchman, and officials in the personal service of the king, not the king himself or any other official of singular importance.

Therefore it appears that there is little evidence to warrant a correlation between hand symbolism in the ancient Near East and in the installation ceremonies of a national leader. While rich and diversified meanings can be found connected to the idiom of the hand in the ancient Near East, this survey of ancient Near Eastern literature has not found the association of “hand” with ceremonies of the type described in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

1CAD (1960), s.v. “sabātu.” šaddakdim RA.GAB. MEŠ LÜ.BAN ana eqlātim šu-us-bu-tim atrudak kum, “last year I sent you the persons of rakbu-status belonging to the class of ‘bowmen’ to install them in feudal holdings.”

2Ibid., 16:37. Assurbanipal granted gardens (nukaribbē ū-ša-as-bi-tu) to the gardeners.

3Ibid. Manzāzu ša rešīja ū-ša-aš-bi-it, “I installed in my personal service” (the following officials).
Rituals of Status Change

The act of laying on of hands is infrequently found in ancient Near Eastern rituals, irrespective of occasion. Only a few cases are recorded, all of which may be placed under two classifications: (1) cultic sacrifice, and (2) royal and cultic installations.

Cultic Sacrifice

Hittite literature gives some of the clearest accounts of laying on of hands in the ancient Near East in its descriptions of sacrificial rites. The hand played three distinct rolls in these rites: the establishment of ritual ownership, identification of substitutes, and the transference of pestilence.

Ritual ownership

The laying on of hands was performed with one hand and was usually described with the phrase, "[subject] QATAM," meaning "[subject] places the hand." On some occasions, "placing" the hand involved contact; on other occasions, "placing"
was merely a gesture from a distance. All occasions of laying on of hands appear to have transpired in the context of cultic offerings such as: breads, wine, grain products, wine, and other prepared food and drinks, as well as live or slaughtered animals, meats, livers, or various animal parts. A cultic functionary or a lay person placed his/her hand over the offered item or pointed his/her hand in the direction of the item as the cultic responsibilities were performed on his/her behalf by an officiating cultic functionary. Kings and sick persons in particular are mentioned as examples of lay persons participating in such rites. Hand placement of this kind attributed the offering and the cultic act to the person whose “hand” that was placed over or towards the sacrifice. In other words, the hand of the devotee established in a symbolic way ritual

1Wright (ibid., 441) notes that the gesture occurs with the adverb tuwaz dai “subject places the hand from a distance over/toward.” The adverb tuwaz indicates that the one performing the act may do it from a relatively remote position. Beckman, 12-14: a Hittite woman performed certain rituals at about the time she was to give birth, which included, among other things, putting forth her hand on the birthstool she was about to use, unless she is impure, at which point she is to remain outside the room in which the birthstool is located and perform the gesture from a distance.

2One scenario involved families going to the wise lady Maštigga for help in solving family feud situations. The position of wise lady was connected with that of either midwife or sorceress. Thirteen such women are known by name, one of whom is Maštigga. During the process of the ceremony, her clients were required to place their hands on certain items such as thick bread, cheese, and wine as an act of designating ritual ownership. See, e.g., O. R. Gurney, Some Aspects of Hittite Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 44-5; Albrecht Goetze, “Ritual Against Domestic Quarrel,” ANET, ed. James Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 350-1; Liane Rost, “Ein hethitsches Ritual gegen Familienzwist,” MIO 1 (1953): 349, 363.
ownership. D. P. Wright refers to this practice as the “principle of attribution by hand placement.”

Substitution

In other contexts, Hittite laying on of hands served to identify substitutes. The text Muršiliš Sprachlähmung illustrates this very well. A synopsis of the storyline is as follows: The weather god becomes angry and causes an illness to overtake Muršiliš the king. An ox is carefully selected and decorated. It is then “identified with the king by the laying on of his hands.” Subsequently the ox is sent to the temple where it is presented to the weather god, slaughtered, and burned. The ox substitutes for the king.

1Wright, “Gesture,” 443. On p. 444, Wright confirms this meaning of laying on hands from an example outside sacrifice. In a ritual where a patient shoots an arrow (probably signifying the dispatch of evil) we read: “The offerer, if a male, he shoots by himself. But if a female, she places her hand on the bow” which the cultic functionary shoots in her stead. The placing of the hand indicates that the shooting pertains to her.


3See Gurney, Aspects, 55. The text was published by A. Goetze and H. Pedersen, Muršiliš Sprachlähmung, Det Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Historisk-filosofiske, Meddelelser XXI/I (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1934), 4-13.
Further clarification of this notion of substitution can be found in the ritual of Ashella, a ritual for ridding an army of a plague. The occasion was motivated by a pestilence that had originated in enemy territory. The ritual began with an order for each army commander to prepare a ram as described by the following first-person account:

Then I twine a cord of white wool, red wool, and green wool, and the officer twists it together, and I bring a necklace, a ring, and a chalcedony stone and I hang them on the ram's horns, and at night they tie them in front of the tents and say: "Whatever deity is prowling about (?), whatever deity has caused this pestilence, now I have tied up these rams for you, be appeased!" And in the morning I drive them out to the plain, and with each ram they take one jug of beer, one loaf, and one cup of milk (?). Then in front of the king's tent he makes a finely dressed woman sit and puts with her a jar of beer and three loaves. Then the officers lay their hands on the rams (emphasis mine) and say: "Whatever deity has caused this pestilence, now see! These rams are standing here and they are very fat in liver, heart, and loins. Let human flesh be hateful to him, let him be appeased by these rams." And the officers point at the rams and the king points at the decorated woman, and the rams and the woman carry the loaves and the beer through the army and they chase them out to the plain. And they go running on to the enemy's frontier without coming to any place of ours, and the people say: "Look! Whatever illness was among men, oxen, sheep, horses, mules, and donkeys in this camp, these rams and this woman have carried it away from the camp. And the country that finds them shall take over this evil pestilence."

1Gurney, Aspects, 48. Ashella is a Hittite man from the region called Hapalla.

2Ibid., 49. See also Wright, “Disposal,” 49-55. Wright points out that the rams and woman that were selected to be carriers of the evil were probably spoils from the enemy land. Wright notes six motifs in this rite. (1) The concretizing of evil in the placement of colored wools, a bead, and a ring of iron and lead on the rams. (2) The transfer of evil to the animals and woman through the act of passing them through the army. (3) The disposal of the impurity through driving the rams and woman to the open country. (4) The prevention of any future evil by sending the rams and woman to the enemy land in such a way that they will not be able to return to the land of Hatti. (5) Appeasement of the gods is indicated also through the decoration of the rams and woman as well as by providing them with beer, bread, and milk. (6) Substitution is visible in the prayer that accompanies the hand-laying rite in which the leaders ask the god to be satisfied with the rams instead of their human flesh.
The laying on of hands clearly indicates substitution in this story. The animals are unambiguously designated in exchange for the army commanders. The experience of Muršiliš and the ritual of Ashella in the Hittite culture are scenarios in which the laying on of hands serves to identify a substitute for the one laying on the hands.

Transference

Two opinions have been expressed as to whether the Hittites perceived a notion of transference in the above-mentioned occasion of laying on of hands in the Ashella ritual. D. P. Wright claims there is no transfer implied. He further claims that Hittite laying on of hands is never associated with healings, blessings, transference of authority, or sins.1 On the other hand, Angel Rodriguez convincingly argues that the "idea of transfer seems to be present" in the Ashella ritual. He points to the transfer of infection from the Hittite camp to the camp of the enemies in the suggestive conclusion of the story of Ashella: "Look! Whatever illness was among men, oxen, sheep, 

1Wright supports this conclusion by focusing on the prayer in the Ashella ritual that accompanied the laying on of hands. Laying on of hands "is a means of designating that the animals are the army leader's choice offerings which are given to the god in exchange for themselves." Wright and Milgrom, 887: also Wright, "Gesture," 446. In his dissertation, Wright points out that Hittites used the concept of transfer in areas other than laying on of hands. "The motif of transfer is evident in rites where an evil of some sort is removed from the patient (i.e., the person or object suffering the evil) and transferred to another object or living being which becomes the bearer of the impurity. The bearer of the impurity is usually then disposed of or banished in some way. Transfer may be performed by waving an object or animal over the patient, by the patient spitting his evil onto the bearer of impurity, by touching an object to the body of the patient in various ways, by combing the evil off the person, by leaving cathartic materials near or under the patient's bed at night to absorb the evil, or by passing through specially erected gates which strip the evil off those who pass through." Wright, "Disposal," 31-2.
horses, mules, and donkeys in this camp, these rams and this woman have carried it away from the camp. And the country that finds them shall take over this evil pestilence.”¹ The story of Ashella clearly illustrates that the Hittites saw in the laying on of hands not only the concept of substitution but also the concept of transference.

**Royal and Cultic Installations**

Very little is known about cultic installations of persons or functionaries in the ancient Near East. Sources are limited to a rare thirteenth-century B.C. E. description of the installations of two priestesses in the north-central Syrian city, Emar.² By comparison, a large number of texts in the ancient Near East present scenes of royal installation, though with little ceremonial detail. Even though, on the one hand, the ancient Near Eastern world gave the hand rich metaphoric meaning and could even treat the hand as a symbol in some areas of transference, on the other hand, hand metaphor or symbolism appears to play no significant role in transfers-of-power scenarios. In fact, four features, other than laying on of hands, stand out as significant in ancient Near Eastern installation scenarios: (1) “Ascend” or “sit”; (2) “inherit”; (3) “climb”; (4) “gentle lead”.

¹Rodriguez. 64.

(3) "appoint," "designate," "name," "grant" or "install"; and (4) "public display" that included placement of royal garments or crown.1


For "public display," note that at Ashurbanipal's installation, his father's (Esarhaddon) words were to be quoted: "You have clothed your son with (royal) robes
Although there is indeed a paucity of evidence for a significant role of the laying on of hands in the transfer of power that presumably takes place in royal and cultic installations, it is instructive to review the usage of hands during these ceremonies. Review is now given first to rituals of installation that include hand gestures without explicit laying on of hands by one person on another, and second, to rituals of installation that use the laying on of hands.

Rituals with hand gestures but no "laying on of hands"

"Taking-the-hand-of-god" rituals. "Taking the hand of god" is a rare hand idiom connected with a cultic event connected with Mesopotamian kings, namely the New Year festival in the spring of the year during the first eleven days of Nisan. The event began with the assembly of the gods at the temple of Marduk. The purpose of the assembly was to determine fates for the new year, particularly the fate of the king.

and made men do obeisance to him. You entrusted him with the kingship of Assyria." Wiseman, 8. In Egypt, the most important public display included placing the crown of the Two Countries upon the head of the king and giving him the royal scepter. Wilkinson (1878), 360-1; Keel. 259: Cyril Alred, Akhenaten, King of Egypt (London: Thames and Hudson. 1988), Plate 51 and Figure 22 on p. 226; Aylward M. Blackman, Luxor and Its Temples (London: A. & C. Black. 1923), 115-9; MacCulloch. 494; Alan Gardiner, "The Baptism of Pharaoh," JEA 36 (1950): 7; Van der Merwe. 41.

1Dhorme, 146-7; Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Part 4. The Scapegoat (New York: Macmillan. 1935), 356; Gray, Near Eastern Mythology, 32; Samuel Henry Hooke, Babylonian and Assyrian Religion (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1953), 59. 60; Gaston Maspero, The Dawn of Civilization: Egypt and Chaldea, ed. A. H. Sayce. trans. M. L. McClure (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 705. Cohen (450-1) disagrees with the theory that the idiom "to take the hand of Bel" is a symbolic gesture by which Marduk granted the king authority to rule for another year" suggesting instead the idiom as referring "as a reference to the king escorting Marduk during the procession."
Subsequently, on the fifth day the king ceremonially abdicated his office, divested himself of his regalia, and suffered himself to be struck in the face by a priest who then directed the king to kneel before Marduk, to recite a formal confession declaring his innocence from any acts injurious to Babylon, and to receive a blessing from Marduk via the priest with promises of success and prosperity. After the blessing, the king was reinvested with his symbols of his rulership by the "hand" of the priest. There was a procession along the "Sacred Way" from the temple to a festival house outside the city. At this time, the king "took the hand" of Marduk to lead him at the head of the procession. No king was considered duly enthroned until he had "taken the hand" of Marduk in his temple. Annually this ceremony was repeated to symbolize his annual reinstatement as Marduk’s vice-regent.

Similar ceremonies took place when the king entered a conquered city and installed himself in the palace of the defeated king. In his installation, the conquering king introduced his gods, or perhaps the divine emblems carried by his army, to his new subjects. The "Investiture" mural in Throneroom 65 and its Sanctuary 66 of the palace of Mari depicts a ritual ceremony in which king Zimri-lim touches the hand of the goddess Ishtar. Al-Khalesi maintains "we are left in the dark concerning the nature and importance of this ceremony" but points out that Parrot hints at a relation between the figures of the "Investiture" mural and the New Year festival in which the king is

re-throned. The idiom of “taking the hand of god” as a symbol of enthronement is certainly appropriate in this setting.

Anointing rituals. The ritual of anointing has, from at least the thirteenth century B.C.E., included an act of the hand as well as the usage of oil. Its origin evidently grew out of the marking of stones in order to visibly mark them and set them apart for sacred purposes. Or its origin also grew out of the ordinary everyday usage of oil placement on the head for hygienic, medicinal, and cosmetic purposes. From this more practical background, anointing took on symbolic significance. This significance added meaning to events of important changes in a person’s status. Such events included changes from single to marital status, slave to freeman, non-property owner to property owner, no business dealing to a contractual relationship, guilt to atonement, and commoner to either king or priest(ess). Two different methods of

1Ibid., 62. See pp. 37, 60-2.

2Fleming, 178. Fleming notes that the discovery of a 13th-century B.C.E. anointing of a high priestess at Emar gives evidence to contradict Martin Noth’s and Roland de Vaux’s claim that anointing is postexilic.

3Ibid., 177.


5Jacob Milgrom, “Anointing,” Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), 3:27. Anointing by pouring oil on the head was performed on many occasions in the ancient Near East for both practical and symbolical reasons.

6Anointing accompanied the acquisition of marital status at weddings, manumissions of prostitutes, confirmations of binding contracts as well as deputations
hand usage in anointing were used depending on whether a person or a stone/idol was
the recipient of the action. When anointing was associated with people, the purpose of
the hand was to hold a container, out of which oil was poured on the head. When
anointing was associated with stones, the hand massaged a mixture of oil and blood
onto stones that represented deities. When anointing was associated with idols, a priest
Eastern anointing, though hands appear to have touched stones and idols, no record has
been discovered in which hands touched humans in a similar ritual.\footnote{Daniel Fleming, telephone interview by author, 14 February 1994. Fleming discussed both the massaging of stones and the lack of touching humans with hands.}

Though it is clear that anointing in the ancient Near Eastern world was associated with significant changes in a person's status, it is not so clear whether the unction was intended to be a preparation for that change or a ceremonialization of the status change. The more generally accepted understanding is that the ancient unction

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1 Daniel Fleming, telephone interview by author, 14 February 1994. Fleming discussed both the massaging of stones and the lack of touching humans with hands.
\end{flushright}
was a common rite in preparation for divine service.\(^1\) Dennis Pardee associates the ordinary act of washing with anointing, and thus sees anointing as an act of purification, a symbolic cleansing, necessary to prepare one for a change in status.\(^2\)

Thorkild Jacobsen points out that in Mesopotamia the phrase "the anointed one," *gudu*, denoted a class of priests or cult personnel. The term *gudu* had its background in anointing for the purpose of delousing and came to indicate personal cleanliness, which in the context of cult indicated ritual purity of priests and thus indicated the preparations necessary for priesthood.\(^3\) Ernst Kutsch prefers not to focus on the function of oil in cleansing, a negative concept indicating a taking away of something, but rather to focus on the function of oil to give vitality. Anointing in the ancient Near East then indicated a preparation act of purification that set free, or of communication of strength, power, and honor that prepared one for change in status.\(^4\)

\(^1\)Fleming, 177.

\(^2\)Pardee, 17. This conclusion is based on his review of ancient Near Eastern anointing practice and his analysis of a "new Ugaritic letter," RS 34.124. Lines 26-32 are the lines of interest: "He also took oil in his horn and poured it on the head of the daughter of the king of Amurru. Whatever sin she has committed against me, you should know that it has been atoned." The daughter is now prepared for a change in status. Evidently she has committed some "great sin," which Pardee concludes is that of treason, and after anointment is ready for reconciliation. He also notes that kings and priests were anointed before attaining the semi-divine status of their office.

\(^3\)Jacobsen, 41, 325-6, n. 11. Jacobsen discusses a 4th-millennium Mesopotamian example of a lament for the god Damu. In the lament is the comment: "For my Damu of the faraways for my anointed one of the faraways." The term for "anointed" *gudu*, Akkadian *paššu*, with the technical meaning of "the anointed one," denoted a class of priests or cult personnel.

\(^4\)Kutsch, 15-16; Veenhof, 308-9.
associates the origin of anointing with marking stones in order to set them apart for sacred purposes. He suggests that human anointing could have originated in marking rather than purification. Thus anointing became an act of setting one apart for a new status, which although is not an act of purification, it is still an act of preparation for entry into divine service.\(^1\)

On the other hand, Milgrom, Rabinowitz, and Harris suggest that the main role of anointing in the ancient Near East was to ceremonialize an elevation of or change in legal status during events such as manumission of slaves, transfer of property, betrothal of a bride, or deputation of a vassal.\(^2\) Veenhof sees the anointing of images of gods as a life-giving and life-enhancing act rather than as a purifying act, the ability of oil to add luminosity and to penetrate, rather than its ability to cleanse. Milgrom agrees, stating that “the prophylactic power of oil” is well acknowledged in the ancient Near

\(^{1}\)Fleming (174-9) notes an example of anointing-by-pouring in the installation of the Emar high priestess. In that cultic installation, oil was poured on the head of a carefully selected woman. This rite “set [her] apart for a new status as priestess and for entry into the service of [the god] dIM.” Gray (“Sacral Kingship,” 295-6) also notes, “The designation of the king as the ‘son of El’ then singles him out as the representative of his sacral community and as the executive of God’s order in society. The king is the one who, to obviate the inconvenience of the whole community being in the required state of consecration with all the restrictions that were imposed, is their representative as worshiper par excellence, for which he is set aside by the rite of anointing. This significance of anointing, though it is not actually attested of a king in the Ras Shamra texts, has been indicated beyond all doubt by a deed of emancipation from the archives of Ras Shamra.”

\(^{2}\)Milgrom, Leviticus. 553; idem. “Anointing,” 3:27-31: Rabinowitz, “Oils,” 12:1350; Harris, 92. Milgrom and Rabinowitz refer to the manumission of a slave woman, the transfer of property, the betrothal of a bride, and the deputation of a vassal. Harris clarifies how the anointing at the sale of property indicated a change of status by pointing out that a man thus became an owner.
East, that oil served an apotropaic purpose possessing intrinsic power that “imparted vitality to and repelled evil from” the statues of the gods. The curses of *The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* provide an example of oil used as an idiom of penetration: “like oil penetrates into your flesh, so may they (the gods) make this curse enter into your flesh.” Via the oil, the curse was understood to be stored in the anointee’s body until such moment as he broke the oath. So, rather than purification, Veenhof sees the purpose of anointing in terms of attaining new and/or higher planes: holiness, consecration, responsibility, or privilege. In this view, then, anointing was more closely related to the change of status itself rather than to preparations for a change of status.

In either case, whether anointing symbolizes the change of status or the preparation for that change, there is clear association in the ancient Near East between anointing and changes of status in general, and official installations in particular. The ancient Near Eastern practice of anointing can shed light on this study of hands and their symbolic connection with change in status, even though the well-established biblical practice of anointing kings and priests is not well attested in extra-biblical

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1 Milgrom, 516-7, 853.

2 Wiseman, 77.

3 A slave was anointed when released from slavery. Anointing accompanied transfer of property transactions as one of the symbolic actions creating a community. Women about to be married were anointed as an act demonstrating the groom’s love for her and his promise to account for her livelihood. Veenhof, 308-13.
Even though hands apparently were not placed directly on people, they did make direct contact when stones were anointed. As such, hands played a significant role in an action that marked and set something aside for sacred purposes. Hands were also used when anointing was an action of pouring. At such time people had transferred to them something they did not have before, such as cleansing, purification, responsibility, privilege, or a new and higher plane. Hand usage in anointing was clearly a part of ceremonalizing changes in status.

\[\text{A. E. Crawley, "Anointing," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (1913), 1:553. "The anointing of kings is a spectacular rite of rare occurrence outside the sphere of Hebrew tradition." Among the few existing records of ancient Near Eastern anointing, Fleming (179) uncovered evidence for the anointing of Hittite kings. The New Kingdom Hittite king Tudhaliya was anointed to the priesthood and the Amarna letters mentioned the anointing of a local official and the oil sent by the king of Cyprus to be poured on the head of the Egyptian king. Gray (Legacy, 221) found that in Ugarit, the rite of adoption by which the king became the "son of El, the offspring of the Kindly One and the Holy," was a rite of anointing. There is some discussion whether the first four kings of Ebla were anointed when they were elected. Pettinato (71) and Muntingh (8) claim they were. Archi (560-1) disagrees. Further disagreements arise between Keel and Wilkinson with regard to the question whether royal Egyptian investiture ceremonies included anointing. Wilkinson (3:360-1) maintains that "one of the principal solemnities connected with the coronation was the anointing of the king, and his receiving the emblems of majesty from the gods. Oil was poured over the head but they also anointed the statues of the gods; which was done with the little finger of the right hand." Keel (257-8) counters that "nothing is known from Egypt of the central point of the Judaic kingly consecration, namely anointing. To be sure, we are informed that the king anointed vassal princes or divine images, but we have no information to indicate the king himself was anointed. However, there has survived a small tablet from the Jemdet-Nasr period which has been interpreted as an anointing. Because the scene takes place before a temple, that is before a deity, it undoubtedly has some religious significance. Whether it represents an anointing, however, and if so the anointing of a king, remains uncertain." At least both Keil and Wilkinson agree that Egyptian kings anointed their vassals.}
Rituals with laying on of hands

The bestowal of blessing by the laying on of hands, so familiar in the Old Testament, appears to be almost unknown in the ancient Near East except for a few instances of Egyptian depictions of royal installations, as symbols on amulets. A newly crowned Pharaoh of Egypt was often pictured with the gods laying their hands upon him in blessing.

1 For example, Jacob blessing the children of Joseph, Gen 48:12-20.

2 Philip King has a drawing of “Baal of the lightning” on a fourteenth to thirteenth century B.C.E. white limestone stele from Ras Shamra that depicts Baal “brandishing a thunderbolt” in his right hand and holding a lance in his left hand that is “decorated with branches that may symbolize lightning.” The drawing portrays a third hand extending down from Baal’s lower chest and touching the head of a small figure. Philip King, Amos, Hosea, Micah—An Archaeological Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 98. This drawing differs from what James Pritchard and Claude Schaeffer both refer to as a dagger in the same place as King’s middle arm. Upon close observation of pictures of the original as presented by both Pritchard and Schaeffer, one is drawn to the clear conclusion that King is incorrect: there is no middle arm. James B. Pritchard, The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, 2d ed. with supplement (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 168, 307; Claude F. A. Schaeffer, Ugaritica II, Mission de Ras Shamra, vol. 5 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1949), 121-30, Plates 23-4.

3 Symbols on amulets include one of Nephthys, ruler of the temple, kneeling on the sign for gold and laying her hands on the sign “chen” (a special symbol in the shape of a circle standing upright on a flat base) whose magical protection guards its possessor from being ‘torn apart’ by negative forces. Jacq (85) interprets this act as that of giving power to the chen.

4 In the myth of Isis, she laid her hands on a dead child and uttered spells so that he lived. MacCulloch, 6:494.

5 The hieroglyph for the Egyptian concept of the Ka is two arms stretched out. When the sun-god created the other gods, he conferred on them his own Ka by laying his hands on them. Van der Merwe, 41.
They have their hands on the king's wrist, shoulder, head, or crown. This is interpreted in terms of the gods conferring long life and a glorious reign. Most of these occasions were limited to hand laying an act of gods rather than of humans. Except for one portrayal of a god's hand directly on Queen Hatshepsut's head, it is not clear in a royal installation whether the gods' hands are laid directly on the head or simply on the crown. In all other portrayals of Hatshepsut, the god's hands are on her crown only. The record claimed that in thus crowning the Queen, the god Amon caused "protection, blessing and vital power to pour forth upon his daughter." 

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1As noted in pictures in Erik Hornung, *Das Grab des Haremhab im Tal der Könige* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1971), pictures 2, 3, 9, 17, and Otto. 33 Colorplate V. Gardiner (7-8) in a late-date crowning, notes that Horus and Thoth "place the crown of Upper Egypt upon Philip Arrhidaeus' head. Then Mont of Thebes and Atum of Heliopolis take the king by hand and, at the invitation of Thoth, lead him into the presence of Amen-Rê". Lastly, that August deity adjusts the crown anew, thus acknowledging the coronation to have been properly accomplished.

2Wilkinson, 3:363; MacCulloch, 494; Van der Merwe, 41; Denny, 6:189.

3Keel (259) points out that of an entire series of scenes shown on an obelisk of Queen Hatshepsut in the temple at Karnak, the crowning was chosen to adorn the apex. The queen kneels before Amon, who places the blue crown upon her head. See also Karol Mysliwiec, "Iconography, Literary and Political Aspects of an Ancient Egyptian God's Identification with the Monarch," in *Monarchies and Socio-Religious Traditions in the Ancient Near East*, ed. H. I. H. Prince Takahito Mikasa (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1984), 45, and plates IV, V, VI; Alred, Plate 51; M. Henri Chevrier, "Rapport sur les travaux de Karnak (Mars-Mai 1926)," *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 26 (1926): 119-130, Plate V; and M. Maurice Pillet, "Rapport sur les travaux de Karnak (1923-1924)," *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 24 (1924): 53-88, Plate V. Plate V of Chevrier presents the scene of Hatshepsut with one god placing his right hand directly on her head and shoulder and another god extending very close to the head of the king. All other pictures present scenes with the hands of the gods placed on Hatshepsut's crown.

4Keel, 259.

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Three Iron II Hebrew bullae seals and one undated Philistine seal give some late and unclear evidence that hands either convey transfers of tangible symbols of authority—bow and arrows—or were possibly placed on the head. The condition of the seals is such that the portrayal is unclear, thus making interpretation difficult. Two of the inscriptions appear to say לֶהָב (belonging to the king), one states לֶהָב (belonging to the governor), and one states שֵׁן אֱלוֹת (governor of the city). It is not clear whether the figures with hands extended are touching the head or not, or if a soldier is leading a captive. Another interpretation is that such depictions were used only if a person’s authority was questioned.

In only one case does a human lay hands on another human in a leadership transfer scenario. In a relief on the temple at Deir el-Bahri, Tuthmosis I, seated upon his throne, presents his daughter Hatshepsut to the great men of her country by laying hands on her shoulder and elbow. This portrayal is accompanied by the following words:

His majesty said unto her, “Come O glorious one, whom I have placed in my arms (i.e. associated with me on the throne), that you may witness the arrangements (made) for you in the palace, that you may take your glorious position which is your due, that you may assume your noble office, excellent in your magic, mighty in your strength; that you may have power over the Two Lands, that you may seize upon the rebellious, that you may appear gloriously in the palace, your forehead adorned with the double crown, that you may be happy as my heir who is born to men. O daughter of the white Crown, beloved of Uto.”


2 Blackman, 117.
The crown is no doubt mentioned because of its primary function as a public display of succession.\textsuperscript{1} Hatshepsut’s father, Tuthmosis I, then continues with instructions to the nobles, high officials, and other notables who have been summoned into his presence in order to issue to them a command, while my majesty puts the majesty of this my daughter in his arms in his palace of the residence. His majesty said in their presence: “This my daughter Hatshepsut, I appoint her to be my substitute. Yea, she is my successor. She it is who shall sit on my wondrous throne. She shall give command to the people in all places of the palace. She it is who shall lead you, and ye shall hearken to her word. He who praises her shall live, but he who saith aught evil, blaspheming her majesty, he shall die.”

These instructions are followed by an account of an outburst of enthusiasm by which all the great men of Egypt expressed their loyal support of Hatshepsut.\textsuperscript{2}

In chapter 3, “Hands in the Installation of Joshua,” it will be tempting to see this laying of hands on Hatshepsut as an ancient Near Eastern parallel to the biblical account of Moses laying hands on Joshua. Therefore, it is important now to note the issues that might undermine a literal interpretation of this portrayal. To begin with, a number of scholars question the historicity of the presentation. While some argue that Tuthmosis I installed his daughter as his co-regent when she was approximately twenty years old,\textsuperscript{3} others argue that Hatshepsut concocted the story twenty years after her

\textsuperscript{1}Wilkinson, 360-1; Keel, 259; Alred, Plate 51 and Figure 22 on p. 226; Blackman, 115-9; MacCulloch, 494; Gardiner, 7; Van der Merwe, 41.

\textsuperscript{2}Blackman, 117-9; Donald B. Redford, \textit{History and Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 82.

\textsuperscript{3}Evelyn Wells, \textit{Hatshepsut} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 112-14. See also Blackman, who states that this “relief in the temple of Deir el-Bahri and the accompanying inscription are definitely historical” (117).
father's death in order to solidify her position on the throne.\textsuperscript{1} Another consideration that colors how the portrayal should be interpreted involves the fact that Egyptian kings were gods, "sons of Amen-Re."\textsuperscript{2} Thus, the hand-laying gesture could have been portraying a god-human act rather than human-human. Since there are so many other such god-human portrayals of hand laying and no other human-human portrayals, it is a distinct possibility that this relief is meant to be interpreted as a divine act. Finally, Tuthmosis I is shown with his left hand on Hatshepsut's shoulder and his right hand on her right elbow.\textsuperscript{3} Without commenting on the hand gesture, Donald Redford refers to the whole scene as a "coming-of-age" presentation rather than a formal coronation of

\textsuperscript{1}Redford refers to this event as a "fictitious coronation by her father" (54), yet suggests that an actual occurrence lies behind it in which her father made a "formal presentation" of his daughter to the court as "heiress" (55). He further refers to this event as an "obscure incident that occurred when she was a girl, and transformed it out of all recognition," an event that "was probably nothing more than a 'coming-of-age' at which time her father presented her to the court as heiress" which Hatshepsut transformed twenty years later into the above quotation (82). See also: Joyce Tyldesley, \textit{Hatchepsut: The Female Pharoah} (London: Viking, 1996). Tyldesley notes that Tuthmosis II and Hatshepsut ruled as king and queen consort when Tuthmosis I died (81). Tyldesley states that Hatshepsut became king during the seventh year of Tuthmosis III (99), and "chose to gloss over her periods as consort and regent, rewriting her own history so that she might invent a co-regency with Thuthmosis I" (101). "There is absolutely no evidence to show that Tuthmosis I ever regarded Hatshepsut as his formal successor, or that he had the intention of passing over both his son and his grandson in order to honor his daughter. The unchallenged succession of Tuthmosis II, and her own conventional behavior as queen-consort, confirms that, at the time of her father's death, Hatshepsut did not expect to become king of Egypt" (106)

\textsuperscript{2}Tyldesley, 102.

\textsuperscript{3}Blackman, 118.
his daughter as the next Pharaoh. The fact that he remains on his throne adds a note of authority to his act.

Laying on of Hands in Ancient Near Eastern Transfers of Leadership

It has already been observed in this chapter that hand symbolism played a significant role in the ancient Near Eastern world of perception, projection, and change of status whereas hand-laying gestures, in particular, are limited to the one case of Hatshepsut's enthronement. If one were to speculate that human-human hand laying was a routine element of succession rituals, this enthronement scenario is the only window by which to examine this practice in the ancient Near East. And while it is quite likely that Hatshepsut's father never physically placed his hands on his daughter, Hatshepsut must have found the motif of hand laying effective in strengthening her power base.¹ Regardless of the historicity, one must ask why Hatshepsut went to such

¹Redford (82-3) notes that an aura of illegitimacy always surrounded Hatshepsut that she desperately tried to mask by asserting her rights over and over in the official inscriptions. She used two means to assert these rights: first, by stressing her legal right as successor to her father which was enhanced by the hand-laying ceremony, and second, by emphasizing the mystery of her divine parentage. To better impress the populace with her divine descent, the mystery of her birth and the paternity of Amun were set forth in a series of reliefs in the Deir el-Bahri temple. The account traced the history of the queen from the time when Amun designated Hatshepsut's mother, Ahmose, as the chosen vessel, through the miraculous birth and her childhood, concluding with her coronation at the hands of the gods. Tyldesley (102) notes that it is perhaps no coincidence that the only other complete cycle of divine birth scenes comes from the Luxor temple of the later 18th Dynasty king Amenhotep III who was the first Pharaoh to promote himself as a god in his own lifetime. His own birth scenes bear a striking similarity to those of Hatshepsut, and it would appear that having admired his predecessor's work, he simply copied it wholesale, substituting the name of his own mother for that of Queen Ahmose.
lengths to connect herself through hand laying to her father. It is therefore useful to attempt an observation of procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the hand-laying gesture from the eyes of Hatshepsut.

Procedural Techniques of Laying on of Hands

Three observations can be made concerning the procedure of hand laying in the experience of Hatshepsut. First, on an administrative level, Hatshepsut needed to establish clear lines of authority because both she and Tuthmose III could claim title to the Egyptian throne. This could have easily become a vulnerable and unstable period due to the probable very young age of Tuthmose III and Hatshepsut, a woman, taking over the real power. Hatshepsut needed to make a dramatic statement in order to establish her connection to her father, a statement reinforced through a ceremony involving physical touch.

Second, the physical setting of the hand-laying gesture enhanced the process. The relief portrays Tuthmosis I in his throne room, elevating his daughter to his own throne, and doing so in the presence of key personnel. The procedure was also enhanced by placing the crown of the Two Countries on Hatshepsut’s head and the royal scepter into her hand.

Third, the ceremony included words which Tuthmosis I spoke to both his daughter and to all in attendance at the ceremony. The words to Hatshepsut were words of encouragement and assurance of her father’s wishes. He described her work as that of exercising power over the two lands and as seizing any who would be
rebellious. The words to the nobles stipulated that his daughter was his substitute and successor in leading the country. Tuthmosis I instructed the nobles, officials, and other notables in the audience that they were to listen to (obey) Hatshepsut and praise her. Any who cursed her or blasphemed her majesty were to die.

Symbolic Meanings of Laying on of Hands

It can be surmised that Hatshepsut desired to communicate: that she had received her father's personal blessing, that her father identified through his hand-laying gesture whom his successor was to be, that he confirmed this choice by the means of touch, and that Tuthmosis I had effectively transferred his authority and power to his daughter.

Tangible Effects of Laying on of Hands

Her father clarified his expectations by stating that the nation of Egypt was to listen to (obey) his daughter's commands. The Deir el-Bahir relief text describes an immediate reaction: the nobles responded immediately and enthusiastically. Hatshepsut's goal was clear. All the appropriate people understood her father's wishes. As a more objective observation, it should be noted that Hatshepsut maintained her power for a rather long period of time.¹

Conclusion

Although direct information about laying on of hands in the ancient Near Eastern world appears to be lacking in general, the information gained from this study of ancient Near Eastern hand symbolism combined with the few events of ancient Near Eastern laying on of hands provides a helpful background to understanding laying on of hands as presented in the Old Testament.

This study has indicated that hands played a central role in the perception, projection, and change of status. In the perception of status, hand(s) symbolized ownership and control. Hand(s) further symbolized the resultant responsibility that included the provision of care, protection, guidance, direction and guarantee of well-being. Out of this symbol of responsibility, hand(s) further symbolized judgment in the sense of punishment or saving power, mercy, and the ability to heal. Hand(s) also symbolized strength and the ability to act. Thus hand(s) symbolized vigilance, readiness to act, performance, as well as accomplishment. As a result, hand(s) became something seminal symbolizing the power of creation or pro-creation and the ability to do harm or good in the world of magic.

In the projection of status, hand(s) carried messages and thus could symbolize favor, invitation, approval, and respect. The message indicated by the hand could be one of loyalty or of prayer. In addition, the message could be one of obeisance and submission. In the right context, a pointed finger indicated guilt or threat and elicited a response of terror. Clean hands indicated a message of purity or innocence.
For the change of status, hands played a significant role because hands symbolized the carrying of power. Thus power can be symbolically transferred from one to another through the hand. The Babylonian king was not duly enthroned until he had taken the hand of Marduk in the new year festival practice of 'taking-the-hand-of-god.' Hands were an element in ancient Near Eastern ceremonialization of change in status through anointing. In the ritual associated with anointing, hands were used to indicate a marking or setting aside for status change. Also, in anointing, hands were associated with the transfer of cleansing, purity, responsibility, and privilege. Ancient Near Eastern evidence of laying on of hands appears to be limited to Hittite cultic practice and Egyptian royal installations. The laying on of hands in the Hittite cult indicated ritual ownership, substitution and transference. Laying on of hands in Egyptian installations indicated divine conferral of blessing, protection and vital power. In Hatshepsut’s rise to power, hand laying indicated the transference of power from her father to herself.

How does the Old Testament view hand symbolism? How does it relate to hands and the perception of status, hands and the communication of status, as well as hands and the transference of status? What is it’s particular focus on laying of hands? Does its treatment of any of these areas in any way relate to ancient Near Eastern practice. How does its treatment of these areas establish a base from which to interpret the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the laying on of hands in transfers of leadership? The next chapter attempts to answer these questions.
CHAPTER II

HANDS AND STATUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Old Testament writers used the imagery of the hand in a wide variety of ways to characterize a person and his status. They used its symbolic significance to convey abstract concepts and idiomatic expressions. Aubrey Johnson points out that the hand indexed feelings, implied power, indicated purpose, reinforced the written and spoken word, carried magical implications, conveyed personal responsibility, and, used with a suffix, became an emphatic form of the personal pronoun.¹

The particular interest of this study is the hand's role as an instrument in changes of status. Exploring Old Testament symbolism associated with the hand provides background material necessary for an interpretation of the meaning of הַמְזָה, "laying on of hands," on Joshua in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. To this end, two constraints are used in this chapter. First, a thematic approach is taken similar to that taken for the study of hands and status in the ancient Near East in chapter 1. The overarching theme, status, is subdivided into three areas: perception, projection, and change. Second, study of הַמְזָה is limited to its usage in these three areas

of status. With these constraints in mind, this chapter first reviews the Hebrew
terms; second, reviews hand symbolism in the three areas of status; third, reviews
laying on of hands in Old Testament transfers of leadership; and fourth, draws
conclusions relevant to an interpretation of Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9.

Hebrew Terms

The word  יד apparently comes from one of the earliest periods in the
development of Semitic languages. The 1,616 occurrences of the most common Old

1Another dissertation dedicated to a thorough study of יד would be
appropriate to test the findings of this survey.

2For a thorough discussion of יד see: Ackroyd, 5:393-426; Alexander,
also: M. Delcor, "Two Special Meanings of the Word יד in Biblical Hebrew," JSS 12
(1967): 368-74; Paul Jouon, "Divers emplois métaphoriques du mot "yad" en
Hébreu," Biblica 13 (1932): 452-9 (hereafter referred to as "Divers emplois"); R.

3Ackroyd, 397; McCurley, 10. McCurley points out that "the names for the
various parts of the body, at least the more important parts, come from one of the
earliest periods in the development of the language of the Semitic group of people." He
gives two reasons: first, because of the great number of terms which are biradical,
i.e., 2 consonant roots which originated before the triradical roots were developed. He
cites for support: Harri Holma, Die Namen der Körperteile im Assyrisch-
Babylonischen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Kustantama, 1911), x. Second,
because many anatomical terms in Semitic are identical to the corresponding words in
Old Egyptian. He then uses "hand" = the Egyptian "ḏ" = the Semitic "yāḏ" (among
other illustrations) along with citing more than 40 etymologies as evidence that
anatomical terms go back to the time before the Egyptians left the original home of the
Semitic and Hamites to wander west. He cites for support of this second reason:
Holma, p. x; William F. Albright, "Notes on Egypto-Semitic Etymology," AJSL 34

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Testament word for “hand” are evenly distributed throughout its writings. Though the normal meaning for is that of “hand,” the ancient mind did not sharply distinguish between “hand,” “wrist,” or “arm.” An object that a human was capable of holding was sometimes identified as such by simply adding the word. Closely related terms include: (1) , palm of the hand, hand; (2) , right hand or side; (3) , left hand or side; (4) , arm; (5) , hollow of the hand(s); (6) , hollow hand or handful, (7) , fist, and (8) , finger.

(1918): 89ff.

1 Ackroyd, 397; Van der Woude, 667. The top frequency books are 1 Samuel, 119; Jeremiah, 117; Exodus, 109; and Ezekiel, 108. Ackroyd points out that “no useful conclusion can be drawn from the observation that the greatest number of occurrences is found” in these books.

2 Ackroyd, 400. Gen 24:22 mentions bracelets for “her hands” obviously meaning for her wrists or forearms.

3 Num 35:17, rock; 35:18, wood tools.

4 Ackroyd, 403. Though is the second most frequent word for “hand” in biblical Hebrew, it is used with only one eighth of the frequency of . Tends to indicate an open hand which is ready to receive something rather than the closed fist. It has a much more restricted usage than , denoting a hollow hand into which oil is poured (Lev 14:15), open hands (Exod 29:24) or hands holding something (2 Sam 18:12). However the distinction between and is at times unclear (Prov 31:19; Isa 62:3). is used to indicate the hand severed from the body (2 Kgs 9:35; Deut 25:12; 1 Sam 5:4). It also is used in connection with the foot or sole of the foot (Ezek 1:7; 2 Kgs 19:24; Gen 8:9) as well as the socket of the thigh (Gen 32:26(25)) and the hollow of a sling (1 Sam 25:29).

5 For , see ibid., 406. The meaning of “arm” overlaps with that of and . For and , see ibid., 405. “The word is always used in the dual indicating the two hands held together forming a hollow denoting a handful.” For , see ibid., 407. is also understood as fist or spade. For further study of the synonyms see Ackroyd, 393-407; Van der Woude, 667.
The verb הָעַבָּד is used forty-eight times in the Old Testament, forty-one times in qal, six in nifal, and once in piel.\(^1\) הָעַבָּד is the root of the proper nouns הָעַבָּד הָעַבָּד הָעַבָּד.\(^2\) The noun הָעַבָּד appears only once and is not linked with any certainty to the verb הָעַבָּד.\(^5\) Synonyms of הָעַבָּד include הָעַבָּד, grasp, lay hold of; הָעַבָּד, lean; the piel of הָעַבָּד, support, refresh; הָעַבָּד, lean, rest, depend on; הָעַבָּד, to rely on, be full of confidence; הָעַבָּד, help, save, rescue; and הָעַבָּד, sustain, support, hold upright, strengthen.\(^6\)

Depending on usage, the meaning of the Hebrew verb הָעַבָּד lies somewhere between “to lean on” and “to support.”\(^7\) This meaning can be either concrete or

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\(^1\) Fabry, 5:884, 889; Patterson, 2:628; Stolz, 2:160-162; Wright and Milgrom, 5:879-87. Qal perfect, 23 times; qal imperfect, 8 times; qal imperative, 1 time; qal participle, 9 times; nifal perfect, 2 times; nifal imperfect, 4 times; piel imperative, 1 time.

\(^2\) 1 Chr 26:7.

\(^3\) 2 Chr 31:13.

\(^4\) Exod 31:6; 35:34; 38:33.

\(^5\) In Judg 4:18 Jaël covers Sisera with a covering, חֲשֵׁב שָׁפִּיקָה.

\(^6\) Patterson, 628; Stolz, 160-2; Wright and Milgrom, 5:881-3.

\(^7\) Podet (15-16) notes that in rabbinical literature the consonantal root S-M-K originally meant “to close” or “to join.” The root came to mean: (1) to mash or pack down; (2) to hold or support; (3) to place in proximity or congruity; (4) to perform the act of laying hands on an animal; (5) to ordain; (6) to find support for an opinion; (7) to derive the biblical hermeneutic from contiguity of verses; (8) to be hardened or resistant to an opinion; (9) to lean; (10) to feel safe or depend on; (11) to draw and order; (12) to thicken or cause to become substantial; and (13) to help. Podet, 31-4, proposes four primary meanings: (1) lean upon; (2) lay on, as in sacrificial rites or
abstract. In the concrete sense, ָּוִּֽֽוּ is used to indicate leaning onto something physical for support such as a wall or a reed, the provision of food, or the support pillars provide for a building.  Abstractly, the idiom ָּוִּֽֽוּ is used when words of a king support (ָּוִּֽֽוּ) his people, one nation “enters into a league” (ָּוִּֽֽוּ) with another nation, or one nation leans on another nation for support and help.  In the Elephantine literature, YHWH was given an additional name, ָּוִּֽֽוּ or “My Support.”  Leaning can take on negative nuances, such as leaning in opposition, attack, or undue pressure. For example, the king of Babylon leaned (ָּוִּֽֽוּ) against Jerusalem.

Normally the more abstract concepts of support are connected with YHWH. Since YHWH finds no one to give him support, His own wrath and righteousness sustain (ָּוִּֽֽוּ) Himself. YHWH upholds (ָּוִּֽֽוּ) His people by His word and by His investiture of designated personages: (3) rest; and (4) literal and figurative applications of support or sustain.

1. ָּוִּֽֽוּ in the sense of wall (Amos 5:19), reed (2 Kgs 18:21; Isa 36:6), sustinance and food (Gen 27:37; Cant 2:5), and pillars (Judg 16:29).

2. Support people (2 Chr 32:8), league with others (Ezek 30:6), lean on a nation such as Egypt (Ezek 30:6).


hand, especially when they fall.¹ YHWH especially blesses those who uphold (נָשַׁר) His own people.² David's prayer is that YHWH grant him a willing spirit to sustain (נָשַׁר) him.³ God's leaning also can have a negative side, for His wrath has been known to lean (נָשַׁר) heavily against one.⁴

The notion of support is closely related to that of reliance and stability, i.e., one who provides support can be counted on. And נָשַׁר too includes this sense of steadfastness. YHWH's commandments are securely firm (נָשַׁר).⁵ The Psalmist has remained steadfast (נָשַׁר) with YHWH since birth, while on the other hand some have falsely claimed to remain steadfast.⁶ The one who fears YHWH will find his heart securely (נָשַׁר) established, and whose mind is steadfast (נָשַׁר), YHWH will keep in peace.⁷

¹People (Pss 3:5[6]; 37:17), by His word (Ps 119:116), by His hand (Ps 37:24), when they fall (Ps 145:14).

²Ps 54:4[6].

³Ps 51:12[14].

⁴Ps 88:7[8].

⁵Ps 111:8.

⁶Birth (Ps 71:6), false claims (Isa 48:2).

⁷Securely established (Ps 112:8), in peace (Isa 26:3).
Perhaps the best known usage of the verb תָּנַשׁ derives from its connection with the noun דַּע, which when combined together literally means "he laid a hand," but can also be translated in a technical sense as the "laying on of one or both hands." Table 2 summarizes all twenty-five occurrences of the phrase תָּנַשׁ in the Old Testament.

Eighteen times hands are laid on animals in the context of sacrifice or of the scapegoat, five times on people, one time on an inanimate object, and one time YHWH supports with His hand one who stumbles.1 Twenty-three of the above twenty-five occurrences occur in a cultic setting, suggesting that the two-word phrase "implies a technical term, by which a ceremony or ritual is depicted."2

1Three passages refer to the usage of one hand on the scapegoat: Lev 4:24, 29, 33 (and he shall lay his hand upon the goat’s head). Five passages refer to the single hand usage on sacrificial animals: Lev 1:4 (and he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering); Lev 3:2, 8, 13 (and he shall lay his hand upon his offering); Lev 4:4 (and he shall lay his hand upon the bull’s head). The usage of two hands is mentioned once: Lev 16:21 (and Aaron shall lay both his hands on head of a live goat). Nine passages use the phrase “their hands” with reference to sacrificial animals: Exod 29:10, 19 (Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on head of a bull); Exod 29:15 (Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of a ram); Lev 4:15 (the elders of the congregation shall lay hands on the bull’s head); Lev 8:14 (Aaron and his sons laid hands on the head of a bull); Lev 8:18, 22 (Aaron and his sons laid hands on the head of a ram); Num 8:12 (Levites shall lay hands on the heads of bulls); 2 Chr 29:23 (the king and assembly laid hands on goats). Three passages refer to Moses laying hand(s) on Joshua (Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9), one passage refers to the children of Israel laying hands on the Levites (Num 8:10), and one passage refers to the congregation laying hands on a blasphemer (Lev 24:14). One passage refers to laying a hand on a wall for support (Amos 5:19). One passage refers to YHWH supporting one who stumbles (Ps 37:24).

2Van der Merwe, 36. Ps 37:24 and Amos 5:19 are the two non-cultic verses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>OBJECT</th>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>PARSING</th>
<th>PLACEMENT</th>
<th>SETTING</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>His hand - יזח</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Burnt</td>
<td>Lev 1:4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>이ראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>Lev 3:2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
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<td>Lev 3:8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>Lev 3:13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruler</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commoner</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Lev 4:24</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commoner</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Lev 4:29</td>
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<td>Aaron/sons</td>
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<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin/ordain</td>
<td>Exod 29:10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aaron/sons</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Burnt/ordain</td>
<td>Exod 29:15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aaron/sons</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin/ordain</td>
<td>Exod 29:19</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Lev 4:15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aaron/sons</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
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<td>Lev 8:14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Aaron/sons</td>
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<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Burnt/ordain</td>
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<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin/Levites</td>
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<td>King/people</td>
<td>יראה</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Sin/Temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scapegoat</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>His two hands - י olarak</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
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<td>Moses</td>
<td>Your hand - י trở</td>
<td>perf, 2ms</td>
<td>on (ם) him</td>
<td>Ordain</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>י trở</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) him</td>
<td>Ordain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>י trở</td>
<td>imp, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) him</td>
<td>Ordain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hearers</td>
<td>Their hands - י לאד</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td>י לאד</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) head</td>
<td>Set aside</td>
<td>Num 8:10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>י גם</td>
<td>ptc, ms</td>
<td>uphold one falling</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Ps 37:24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>A man</td>
<td>י ALSO</td>
<td>perf, 3ms</td>
<td>on (ם) wall</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Amos 5:19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in table 2, eight usages of the phrase in the sacrificial setting have a singular subject, singular verb (כָּלַע), and singular object (רָצַע). The nine other usages in the sacrificial setting have a plural subject and object (בָּשַׁל). Three of these nine plural subject/object usages have a singular verb (כָּלַע), six have the normally expected plural verb (כָּלַע). In the case of the scapegoat, Aaron (singular subject) lays (singular verb) his hands (plural object) on the goat. Moses is commanded to lay his hand (singular) on Joshua, yet in the response to the command, he lays hands (plural) on Joshua. Eighteen of the twenty-five occurrences have hands placed on the head. From the usage of כָּלַע in the passages discussing the setting aside of the Levites and that of Moses laying hands upon Joshua, later Judaism derived the word נְזֵרָה in the sense of “ordination.”

1Isaac Levitats, "Semikhah," Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), 9:1142.3; Aaron Rothkoff, "Semikhah," Encyclopedia Judaica, (1971) 14:1140-42, 1143-47; Podet, 16; Gavrin, 101-3; A. Epstein, "Ordination et Autorisation," REJ 46 (1903): 197-211; Newman, 1-12; Ferguson, "‘Ordination in the Ancient Church': An Examination of the Theological and Constitutional Motifs in the Light of Biblical and Gentile Sources." 77-8; Van der Merwe, 36; Emil Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, rev. English ed., ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 2:211-12. In his dissertation, Ferguson (77-8) points out that the word semikhah was used in the Talmud in the sense of proximity, laying hands on a sacrifice, and relying upon authority. From the latter meaning developed the "semikhah" given to a scholar so as to invest him with authority. Podet (16) notes that depending on its time and usage נְזֵרָה referred to: (1) a state of proximity or physical congruity; (2) the process of conferring one’s peccant responsibilities to an animal; (3) an act of laying hands for symbolic reasons upon any sacrificial animal; (4) the investment of an individual with special authority, power, or responsibility; and (5) a document testifying to such investment. The Babylonian Talmud uses words from the samakh root for ordination. The Jerusalem Talmud uses קָנָה (from manah), a general word for any kind of installation into office. Gavrin (102) states: “The Mishnah employs the word samakh (to ordain) and its related derivatives for ‘ordinand,’ ‘ordainer,’ and ‘ordination.’” Schürer (2:211-12) states that
It is commonly understood that the concept of leaning indicated by the word דָּעַב when combined with an action of the hand, produces a gesture where heavy pressure is applied to the recipient of the action. David Daube draws attention to this element of pressure by comparing the gesture of laying on of hands using the verb דָּעַב with the same gesture using the verbs נָחַל/שָׁנָל (“to put,” “to place”). Daube proposes that דָּעַב signifies a “vigorous” “leaning” of one’s hands onto someone or something with some force which is concentrated at the base of one’s hand. Such action is usually associated with offerings or consecrations, whereas נָחַל refers to a force of a much “gentler character” and is used where blessing is concerned. More recently, Wright argues that this distinction in form is “hard to sustain on the meager evidence. The verb סָמָך in the Priestly writings may be only idiomatic and may not imply applied pressure.” This question will be further discussed in the section dealing with hands and the change of status.

usage of the term for ordination seems to have been discontinued in the second century C.E.

1 Jacob Milgrom, Numbers Bemidbar, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 5750/1990), 235. “The rabbis state explicitly that the act of סָמָך must be ‘with all one’s strength.’”

2 Daube, 224-6.

Hands and the Perception of Status

To better understand biblical references that involve the perception, projection, and change of status, an informal survey of hand usage, literal and metaphorical, in the Old Testament follows in this section and the ensuing two sections. For convenience, the Appendix portrays in table format a summary of these three sections: perception, projection, and change of status, a summary that also lists the biblical text references used in this study.

Since an individual possesses strength (as a possession of ability to act) as well as wealth (as a possession of material resources), the hand can symbolize status in an active sense as well as in a passive sense. Strength is an active ability while wealth is an inherently passive one. The following two subsections survey references to "hand" in the Old Testament in terms of perception of status.

Wealth

The status of an individual is often indicated in terms of hand symbolism. This follows from the fact that the status of an individual is often perceived according to the possessions associated with that individual and the fact that possessions are so closely linked to hands and hand usage in Old Testament culture as in all of the ancient Near East. Possession is an act of the hand. "To have in one's hand" means "to have in one's possession" and possession is the essence of wealth.

1 "To have in my hand" (1 Sam 9:8).
Wealth begins with the human body and the hand is particularly valued. The hand is normally an indispensable element of daily life and makes the accumulation of other kinds of wealth possible. The Old Testament is replete with literal references to the hand such as Jeroboam's “shriveled hand” at the altar and Eleazar's “weary hand” at his sword.\(^1\) Greater value was attached to the right hand than to the left,\(^2\) the right hand being more active and thus more significant.\(^3\) Ehud's left-handedness is noted in terms of his being described as a "man impeded in his right hand."\(^4\) References to the right hand in the context of blessing are deemed stronger because of the greater honor connected with the right hand.\(^5\)

Other literal references to hand include the function of the hand to enclose or grasp ordinary objects like javelins, food, offerings, silver, and robes "in . . . hand."\(^6\) The hand also performs acts of writing, cooking, reaching out, and touching.\(^7\)

\(^1\)Shriveled hand (1 Kgs 13:4), weary hand (2 Sam 23:10).
\(^2\)Johnson, 52. To be left-handed is to be the subject of special comment (Judg 20:16).
\(^3\)Right hand more active (Judg 5:26; Ps 21:9), more significant (Gen 48:8-22; Eccl 10:2; Jer 22:24).
\(^4\)Left-handedness (Judg 3:15).
\(^5\)Stronger blessing (Gen 48:14), more honor (Ps 110:1).
\(^6\)Javelin (Num 25:7), food (Gen 27:17), offering (Num 5:25), silver (2 Sam 18:12), robe (1 Sam 24:12).
\(^7\)Writing (Exod 31:18; Deut 9:10; Dan 5:5), cooking (Lam 4:10), reaching (Gen 3:22; 8:9; 1 Kgs 13:4; 1 Chr 13:9; Cant 5:4; Ezek 2:9), touching (Lev 15:11).
While the hand has both positive and negative connotations, the finger in the
Old Testament predominantly takes on negative symbolism, as is characteristic of other
Near Eastern cultures. At the time of the Exodus, Pharaoh's magicians refer to the
plagues as the "finger of God." In Babylon, a finger writes a judgment on the palace
wall. Isaiah equates finger pointing with malicious talk and oppression, and the wise
man notes that worthless persons point the finger. Idols are the work of man's
fingers. However, the fact that explicit references to the finger of the God of Israel
are positive is noteworthy. In this respect, the Old Testament seems to be unique in
the ancient Near East. The heavens are the works of God's fingers, the finger of God
wrote the ten commandments, which were to be tied to man's fingers.

Hand, like finger, can be used symbolically. It can euphemistically refer to
another part of the body, and the body as a whole, or a person. Life itself was

1 Plagues as finger of God (Exod 8:19).
2 Finger writing on wall (Dan 5:5).
3 Pointing the finger (Isa 58:9; Prov 6:13).
4 Work of man's fingers (Isa 2:8; 17:8).
5 Heavens are the work of YHWH's fingers (Ps 8:3[4]), YHWH's fingers write
commandments (Exod 31:18; Deut 9:10), tied to man's finger (Prov 7:3).
6 Hand representing another part of the body, phallus (Isa 52:8,10). Ackroyd
(400, 403) points out that חת as a euphemism for phallus may be considered an
extension of חת as "power." Two other explanations have been proposed for this
euphemistic application: (1) Delcor (234-40) sees this as a natural outgrowth of חת
when it is used to mean memorial stele, and (2) Van der Woude (668) along with
Fitzgerald (368-74) sees a possible philological relationship of חת with the root חת,
"love," thus the phallus connection to חת would be natural since it is considered the
organ of love. Hand representing the body as a whole: "No hand [i.e., no man] shall
considered a function of the body parts as well as the whole body. Body parts were actually thought to have served "as seats of various attributes, even as the seat of life itself,"¹ or as "vehicles of the life inherent in the whole body."² Thus, Old Testament writers sometimes use anatomical terms for "self." Body parts such as the "heart," "face," and "hand" often carry a pronominal force.³ The various parts of the body were also referred to either as instruments of the ego or as engaged in some form of personal behavior.⁴

Scholars debate whether Old Testament writers considered anatomical parts to possess life in and of themselves. Foster McCurley convincingly argues that though various attributes and emotions were assigned to particular parts of the body,⁵ none of them had life in and of themselves.

¹McCurley, 6-7.


³McCurley, 7; ns. 18, 19, 22 on p. 19. For parallelism of הבן, הבן, הבן with the pronoun ר.; Ps 27:3; Prov 5:12; Lam 1:20. Other cases where "heart" represents the self, see Gen 31:26; Exod 9:14; Jer 30:21; Eccl 5:1, etc. Where הבתק is seen as the self: Gen 43:34; Deut 7:24; 11:25; Josh 10:8; 23:9; 2 Sam 17:11; Hos 5:15; 7:2; Pss 80:17; 105:4; Prov 7:15; Esth 1:10; 2 Chr 19:2. הבתק stands parallel to a personal pronoun in 2 Sam 3:12; Isa 10:14; 50:11; Job 5:18; Lev 12:18; Deut 12:17, 18 and הבתק in Ps 16:11.

⁴Johnson, 37.

⁵Ibid., 7-8. The "heart," "bowels," "liver," "kidneys," "womb," "mouth," "lips," "tongue," "eyes," "hand," and others had connected with them various shades of psychological meanings. For example, the "heart" and the "ear" served as the seat of the intellect; the "hair" and the "arm" as seats of "strength"; the "bowels," "liver," or "kidneys" were the seats of various emotions.
the parts were considered to act independent of the rest of the body. In a concept which Robinson calls "diffused consciousness," the different parts of the body possessed a "quasi-consciousness" of their own. McCurley proposes, in agreement with Aubrey Johnson, N. W. Porteous, and D. S. Russell, that the ancient attitudes can be understood in terms of a synecdoche. In this concept, each body part represents and acts for the whole person, or pars pro toto. McCurley suggests that "any statement of an external influence on any part of the anatomy is a statement of the feeling or activity of and on the whole person." Apparently, such thinking permeates all Semitic literature. Concrete references to body parts are employed in almost every phase of literary expression. A clean hand refers to a clean or innocent individual and an evildoing hand is an evildoing individual found guilty. Adding a personal pronoun as a suffix to the word "I" emphasized individual responsibility as well as emphatically giving indication that "I," "he," "she," or "you" were personally involved in a

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3 McCurley, 8.

4 Ibid., 9. "Man’s body and its parts serve as the system of reference by which all other spatial distinctions are understood.... Early Semitic literature can be neither understood nor appreciated without an understanding of the importance of the body in its relationship to its own parts and in its relationship to the world."

5 (my hand), "I": Judg 17:3; 2 Sam 3:12; Isa 10:14; 50:11; Mal 1:9. (his hand), "he": 1 Sam 14:34; 16:2; Job 5:18; Jer 38:11. (her hand), "she":

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particular activity. In this section, that involvement is direct; in a later section, it will be indirect via intermediaries.

The word \( \text{share} \) also functions naturally as in units of measure. It denotes fractions translated as "share," "part," "portion," or "division," often in the context of inheritance.\(^1\) \( \text{share} \) as "share" indicated ownership of a fraction when concrete items such as harvest, guards, and population are divided.\(^2\) \( \text{share} \) as "share" can also be used in abstract ownership, as in owning a king—"we have ten hands in the king."\(^3\) But \( \text{share} \) as "share" can also denote multiples or the number of times (hands) one thing is multiplied. Benjamin received five times (hands) more food than his brothers and Daniel was ten times (hands) smarter than everyone else.\(^4\) Even when \( \text{share} \) is not explicitly used, hand takes on a sense of measure as in "the land produced abundantly" (literally, "for handfuls," \( \text{share} \)).\(^5\)

In a less quantitative way, hand measures material wealth. To "become rich" is to "get a hand"; to "become poor" is to have a "hand fail," and a person's net worth is

\(^1\)See, for example, Gen 43:34; 2 Sam 19:43[44]. Gnana Robinson (282-3) argues that the expression \( \text{share} \) (a hand and a name [Isa 56:5]) may more aptly be translated as promising to the foreigner who honors the Sabbath "a portion (or possession) and a name" in the house of YHWH.

\(^2\)Fraction of harvest (Gen 47:24), guards (2 Kgs 11:7), population (Neh 11:1).

\(^3\)Fraction of political support (2 Sam 19:43[44]).

\(^4\)Multiples (Gen 43:34; Dan 1:20).

\(^5\)Handfuls (Gen 41:47).
valued “according to the hand.” Royal gifts are given “by the hand of” a king, and his unique ability to give lavish amounts of wealth clearly alludes to his high status. Occasions on which a king dispenses royal wealth are signified by the phrase “according to the bounty [hand] of the king.” Human generosity is characterized by a person’s “opening his/her hand to the poor.” Anthropomorphically, divine generosity is also characterized by YHWH’s “opening His hand.” Closed hands portrayed a lack of generosity toward the poor.

Possessions such as land, agricultural produce, and monuments are associated with the hand. Land is taken “from the hand” and fields are purchased “from the hand.” Agricultural produce as “work of the hand” is alternately blessed and struck with blight, and people “eat . . . and rejoice before YHWH in every work of the hand.”

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2 According to the hand of the king (1 Kgs 10:13; Esth 1:7: 2:18). Joüon, “Divers emplois,” 458: the phrase, “by the hand” or “by the means of the royal hand,” became a formula indicating “according to the resources of the king.”

3 Woman of valor stretches her hand (Prov 31:20), Israelite must open his hand (Deut 15:8, 11).

4 YHWH opens His hand (Pss 104:28; 145:16).

5 Israelite closes his hand (Deut 15:7).

6 Purchasing “from the hand” (Gen 48:22; Deut 3:8; Lev 25:14; Ruth 4:5, 9).

7 Deut 12:7. See also agricultural produce (Deut 12:18; Job 1:10; Hag 2:17).
Fame is considered a form of wealth and monuments are material evidence of that fame. On occasion תֶּלֶת refers to a stele of victory or a funerary stele erected as a memorial to someone and thus translated as “monument.”

In summary, the Old Testament world treated the hand as a representative of an individual. Hand also functioned as a unit of measure and symbolically became a measure of wealth.

Strength and Direct Action

Since ability to accomplish tasks is a form of wealth, various strengths are described in terms of the hand. In Old Testament culture, as in the surrounding cultures, hands symbolized strength, power, the ability to perform and accomplish.

The strength of will is described in terms of a high hand. The posture of the hand symbolizes the will. To act with a high hand (תֶּלֶת תֶּלֶת) is to act independently and triumphantly. It can also mean negative willfulness or defiance. “The soul that does anything with a high hand” is one who sins willfully and defiantly. Lifting the hand can indicate outright defiance also.

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1 Memorial (1 Sam 15:12; 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5).

2 High hand in independence (Deut 32:27; Isa 26:11), in triumph (Num 33:3; Mic 5:8).

3 Num 15:30. See also high hand in defiance (Exod 14:8).

4 Lifting hand in defiance (1 Kgs 11:26f).
Conversely, lowered hands express lack of will. While drooping hands can indicate physical weakness, poverty, and the cessation of a task, their symbolism is usually rooted in the function of the will. Drooping hands symbolize refusal to act. Drooping hands are the opposite of “strong” or courageous hands and are signs of fear, despair, and anguish. One who lacks general resolution and is lazy also lets his hands hang down. Other gestures with connotations of indolence include “folding of the hands” and “burying hands in a dish.” “Short hands,” disappearing hands (“hands that go away”), and “no hands” express diminishing degrees of lack of will or powerlessness.

In terms of guidance, hands can designate a physical signpost or a metaphorical vehicle or recipient of guidance. References are made to “guiding with skillful hands” and “teaching hands for war,” “training hands for battle,” and “taking by the hand.”

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1Drooping hands in weakness (2 Sam 17:2), in poverty (Lev 25:35), in cessation of action (יִבְרָךְ, 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:15; Ezra 4:4; Jer 38:4).

2Drooping hands in refusal (Josh 10:6).

3Drooping hands in fear, despair, and anguish (2 Sam 4:1; Isa 13:7; Jer 6:24; 30:6; 47:3; 50:43; Ezek 7:17; 21:12; Dan 10:10; Zeph 3:16).

4Drooping hands of lazy (Job 4:3; Eccl 10:18).

5Lazy folding of hands (Prov 6:10; 24:33), burying hands (Prov 19:24).

6No hands (Josh 8:20; 2 Chr 15:7; Ps 76:5[6]), disappearing hands (Deut 32:36), short hands (Num 11:23; Isa 50:2; 59:1).

7Signpost (Ezek 21:24).

8Guiding with the hands (Ps 78:72), by teaching the hands (Ps 144:1; 2 Sam 22:35), by taking by the hand (Ps 73:23; Isa 51:18; Jer 31:32).

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The ability to create and creativity in general are strongly linked to hand symbolism. While YHWH is said to create with the words of His mouth, his creativity is also described in terms of His hands. His hands “stretched out the heavens” and the world and its inhabitants are the “the works of His hands.”

It is God's creative hands that make a sanctuary and bless man with life and accomplishment.

At a lower level, man's hands also create. The “hand of the potter” and the “hand of the craftsman” are recognized, but the worship of wood, silver, and gold idols, “the works of man’s hands,” is inappropriate. God warns His people against thinking their accomplishments come by their own ability, saying “It is my power and the might of my hand that have gotten me this wealth.”

Legal claims of ownership are made with the hand. The “hand finds” property or property is “in the hand.” When the hand “reaches” or “touches” something, ownership is claimed. This is particularly important in the context of


2. Hands make sanctuary (Exod 15:17), breath and ways in hand (Dan 5:23).

3. Potter (Lam 4:2), craftsman (Cant 7:1[2]). In the latter, the work of the craftsman is used as a standard with which to compare a woman’s beauty. Objects of worship (2 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 32:19; Jer 1:16; 25:7), gold and silver idols (Deut 27:15; Pss 115:4; 135:15; Isa 31:7; Jer 10:9), wood and stone idols (Deut 4:28; 2 Kgs 19:18; Hos 14:3[4]).

4. Might of the hand (Deut 8:17).

5. Hand finds (Lev 25:28; 1 Sam 25:8; Job 31:25), in the hand (1 Chr 29:12; Job 1:12)
sacrificial offerings where particular importance is given to a worshiper’s ownership of the offering. This would explain why offerings are accepted “from the hand” and heave offerings and freewill offerings are “offerings of the hand.”

Other legal uses of the hand involve judgment. The high priest judges “with an ephod in his hand” while God expresses his role of Judge by pointing out that “My hand lays hold on judgment.” The “hand” or “heavy hand” dispenses discipline and the “hand stretches out” in destruction. The Hebrew verb הולך, “to stretch out,” is variously translated “to lift,” “to put out,” “to lay,” “to extend,” “to send out,” usually with some legal connection. When it is used in contexts of theft or the destruction of life or property, the reference alludes to its being mandated or forbidden, allowed or not allowed by some authority figure. For example, Reuben insists that his brothers “not lay hands” on Joseph, an angel instructs Abraham “not to lay hands” on

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1Finding/reaching lamb (Lev 5:7; 12:8), bringing fire offerings (Lev 7:30), touching turtle-doves (Lev 5:11), taking heifer (1 Sam 16:2).

2Offerings from the hand (Judg 13:23; 17:3; 1 Sam 14:34; 2 Chr 34:9; Mal 1:9, 10, 13; 2:13), of the hand (Deut 12:17).

3Ephod in hand (1 Sam 23:6), judgment in God’s hand (Deut 32:41).

4Hand of discipline (Isa 1:25).

5Heavy hand of discipline (1 Sam 5:6-7; Pss 38:2[3]; 32:4).

6Satan (Job 1:11-12; 2:5), Haman (Esth 3:6; 8:7), YHWH (Exod 3:20; 9:15; 24:11; Ps 138:7; Jer 6:12), angel (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:15), wicked (Ps 55:20[21]), king (Dan 11:42), Israel (Isa 11:14), assassins (2 Sam 1:14; 18:28).
Isaac, and Ahasuerus authorizes the Jews to “stretch out a hand” to defend themselves.\(^1\) κλείσια implies treason when Joab’s man refuses to “lift my hand against the son of the king” and when Mordecai discovers two eunuchs plotting to “stretch forth a hand” against the Persian king.\(^2\) It indicates theft when someone “puts his hand on the goods.”\(^3\) A man “determined to die from the hand” is a man under a death sentence and the “drawing back of the hand” or the “returning of the hand” alludes to the staying of execution.\(^4\) His hand acts “with might” and when it “cuts off,” it brings death.\(^5\) The all-powerful God manifests Himself in His punishment administered through His skillful hand—a “strong” or “mighty hand.”\(^6\) The formula “mighty hand and outstretched arm”\(^7\) alludes to YHWH’s execution of judgment in the Exodus in an

\(^1\) Joseph’s brothers (Gen 37:22), Abraham (Gen 22:12), Jews of Persia (Esth 9:2).

\(^2\) One of Joab’s men (2 Sam 18:12), Ahasuerus’s eunuchs (Esth 2:21; 6:2).

\(^3\) Theft (Exod 22:8[7]).

\(^4\) Death sentence (1 Kgs 20:42), withdrawing hand (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:15; Isa 1:25; 14:27; Ezek 20:22; Lam 2:8).

\(^5\) Hand with might (Job 30:21), hand cuts off (Ps 88:5[6]).

\(^6\) Skillful hand (Job 12:9; Pss 32:4; 39:11), strong hand of YHWH (Exod 3:19; 6:1; 13:9; Deut 6:21; 9:26; Num 20:20).

\(^7\) Mighty hand and outstretched arm (Exod 14:31; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 11:2; 26:8; 7:18-19; Jer 32:21; Ps 136:12). Smith, 49, “By an intelligible anthropomorphism Yahweh accomplishes his designs by his hands.”
anthropomorphic gesture. The destruction of Israel’s agricultural produce is similarly described by the “strong hand of Midian.”

Legal accountability is indicated by expressions like “to require at the hand of” and “to call account from the hand of.” Vengeance is a legal right and requirement and its terminology focuses on blood. “Blood from the hand” of the murderer is avenged by the “hand of the avenger.” The “hand of the avenger of the blood” demands or requires “blood at/from [someone’s] hand.” The latter formula extends to animals that are responsible for human loss of life, notwithstanding the fact that animals do not have literal hands.

Hands play distinctive roles in the moral sector of Old Testament life. “Clean hands” are associated with purity and righteousness and the washing of hands is symbolic of a state of innocence. Priests and elders washed their hands before entering the tabernacle, presumably symbolizing their status of purity before drawing

1 Strong hand of Midian (Judg 6:2).
2 Legal responsibility (2 Sam 4:11; Isa 1:12; Ezek 3:18; Mal 1:10, 13).
3 Blood from the hand (Gen 4:11), hand avenges blood (1 Sam 25:26; 2 Kgs 9:7).
4 Hand of avenger (Num 35:25; Deut 19:12; Josh 20:9), blood required at/from [someone’s] hand (2 Sam 4:11; Ezek 3:18, 20; 33:6, 8).
5 Blood required at/from [animal’s] hand (Gen 9:5).
6 Righteousness (2 Sam 22:21; Ps 18:24[25]), strength (Job 17:9), pure heart (Ps 24:4), clear conscience (Gen 20:5), clean hands (Gen 20:5; Pss 26:6; 73:13).

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near to YHWH.¹ Wicked hands induce a strong force resulting in misery.² Approval is indicated by hand clapping. Both people and objects of nature express joyful approval by clapping.³ Enemies express their glee at the misfortune of others by clapping, but executed differently, clapping or striking the hands can express disapproval or anger.⁴

As much as the hand plays a significant role in communicating the nuances of status as it relates to the will, creativity, judgment, and moral values, its most direct symbolism is based on the direct use of the hand in work—be it domestic or military, lawful or criminal in nature.⁵ The woman of valor “stretches out her hand to the distaff” and is rewarded with the “fruit of her hands.”⁶ Reward in kind (positive or negative) is discussed in terms of ✓lES in the “dealing of the hand.”⁷ More abstractly, the hand is a symbol of all human effort and power. It is associated with  

¹Washing hands (Exod 30:19, 21; 40:31).
²Job 20:22.
³Nature claps (anax) its hands for joy (Ps 98:8; Isa 55:12), people clap (nab) their hands at King Joash’s installation (2 Kgs 11:12), people clap (yadd) their hands in joy (Ps 47:1[2]).
⁴Hands clap at enemies (Lam 2:15; Ezek 25:6; Nah 3:19), clap in anger (yadd—Num 24:10; yadd—Job 27:23). Note that yadd is a secondary form of yadd.
⁵Work of hand (Deut 2:7; 14:29; 30:9; Isa 65:22).
⁶Fruit of the hand (Prov 31:19, 31).
⁷Dealing of the hand (Judg 9:16; Prov 12:14).
opportunities, accomplishments, deeds, and effort. Yet hand symbolism is particularly prevalent in contexts of violence. Murder is committed by “hands shedding blood” and symbolized by “blood in the hand” or “hands full of blood.” A conqueror spoils a nation when he “spreads his hands.” A threat is intended with the verb  when the “hand shakes against the mount of the daughter of Zion” or “waves against an orphan.” In fact, the word  is frequently so closely associated with raw power that it substitutes for the word “power” and “violence.”

In summary, the hand is frequently used to convey concepts of strength and accomplishment. In the Old Testament, hand terminology can indicate the strength of will, guidance, creativity, legal claims of ownership, judgment, legal accountability, purity, approval, ability, violence, and power.

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1 Accomplishment (Prov 12:14, Ps 90:17), “Toil of the hands” (Gen 31:42).
2 Shedding blood (Deut 21:7; Prov 6:17), blood in the hand (Ezek 23:37, 45; Josh 2:19), hands full of blood (Isa 1:15).
3 Hand spreads ( – Lam 1:10; Isa 25:11), hand swallows (Lam 2:8).
5 Van der Woude, 667-74; Alexander, 362-4. Power (hand) of Egypt (Exod 14:30), power (hand) is gone (Deut 32:36), mighty power (hand) (Deut 34:12, NKJ), establish power (hand) (1 Chr 18:3, NKJ), power (hand) of the holy people (Dan 12:7), no power (hand) to flee (Josh 8:20), YHWH spoke with mighty power (hand) (Isa 8:11, NAS). When a specific version has not been specified adjacent to the citations above, the given translation is considered standard among most versions. With violence (hand) (Isa 28:2, RSV).
Hands and the Projection of Status

The previous section reviewed Old Testament hand symbolism in connection with notions of wealth, ability, and their contributions to status. Now attention is drawn to another level—hand symbolism in connection with notions of relationship, cooperative and subordinate action, and their contributions to status. While wealth and ability are clear indicators of status, status is even more strongly indicated by the network of people that surrounds an individual. Status is often inferred through human relationships. These relationships are forged either in a hierarchical or non-hierarchical fashion. In the Old Testament, the hand plays a large role in describing both kinds of relationships, and thus plays a large role in describing the projection of status based on both kinds of relationships. The following two subsections survey references to יָן in the Old Testament in terms of projection of status.

Position and Relation

In hierarchical relationships, a person of status bonds with subordinates and taps their wealth and ability, as well as his own. The status of a superior increases when subordinates execute his will. At times, the hand becomes synonymous with authority and the right to rule, to command, to have oversight over, or to have custody or care

1Tracing hierarchical chains of command in this study, the symbol \( \rightleftharpoons \) is used for explicit references to hand symbolism; otherwise, the symbol \( \rightarrow \) is used to link higher to lower levels of status. For non-hierarchical relationships, the symbol \( \leftrightarrow \) is used to link equal levels of status.
over others. The hand is a symbol of control in delineating chains of command.\(^1\) For someone/something "to be in your hand" (היד־ך) is for him/it to be under your control. For something/someone "to be put/given into your hand" (ידנֶה) is to be put in or given control.\(^2\) A person with "his hand on the neck" (יהידיכך) of his enemies is clearly in control over his enemies.\(^3\) To be "under the hand" (ידנֶה) of someone is to be under the rule or dominion of that person.\(^4\)

Rulership and dominion also incorporate a sense of accountability and responsibility that includes the care and protection of others, the provision of guidance and direction, as well as guarantees of safety. To be "in," "upon," or "under" someone's hand(s) meant to be in that person's power, therefore under his protection or subject to his direction or control.\(^5\) The hand of God not only protects but also provides a place of hiding.\(^6\) The Psalmist combines ידֶה and ידֶה to indicate protection.

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\(^1\) King David \(\text{priests/Levites} \rightarrow \text{vestments/cymbals} \) (Ezra 3:10), Moses \(\rightarrow \text{Ithamar} \rightarrow \text{Levites} \rightarrow \text{records} \) (Exod 38:21), King \(\rightarrow \text{Asaph} \rightarrow \text{sons} \rightarrow \text{prophesy} \) (1 Chr 25:2), Jeduthun \(\rightarrow \text{sons} \rightarrow \text{prophesy} \) (1 Chr 25:3), King \(\rightarrow \text{Asaph, Jeduthun, Herman} \rightarrow \text{sons} \) (1 Chr 25:6), David \(\rightarrow \text{Jehoida} \rightarrow \text{priests} \rightarrow \text{watchmen} \) (2 Chr 23:18), King \(\rightarrow \text{Uzziah} \rightarrow \text{Hananiah, Jeiel and Maaseiah} \rightarrow \text{muster} \rightarrow \text{soldiers} \) (2 Chr 26:11), Priests \(\rightarrow \text{themselves} \rightarrow \text{Israelites} \) (Jer 5:31).

\(^2\) Ahikam does not give Jeremiah into the hand of the people (Jer 26:24), YHWH gives the kingdom into the hand of Absalom (2 Sam 16:8).

\(^3\) Judah's hand on the neck of enemies (Gen 49:8).

\(^4\) Egyptians (Exod 18:10), Judah (2 Kgs 8:20, 22; 2 Chr 21:8, 10), Arameans (2 Kgs 13:15), Pharoah (2 Kgs 17:7).

\(^5\) Protection (Gen 42:37), control (1 Chr 25:2; Jer 5:31).

\(^6\) Hand of God (1 Chr 4:10; Ezra 8:22), place of hiding (Isa 49:2; 51:16).
or care, "though one falls, he will not be cast down, for YHWH upholds (יָשָׁב) his hand (יָד)." Angels' hands play an important role too, for they keep the feet of mankind protectively in their hands. In the human arena, touching another with the hand could indicate protection.

Hand references typify various kinds of hierarchical relationships, ranging from the relationship between a king and his officials, a master/mistress and his/her slave, a commander and his army, a prophet and his assistant/aide to that between YHWH and specific prophets and prophets in general. The hand is central in expressing respect. When it is recorded that the eyes of the servant/maid "look to the hands of the master/mistress," a high regard for the master's authority is implied. When Elisha

1Ps 37:24.
2Ps 91:12.
3Jer 26:24.
4King or Pethahiah (Neh 11:24), Cyrus or Mithredath (Ezra 1:8).
5Sarah or Hagar (Gen 16:6), Israelites or Gibeonites (Josh 9:26).
6Joab or Abishai or soldiers (2 Sam 10:10).
7Elijah or Elisha (2 Kgs 3:11).
8Specific prophets: YHWH or Moses (Exod 9:35; Lev 10:11; Josh 20:2; Judg 3:4; 1 Kgs 8:53; 2 Chr 33:8; Neh 8:14), YHWH or Elijah (1 Kgs 17:16; 2 Kgs 9:36: 10:10), YHWH or Jehu (1 Kgs 16:7, 12), YHWH or Ahijah (2 Chr 10:15), YHWH or Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25), YHWH or Isaiah (Isa 20:2), YHWH or Jeremiah (Jer 37:2), YHWH or Haggai (Hag 1:1, 3; 2:1), YHWH or Malachi (Mal 1:1). YHWH or prophets in general (Hos 12:10[11]; Zech 7:7, 12).
9Eyes of servant looking to hands to master (Ps 123:2).
“poured water on the hands of Elijah,” he showed deep respect for his master the prophet. Hand symbolism is also used in conjunction with relationships between a supervisor and his worker(s), a custodian and his charge(s).

—all can mean “side” as a noun. A roadside or gate is expressed as a hand of a road or gate; a coast as a hand of an ocean or river; a border as a hand of a locale, and handles, as a hand of an earthen vessel. But because Hebrew uses anatomical terms directly for prepositions, as do other Semitic languages, the hand is commonly employed to express spatial and social relationships.  can mean “beside,” presumably because the hands hang “beside” a person. In terms of status, it is notable that when a person is said to be standing “beside” another, that person has lower social

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1Elisha pouring water over hands of Elijah (2 Kgs 3:11).
2Ithamar Gershonites (Num 4:28, 33).
3Priests temple (2 Chr 23:18), Joseph possessions (Gen 39:8), Joseph prisoners (Gen 39:22), Pharaoh grain (Gen 41:35), Shelomoth plunder (1 Chr 26:28). Jehiel precious stones (1 Chr 29:8), Hegai harem (Esth 2:3, 8, 14).
4Side of road (1 Sam 4:13; Ps 140:5[6]; Ezek 48:1), side of gate (2 Sam 15:2; 18:4; Prov 8:3).
6Border (Num 34:3; Ezek 48:1).
7Handles (Isa 45:9).
8Joab’s field at hand of me (2 Sam 14:30), Jonathan at hand of his father (1 Sam 19:3), Arabs at hand of Cushites (2 Chr 21:16), a series of families building the wall of Jerusalem, each “at the hand” or “beside” the next (Neh 3:5, 7-10), olive clusters at hand of gold pipes (Zech 4:12).
social rank. This meaning is consistent with the notion that the side is inferior to the center. Consciousness of social position is demonstrated when someone is said to be “on his hand” (לְדוֹתָה), it being understood that he is in his proper “place” or “position.” In the context of the Israelite marching order in the Exodus, each tribe was to journey with “each man at his hand.” The same phrase לְדוֹתָה is translated “according to the hand of,” meaning “according to the direction of.”

In non-hierarchical relationships, persons of equal status bond together and increase each other’s status by their association. Collaborators, allies, friends, and relatives tap each other’s resources. Together they strengthen their collective and individual standing. Old Testament writers developed various extended meanings from the concept of hands holding like things together. A hand can hold wheels together, thus an axle is referred to as לְדוֹתָה. A hand can hold boards together, thus a stay, peg, or tenon is also referred to as לְדוֹתָה. Similarly, geographical boundaries, holding a

1When the sons of David are said to be “at his side” in 1 Chr 18:17, it is meant that they are “under his direction.” “Under the direction of” is also nuanced to “at the disposition of.” Joüon, “Divers emplois,” 456.

2Jer 6:3. Joüon (“Divers emplois.” 452-3) suggests that לְדוֹתָה in Deut 23:13 not be translated as “place” but as “latrine.”

3Each man at his hand (Num 2:17). Similarly, Jeremiah refers to shepherds being fed each man in his hand (Jer 6:3).

4Axle ↔ wheels (1 Kgs 7:32-3).

5Pins ↔ boards (Exod 26:17, 19), supports ↔ wash stand (1 Kgs 7:35-6).

6Borders ↔ country (1 Chr 7:29).
country together, and mediators, holding individuals together, are spoken of in terms of the hand. That which lies between (e.g., the expanse of the land within the boundaries) is also described with hand terminology. can allude to the distance between the two arms and takes on the meaning of "between." YHWH speaks of the extent of David's kingdom by saying, "I will set in the sea his hand and in the rivers his right hand." In the same vein, "wide of hands" or "wide on both hands" implies spaciousness in the context of pastures, land, cities, rivers, and seas.

Hands also are used in the context of humans bonded to one another by common interests. An ally is defined as one whose hand is "with" another. An ally is one who does "not withdraw" his hand. As it were, allies join hands for added strength, assurance, and aid in time of need. Extending this concept, the expression can be translated as "assuredly."

1Mediator people (Job 9:33).
2David's hands in the sea and in the river (Ps 89:25).
3Wide of hands (1 Chr 4:40; Isa 22:18).
4Wide on both hands (Gen 34:21; Neh 7:4; Ps 104:25; Isa 33:21).
5Hand of Israelites with wicked (Exod 23:1), hand of God with Jabez (1 Chr 4:10), hand of Ahikam with Jeremiah (Jer 26:24), hand of priests with David (1 Sam 22:17), hand of Abner with David (2 Sam 3:12).
6Gibeonites as allies of Joshua (Josh 10:6).
7YHWH's hand helps (Ps 119:173).
8Hand in hand (Prov 11:21; 16:5).
Formal surety is a guarantee within hierarchical as well as non-hierarchical relationships. For financial assurance, one “strikes hands” with another, indicating willingness to become surety for a loan. Financial guarantees are called “loans of the hand.” The shaking or clasping of hands, the “giving of the hand,” confirms and guarantees an agreement and endorses a pledge and thus carries definite legal implications. This gesture is sometimes extended to communicate divine guarantees.

When a pledge is made, an oath is generally involved, in which case the hand is normally raised. This practice is in keeping with ancient Near East custom. In so doing, a person invoked the surety of Deity. YHWH also raises His hand as He made oaths to the patriarchs or Israelites, acting as His own surety. A particularly solemn

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1To strike (ותחת) hands (Job 17:3; Prov 6:1; 17:18; 22:26).

2Deut 15:1-2. In Deut 15:2 the phrase נַחֲלָה יַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב נַעֲקֹב نַעֲקֹב

3Sons of Israel to YHWH (2 Chr 30:8), Jehon to Jehonadab (2 Kgs 10:15), priests to one another (Ezra 10:19), Israelites to Egyptians (Lam 5:6), fingers/hand to law (Exod 13:9; Prov 7:3).

4YHWH grasps Cyrus’s right hand (Isa 45:1).

5In swearing to the King of Sodom, Abraham raised his hand to YHWH (Gen 14:22), the man dressed in linen raised both hands to the heavens and swore by Him who lives forever (Dan 12:7).

6Exod 6:8; Num 14:30; Deut 32:40; Neh 9:15; Ps 106:26; Ezek 20:5, 6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14.
oath, carrying a curse or a ban for violation, is indicated by the hand placed “under the thigh,” a euphemism for placing the hands on the generative organs.¹

In summary, the hand is used repeatedly to convey notions of status due to various kinds of relationship. In the Old Testament, hand terminology accompanies both vertically ordered hierarchical chains of command, which delineate control, care, protection, respect, and position, as well as horizontally ordered non-hierarchical alliances, which delineate working together. Hand symbolism crosses the hierarchical line in the areas of surety, financial guarantee, and the making of oaths.

Power and Intermediary Action

When status is projected in a relationship, it is largely due to an increase in potential for action. Intermediaries, be they allies or subordinates, supplement the direct actions of an individual. Kings, masters/mistresses, commanders, supervisors, and custodians extend their spheres of influence by acting through others. In this subsection, Old Testament usage of hand symbolism is reviewed in the venues of action taken on behalf of one person by another. These venues can be cooperative (involving an intermediary of equal status), or subordinate (involving an intermediary of lower status). Subordinate action is emphasized as a dynamic extension of hierarchical relationships.

It is important to note that subordinate action is not described in terms of the doer’s hand, but rather the delegator’s hand, the hand of a higher ranking person who

¹Eleazer on Abraham (Gen 24:2, 9), Joseph on Jacob (Gen 47:29).
commands, dictates, teaches, or otherwise effects action in others and takes responsibility for that action. When the doer's hand is involved, ownership of direct action is claimed. A person takes responsibility when he acts "by his hand" and YHWH demands accountability "from the hand" of murderers and unworthy watchmen. However, when a subordinate's hand is involved, the responsible party acts through an agent. In this context, hand itself is understood as "agent" in the ancient Near East.

In the Old Testament, YHWH acts "by the hand of Moses" over thirty times. When YHWH speaks "by the hand of Moses," he speaks through His agent Moses. When Moses begs YHWH to send His message "by the hand of someone else," he begs for Him to send another agent. Stretching or sending out (n*pE7) one's hand usually indicates the "undertaking" of a project. In this case, YHWH undertakes a

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1YHWH takes direct responsibility for torment (Isa 50:11). Taking responsibility and claiming ownership are very closely related notions. The expression "from my/your hand" can interpreted either way. See n. 4. p. 100. above, for additional references.

2Murderers (Gen 9:5), watchmen (Ezek 33:6).

3The Amarna Letters use the qabû ina qâši as the equivalent of "to speak through somebody." Van der Woude, 1:667-74.


5Someone else (Exod 4:13).

6YHWH sent (נָפָל) a message to David by the hand of Nathan (2 Sam 12:25) and to His people by the hand of His messengers (2 Chr 36:15).
project involving Nathan as prophet. In fact, prophets in the Old Testament generally describe themselves as agents by citing that “YHWH spoke by the hand of” His prophet.¹ The Old Testament also includes passages in which YHWH saves and destroys “by the hand of” other intermediaries.²

Using the formula “by the hand of,” however, is by no means exclusively used for YHWH’s agents. Other messages and letters are recorded to have been sent “by the hand of” intermediaries.³ And there are instances of the formula, “by the hand of,” when an agent is designated to retrieve a pledge, to bear gifts, to send temple treasure, and to pay tribute.⁴ Violence is also effected through intermediaries: for example, David’s life is threatened “by the hand of” Saul, Adonijah is killed “by the hand of Solomon,” and Israel is taken captive “by the hand of the king of Babylon.”⁵

¹The role of the prophet as agent of YHWH is so strong, it is almost exclusively described in terms of YHWH speaking, commanding, ordaining, or otherwise acting “by the hand of” His prophet. Therefore, the Old Testament references are identical to those used in the previous subsection. See n. 1, p. 107, above.

²YHWH saves by the hand of Jeroboam (2 Kgs 14:27) and Gideon (Judg 6:36). YHWH destroys by the hand of Israel (2 Chr 28:9; Ezek 25:14) and Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek 30:10).

³Message by the hand of a fool (Prov 26:6), word by the hand of envoys (Jer 27:3), letter by the hand of Elasah (Jer 29:3).

⁴Judah retrieves a pledge by the hand of a friend (Gen 38:20), Israelites send tribute by the hand of EHUD (Judg 3:15), Jesse sends gifts to Saul by the hand of David (1 Sam 16:20), Cyrus brings out temple treasure by the hand of Mithredath (Ezra 1:8).

⁵Saul (1 Sam 27:1), Solomon (1 Kgs 2:25), King of Babylon (Jer 38:23).
In summary, the hand is used in the Old Testament to convey notions of intermediary action, or action on behalf of YHWH by a prophet or action on behalf of one person by another.

**Hands and the Change of Status**

The two previous sections have reviewed hand symbolism in the perception of status (via wealth and abilities of direct action) and the projection of status (via relationships and abilities of delegated action). This section surveys the use of hand gestures in Old Testament accounts of changes in status.

Status can be changed in a number of fundamental ways. Since status is perceived through possessions and projected by relationship, changes can be effected simply by exchanges of wealth or verbal declarations of position. When succession or the propagation of status is involved, however, changes are effected in more complex ways and include more formal and elaborate rituals. Regardless of the complexity, however, the hand is often a central symbolic vehicle of change. The next subsection reviews the use of hand terminology in the Old Testament when changes of status are accompanied by exchanges of wealth and the emergence of relationships. The second subsection reviews the use of hand gestures in Old Testament accounts when changes of status are accompanied by ritual.
Exchanged Wealth and Transformed Relationships

Hands are an obvious medium of transfer, particularly in the concrete mind-set of Old Testament writers. Thus naturally the hand is used as the symbolic vehicle for all exchanges of wealth and all changes of status that occur as a result of transfers of property, from one hand to another. These exchanges can take the form of purchases, loans, gifts, tribute, and booty. They can also take more abstract forms, examples of which include ritual defilement and magic.

Ritual defilement can be passed by the hand. Unwashed hands transmit ritual uncleanness; rinsed hands, under certain circumstances, do not. Sin is transferred from the High Priest to the scapegoat as he lays hands on its head. It is the hand that is associated with one of the most universally recognized gestures which brings about moral as well as legal defilement, the passing of a bribe. In all these cases, status changes—from ritual purity to uncleanness, from righteousness to sinfulness, from moral freedom to subordination and corruption.

In the realm of magic, power is mediated by bodily contact. The ancient mind developed the concept of the hand as mystery, and the hand in the ancient Near Eastern

1Rinsing hands to counteract defilement (Lev 15:11).

2Scapegoat (Lev 16:21).

3Bribe to Delilah (Judg 16:18).

4Smith (50) refers to the widow's son resurrected after Elijah stretched out on the boy three times (1 Kgs 17:19-22) and a man who came to life after touching Elisha's bones (2 Kgs 13:21).
world became the chief member of the body used in magical rites. These rites of hand mysteries impacted Hebrew culture. Some elements of magic persist in a few Old Testament accounts. For example, Moses holds his hands up in order for the Israelite army to prevail against the Amalekites, and Elisha puts his hands on Joash’s hands as he shot a bow to indicate God’s promises of deliverance. Magical practices might even have influenced rituals of blessing and the idea that the potency of the hand placed on the head depended on one’s relationship with YHWH. In general, however, the Old Testament opposes magic in surrounding cultures. Instead, it elevates the role of YHWH’s own hands—His priests and His prophets. Even so, Elisha refuses Namaan the Aramite’s request to rid him of leprosy by means of some magic power exercised by the touch of a sorcerer or witch, even by pointing the hand or finger, much harm can be done through contact, real or imaginary, as, conversely, the touch or pointing of one who wishes well or who is lucky works good. Hence, certain gestures of the hand or fingers are all-important in magic, whether for good or evil purposes.

1MacCulloch, 495. By the touch of a sorcerer or witch, even by pointing the hand or finger, much harm can be done through contact, real or imaginary, as, conversely, the touch or pointing of one who wishes well or who is lucky works good. Hence, certain gestures of the hand or fingers are all-important in magic, whether for good or evil purposes.

2Moses (Exod 17:8-13) and Elijah (2 Kgs 13:16).

3Individual (Gen 48:8-22), priestly (Lev 9:22). In the hand-laying gesture of blessing, the hand transferred a secret power. Hanson, 415.

4Ackroyd (416-7) states that magical association exits in OT hand symbolism but that it is not possible to be absolutely clear about how much. Johnson (58-60) traces the magical and religio-magical usage of hand symbolism in Israel.

5Namaan wanted Elisha to wave his hand (מן ינש), 2 Kgs 5:11. Hanson (416) reviews several interpretations of wave (מן). Hanson notes that Maurer and Péter propose that the verb in the hifil contains magical overtones that the narrator tried to avoid. Hanson further points out that Montgomery and Gehman see it as an exorcist’s gesture. Hanson also notes that Ackroyd emphasized that hand laying in the Old Testament is never for healing.
through Elisha’s hands. Elisha seems to make a point of limiting the symbolism of the hand and the transformations which can be attributed to it.

At a more mundane level, however, the hand is clearly an instrument of transformation. Clearly a person’s status changes when he merely purchases something. The hand is normally associated with the exchange of possessions by which the purchaser achieves the new legal status of ownership. Hands become symbols in any purchase or payment for services and the subsequent change in status.\(^1\)

In the context of loans, “opening” of a hand places the receiver into the status of debtor and “dropping” the hand remits the obligation.\(^2\) “Giving up your hand” cancels the debt.\(^3\)

The giving of gifts is also tightly integrated with hand symbolism and can change the status of the receiver as well as of the giver. Gifts which change status can take the form of freewill offerings, encouragement, and ritual tokens. Freewill gifts could be transfers of assets.\(^4\) Encouragement as a gift is implied when a man “strengthens the hands” of another, bolstering his morale and otherwise helping him

\(^{1}\) Joseph bought from hand of Ishmaelites (Gen 39:10), Jacob purchased land from hand of sons of Hamor (Gen 33:19), purchase from neighbor’s hand (Lev 25:14), purchase field from hand of Naomi (Ruth 4:5, 9), money for workmen (2 Chr 34:17), silver for mercenaries (Esth 3:9).

\(^{2}\) Open hands (Deut 15:8), dropping the hand (Deut 15:3).

\(^{3}\) Cancelling a debt (Deut 15:3).

\(^{4}\) Keepers of threshold collect money from hand of Manasseh and Ephraim (2 Chr 34:9), priests take jealousy offering from woman’s hand (Num 5:25).
accomplish his goals.¹ On a grander scale, a king changes a person’s status by means of a valuable token like a ring. On two occasions an Old Testament king took a ring off his finger and gave it to someone, which was followed by a notable change of status.²

The exchange of wealth also changes status on a national scale. The paying of tribute is a common way of proclaiming a nation’s status after being conquered. When tribute is proffered, the giver becomes a tributary.³ In a less voluntary manner, the status of a conquered nation is changed by the taking of booty.⁴

There are many instances in the Old Testament where hand symbolism helps communicate changes of status which occur as the result of changes in relationship between people. Invitations to participate in such transformations usually involve hand gestures. YHWH spreads out His hands in appeal to His people for a renewed relationship.⁵ The gesture of stretching out the hand symbolizes the change of status that is desired.

¹Men of Shechem strengthen hand of Abimelech to kill brothers (Judg 9:24), Jonathan strengthens hands of David in God (1 Sam 23:16), Job strengthens weak hands (Job 4:3).

²Both cases involved a foreign, not an Israelite, king. Pharoah gave a ring to Joseph (Gen 41:42) and Ahasuerus gave a ring to Haman (Esth 3:10).

³Tribute (Judg 1:35).

⁴Taking booty from the hand of Amorites (Gen 48:22), taking land from the hand of two kings (Deut 3:8), taking Gath from the hand of Philistines (1 Chr 18:1), hand finds riches of the people (Isa 10:14).

⁵YHWH spreads His hands in invitation (תָּמֹן—Isa 65:2; קָרָאת—Prov 1:24).
When a person gives (יָד) his hand to another, he gives up his will, as it were. Depending on the context, the giving of the hand is translated in terms of pledging allegiance, submitting, yielding, or surrendering. Much like the giving of tribute, the gesture of giving the hand transforms the relationship between giver and receiver. Subsequently, the receiver takes on authority over the giver.¹ The giving of the hand changes status.

However, when one person gives (יָד) or sells (מָכַס) another person “into the hand” of someone, that person is placed involuntarily under the authority and control of someone who then has the power of life and death over him.² When someone delivers (יָדַע) or saves (יָּעַם or יָשָׁב) a person “from the hand” of an oppressor,³ that person is taken out from under the authority and control of someone who had the

¹Leaders pledge allegiance (give hand) to Solomon (1 Chr 29:24), Israelites yield (give hand) to YHWH (2 Chr 30:8), Israel surrenders (gives hand) (Jer 50:15), Israel submits (gives hand) to Egypt (Lam 5:6),

²Elijah would deliver Obadiah into the hand of Ahab (1 Kgs 18:9), YHWH sells Israel to the hand of its enemies (Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; 1 Sam 12:9), YHWH sells Tyre to hand of Judah (Joel 3:8[4:8]). Note how “death and life . . . in the hand of the tongue” (Prov 18:21) refers to the power of speech to control life and death.

³Johnson, 53. Using the verb יָּעַם: YHWH delivers Jacob from the hand of Esau (Gen 32:11[12]), Israel from the hand of the Egyptians (Exod 3:8; 18:10), Israel from the hand of its enemies (Mic 4:10), Israel from the hand of the wicked (Jer 15:21), no one delivers [anybody] from the hand of YHWH (Deu 32:39) or Babylon from the hand of flames (Isa 47:14). Using the verbs יָּעַם and יָּשָׁב: YHWH saves Israel from the hand of the foe (Ps 106:10).
power of life and death over him. In abstraction, the same idea holds. A person delivered from the "hand of Sheol" escapes from death's power to terminate life.¹

In summary, the hand is used in the Old Testament to convey notions of change in status that are included with exchange of wealth, whether on a personal or national level, and relationships transformed by ritual defilement, magic, or coming under the power of another.

Rituals of Status Change

Having surveyed the use of hands in changes of status, this section now focuses on the more formal use of the hands in specific rituals. The ceremonial use of the hands is central in these rituals and the changes of status that they effect. Four rituals are addressed: worship, anointing, consecration, and hand imposition.

Worship and Stretching the Hands

The issue of what/who constitutes a proper object of worship is addressed in many instances with reference to the hand. Sun worship is rejected in language that alludes to the fact that kissing the hand is a sign of homage to the sun and YHWH reprimands Israel for worshiping the works of their own hands and saying "our gods" to what their hands have made.² In the worship of the true God YHWH, rituals of prayer are also closely tied to the raising and spreading of the hands. Israelite prayer

¹Delivering (יִבָּעָל) from hand of Sheol (Hos 13:14; Ps 49:15[16]).

²Kissing the hand (Job 31:27), “our gods” (Jer 1:16; Hos 14:3).
incorporated lifting the hands toward God.\(^1\) Raised hands in the context of prayer have been interpreted in a number of ways. Sometimes raised hands indicate a vow to God, using the recognized gesture of taking an oath.\(^2\) Sometimes raised hands simply express praise to God.\(^3\) Perhaps spreading the hands indicates receptivity to the divine.\(^4\) Certainly at times the physical expression did not always present a genuine emulation of the heart.\(^5\) But raised hands in many cases indicate a graphic plea for divine deliverance.\(^6\)

**Anointing and Hands Pouring Oil**

Anointing is another ritual of status change which involves the hands. However, it does not involve contact of the hand. This is an important point with regards to the laying on of hands. This brief review of anointing will demonstrate that there was no relationship between anointing and laying on of hands in the Old Testament. The Old Testament employs three Hebrew terms, \( \text{יְנַחַן} \), \( \text{יְנַחַנָּה} \), and \( \text{יְנַחַנָּהּ} \), from which the word "anoint" has been translated.\(^7\) Only used once in the sense of

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\(^1\) Lifted hands (Ps 28:2), spread out hands (Isa 1:15).

\(^2\) Deut 32:40; Neh 8:6.

\(^3\) Ps 63:4[5].

\(^4\) Ps 143:6.

\(^5\) Lam 1:17.

\(^6\) Ps 71:4.

\(^7\) For a study of anointing see: Crawley, 1:549-55; Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 103-106; idem, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh
anoint, מָשַׁח literally means to make fat or prosperous. Used nine times, מָשַׁח indicates either the ordinary physical process of anointing the body with olive oil or the pouring of pure and fragrant anointing oils onto the anointed.

The most common Old Testament term for anointing, the verb מָשַׁח is used sixty-nine times and its noun מָשָׁחַ thirty-eight times. Originally מָשַׁח meant to wipe or stroke with the hand in a smearing or spreading of a liquid, thus the Old Testament uses this term to indicate spreading oil over wafers, rubbing a shield or one’s body.


1Ps 23:5; Szikszai, 1:138-9, and Herbert Wolf, “מָשַׁח (מָשַׁח) be(come) fat, prosperous; to anoint,” TWOT (1980), 1:458. Ps 23:5 literally states that the head is “made fat with oil” as a description of the blessing of God. The LXX translation of מָשַׁח, λιπαίνω, is rooted in the same concept of “to fatten” but also has the meaning of anoint. See also, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, s. v. λιπαίνω (1957), 476, and John Groves, A Greek and English Dictionary, Comprising All the Words in the Writings of the Most Popular Greek Authors (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1830).

2Exod 30:32; Deut 28:40; Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam 12:20; 14:2; 2 Chr 28:15; Ezek 16:9; Dan 10:3; Mic 6:15. See also, Szikszai, 1:138-9, and R. D. Patterson, “מָשַׁח (מָשַׁח) I, anoint,” TWOT (1980), 2:619; Arndt and Gingrich, 34; Groves; and Henrich Schlier, “ἀλείφω,” TDNT (1972), 1:229. The LXX term for מָשַׁח, αλείφω, is also used for external physical anointing as opposed to the ceremonial anointing.

3Tuttle, 44. The LXX translates מָשַׁח with both ἀλείφω and χρίσω, the latter preferred for ceremonial anointing. Schlier, 229, and Walter Grundman, “χρίσω, χριστάσοντας, ἀντικριστος, χρία, χριστιανός,” TDNT (1972), 9:493-6.
with oil, or the painting of a house.¹ Most often, however, the Old Testament employs
the verb to indicate a form of ceremonial anointing and the noun to indicate one who
has received this special anointing. A distinction was made between the cult and the
profane by forbidding the pouring (ךַּלְּחַמ) of holy anointing oil (ךַּלְּחַמ הַנְּטָה) on a
person's body other than Aaron and his sons.²

Both inanimate objects and people received ceremonial anointing. Jacob
anointed a pillar by pouring oil on it.³ Other anointed objects were all connected with
the cult: altar, altar utensils, tabernacle, ark, and some of the offerings.⁴ People who
received anointing included patriarchs, prophets, healed lepers, priests, and kings, with
kings the most frequently mentioned.⁵

Anointing of people was associated with changes in status. Patriarchs changed
from ordinary men to chosen men.⁶ Prophets changed ordinary men to "men of

¹Spread liquid. BDB. s.v. "ךַּלְּחַמ"; William L. Holladay, A Concise Hebrew
and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. s.v. "ךַּלְּחַמ" (1971), 218. and Tuttle, 44-
60. On wafers (Exod 29:2), shield (2 Sam 1:21: Isa 21:5), body (Amos 6:6), painting
(Jer 22:14).


³Gen 28:18.

⁴Altar (Exod 29:36), altar utensils (Exod 40:10), tabernacle (Exod 30:26), ark
(Exod 30:26), offerings (Exod 29:2).

⁵Weisman, 379, 380, 382; Rabinowitz, "Anointing," 27; Szikszai, 138-9; De
Vaux, The Bible, 152-66; idem. Ancient Israel, 71. Tuttle (51) points out that almost
half (32 out of 65 references) of the occurrences of "ךַּלְּחַמ" refer to the king's anointing
and 33 of the 38 times that "ךַּלְּחַמ" appears are connected with a king.

⁶ךַּלְּחַמ occurs only once with reference to the patriarchs, Ps 105:15. Tuttle,
54; Hesse, 504.

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Anointing most frequently occurred in scenarios of induction, indicating ceremonially that one was indeed an authorized choice of YHWH. Anointing indicated that one had been set apart and consecrated by God to represent Himself in some special way. It also indicated that a new relationship now existed between God and His chosen, a relationship often accompanied by a special endowment of the Spirit.

1Though no conclusive evidence for anointing of prophets exists, two passages suggest such a possibility: 1 Kgs 19:16; Isa 61:1. Hesse (501) argues against a literal anointing and equates the anointing of the above two texts to the gift of the Spirit. Tuttle (52-4) argues instead that “the concept of anointing does appear twice in connection with the prophetic office thus implying the existence of such a rite.”

2Rabinowitz (“Anointing,” 28) states, “The leper was anointed on the eighth and concluding day of his purification ritual”; however “the indispensable verb mshh is tellingly absent.” Milgrom (Leviticus, 555) points out that the change in status was from banishment to a freedom to reenter society.

3Tuttle, 50-1; Hesse, 500-1; Rabinowitz, “Anointing,” 27-8. Sixteen times anointing is connected with the priesthood, mostly to the anointing of Aaron and/or his sons. No mention of priestly anointing is mentioned subsequent to the conquest.

4Hesse, 498-9.

5The one exception might be that of the anointing of a leper. The anointing in this case might be seen more as a rite of purification (Rabinowitz, “Anointing,” 28). But, in fact the leper entered into a new social status as the net result of this purification rite. “To inaugurate” incorporates the idea of making a formal beginning with that of ceremony. So one could say that the leper was inaugurated into a new status of life.

6A new title was given after the anointing ceremony, especially to the kings: “the anointed of YHWH,” “His anointed,” and “My anointed.” Tuttle, 51.
given at the time of anointing.\textsuperscript{1} Prophet became God's special spokesman, priest received special empowerment to perform his duties before God and people. and king received a special filling of the Spirit of God which meant he would receive YHWH's support, strength, and wisdom.\textsuperscript{2} Anointing brought a special status of belonging to God, a becoming God's servant and confidant, and a standing under His protection that gave an inviolability to the one anointed.\textsuperscript{3} The one anointed was to be hedged with sacredness for his protection and empowered to perform the functions of his office.\textsuperscript{4} In fact, to touch the anointed king is to sin against YHWH.\textsuperscript{5}

Evidently, though \( \pi\nu\pi \) originally connoted an action of the hand in smearing or spreading, its usage indicated something different when applied to the spiritual realm. Ceremonial anointing appears to involve either sprinkling or pouring/dousing

\begin{itemize}
\item With anointing, the Spirit of YHWH came upon David (1 Sam 16:1-13; 2 Sam 19:22). Hesse, 503.
\item Support (1 Sam 16:13-14; 18:2), strength (Ps 89:21-25), wisdom (Isa 11:1-4; Rabinowitz, "Anointing," 27-31). Milgrom (Leviticus, 553-5) notes that at a king's anointing, he was conferred with the \( \text{ruah YHWH} \), that is to say, YHWH's support, strength, and wisdom. However. Milgrom also notes that the anointing of the high priest served a different function, for it conferred no \( \text{ruah YHWH} \), but instead "sanctified" him by removing him from the realm of the profane and by empowering him to operate in the realm of the sacred and handle sancta.
\item Tuttle, 44-60; De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 103-6; idem. The Bible, 152-66: Hesse, 501-4. Milgrom (Leviticus, 553-5) states that the implication of anointing is that it is a sacred rite indicating that the anointed one receives divine sanction and that his person is inviolable. 1 Sam 24:7, 8; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16: 19:22.
\item Crawley, 553.
\item Hesse, 504.
\end{itemize}
oil from a horn or cruse onto the head of an individual. While the hand obviously played a role in anointing, it appears that the Old Testament practice of anointing followed the ancient Near Eastern procedure of not placing hands directly on people in the ceremony of anointing. Anointing symbolized a transfer from one status to another and hand usage in this rite played a significant role in ceremonializing this change in status.

Consecration and “Filling the Hand”

In Akkadian “filling the hand” indicated assignment or transfer of a person, population, kingdom, or war booty into the hand of an individual. However, the Old Testament idiomatically used the phrase “filling the hand” ( נָשָׁף ) only in the cult as a reference to priestly ordination and one time to the consecration of an altar. “Filling the hands” has been variously translated as consecrate, ordain(ation), set apart.

1 Sprinkling (Exod 29:31; Lev 8:30). Milgrom (Leviticus, 533-5) notes that while Aaron had oil poured on his head at his anointing, his sons were instead sprinkled. Pouring/dousing (Exod 29:7; Lev 8:12; 2 Kgs 9:6; etc.) Milgrom (Leviticus, 518-19) uses the term “dousing” and points out that “no other means was employed.” He points out that the verb “pour” ( יָרַע ) is connected with anointing ( נָשָׁף ) in the stories of Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:18; 31:13), Samuel and Saul (1 Sam 10:1), and Jehu and Elisha (2 Kgs 9:3). Anointing of the high priest was solely referred to as “dousing” ( Lev 21:10; Ps 133:2 ). Anointing of kings was always performed with a horn which implies pouring (1 Sam 16:13; 1 Kgs 1:39). David was anointed from a horn and Saul from a cruse to indicate that Saul’s kingdom was not everlasting. See also, Rabinowitz, “Anointing,” 27-31.


or install. The expression first applied to Levites and Aaronic priests. Later the 
expression applied to the ordination of unapproved priests.

Interpretations of the Old Testament idiom “filling the hand” include both 
abstract and concrete connotations. The equivalent Akkadian phrase, specifically its 
concept of putting something concrete into another’s hands, has colored interpretation 
of the Old Testament phrase. Thus a priest’s income must be that which “fills his 
hands.” Two Old Testament texts support this interpretation. For ten pieces of silver, 
food, and clothing Micah hired a Levite to be his personal priest. The book of Judges 
states that Micah “filled the hand” of the Levite and the young man was a “priest to 
him.” The second occurrence involves a “filling the hands” ceremony of Aaron and

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1 Jay Green (The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek English Bible [Wilmington, DE: 
Associated Publishers and Authors, 1976]) translates as consecrate. The NIV translates 
as ordain, set apart, ordination, install, and consecrate.


3 Judg 17:5; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Chr 13:9.

4 For a thorough study of מָלַק see Snijders, 881-4, also H. F. Beck, 
“Consecrate, Consecration,” IDB (1962) 1:676-7; M. Delcor, "מָלַק ml' voll sein, 

5 Snijders (8:302) refers to De Vaux, Noth, and Michaeli. Delcor (מָלַק, 899) 
refers to the Mari letters.

6 Snijders, 8:302-3.

7 Judg 17:10-12.
his sons in which sacrifices were placed in their hands.1 “Filling their hands” has been interpreted as investing them with the requisite sacrificial gifts and thus sanctifying Aaron and his sons that they might be priests. Or, it refers to providing something to the priest that he might have something to offer God. Or, filling presupposes the daily repetition of the consecration offering.2

Abstract interpretations assert that “filling the hands” refers to giving full authority or power, an enabling of the priest to accomplish his task. The LXX supports this interpretation by not translating θυματίζω (fill) with πληράματι (fill, fulfill) or πληρέω (make full, fill), but rather with τελείω which means “completely finish.” When a priest’s hands were full he was ready to fully function in his priestly role; his hands were so full that he had no time for other business.3 Snijders points out that the ritual of “filling the hand” is a pars pro toto of the priestly ordination; to speak of the hand is to speak of the priest. But to Snijders, nothing real was put into the hand. Rather, “filling the hand” serves as a title for entrance into priesthood.4

1Van der Merwe (34) states that “this expression may refer to the fact that selected portions of the animal-sacrifice were placed upon the hands of the priests in the course of this ceremony, Exod 29:22ff.”

2Exod 29:24ff.; Lev 8:27ff.; Alexander, 362-4; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 2:205, 229, 344. Torrance (228) notes that “filling the hands” means that the act of consecration is brought to its fulfillment or completion when the priest’s hands are filled with the holy oblations. It can also be applied in an extended sense to the consecration of the altar through having laid the oblation on it.

3Alexander, 362-4.

Ordination and Laying Hands

It has already been shown that the Old Testament shared with the rest of the ancient Near Eastern World in applying the rich symbolism of the hand to the perception, projection, and change of status. However, unlike the ancient Near Eastern World around it, the Old Testament placed major significance upon hand laying. This begins with the symbolism associated with the making or calling of a prophet. YHWH not only called a prophet to become His hand, as has been discussed earlier, YHWH also laid His hand to enable and to compel the candidate for prophetic office.1

As used in the Old Testament, the verb לְפָּרָשׁ, when combined with the noun יָדוֹ, indicated a laying on of hands. As noted above,2 לְפָּרָשׁ יָדוֹ occurs twenty-five times in the Old Testament: eighteen times on animals in the context of cultic sacrifice

Against Their Ancient Near Eastern Background." in Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Panel Sessions, Bible Studies and Hebrew Language [Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1983], 124-5) argues against the concept of “filling the hand” having anything to do with putting a physical item into a priest’s hands. Rather, he points out that the Akkadian term qāam mullū (=millē yad) has the sense of consecrating for duty. To him the Hebrew phrase has “precisely the same meaning.”

1The phrase not only refers to a prophetic formula for the reception of the word which was experienced as pressure and restraint but also as a visionary ecstasy. The hand of God enabled Elijah to run before Ahab’s chariot from Carmel to Jezreel (1 Kgs 18:46). Music helped create a condition of ecstasy in which YHWH’s hand came upon Elijah (2 Kgs 3:15). The grasp of the hand of YHWH had a powerful compulsion in the case of Isaiah (8:11), Jeremiah (15:17), and Ezekiel who uses this formula in seven places in relating his visions (Ezek 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:33; 37:1; 40:1).

2In the word definition section at the beginning of this chapter.
or banishment;¹ five times on people in the context of installation to office, judgment, and of setting aside:² one time on an inanimate object in the context of expecting support;³ and one time on one who is stumbling in order to provide support.⁴

The focus of this study is on the significance of laying on of hands in transfer of leadership and installation to office. Therefore primary attention is not to the hand gesture in its application to animals, inanimate objects, support to the stumbling, or to people in scenarios not involving leadership transfer and installation to office. Thus study is limited to laying on of hands specifically in the experience of Joshua.⁵

¹In the context of sacrifice, hand(s) were laid on the heads of animals for the burnt offering (rimon, Lev 1:4), the fellowship/peace offering (κοσμικὸς θυσία, Lev 3:2, 8, 13), and the sin/guilt offering (κακοκατάλημα, Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33). Hands were also laid on animals for sacrifices connected with the consecration of priests (Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 8:14, 18, 22) as well as Levites (Num 8:10), and with Hezekiah’s rededication of the temple (2 Chr 29:23). Hands were laid on the scapegoat during the Day of Atonement ceremonies which resulted in its banishment to the wilderness (Lev 16:21).

²Three of the five texts discuss Moses laying hands on Joshua at his installation (Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9), one discusses the congregation of Israel laying hands in judgment on a blasphemer (Lev 24:14), and one discusses the congregation laying hands on the Levites in setting them aside for work in the Tabernacle (Num 8:10).

³Hands laid on a wall for support (Amos 5:19).

⁴YHWH supports those who stumble by laying His hand on them (Ps 37:24).

⁵It can be argued that laying on of hands in the experience of the Levites transferred to them the leadership of Israel’s first born and installed them into the office of temple and priest support. But, as noted in the introduction to this study, the Levitical experience has not been used as a prototype for ordination. This study focuses on Joshua’s experience because: it is a scenario in which only one individual received laying on of hands, it is a clear time in which leadership was transferred from one person to another, there is a clear office to which he was installed, and it has traditionally taken on prototypical application to current ordination practice.
should be noted however, that various symbolic meanings of laying on of hands in each of its usages applies to all areas of its usage. The following chapter sections address the various symbolic meanings of laying on of hands as applied to the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of laying on of hands.

**LAYING ON OF HANDS IN OLD TESTAMENT TRANSFERS OF LEADERSHIP**

Procedural Techniques of Laying on of Hands

Various concepts as to the procedure of laying on of hands become evident in a study of the Old Testament practice. Was the gesture one of strong or gentle pressure, was it with one or two hands and did the number of hands make any difference, and what actions accompanied the gesture? The following three chapter sections address these questions.

"Pressure" vs. "Gentle"

Laying-on-of-hands texts connected with blessing use the verbs יְבַל or הֵבַל instead of יָבַל. Thus David Daube sees two different kinds of laying on of hands, one represented by יָבַל, the other represented by יְבַל. Laying on of hands represented by יְבַל or יָבַל is of a "gentler character" than that represented by יָבַל. Gentle touch characterizes blessing, not the "vigorous pressure" of יָבַל. To Daube, the one laying on hands in blessing became a "conductor" transmitting "an influence

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1Both יָבַל and יְבַל mean "to place," "to put," "to set," or "to lay." Daube (225-9) sees these verbs as "synonymous in this connection."
from above" resulting in "the pouring of one's personality into another being, the creation of a representative or substitute."¹

Everett Ferguson agrees with Daube that "the basic distinction between the actions is well grounded." However, Ferguson disagrees "with the psychological interpretation of samakh as signifying the pouring of one's personality into a substitute," and suggests that "the distinction with sim and shith breaks down" when Daube uses them "to indicate the transference of something other than or less than the whole personality."² On the other hand, Wright disagrees with Daube's conclusion and suggests that a distinction between דֶּשֶׁנ/דֶּשֶׁנ and תַּכָּר is "hard to sustain on the meager evidence," and that תַּכָּר may not indicate the application of pressure.³

¹Ibid. Daube points out that part of the problem in seeing no difference between the 2 types of laying on of hands rests in LXX and English translations. The LXX translates both samakh and sim with ἐπιτοίημα. And in English all 3 Hebrew verbs are treated exactly the same.

²Ferguson, "Jewish and Christian Ordination," 13: idem, "Ordination in the Ancient Church," 71-74; idem, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination." JTS 26 (1975): 1-12. An overview of these three sources indicates that Ferguson draws support for his conclusion from the fact that the LXX used the same verb for both sim and samakh. Also, he notes that the Dead Sea Scrolls, Genesis Apocryphon 20:22, 29, use samakh in an account of Abraham healing Pharaoh by prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus, Ferguson disagrees with Daube's classifications of New Testament benedictions and healings as representing samakh and instances of appointment and impartation of the Holy Spirit as representing samakh. However, Ferguson still concludes that Jewish ordination developed from samakh while Christian ordination developed from sim. Marjorie Warkentin, Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 111: "The distinction between ṣāmak and sim is lost in the LXX both being translated by ἐπιτοίημα or a cognate."

³Wright, "Hands," 3:47: "The verb ṣāmak in the Priestly writings may be only idiomatic and not indicate that pressure is applied."
Detailed study of מְשָׁפָּר/מְשָׁפָּר usage supports Wright's conclusion. These verbs do not always denote gentleness: they also indicate taking things by force, an arrest, compelling settlement of disputes, and YHWH's judgment on the nations. In addition, מְשָׁפָּר carries overtones other than "vigorous pressure" such as a gentle leaning against a wall, or the overtones of support and sustenance, as well as reliance and stability. Thus an interpretation of laying on of hands must go beyond the "gentle" versus "pressure" discussion proposed by Daube.

One or Two Hands

Twenty-three of the twenty-five occurrences of the phrase מְשָׁפָּר in the Old Testament are used in a cultic activity, in ceremonies involving sacrifice, atonement, ordination, and judgment. Nine of the twenty-three occurrences use the singular for hand (מר), fourteen use the plural, hands (מר or dual, מְשָׁפִּים). In eight sacrificial ritual texts, when the subject is singular, the object is also singular (מר, his hand). In nine other sacrificial ritual texts, when the subject is plural, the object is plural.

1By force (1 Kgs 20:6), arresting Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:16; 2 Chr 23:15), settle dispute (Job 9:33), judgment (Ezek 39:21).


3Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 4:15; 8:14, 18, 22; 16:21; 24:14; Num 8:10, 12; 27:23; Deut 34:9; 2 Chr 29:23.

While six of these latter nine occurrences use the normal plural subject with the plural verb, three use a singular verb with the plural subject. Two of four non-sacrificial scenarios use a singular subject with its object in the dual (ךָֽתַר וּךָֽתָר, his hands). The first such scenario presents Aaron laying his hands on the scapegoat, the second presents Moses laying his hands on Joshua. However, in the second scenario, God first instructed Moses to lay “your hand” (ךָֽתַר) on Joshua. The other two non-sacrificial scenarios use a plural subject with its object in the plural. The first scenario presents the witnesses of a blasphemer’s sin laying their hands on his head, the second presents the congregation of Israel laying their hands on the Levites.

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1 Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 4:15; 8:14, 18, 22; Num 8:12; 2 Chr 29:23.
2 Exod 29:10, 19; Lev 8:14. Milgrom (Leviticus, 520) discusses these inconsistencies in the MT, which are further complicated in the LXX and Samaritan versions, concluding that the MT must be left unchanged.
3 Lev 16:21, and yet the Ketib has the singular.
5 Num 27:18. The MT indicates that Num 27:18 uses the singular for hand while using the plural in Num 27:23 and Deut 34:9. Péter, 48; Wright, “Gesture,” 435. Both Péter and Wright read this verse as a “defectively spelled dual” and thus eliminates the singular, “hand.” The LXX supports this conclusion by translating Num 27:18 with the plural, however the Sam changes the plural of Num 27:23 and Deut 34:9 to the singular. The Targums and Vulgate follow the MT while the Syriac leaves both Num 27:18 and 23 in the singular with Deut 34:9 in the plural.
6 Lev 24:14.
7 Num 8:10.
On the basis of the above information, René Péter, D. P. Wright, and others conclude that the usage of one hand was limited to the sacrificial rite while the usage of two hands was limited to non-sacrificial rites.¹ Such a conclusion also stipulates that the scapegoat scenario not be included as a sacrificial rite.² In addition, Wright concludes that the Levite scenario is a single-handed event with the same meaning as the sacrificial rite.³ Wright and Milgrom recognize that the only texts clearly presenting a two-handed rite are the scapegoat and Joshua scenarios but then they hypothesize that the blasphemer scenario was also two-handed.⁴

Angel Rodriguez draws attention to two important points: (1) subject-verb agreement in the twenty-three occurrences does not clearly define whether one or two hands is used for sacrifice, and (2) in the case of Joshua, “the description of the ritual

¹Péter, 48-55; Wright and Milgrom, 5:884-8. Wright refers to B. Janowski and R. Rendtorff for support with this conclusion. For other scholars who agree, see Rodriguez, 196-8.

²Wright (“Hands,” 47) points out that in his opinion the scapegoat is not a sacrifice, rather it is merely a bearer of impurity.

³Ibid.; idem, “Gesture,” 446. Wright points out that the surrounding terminology is sacrificial in nature. By the laying on of hands the Israelites show that the Levites are their “offering” to God and that benefits from the Levites’ service will accrue to them. However, Péter (53) points out the difficulty of determining whether or not one or two hands were used with the Levites. Since he favors an “identification” meaning of hand-laying on the Levites, he leans toward the one-hand interpretation.

⁴Ibid., 433-46; Milgrom, Leviticus, 1041. Wright (“Gesture,” 433-46) points out that two-handed laying on of hands is not so clear on Joshua because of the Lev 27:18 mention of one hand. He prefers to see it as a “defectively spelled dual.” He says that the two-handed form as it applies to the scenario of the blasphemer is “ambiguous,” but then works under the assumption that it is indeed two-handed.
employs the singular; the execution of the ritual employs the dual.” He suggests the
latter as a possible interpretation for the sacrificial rite: its description could use the
singular while its execution could use the plural.¹ Rodriguez concludes that no
significant different meaning exists between the usage of one or two hands in Old
Testament practice. In arguing against R. Péter’s conclusion that the one and two-
handed gestures are to be interpreted differently, N. Kiuchi draws a similar conclusion
to Rodriguez: “The difference in form as such does not necessarily imply a difference
in the meaning of the gesture.”²

Another three observations support Rodriguez. First, laying on of hands shares
common ground between sacrificial and ordination events. Sacrificial laying-on-of-
hand ceremonies were closely associated with the ordination of Aaron and his sons.³
Levites were set aside to replace the specialized leadership demanded of Israel’s
firstborn. In a similar fashion, Joshua was set aside to replace the leadership of Moses,
a setting aside that has been referred to as an ordination.⁴ Thus, all three scenarios
involved ordination: Aaron and his sons to leadership as priests. Levites to substituting
for the leadership demanded of the firstborn. and Joshua to replace the leadership of
Moses. The number of hands varies in each scene. No hands are mentioned as laid on

¹Rodriguez (196-8) uses the scapegoat scenario (Lev 16:21) to illustrate the
actual performance of ritual that uses two hands.

²N. Kiuchi, The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning

³Exod 29:10. 15. 19; Lev 8:14. 18. 22.

⁴Daube, 226-7.
Aaron and his sons, yet they laid their hand(s) on ordination sacrifices. The number of hands is not clear in the ordination of the Levites yet, in Joshua’s ordination, both one hand and two hands are mentioned. The fact that laying on of hands was associated with both sacrifice and ordination would indicate a similar underlying meaning and signify no difference between the meaning of one or two hands.

Second, in two areas the one vs. two hand distinction appears arbitrary and contrived. One such area grows out of a comparison of hand-laying on the scapegoat with hand-laying on the Levites. Wright postulates that hand-laying on the Levites was with a single hand. He supports his conclusion by pointing out that surrounding terminology is sacrificial in nature, and since in his opinion all sacrificial laying on of hands uses a single hand, therefore hand-laying on the Levites was also with one hand. Yet Wright at the same time appears to dismiss the abundance of sacrificial terminology surrounding the scapegoat scenario and states that this two-handed rite has no relationship to the sacrificial system.¹ A second area of arbitrariness grows out of a comparison of hand laying on the blasphemer with hand laying on the Levites. Both scenarios are described with the same subject-verb-object agreement, leaving unclear whether one or two hands was used. Sentence structure describing the two scenarios does not support the conclusion that two hands were used in one situation while only one was used in the other. Yet Wright concludes that two hands were laid on the

¹This is not to imply that the scapegoat ritual is a sacrificial ritual. There are significant differences between the two rituals. The scapegoat rite is however embedded in a ritual complex which consists mainly of sacrifices which colors an interpretation of the scapegoat ritual.
blasphemer while one hand was laid on the Levites. In either of the above two areas, it appears that one’s understanding about the meaning of laying on of hands colors interpretation of whether one or two hands was used.¹

Third, a review of the broad range of the meanings of confirms does not support drawing a fine line of distinction between the meaning of one or two hands. For instance, to have something in one’s hand was to have that item in one’s possession, control, or power. At times, the number of items represented as being in one’s hand (singular) were obviously far more than could be held by one hand.² One plucked grain with his hand (singular) when it was understood that both hands were to be used.³ The number of references to hand in the singular far exceed those in the plural. Evidently, the ancient mind thought of both hands when using the singular. Since a reference to one hand can include both, it became necessary to use more deliberate language when referring to two hands. Besides, more often than not, the number of hands was not significant. Three experiences of Moses illustrate that the number of hands used was not as important as the fact that hands were used. In the battle against the Amalekites, when Moses held up his hand (singular) the battle went well, but when

¹See the section below entitled, “Theories Regarding the Meaning of Laying on of Hands.” For a review of Wright’s and Milgrom’s conclusions, see Wright, “Hands,” 47; idem, “Gesture,” 443-47; and Milgrom, Leviticus, 1041.

²Seven ewe lambs (Gen 21:30), many gifts (Gen 24:10), vessels and trumpets (Num 31:6).

³Deut 23:25[26].
his hands (plural) dropped, the battle went poorly.¹ In the two passages describing Moses carrying the two tables of stone, three different expressions are used with respect to the number of hands: (1) his/my hand (singular), (2) his hands (plural), and (3) my two hands.² And finally, relative to the interest of this study, God told Moses to lay his hand (singular) on Joshua, then Moses laid his hands (plural). Sansom notes that the discrepancy in the number of hands in the appointment of Joshua warns “against putting too much weight on the number of hands.”³ Whether one or two hands is used appears insignificant to interpreting the meaning of the gesture.

The above evidence demonstrates extreme difficulty in drawing significant conclusions relative to Old Testament understanding of the difference between laying on of one or two hands. Rodriguez’s conclusion is correct: no significant difference exits between the usage of one or two hands.

Actions Accompanying Laying on of Hands

Rodriguez, along with Van der Merwe and others, also concludes that the practice of laying on of hands was often accompanied by the spoken word.⁴ Four scenarios of laying on of hands support their conclusions: that of the scapegoat, sin

¹Exod 17:11, 12.
²Exod 32:15, 19; Deut 9:15, 17; 10:3.
³Sansom. 325.
⁴Rodriguez. 198-201; Van der Merwe, 37-38.
offerings (sacrifices), blasphemer, and Joshua. First, the rite of the scapegoat in Lev 16:21 was accompanied by the spoken word of the high priest, in this case a confession of the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of Israel. Second, verbal confession accompanied certain sin offerings which also required the laying on of hands. Third, Van der Merwe points out that Deut 17:6 and 1 Kgs 21:10, 13 indicate that before stoning a person, witnesses should give public testimony of what they have witnessed. He then surmises that in any case of stoning, such as for the blasphemer in Lev 24:14, "the laying on of the hands was accompanied by an evidence concerning the guilt of the

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1 Scholars (e.g., van der Merwe, 37) have also found support for words accompanying the laying on of hands in the story of the false accusation of Susanna as rendered in the apocryphal addition to the book of Daniel. The elders who falsely accused Susanna placed their hands on her and then gave their false testimony. This study does not take this story into account for four reasons: (1) The Hebrew vocabulary of this study does not appear in this apocryphal story which is written in Greek. (2) Susanna was never part of the Hebrew canon. (3) Susanna is not quoted as Scripture by any ancient Jewish writer, including Josephus. (4) Today, "virtually no scholar subscribes to the story as pure fact" and most view the story as purely secular. Carey A. Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions, AB, vol. 44 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 80-89. See also, Marti J. Steussy, Gardens in Babylon: Narratives and Faith in the Greek Legends of Daniel, SBL Dissertation Series, no. 141 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 111.

2 Rodriguez argues that the Lev 16:21 evidence of confession of sins in a cultic context applies also to the laying on of hands in the sacrificial context. Thus to Rodriguez, the spoken word also accompanied the hand-laying rite when it preceded any sacrifice. However, verbal confession does not appear in the book of Leviticus until 5:5. In Lev 3:2, hand-leaning is performed on a well-being offering even though Lev 3 does not mention forgiveness or atonement. If Rodriguez were to be correct, any words accompanying the well-being offering would have to be of a different nature than that of confession of sin and could possibly include words seeking for God's deliverance, words of thanksgiving for deliverance or God's generosity, or words expressing how the one offering the sacrifice fulfilled his vow. See Lev 7:11-21 for reasons to offer the well-being offering.

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person to be stoned.”¹ Fourth, both Van der Merwe and Rodriguez support the concept that words accompanied the laying of hands on Joshua. Van der Merwe changes the translation of Num 27:20 from “that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient (unto him)” to “so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may hear.” Thus hand-laying was “accompanied by a solemn declaration.”² While Rodriguez disagrees with this translation, he agrees with the conclusion based on a different defense. He grounds his defense on the commission, or charge, given to Joshua in Num 27:19, a commissioning that “was oral.”³ The above four scenarios provide evidence that spoken words accompanied laying on of hands in both sacrificial and non-sacrificial contexts.

Upon what were hands laid? Nineteen of the twenty-three occurrences of laying on of hands in a cultic activity place the hands on the head (שָׁלֹם יָדְךָ).⁴ In each of the sacrificial occurrences, hands are laid on the head of the animal to be sacrificed.⁵ In the case of the scapegoat, hands were laid on the head.⁶ Also, hands were laid on the

¹Van der Merwe, 37.
²Ibid., 38.
³Rodriguez (199) believes that Deut 34:9 supports the “obey” translation of Num 27:20. Further discussion of Num 27:19, 20 is presented in chapter 4.
⁴Refer to the column entitled, “Placement” in Table 2, Analysis of דָּבָר יָדְךָ.
⁵Exod 29:10, 15, 19 Lev 1:4: 3:2, 8, 13; Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 8:14, 18, 22; Num 8:12; 2 Chr 29:23.
head of the blasphemer. Hand placement is not given a specific location in the remaining four occurrences, rather three times in the Joshua scenario hands were laid “on him,” and one time hands were laid “on the Levites.” Hand-laying on the head occurred in a majority of both sacrificial and non-sacrificial rites. It would therefore appear appropriate to conclude that hand-laying on the head probably occurred in both of the Joshua and Levite scenarios.

Symbolic Meanings of Laying on of Hands

As noted in the introduction, scholars have often pondered what is accomplished with the דָּבָר נֶאֶס rites of the Old Testament. Wright comments that hand placement is the “most discussed gesture in the Old Testament.” Agreement about the gesture’s meaning is rare and at times the various theories of interpretation contradict each other. Proposals for interpretation vary from symbolic to literal and from a single meaning to more than one meaning. Fabry uses the word “curious” when referring to W. Wefing’s literal interpretation that hand extension took place in order to hold the

1 Lev 24:14.

2 Wright, “Gesture,” 437.

3 Ibid., 433. Wright states that there is no general consensus on the significance of the gesture of laying on of hands.

4 Sansom (324, 326) suggests that hand-leanng does not always have the same basic significance and posits two meanings to the gesture; transference and acknowledgment or identification.
animal to be sacrificed firmly in place.\textsuperscript{1} This theory completely overlooks the rich meaning of Old Testament symbolism where most scholars search for their interpretation. In this search, a growing number of scholars follow Péter's lead in differentiating between one-handed and two-handed gestures. However, scholars do not agree on the significance of the one- vs. two-handed gesture. And, as noted above, evidence is lacking to support differentiating between one or two hands.

The majority of scholarly opinion on the meaning of laying on of hands has been categorized into a variety of theories.\textsuperscript{2} One can become confused when trying to understand the language used to describe these theories because the descriptive words can be used very differently by different authors. One such word is "identification" which has been used to describe the meaning of laying on of hands in two very different ways. "Identification" can indicate ownership: that which I lay my hands on is thus "identified" as mine. Or, "identification" can indicate becoming one with another; I personally "identify" with the one on whom I lay my hand. Another confusing term is that of "Manumissio." Rodriguez uses the term to indicate the

\textsuperscript{1}Fabry, 884.

\textsuperscript{2}Rodriguez (201-8) suggests five theories: (1) Transfer and/or Substitution, (2) Identification, (3) Consecration/Dedication, (4) Appropriation and/or Designation, and (5) Manumissio. Fabry (883-4) suggests four: (1) Transfer, (2) Identification, (3) Modified Substitution, and (4) Declaration-Demonstration. Fabry gives an excellent review of the various scholars classified under the various theories. Milgrom \textit{(Leviticus}. 150-3) gives four: (1) Transference, (2) Identification, (3) Declaration, and (4) Ownership. Wright ("Gesture," 437-46) gives five: (1) Transfer of sin, (2) Transfer of personality with Substitution, (3) Transfer of personality with no Substitution, (4) Dedication, and (5) Demonstration. Van der Merwe (38-41) gives three: (1) Animistic, (2) Transfer, and (3) Manumissio.
renouncing of property while van der Merwe uses it to indicate the claim to property as mine.¹

This study groups scholarly opinion of the meaning of hand-laying into four areas: (1) transfer, (2) substitution, (3) confirmation of legal decisions, of the recipient of the action, of ownership, of recognition, and (4) setting apart. “Confirmation of ownership” includes the ownership element of “identification.” “Transfer” includes the becoming-one-with-another element of “identification” because when one becomes one with another (i.e., identifies with another) his personality or identity has been transferred to of that another.

Transfer and Identification

The most debated meaning of hand-laying is that of transfer. To many, the High Priest laying hands on the Day of Atonement scapegoat becomes the prototype giving meaning to the gesture. Lev 16:21 states that sin transferred to the scapegoat. Thus it is theorized that laying on of hands is a gesture of transfer conveying “the idea of transmitting something from a person to another person or a sacrificial animal.”² Stolz proposes that an intensive interrelation of a magic-real sort between the one laying on hands and the one receiving the laying on of hands becomes the common background to the concept of transfer.³ Scholars suggest various other elements of

¹Rodriguez, 208; Van der Merwe, 39.
²Ackroyd, 423-4.
³Stolz, 162.
transfer. Since "bad can be transferred," as evidenced on the Day of Atonement, sin can be transferred from a sinner to his sacrificial animal. Evil can also be transferred to humans. Witnesses of blasphemy laid hands on the blasphemer, thus transferring to the culprit the defilement he brought upon them. or, by anticipation, transferred to him the blood-guiltiness which would rest on them as a result of his execution. Laying on of hands not only transferred what was bad, but also authority, power, blessing, and healing. By laying hands on the Levites, the congregation of Israel symbolically transferred to the Levites their obligations in connection with the tabernacle service which also included authority to act in behalf of the whole nation. Through the laying

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1Daube, 226.

2Fabry (883) notes scholars who agree that sin is transferred: Volz, Elliger, Rendtorff, and Koch.

3Lev 24:14.

4Daube, 227: Wright and Milgrom, 5:884.

5When Moses laid hands on Joshua: Fabry (et al.), 883; Daube, 226-7; Péter, 50; Ackroyd, 423-4; Maertens, 643-7. Maertens proposes laying of hands as transmission of healing for the ancient Near East but notes that the Old Testament considers this practice as too close to magic.

on of hands Moses transferred his function (duties) to Joshua. Some also propose that the gesture transferred ownership of the gesture recipient to God. Some also propose that the gesture transferred ownership of the gesture recipient to God.2

Others suggest that hand-laying symbolized a different kind of transfer, a transfer of personality or identity to the animal to be sacrificed.3 This transfer of self resulted in the identification of one's self with the one upon whom hands were laid, not an identifying of, but an identifying with. For example, Israel transferred the identity of their firstborn to the Levities through the laying on of hands. Hand-laying did not point out who was to take the place of the first born, rather it was an identification with the Levites.4 Or in sacrificial ritual, the penitent identified with the animal to be sacrificed in order to effect a communion with divinity,5 a communion made possible because laying on of hands effected the transference of one’s self to the sacrificial animal.6 Thus the animal actually became part of the personality of the individual.7 a

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1Stolz, 160-2.

2Milgrom (Leviticus, 150) refers to A. Dillman and V. Ryssel.

3Wright ("Gesture," 437) suggests scholars in two categories. The transfer of personality to the sacrificial animal resulting in the animal becoming a substitute: Bernoulli, MacCulloch, and Noth. The transfer of personality or identifying of the animal with the offerer where there is no substitution: Elliger, Bertholet, Janowski, Lesetre, and Péter.

4Péter, 53.

5Stolz, 162.

6Fabry, 883. Fabry notes that M. Noth, W. Robertson Smith, A. Bertholet, R. K. Yerkes, and H. H. Rowley accept this and calls it the “identification” theory.

7Rodriguez (203-5) discusses H. Wheeler Robinson, Aubrey R. Johnson, H. Rowley, and D. Daube in this context. Johnson (60) states that the worshiper lays his
transfer of personality so complete that the soul of the one offering the sacrifice totally "penetrated" or "permeated" the soul of the animal.\textsuperscript{1} On the other hand, H. P. Smith proposes a backwards transfer in which the sanctity of the sacrificial victim passed back to the worshiper.\textsuperscript{2}

Péter proposes an interesting distinction between the usage of one and two hands. He concludes that the two-hand gesture implies transfer while the one-hand gesture implies only an identification of the one offering the sacrifice with the victim.\textsuperscript{3}

Wright, Milgrom, and other scholars accept the one-hand versus two-hand distinction, agreeing that the single-hand gesture does not denote transfer.\textsuperscript{4} However, scholars

hand on the sacrificial animal "so as to associate himself with the victim." Daube (225-6) describes hand-leaning as a "pouring your personality" or as a passing on of "positive, beneficial qualities of a person." Marshall (724) describes the rite as indicating the "identification" of the people with their offering.

\textsuperscript{1}Milgrom (\textit{Leviticus}, 150) identifies Dussaud as supporting this concept. Van der Merwe (38) places this concept under the heading of "Animism."

\textsuperscript{2}Smith, 55-7.

\textsuperscript{3}Péter, 48-55. He notes that the usage of two hands is limited to the Day of Atonement (scapegoat), consecration of Joshua as well as the Levites, and at the punishment of the blasphemer.

\textsuperscript{4}H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism," \textit{JTS} 48 (1942): 130-1; van der Merwe, 38-41. Fabry (883) notes that Janowski and Rendtorff accept transfer for the scapegoat ritual but not for the sacrifice ritual. Daube (224) notes Robertson Smith in this category. Wright ("Gesture," 437-8) supports this conclusion with six reasons: (1) The transfer theory is informed by the substitution theory of sacrifice which to Wright is "untenable." (2) The transfer theory is based on the scapegoat rite which to Wright is not a sacrifice and the rite uses two hands while the sacrificial rite uses one hand. (3) The hand gesture in the "well-being" offering transfers no guilt because to Wright this offering is not expiatory. (4) If there is transfer, why is there no laying on of hands for the bird and cereal offering? (5) If transfer is to be indicated, then the slaughter of the animal would be the high point of
differ about what the single-hand gesture does denote. Milgrom and McClean do not accept the meaning of identification, arguing instead that the gesture signifies ownership.\(^1\) Wright adds a slightly different nuance: the single-hand gesture ritually attributes the animal to the offerer.\(^2\) Wright does not perceive transference in the single-hand gesture, supporting his conclusion by examining hand placement rites in the Hittite culture. However, evidence presented in chapter 2 of this study indicates that a transference interpretation can be made of the Hittite rites.\(^3\) Also, Wright gives no indication of how Hittite ritual may have influenced Israelite ritual.

Agreement about the two-handed ritual gesture is also difficult to attain. Wright looks at two-hand usage in the cases of the scapegoat, Joshua, and blasphemer, pointing out that drawing firm conclusions about the meaning of the gesture is difficult and can only be tentative.\(^4\) While two hands were clearly used in the scenarios of the scapegoat and Joshua, one must work on the bases of assumption for the scenario of the blasphemer. A plural subject, plural verb, and plural object are used for both scenarios


\(^2\)Wright, "Gesture." 439.

\(^3\)Ibid., 439-46.

\(^4\)Wright, "Hands." 348.
of the blasphemer and Levites. Yet Wright and Milgrom assume a one-handed rite for the Levites and a two-handed rite for the blasphemer.

Van der Merwe recognizes that transference takes place in the experience of Joshua. However, to him two elements effected transference: (1) the laying on of hands, and (2) the spoken word publicly declaring Joshua as Moses' successor.\(^1\)

Wright also proposes that transference took place in the rite for Joshua—transfer of administrative honor, glory, and a spirit of wisdom.\(^2\) However, Moses' arms and hands transferred nothing; rather the words of Moses accomplished the actual transfer.\(^3\)

The hand-laying gesture merely pointed out the recipient of his authority.

Milgrom disagrees with Wright about transfer in the case of the blasphemer. Wright maintains that nowhere else in the Bible does blasphemy cause pollution to fall on those who hear it, so there is nothing to transfer.\(^4\) Milgrom counters that hand-leaning effectively transferred pollution back to the blasphemer. He supports this conclusion by referring to the case of the witness who, as a result of refusing to testify, must bear his punishment. The formula, "must bear his punishment," implies capital punishment that in the case of remorse and confession is commuted to a purification offering. The fact that a purification offering is prescribed indicates that to ignore an authorized curse containing the name of God creates a pollution. Milgrom then states:

\(^1\)Van der Merwe, 38, 40-1.

\(^2\)Wright, "Gesture," 436.

\(^3\)Wright and Milgrom. 5:884-8; Wright, "Hands," 3:48.

"How much more would a blasphemy, not just ignoring God but cursing him, give rise to a pollution that must be returned to the blasphemer."\(^1\)

To Wright, transfer of sin to the scapegoat was effected by confession and not the laying on of hands. Wright maintains that Aaron never carried or embodied evil thus can not initiate a transfer of sin. Thus Israel’s sins did not travel through Aaron’s arms to the goat, rather hand-laying indicated where the sins confessed by Aaron were to alight.\(^2\) Hand-laying became a symbolic pointing to the recipient of an action.

Though disagreements exist about whether the laying on of hands indicates transference, the arguments in its behalf are the more convincing. Rodriguez and, more recently, Noam Zohar argue that the scapegoat ritual can provide a prototype for other sacrifices. Zohar points out that “the flow of metaphysical entities to persons is frequently perceived in the Bible as going through their hands.”\(^3\) Kiuchi argues that in the Day of Atonement ceremonies, Aaron not only represented the people, but also bore their guilt in “a substitutionary capacity.” Aaron laid his hands on the scapegoat on behalf of the whole congregation and their guilt then “devolved on the Azazel goat.”\(^4\) If a hand can symbolically point out someone, as Wright noted, it can also

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\(^1\)Lev 5:1; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1041.


\(^4\)Kiuchi (152, 156) examines Lev 16:5, 10, 16a/21a and concludes that the Azazel-goat ritual is a special form of the burning of the *hattat*. 

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symbolically transfer. Rodriguez argues two points of support. First, holiness and sin can exist in the same place at the same time. Priests ate the *hattât* (sin offering) flesh which was referred to as “holy” flesh and yet the uneaten *hattât* was also a source of contamination since the person taking it out had to wash his clothes and bathe before returning to camp. It is possible for laying on of hands to transfer sin to the sacrifice even though it is also called “holy.” Second, Rodriguez argues that the *יוֹלֶדֶת* and *נַעַרְיָה* offerings also serve an expiatory function. To Rodriguez, there is therefore a similarity between all offerings in which the laying on of hands serves a transference function. Rodriguez is correct in concluding that one of the functions of hand-laying is that of transference, however his conclusion that hand-laying always denotes transference in all sacrifices bears closer scrutiny.

Though, as Wright points out, the two-handed gesture has different meanings in different contexts; one constant meaning is that of transfer. As noted above, transfer in the scenario of the scapegoat involves sin and guilt. In the case of the blasphemer, guilt transferred to the sinner. In the case of the Levites, only one responsibility of the first-born, that of serving in the sanctuary, is transferred to the Levites. Moses’

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1Holy flesh, Lev 10:16-18. Having to wash the clothes was true only in Lev 16, however it is not true in Lev 4.

2Rodriguez, 214-232.

3It appears that no expiatory function for the *יוֹלֶדֶת* offering is found in Lev 3 though one can derive a kind of expiatory function in Lev 17.
placement of hands on Joshua effected transfer—that of power, office, authority, blessing, or majesty.¹

The question arises, what was transferred? Context directly affects the answer. Items of transfer included sin, guilt, limited responsibility, power, office, authority, blessing, or majesty. The one performing the hand-laying action does not lose independence or total responsibility. The animal or individual who receives the hand-laying never becomes magically the same as the one performing the action. Joshua did not become Moses. Rodriguez asked a very good question: “On what basis can it be said that the Hebrews were so primitive in their way of thinking that they were unable to determine the limits of their personality so that at times the individual and the object merged into one single totality.”² Thus the more extreme elements of the transfer theory must be rejected, namely those suggesting that hand-laying transfers one’s personality or soul.

Substitution

Closely related to transference is the theory of substitution. Because one may transfer sin to an animal in the sacrificial rite, the animal then “substitutes” for the sinner in death.³ Daube otherwise states the concept as “the people were replaced by

¹Wright “Gesture,” 434-5. Though Wright prefers to interpret the Joshua scenario as designation or demonstration, he still recognizes that many scholars see transfer.

²Rodriguez, 203.

³Rodriguez (201-2) points out that Adler and Blome see transfer of sin and guilt, while McClintock, Lambers, Grant, and Péter see only a transfer of sin (no
the animal." 1 On the other hand, Kiuchi doubts that hand laying “symbolized the
unloading of sin, i.e., transference of sin.” He concludes that hand laying “simply
expresses the idea of substitution.” 2 Fabry suggests a “modified substitution
hypothesis” which does not allows for the transfer of “sinful matter” to the animal in
sacrificial ritual. Rather, his hypothesis stipulates that the essential element is sharing
in the death of the sacrificial animal which the penitent identifies himself with by the
laying on of hands. 3 Daube maintains that Moses created a “substitute” for himself
when he laid hands on Joshua. 4 He further suggests substitution occurred when
witnesses laid hands on the blasphemer, symbolizing action in behalf of the community
as a whole. 5 Daube also proposes substitution in the experience of the Levites, because
the congregation through hand-laying “merged in the Levites, [making] the Levites into

Wright (“Gesture,” 437-8) differentiates between scholars who propose
substitution resulting from transfer of sin and guilt (Volz, Medebielle, and Elliger) and
substitution resulting from transfer of one’s personality or identity (Bernoulli.
MacCulloch, and Noth).

1 Daube, 225.

2 Kiuchi (116-19) proposes that hand laying indicates substitution for both the
hattat and Azazel rites. He concludes however (119), that “the evidence for the
meaning of the gesture is scanty, one should not read too much into it about the
meaning of the sacrifice.”

3 Fabry, 883-4. He notes that Janowski, Noth, and Gese share this concept of
modified substitution.

4 Ibid., 227.

5 Ibid.
their representatives, into their other selves."\(^1\) Péter, claiming to represent the majority of commentators, agrees, viewing the consecration of the Levites as substitution rather than of consecration.\(^2\) Other scholars suggest that hand laying indicated an act of substitution, indicating that the Levites substituted for and represented the rest of the congregation, in particular the first born.\(^3\)

Scholars opposed to the transfer interpretation of the laying on of hands are generally opposed to the substitution interpretation as well. Wright states that "the frequently suggested substitution theory is not a valid sacrificial theory in Israel."\(^4\) As noted above, he labels the substitution theory "untenable" for the same reasons he uses to reject the transfer interpretation.

Rodriguez argues that the ritual of laying on of hands not only includes the idea of transference, but also that of "the establishment of some relationship between the subject and the object of the ritual," a relationship of substitution. This is particularly evident in the expiatory sacrifices where the offerer of the sacrifice transfers sin

\(^1\)Ibid., 226.

\(^2\)Péter, 53.

\(^3\)The congregation indicated through the laying on of hands a symbolic acknowledgment that the Levites substituted for their firstborn as well as the whole nation: Leonard Elliott Binns, *The Book of Numbers*, WC (London: Methuen, 1927), 50; Wenham, 96-7; R. B. Allen, "Numbers." *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:766-7; Timothy R Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 170; J. Sturdy, *Numbers*, CBC (London: University Press, 1976), 67; "Numbers," SDABC, 1:852. As a direct result of all that was transferred, the Levites became the people's representatives. Budd, 93.

\(^4\)Wright and Milgrom, 5:885-6. See also, van der Merwe, 39.
through the laying on of hands and enjoys life because the animal dies as his sacrificial substitute.\(^1\) Rodriguez detects clear substitution in both the Joshua and Levite scenarios. Laying on of hands prepared Joshua to take the place of Moses, and the Levites took the place of the firstborn. However Rodriguez sees no clear substitution in the scenario of the blasphemer.\(^2\)

**Confirmation**

Many scholars see in the hand-laving rite a gesture that establishes, validates, ratifies, or confirms. Scholars propose several theories for what is confirmed. For the purposes of this study, scholarly opinion is organized under the headings of confirmation of legal decisions, of the recipient of the action, of ownership, and of recognition.

**Confirmation of legal decisions**

In forensic settings, laying on of hands confirmed or reinforced information necessary to arrive at judicial decisions. Wright suggests that by laying hands on the blasphemer, the witnesses of his sin clarified unambiguously and in a clear legal manner that the sinner was guilty and worthy of death. The hand gesture confirmed that the witness indeed observed the deed and acknowledged his responsibility in the

\(^1\)Rodriguez, 224, 229-32.

\(^2\)Ibid., 208-14.
death of the criminal. Milgrom counters that if hand-laying on the blasphemer was for judicial purposes only it should have been performed as soon as he was apprehended and not after the oracle specified the penalty.

Julius Greenstone and Robert Jamieson suggest that the hand laying rite marked an appointment of the Levites to office, the office of exclusive work in the Tabernacle. Stoltz postulates that the gesture, when applied to ordination or passing on of leadership situations, reinforced leadership charisma to their people. This theory's main strength grows out of the concept that since laying on of hands has no actual magical power, it must be more of a symbolic gesture. One of the important messages of the gesture's symbolism is that it confirms in this official manner that the one receiving the gesture has indeed legally received a new office.

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1Wright and Milgrom. 5:885; Wright, "Gesture," 435-6.
2Milgrom, Leviticus. 1042.
4Stoltz, 162.
Confirmation of the recipient of the action

Peter and Milgrom perceive hand-laying as that which enables the hand-layer to declare his purpose. Wright regards two-hand-laying primarily as a “demonstration gesture” which “designates the recipient of the ritual/real action.” He also calls hand-laying a “demonstrative finger pointing.” For example, by the laying on of hands witnesses of the blasphemer designated who the guilty one was, Aaron designated which goat was to receive the sins of Israel, and Moses demonstrated before all the people that Joshua was designated as his successor. Laying on of hands identified or designated the Levites as the ones specified to become an offering of the whole congregation. Or, through the laying of hands, the people identified with the Levites or their service. Ashley suggests that laying on of hands identified the Levites with the people.

This theory appears to borrow from hand-laying in blessing. At the time of blessing, the bessor designated the recipient of his blessing by laying his hand(s) on

1Peter, 48-55; Milgrom (Leviticus, 150) also points out Büchler in this camp.
2Wright and Milgrom, 5:884.
5Ashley, 170.
the designee's head. Right-hand placement indicated a more important blessing, as illustrated by Jacob deliberately crossing his arms in order to place his right hand on the youngest son of Joseph. Jacob clearly designated Ephraim as the receiver of the greater blessing. It is instructive to note that even though the verbs for hand placement in blessing are כְּנָֽסָא and כְּנָֽסָא rather than כְּנָֽסָא, hand-laying is yet a gesture confirming who/what is to receive the action.

But more than merely designating the recipient, hand-laying in blessing also included an act of identification. For when Jacob laid hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh, he also blessed them by stating, "and may my name be named on them." Not only did he confirm who was to receive his blessing, but at the same time identified intimately with the recipients of his blessing. A theory that limits the meaning of hand-laying to mere designation touches on an important element of laying on of hands but misses the greater depth of the gesture's meaning. Such theory needs more precision in definition when applied to any situation in which כְּנָֽסָא is used.

1Stacey (265) states that the blessing is not primarily an act of the patriarch but an act of God in response to the patriarch's prayer. The laying on of hands is not so much a means of transmission as a positive and unequivocal designation of the recipient.

2Gen 48:12-16. Hanson (415) notes that the right hand bestowed the blessing that conferred power.
Confirmation of ownership

Milgrom does not interpret hand-laying as a declaration or confirmation of the recipient of the gesture. He, along with a sizeable number of scholars, prefers to interpret the gesture as a statement of ownership. Hand-laying becomes a statement that this sacrifice belongs to the one performing gesture. Since this is the only activity of the one offering the sacrifice it thus becomes his "handwriting." In other words, the sacrifice is mine, it is I who offer it, and the fruits of this sacrifice are to benefit me. Ownership must be established and authenticated to make the sacrifice valid.

This theory supposedly denies the substitution theory and states instead that "laying on of a hand" gives an explanation of the intent of the act. The hand gesture is a "solemn attestation that this victim comes from this particular individual." A. Johnson points

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1Milgrom (Leviticus, 150-3) refers to J. Pedersen, E. Lohse, W. Eichrodt, and H. Ringgren for support; van der Merwe (39) refers to this under the title of "Manumissio." Milgrom supports his argument by: (1) referring to the Tannaite denial of hand leaning by proxy, insisting that it be performed by the offerer, and (2) referring to the Akkadian idiom *emêdu qašt* "place the hand" (semantic equivalent of *samakyad*) which in the legal texts clearly designates ownership.

2Wright and Milgrom, 5:885-6.

3Fabry (834) places J. C. Matthes, W. Eichrodt, H. Ringgren, L. Moraldi, and R. de Vaux in this category. H. W. Robinson ("Hebrew Sacrifice," 130-1) states that hand-laying states, "this is mine," not in the sense of let it suffer for me, but in the sense that it is my act and so an extension of myself. Sansom (325) states that hand-laying is not transfer but an attestation that the victim comes from this particular individual or group, that is is offered in his or their name, and that the fruit shall be his. Thus the sacrifice has a representative nature.

4De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 416, 449; Wright, "Gesture," 438; McLean, 355. Both Wright and McLean use De Vaux's statement as the best explanation of laying on of hands in the Old Testament.
out that an offering is personal when it is connected with one's hand: "the heave
offering of your hand."¹ Wright supports this interpretation by considering Hittite
ritual which he maintains used laying on of hands to establish a "link" or "connection"
between the worshiper and the performance of the ritual.²

Rodriguez finds this theory "problematical," for ownership was otherwise
indicated; the act of bringing the animal to the sanctuary demonstrated ownership.³
Ownership had already been established before the hand-laying gesture. To Rodriguez
the "unique meaning of the ritual is removed" if one limits the meaning of hand-laying
to just a statement of ownership. To him, such limit to the meaning of hand-laying is
demeaning to the Old Testament emphasis on God as the owner and man the steward of
God's blessings.⁴ However, cannot the declaration or confirmation of ownership
theory agreeably combine with other theories? Laying on of hands could include the
concept that the one laying the hands is indeed stating "this is mine" while at the same
time indicating a transfer of power or that the recipient of the action is a substitute.

Maertens suggests that laying on of hands indicates ownership in the sense of
belonging. Thus laying of hands by the Israelites on the Levites indicated that the

¹Deut 12:17; Johnson. 60.

²Wright and Milgrom. 5:887. See above ancient Near Eastern Background chapter for a contrary opinion.

³Rodriguez is not necessarily correct in this assumption. An animal could be
brought by someone assisting the offerer (e.g., a grandson assisting his feeble
grandfather). In such a case there would be ambiguity regarding ownership until hand-
leanning took place.

Levites belonged to the people. To Maertens, laying hands on a sacrificial animal claimed the animal as belonging to the hand-layer. Also, hand-laying on the scapegoat made it a part of the people and thus had substitutionary power.¹

Confirmation of recognition

To van der Merwe, laying on of hands communicates no transference or substitution. Rather, by this gesture, the one performing the rite realized the solemnity of the moment. In other words, by the act of hand-laying one confirmed the recognition of his “whole-hearted intention” to bring a sacrifice and that he had “whole-hearted concern” for what he was doing. Hand-laying was a “counteraction of the frivolity with which actions like these were sometimes performed.” In the case of the blasphemer, through the laying on of hands witnesses gave evidence that they recognized the grave implications of their actions.

M. H. Shepherd suggests a variant of van der Merwe’s conclusion. Instead of hand-laying indicating a recognition of the solemnity of the moment, hand-laying indicated recognition of the solemnity of choosing the recipient of the gesture. Laying on of hands is an outward sign of the recognition of Joshua’s spiritual qualifications.²

¹Maertens, 642-3.
²Shepherd, 2:521-22.
Setting Aside

Laying on of hands devoted an item to religious use or set it apart for deity. In other words, the person performing the gesture dedicated or consecrated either his sacrifice or another individual to YHWH. The hand gesture designated the animal or individual as a gift to God.¹ H. Schultz states that the laying on of the hand is “merely a general act of dedication” by which the “sacrificer dedicates each victim, as his own property, to some higher object.”² Shepherd sees the sin offering as set apart by the laying on of hands in consecration to sacred purpose.³ Swete points out that in the cases of the blasphemer, Levites, and Joshua, laying on of hands symbolized the devotion to God of the object on which hands were laid.⁴ Wright proposes an equivalent meaning for laying on of hands on the Levites and sacrificial offerings. The Levites were dedicated, or set aside, before the tent of meeting to YHWH as a נָבַשׂ (wave offering)⁵ of the Israelites, or as the gift (instead of the firstborn) of the children of Israel to YHWH.⁶ To others, the hand laying rite distinguished the Levites from the

¹Wright ("Gesture," 437) notes the following scholars under this theory: Bähr, Bernoulli, Eichrodt, Matthes, Merwe, Moraldi, Rothkoff, and Stolz.


³Shepherd, 2:251.

⁴Swete, 3:84.

⁵Num 8:11.

⁶Wright and Milgrom, 5:887. Rodriguez (205) points out scholars who see laying on of hands as a dedication of the sacrifice to God: H. Shepherd, C. Maurer, I.
rest of the community. The Levites experienced an act of consecration in which they were set apart from the rest of the congregation in order to be completely dedicated to cultic service.¹

A. Rodriguez finds this theory incorrect when applied to the sacrifice because the offerer first had “to obtain forgiveness for sins,” thus was “hardly in a position of consecrating anything to the Lord.”² However, by definition, sacrifice is an offering or giving over of something to the holy realm, i.e., in the case of Israelite sacrifice, to YHWH. So identifying oneself as the owner of a sacrificial animal was involved in the transfer of the animal to holy YHWH. This is a type of consecration which had to be accomplished before the ritual could be completed. Completion of the ritual was prerequisite to receiving forgiveness.³ Rodriguez incorrectly proposes that the offerer could not consecrate something before first obtaining forgiveness. Also, in the

H. Marshall, and D. Schotz.

¹B. Maarsingh (Numbers: A Practical Commentary, trans. J. Vriend [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987], 31-2) notes that out of all the nations, the Lord had set apart Israel; out of all the Israelites, he had set apart the Levites; out of all the Levites, he had set apart the priests; out of all the priests, he had set apart the high priest. And he appointed Moses to set apart the Levites from the rest of the people. Other scholarly language describing the significance of laying on of hands for the Levites includes: “solemnly set apart.” R. Winterbotham, Numbers. PC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdamans, 1977), 71; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 533-4; Huey, 34; “dedicated.” Ashley, 170; “completely dedicated.” Baruch A. Levine, Numbers I-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 273-4; “ordained.” Walter Riggans, Numbers. DSB (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 65; “consecrated.” Galtier, 7:1304.

²Rodriguez, 205.

³Lev 4:31; note the passive construction.
ceremony of dedicating the Levites to YHWH. The Israelites as a whole laid their hands on the Levites without any mention of previously going through any kind of purification or forgiveness rite.\(^1\) It therefore appears possible that the laying on of hands can indicate the desire of the one performing the gesture to dedicate something or someone to YHWH.

**Tangible Effects of Laying on of Hands**

Each of the areas in which laying on of hands took place had clear tangible effects resulting from the laying on of hands. The tangible effects of the hand gesture in the experience of Joshua will not be reviewed here because the next chapter presents a study in depth. In the context of sacrifice, hand laying was followed by slaughter of the animal. In the context of the scape goat, hand laying was followed by banishment of the goat to a wilderness existence. In the context of the Levites, hand laying was followed by service in the Tabernacle. In the context of the blasphemer, hand laying was followed by execution. In the context of an inanimate object such as a wall or a more personal context of one who stumbles, hand laying provided support. All scenarios of hand laying contained clear tangible results.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Old Testament symbolism of יָבַע, usually translated as “hand,” developed out of its obvious everyday usage. It is a word used often in the Old Testament. 1,616

\(^1\)Num 8:5-26.
times, and is even distributed throughout its writings. Idiomatic usage of הָנָה grew out of its meaning that lies somewhere between “lean” and “support.” It was used idiomatically to indicate (1) sustenance such as provision of food, (2) support in the sense of upholding such as pillars for a building, alliance with others, as well as (3) reliance, stability, and steadfastness. Twenty-four of the twenty-five combinations of וּ with the verb הָנָה indicate an action of the hand on (יָצָצ) something. Nineteen of these twenty-four are actions on the head of an animal or person, four are actions on either Joshua or the Levites, and one is an action on a wall. The twenty-fifth occurrence of the combination indicates an action of YHWH in upholding one who is falling.

This study of the words וּ and הָנָה and the phrase וּ הָנָה has demonstrated the richness of hand symbolism in the Old Testament in its connection with three areas of status: its perception, projection, and change. First, like the ancient Near Eastern World around it, Old Testament hand symbolism played a significant role in perception of status in the areas of wealth as well as strength and direct action. The Old Testament treated the hand as a representative of an individual and thus it became directly linked with that person’s possessions. Hand also functioned as a unit of measure and symbolically became a measure of one’s wealth such as ownership of land, agricultural produce, or, in the more abstract arena, fame. In the Old Testament culture, hands also symbolized strength, power, and the ability to perform and accomplish. Areas of accomplishment, or direct action, in which hand symbolism played a central role include strength of the will, guidance, creativity, legal claims of
ownership, judgment, legal accountability, purity, approval, and ability. This element of "י" is so strong that on occasion it has been translated as "violence" or "power."

Second, Old Testament hand symbolism played a role in connection with notions of relationship, cooperative and subordinate action, and their contributions to status. In the projection of status, hand symbolism accompanied both vertically ordered hierarchical chains of command in areas such as control, care, protection, respect, and position and horizontally ordered non-hierarchical relationships such as alliances and other areas of mutually working together. Hand symbolism crossed the hierarchical line in the areas of surety, financial guarantee, and the making of oaths. Also, in the projection of status, subordinate action is not described in terms of the doer's hand, but rather the delegator's hand. Thus the hand is used in the Old Testament to convey notions of intermediary action, or action on behalf of YHWH by a prophet or action on behalf of one person by another.

Third, since hand(s) symbolized power and were also a medium of transfer, one easily sees in the Old Testament the hand as an important symbol in effecting status change. Old Testament hand symbolism is used to convey notions of change in status that are included in exchanges of wealth (whether on a personal or national level), levels of purity, effects of magic, or in the coming under the power of another. Four rituals of status change incorporate hand symbolism: worship, anointing, consecration, and laying on of hands.

One cannot easily arrive at a single interpretation of the significance of Old Testament laying on of hands. However, the following conclusions appear probable.
First, the noun יָדוֹ denotes individuality, ability, possession, power, authority, and creativity. As in the rest of the ancient Near East, Old Testament usage of a hand could symbolize either that the recipient is in the hand layer’s possession and thus in his power, or it could symbolize the passing on of power and authority. In the Old Testament, YHWH spoke, gave commandments, acted, and ordained by the hand of human agents. Thus, “hand” became symbolic of agency, a symbol of YHWH’s visible presence. Second, the verb יָנָלָל indicates more than a mere “leaning” onto someone, but also includes the very strong concept of sustenance and support. The action of יָנָלָל involves not only that of leaning upon something but also that of providing sustenance and support. Third, the Old Testament mind did not draw sharp distinctions between the usage of one or two hands. The purpose and context of a particular hand-laying event determine its meaning, not the number of hands. Fourth, words accompanied hand-laying, and hands were laid on the head. Fifth, the difficulty of scholars in arriving at consensus about what the laying on of hands accomplishes along with the fact that several theories of interpretation contain accurate observations draws one to an eclectic conclusion.

Ceremonies of laying on hands cannot be explained by one theory alone, for they communicated a broad spectrum of meanings which include: transference, substitution, confirmation of legal decisions, of the recipient of the action, of ownership, and of recognition, as well as a setting aside. These meanings, though related to Hittite cultic practice and Hatshepsut’s experience of laying on of hands, appear to carry far more complex significance in the Old Testament. The Egyptian
concept of blessing is carried in the Hebrew verbs שָׂמַע, however not with the phrase רָגַע. Rather, רָגַע indicates leaning as well as support, transfer of something, declaration of a substitute, confirmation of a legal act, confirmation of who is to receive the results of the hand-laying, confirmation that the hand-layer claims ownership of the recipient of the action, confirmation that the recipient of the action is appropriate, as well as a setting aside of this recipient.

As noted in the Introduction, the focus of this study is the laying on of hands in contexts associated with the investiture of a leader and the transference of authority.

The only clear occurrence in the Old Testament is Moses' laying hands on Joshua.

Chapter 3 addresses the two texts that describe this experience. The chapter's aim is to develop a thorough exegetical understanding of the laying on of hands in this particular scenario.
CHAPTER III

HANDS IN THE INSTALLATION OF JOSHUA

Num 27:12-23

Introduction

Organization of the Book of Numbers

In order to interpret Num 27:12-23 one must first analyze its placement in an outline of the book of Numbers. However, outlining the book poses quite a challenge. Scholars have long struggled to make sense of its inner structure.¹ Dennis Olson surveyed forty-six commentaries and discovered twenty-four substantially different outlines proposed for Numbers. Olson notes that there is no agreement as to the beginning and ending of major sections even among scholars sharing similar

¹Allen (2:668) discusses comments by Goldberg who stated that “the Book of Numbers was never a self-standing literary work,” and (2:669) by Rolf Rendtorff who stated that Numbers is “the hardest to survey.” According to Allen (2:669), “many are not sure that the Book of Numbers is really a ‘book’ at all.” For to many it has “no real beginning, no clear ending, and only a muddled middle.” Martin Noth (2) maintains that it is difficult to see any pattern in its construction. For the book is “not a self contained unit.”
approaches. Because of the complexity of the book of Numbers, several scholars included more than one outline within the same commentary.¹

Olson concludes that the primary reason for the inability to create a clear inner structure of Numbers rests upon building outlines on incorrect foundations. He proposes four such wrong foundations: (1) chronological notations in Numbers; (2) geographical notations of Israel's movements; (3) major tradition-historical themes; and (4) the detection of different documentary sources.² Generally, traditional interpretations emphasize Olson's second "wrong" foundation, or the geographical notation foundation which normally results in a three-part division of Numbers based on Israel's camping experience: (1) in the Desert of Sinai, (2) between Sinai and Moab, and (3) on the plains of Moab.³

In addition to building an outline of Numbers on the above foundations, other interpretations view the Book of Numbers as a disconnected collection of various traditions. Noting that at times Numbers reads as a story interrupted by laws and at other times as laws interrupted by story, Martin Noth concluded that, "from the point of view of its contents, the book lacks unity, and it is difficult to see any pattern in its


²Ibid., 54-63.

³For example: Huey, 11-16. Allen (2:671-3) points out that Gray, Rendtorff, and Unger follow a similar three-part outline but that others modify the three parts into four or five elements.
construction."¹ Other scholars, such as Otto Eissfeldt, note that Numbers has no unique qualities but gains its character only in light of its relationship to the rest of the Pentateuch requiring an interpretation in light of the Pentateuch as a whole.²

To Olson, each of the above-mentioned foundations provides no adequate basis on which to build a unifying framework of the book. He suggests that critical as well as conservative scholars have emphasized the question of historical referentiality of the text to the exclusion of analyzing the theme of the book itself.

Olson proposes that the census lists in Num 1 and 26 form the foundation for a definitive and unifying structure of the Book of Numbers. This structure, based upon dividing the book into two major divisions delineated by the two census documents, is best summarized under the theme, "The death of the old and the birth of the new." In the first division (Death of the Old), the old generation is condemned to die in the wilderness, Num 1-25. In the second division (Birth of the New), a new generation arises as signaled by a new census in Num 26. "This generation stands on the edge of the promised land and recalls the warnings and promises of the past as it looks forward

¹Noth, 1-2. Noth's commentary is sprinkled with remarks about the lack of coherence in the book of Numbers. Of chap. 15, he states that "the individual parts of this collection have no connection with each other (p. 114). Of chap. 17, he further states that "verses 6ff. produce a disjointed effect and might be regarded as a later addition, were it not for the fact that the whole of vv. 1-7 is so disordered and lacking in unity that one can scarcely expect any consistency of thought" (p. 135). See also p. 57 on Num 6:21 and p. 77 on Num 10:29-36.

²Otto Eissfeldt suggests that division of the Pentateuch was not based on the existence of five separate books, but on the need to divide it into five approximately equal parts (The Old Testament: An Introduction [Oxford: Blackwell, 1965], 256-7); see Allen, 2:669-70.
to its own destiny," Num 26-36. The concern of the daughters of Zelophehad for their inheritance in the promised land provides an *inclusio* in Num 27 and 36. for the matters pertaining to the second generation. The second division of Numbers addresses three major issues in addition to the concerns of Zelophehad’s daughters: (1) Joshua’s commission to lead the people into the promised land. (2) provision of further ordinances for life in the promised land. and (3) Moses leading a successful war against the Midianites in retaliation for Midian having lead the “New” generation into apostasy.

Timothy Ashley admits that “Olson’s analysis has much to recommend it.” However, Ashley prefers “the more traditional analysis of Numbers.” because, in his opinion, the book is thus more closely “connected” with the Pentateuch. “in which it is, after all, set.” On the other hand, Ronald Allen suggests two convincing arguments against acceptance of any division of Numbers on the basis of the traditional geographical notation foundation. First, not every verse in Numbers can be assigned with absolute clarity to a geographical point. Second, a division based on geography fractures the book making it “only a strange cluster of varied chapters that really belongs to the larger unity of the Pentateuch.” Allen agrees with Olson that Numbers is instead a book with a “coherent beginning, middle, and ending.”

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¹ Olson, 197.

² Ashley (2-3) does not elaborate on what he means by “connected.”

³ Allen, 2:673.
some modification Olson's outline based on the first and second census resulting in two unequal volume sections: (1) 1:1-25:18. and (2) 26:1-36:13.¹

Mary Douglas notes that the narrative sections of Numbers are continually interrupted by ritual laws but rejects the view that these interruptions indicate lack of coherence to the book as a whole.² To Douglas, "the interpretation of a sacred text cannot go forward comfortably on the assumption that the editors put it together carelessly."³ Douglas proposes a structure of Numbers which accepts the periodic switching back and forth between narrative and law as deliberate. She sees seven narrative sections alternating with six ordinance sections whose arrangement is an elaboration of the structure of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. Each narrative and ordinance section has a parallel narrative or ordinance section plus one narrative section as the middle turning point.⁴ The thirteen sections and their parallels are illustrated in figure 1.

¹Ibid., 2:675. Allen's modifications include subdividing the first division into two sections instead of Olson's three sections and subdividing the second division into four sections instead Olson's seven sections.


³Ibid., 87.

⁴Ibid., 103-4.
Figure 1. Adapted from Mary Douglas's outline of the book of Numbers.¹

¹Douglas. 118.
Douglas looks "for guidance about the structure of the book . . . within the book itself."¹ She notes that Section I of Numbers lays out the positions of the twelve tribes on the four cardinal points of the compass. From this observation she expects to find the book divided into twelve sections, "arranged in a strong quartering pattern."² Then she adds that the Jewish "lunar calendar has twelve regular units and an optional thirteenth month not brought into use every year."³ From the calendar observation, she moves into an analysis of how Numbers treats the festival year noting that Numbers using a scale of sacrifices ascribes more importance to the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month than to the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month.⁴ To Douglas, Numbers, in particular chap. 28 and 29, draws attention to a scheme for the calendar year which divides in half and starts again at the seventh section. Numbers ascribes the main honor to the old Jewish New Year in the autumn equinox but also recognizes the Babylonian New Year in the spring equinox. As the Jewish religious year has two main turning points at the first month and again at the seventh month, likewise the structure of Numbers follows a parallelism that makes it

¹Ibid., 113.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., 114.
⁴Ibid., 114-5. Douglas analyzes the number of animal sacrifices ascribed by Numbers to the various religious festivals noting that the multitude of sacrifices required for the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles far exceeds all other animal sacrifices for the other religious holy days.
match the structure of the religious year, which is divided into two halves indicated by
Section I and Section VII.

A potential problem arises from the fact that Numbers has thirteen sections and
the festival year is built on twelve months. Douglas resolves this problem by using a
ring analogy. She concludes with a chiastic structure of Numbers which she describes
as a circle around parallel rungs. "The convention of ring composition allows for the
last section to overlap and interlock with the first" in which both the midpoint and the
end point match the beginning.¹ Douglas maintains that Numbers is arranged by a poet
into a circle, like the circle of the seasons, in a similar fashion to other great poems
known as ring compositions.

Douglas’s final outline, as noted above in fig. 1, is a complicated combination
of all of her observations. First, Numbers is composed of thirteen sections alternating
between narrative and law, each section leading to the next section. Each section also
has its parallel. Second, there is a vertical link between Sections I and VII. Numbers
has two prologues, as represented by these two sections, in which Section I’s theme is
completed in Section VII. Third, Numbers is quartered, like the arrangement of the
twelve tribes around the tabernacle. The quarters are indicated by a line drawn
between Sections I and VII and between Sections IV and X. Section IV discusses
trumpets and their usage while Section X states when they are to be blown. When
combining all of these concepts, Douglas notes that all sections must be read with their
parallel section in order to fully understand a particular section and that the quartering

¹Ibid., 117.
must be taken seriously as well. Quarter 1. or Sections II and III. describes a calm, law-abiding people who are reminded of prophecies. Quarter 2. or Sections V and VI. describes the murmurings of the Israelites who try the patience of YHWH which results in the debacle described in Section VII. Quarter 3. or Sections VII and IX. brings the Canaanites and Moabites along with Balaam into the picture. Quarter 4. or Sections XI and XII, describes Israel’s triumphant march through enemy land right up to the borders of the Promised Land.

It is not the purpose of this study to develop a thorough analysis of the various proposals for an outline of Numbers, though the outline by Douglas is so complex that it seems artificial. The outlines proposed by Olson and Douglas differ; however, each proposal is rooted in one important common principle. Each defends the concept that Numbers is a book in its own right with its own unique message. Such realization makes possible a stronger interpretation of Num 27:12-23. Joshua’s succession thus plays a role in a deliberately developed scenario.

What role does Num 27:12-23 play in the overall scheme of Numbers? The next section addresses the interplay between this passage and the rest of the book.

**Num 27:12-23 in the Overall Scheme of Numbers**

Three of the above-mentioned views of the inner structure of Numbers provide important clues to assist in an interpretation of Num 27:12-23: (1) the traditional geographical notation interpretation; (2) a two-part division of the book based on the two census counts as proposed by Dennis Olson; and (3) the chiastic structure of the
book proposed by Mary Douglas. This section studies the contribution of each of these three views to an understanding of Num 27:12-23 and its placement in the book of Numbers.

Num 27 falls into the final main section of outlines built on the traditional geographical notation. Israel arrived on the plains of Moab and was preparing to enter the Promised Land. The census of Num 26 established a new generation who was given permission to enter that land. The story of Zelophehad's five daughters provides a framework for the rest of this section by establishing their inheritance rights in Num 27:1-11 and concluding in Num 36 by clarifying these rights should they enter into marriage. Chap. 27 concludes by addressing the issue of leadership succession for the new generation. The chapters following chap. 27 attend to Israel's preparation for entering the Promised Land such as a review of cultic and legal regulations, a war against the Midianites, a request by Reuben and Gad for allotment of land in the Transjordan, a review of the old generation's journey, and a plan for land division.1

The traditional geographic notation interpretation places Num 27:12-23 among other events in which Israel finds herself preparing for entry into the Promised Land. The

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1Chaps. 28-30 provide cultic and legal regulations for the new generation. Chap. 31 describes Moses' last act of leadership in a holy war against the Midianites for tempting the old generation into apostasy. Chap. 32 describes the aversion of a potential crisis stimulated by Reuben and Gad's request for the allotment of land in the Transjordan. Chap. 33 reviews the old generation's journey and gives words of warning and encouragement to the new generation. Chaps. 34-36 establish for the new generation boundaries and divisions of the land, Levitical cities, and cities of refuge, and the maintenance of tribal property in the same lineage group.
necessity of new leadership to lead Israel into the Promised Land must be addressed. Num 27:12-23 addresses this necessity.

Outlines of the Book of Numbers proposed by both Olson and Douglas provide additional insight into the importance of Joshua’s commission as presented in Num 27:12-23. First, a review of Olson’s twofold division, death of the old generation and rise of a new generation of hope, provides a most important setting for the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. God’s command to take a census in Num 26 follows a similar symmetrical construction of form as the command issued in Num 1. This similarity between the two census lists “suggests that they are intended to function together as the primary structural pillars of the book of Numbers.”

Olson notes that as a pillar of the second half of Numbers, the census list in Num 26 becomes more than an indication and sign of completed judgment on the first generation and of God’s promise for a new generation. It also provides two important links to the chapters following: (1) an extended genealogy of the tribe of Manasseh which includes the unusual detail of naming specific individuals other than clan leaders, i.e., the five daughters of Zelophehad explicitly named in Num 26:33; and (2) a statement of the goal of the census which Num 26:52-56 indicates as primarily for the purpose of distributing fair amounts of land to tribes based on their relative sizes. The chapters following the census address the specific concerns of these two areas by giving a detailed description of the inheritance questions of the Zelophehad daughters as well.

as giving a detailed description of the installation of Israel’s next leader who would facilitate appropriate distribution of the Promised Land to each of the tribes.

Olson also notes that the appearance of the story of Zelophehad’s daughters in both Num 27:1-11 and 36:1-12 provides a frame or inclusio around all the material related to the new generation. Three major themes emerge from the story of Zelophehad’s daughters: (1) reaffirmation of the immanence and reality of YHWH’s promise to enter the Promised Land; (2) reaffirmation of the commitment to maintain the inclusiveness of all the tribes; and (3) affirmation of the flexibility of tradition, that the past is to be reinterpreted for the sake of the new generation.¹

Thus, in Olson’s outline, Num 27:12-23 addresses the issue of the new generation’s urgent need for leadership, particularly because Moses knows he cannot set foot on Canaan’s soil. A new generation requires a new leader. Someone must lead the new generation into conquest of the new land. And, to accomplish the goal of the second census, a new leader must be found who will provide guidance for the fair distribution of the land. Joshua answers the new generation’s need for new leadership.

Douglas’s chiastic structure of Numbers parallels Joshua’s commission in Num 27:23 with Joshua’s response to the ten weak spies in Num 14:6-10.² This structure of Numbers directly links the choice of Joshua as the new generation’s leader with the loyalty-testing experience of spying on the Promised Land. In rising to the defense of YHWH’s plan against ten other spies, Joshua demonstrated the qualities necessary to

¹Ibid., 165-6.

²Douglas, 121.
become Israel’s next leader. The one who had the courage to stand against the majority also has the moral fortitude to guarantee equitable distribution of the land to all the tribes.

A common understanding of the outlines of Numbers proposed by the traditional geographical notation, Olson or Douglas, is that Num 27:12-23 addresses the leadership needs of Israel as it prepared to enter the Promised Land. Leadership issues appear not only in Num 27 but also as a subtheme permeating the whole of Numbers. Two issues carry high prominence: (1) Numbers stresses that leadership resides in the hands of YHWH; and (2) Numbers stresses the importance of solid human leadership.

First, in various ways. Numbers emphasizes the leadership of YHWH. YHWH twice ordered Moses to take a census of the Israelite community, particularly of the family Levi. YHWH told Moses how to arrange the camp and when to move it. YHWH described the laws, both cultic and civil, that Moses is to pass on to the Israelites. YHWH gave the appropriate priestly blessing to Aaron through Moses. YHWH instructed Moses to set aside the Levites to assist Aaron and elders to assist himself. YHWH took care of rebellions against Moses and Aaron’s leadership as well as their own leadership faux pas. YHWH provided a leader to succeed Aaron, and in Num 27 He provided a successor to Moses. Numbers clearly stipulates that YHWH provided all necessary leadership for the children of Israel.

Second, in Numbers, human leadership also takes on importance, although always under the direct supervision of YHWH. Moses, as leader of Israel, is
mentioned in each chapter of Numbers except four.¹ But a change was coming to the human element of leadership. Aaron has already died and his son Eleazar had taken his place in providing leadership for the cultic affairs of the new generation. Num 27:12-14 informs the reader that Moses is soon to die. Num 27:15-23 stipulates who is to take his place. Joshua is the one to lead the new generation into the Promised Land and then actualize its equitable distribution among all the tribes.

Summary

Num 27:12-23 plays an important role in the overall scheme of the Book of Numbers. The old generation and its leader cannot enter the Promised Land. The new generation will enter that land, but in order to do so, it must have new leadership. The new leader must be God-given and effective not only in leading Israel into the Promised Land but also in establishing Israel in that new land. Num 27:12-23 clarifies YHWH’s choice of as well as Moses’ installation of the “New” generation’s leader.

What is the evidence that Num 27:12-23 is a distinct unit? If it is a distinct unit, what then is its inner structure? The next section addresses these questions.

Structure of Num 27:12-23

Passage Delimiters

Dennis Olson’s division of Numbers on the basis of the two census counts provides the starting point for this study’s outline. Num 26 begins the second half of

¹Owens, 77. In making this assessment, Owens uses the Hebrew text, instead of the English translation, as the criterion for chapter divisions.
Numbers by describing the second census. Num 27 shifts into a narrative mode. Num 27:1-11 describes inheritance issues raised by the daughters of Zelophehad. Num 27:12-23 addresses two issues: (1) YHWH's request of Moses to climb a mountain and view the Promised Land that he could not enter due to his sin at Kadesh, and (2) YHWH's instructions to Moses concerning Joshua's installation ceremony and Moses' response to those instructions. Num 28 shifts into an ordinance mode, the first eight verses addressing issues of the daily offering.

The Masoretic indicators for liturgical reading of the text indicate one paragraph for each of the two aforementioned concerns addressed in Num 27:12-23. It is shown below that the two Masoretic paragraphs really address one specific theme. It is the purpose of this section to establish only that Num 27:12-23 has clear delimiters indicating its beginning and ending points.

Four indicators confirm that Num 27:12 begins a new paragraph. First, vs. 11 finalizes the inheritance issue of Zelophehad's daughters by usage of a נָשָׁה conclusion statement, נָשָׁה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "as YHWH commanded Moses." Second, the Masoretic Text indicates a paragraph change between vs. 11 and vs. 12 by usage of a ל (s'yāmā) paragraph indicator. Third, the phrase נָשָׁה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "and YHWH said," can indicate a change in topic, often beginning new paragraphs throughout the book of Numbers.¹ Fourth, a dramatic change in topic takes place in vs. 12. The daughters of Zelophehad are no longer an issue. Instead, the topic

¹For example: Num 1:1; 2:1; 3:5, 11, 14, 40, 44; 4:1, 17, 21; 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 22; 7:4; 8:1, 5, 23; 9:1, 9; 10:1; 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; etc.
changes to YHWH’s double command to Moses to climb a mountain and to view the land to be given to the children of Israel.

Four indicators mark the end of the pericope with vs. 23. First, the issue of Joshua’s succession is brought to a conclusion with a ‘.y’Nr conclusion statement, “as YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses.” Second, the Masoretic Text indicates another paragraph change between vs. 23 and vs. 1 of chap. 28 by the usage of a ב (p’tūhā) paragraph indicator. Third, an inclusio delimits the paragraph beginning with vs. 15 and concluding with vs. 23. The piel form of הובך begins the inclusio in vs. 15 with Moses speaking to YHWH requesting an appointment of a leader for Israel. The piel form of הובך concludes the inclusio in vs. 23 with a reference to YHWH having spoken. Moses did “as YHWH had spoken” (לנְאשֵׁר הָבָּן יִשְׂרָאֵל). Fourth, the topic changes from issues concerning Joshua’s installation in Num 27:15-23 to issues concerning the daily offering in Num 28:1.

In summary, delimiters clearly indicate the beginning and ending points of Num 27:12-23 as a passage set between the narrative of the inheritance question of the daughters of Zelophehad and an ordinance section addressing issues of the daily offerings.
Text and Translation

Condition of the text

The Hebrew or Masoretic Text of the Pentateuch is in "excellent condition, generally free from expansions and serious problems." Transmission of the Pentateuch received special attention by scribes and appears to be the best preserved, with the fewest textual problems, of all Old Testament texts. The Samaritan Pentateuch as well as the Septuagint contribute very little to significant reconstruction of the Masoretic Text. This lack of contribution indicates that textual issues with the Masoretic Text are older than either of these versions, thus supporting the antiquity and purity of the Masoretic Text. Because the Masoretic Text is generally preferable to any of the variant readings, the translation for this study depends on the Masoretic Text as it appears in the BHS.

1P. Kyle McCarter. Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, OT Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). 88. See also: Allen, 2:661; Ashley, 11-14. Milgrom (Numbers, xi) notes that, except for a few lines of poetry (21:14, 30: 24:22-24), the text of Numbers is in an excellent state of preservation. The variations in the Masoretic manuscripts are few and insignificant. Greater deviations from the Hebrew are found in the LXX and Samaritan versions. However, these are not evidence of a different Hebrew text but, probably, curtailments or enlargements of the Masoretic Text. The Samaritan, for instance, has freely incorporated parallel material from Deuteronomy in order to harmonize the Numbers accounts with that book. Such additions can be found in 12:6; 14:41, 45; 20:13; 21:13, 22.

English translation

I. YHWH Spoke
   :12 And YHWH said to Moses, “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel.
   :13 After you have seen it, you will be gathered to your people, even you, just as was gathered Aaron your brother.
   :14 because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin, in the rebellion of the congregation, to sanctify me at the waters before their eyes. These are the Waters of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.”

II. Moses’ Request
   :15 And Moses spoke to YHWH, saying:
   :16 “Let YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation.
   :17 who will go out before them and who will come in before them, who will lead them out and who will bring them in, so that the congregation of YHWH will not be as sheep who have no shepherd.”

III. YHWH’s response:
   :18 And YHWH said to Moses, “Take (to yourself) Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lay your hand on him.
   :19 and stand him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him before their eyes.
   :20 and you shall confer some of your honor on him so that all the congregation of the sons of Israel will obey.
   :21 He shall stand before Eleazar the priest and he shall ask for him by the judgment of the Urim before YHWH. According to His word they shall go out and according to His word they shall come in. he and all the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.”

IV. Moses obeyed:
   :22 And Moses did just as YHWH commanded him. And he took Joshua and stood him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation.
   :23 and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him just as YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses.
Theme: The Succession of Leadership from Moses to Joshua

As noted above, the Masoretic indicators for the liturgical reading of the text for Num 27:12-23 indicates two paragraphs, (1) vss. 12-14; and (2) vss. 15-23. Scholars have treated these two paragraphs “often without much attempt at relating them.”¹ Yet, a review of commentaries demonstrates that a significant number of commentators treat the two paragraphs as belonging a single theme pericope which addresses “the succession of Moses by Joshua.”² The latter concept is the more

¹Ashley, 548. Also, Porter (“Succession,” 126, note 90) in arguing that the two paragraphs “belong closely together,” notes that “most scholars consider them to be two originally distinct sections.”

reasonable based upon the following support: (1) comparison of the pericope with earlier death reports in the Pentateuch; and (2) elements within the pericope that demand linking them together, such as conversation flow or linkage of concepts by the use of key words and phrases used in both paragraphs.

George Coat’s study of death reports in Gen 12-50 provides evidence that can be used to develop the pericope’s theme.¹ Coat notes that elements of the various death reports in Gen 12-50 include: (1) a life summary which included age at death and for Joseph an announcement of his coming death; (2) a death notice; (3) a burial notice which could include geographic location; (4) a notice of mourning; and (5) a notice of succession.

While Num 27:12-23 contains several of these elements, it is more closely related to the death report of Aaron in Num 20:22-29. Ashley lists six elements of this report: (1) Mount Hor as a geographical indicator; (2) YHWH's announcement beforehand of both the death and reason for the death; (3) appointment of a successor; (4) actual implementation of his successor's appointment; (5) the actual death report; and (6) the mourning rites. The death reports of the two brothers, civil leader and cultic leader, carry certain commonalities.

Each of the two Masoretic paragraphs of Num 27:12-23 include unique critical elements of the Genesis death reports as well as of the death report of Aaron that demand keeping the paragraphs together. Paragraph one (:12-14) contains three elements: (1) the geographical indicator Mount Abarim; (2) an announcement of Moses' impending death; and (3) an explanation of why the death was necessary. Paragraph two (:15-23) contains two elements: (1) a succession announcement; and (2) the successor's appointment. One paragraph contains information necessitated by the other in order to make a complete report. Ashley concludes that "the two passages are two halves of one reality: one gives the cause, the other the effect."  

The number of verses given to the various death report elements provides a clue to the pericope's theme. Three verses address details of Moses' impending death while nine address details of his successor. The second Masoretic paragraph carries the greater weight. Not only is it longer, but it also supplies the major theme, that of the

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1 Ashley, 548.
2 Ibid., 549.

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installation of Joshua. The first paragraph reviews background information which provides a springboard to the more important issue. The first Masoretic paragraph clarifies that Israel will soon be leaderless while the second paragraph describes how the next leader will be installed into his position. Thus, thematically, the first paragraph plays a supporting role rather than a role of primary importance. This pericope thus focuses on Moses’ death only to bring focus to the need to appoint a successor to Moses necessitated by his imminent death.

The development in the conversation between YHWH and Moses reinforced by the unity of ideas shared throughout the pericope provides further evidence of the pericope’s theme which addresses the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. A conversation between YHWH and Moses commences the pericope in vs. 12 with the phrase, “and YHWH said to Moses” (נִתְנָה לַהֲדִיק). The conversation continued, as indicated in vs. 15, when Moses responded to YHWH with the phrase, “and Moses spoke to YHWH” (יִתְנָה לָעֵד). YHWH responded to Moses in vs. 18 with the phrase, “and YHWH said to Moses” (נִתְנָה לַהֲדִיק). The conversation between YHWH and Moses concludes in vs. 22 with an action, “Moses did just as YHWH had commanded him” (נִתְנָה לָעֵד כְּמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְרַב עַל יְהוָה). The conversation focused on the theme of succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. YHWH’s request that Moses go up the mountain and view the Promised Land resulted in Moses’ request that YHWH appoint a leader which in turn resulted in YHWH’s instructions about how to install Joshua as Israel’s next leader. The pericope concludes with the statement that Moses did as YHWH instructed him.
Besides conversation flow, another focus on the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua emerges out of the imperatives used in the pericope. YHWH initiated conversation with Moses in vs. 12 with a double imperative. Moses was commanded to "go up" (תָּהַל) a mountain and to "view" or "see" (רֵאָה) the Promised Land. During the course of the conversation, YHWH responded to Moses with a second imperative in vs. 18. Moses was commanded to "take" (נָשַׁב) Joshua, son of Nun.

Two arguments support using the imperatives as indicators of the pericope's theme: (1) elsewhere the commands "go up" (תָּהַל) and "view" or "see" (רֵאָה) established scenarios which contained a follow-up command or an additional expectation; (2) the command "see" (רֵאָה) has a strong connection with the command "take" (נָשַׁב).

First, the command "go up" (תָּהַל) was often given in the Old Testament with a purpose. One was told to "go up" in order to accomplish something such as, go up to dwell, to bury, to worship, to receive something, to be made king, to erect an altar, to destroy, or to conquer. From the latter two concepts, the command to "go up" could even take on covenantal implications, for Israel was to go up and possess the land promised to them in the Covenant.

Additionally, the command to "view" or "see" (רֵאָה) was also known in the Old Testament to lead to a second command. For Abraham and Jacob, YHWH had

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1To dwell (Gen 35:1), to bury (Gen 50:6), to worship (Exod 24:1), to receive the two tablets of stone (Exod 23:12; Deut 10:1), to be made king (2 Sam 2:1), to conquer (2 Sam 5:19; 2 Kgs 18:3, 18, 25; 1 Chr 14:10; Isa 36:10), to erect an altar (2 Sam 24:18), to destroy (Jer 50:21).

2Exod 33:1; Deut 1:21.
also used the command to “view” or “see” (מָצֵא) as a precursor to a second command. Abraham had been told to “view” the land YHWH would give him, then was told to “walk” throughout the whole land.  

1 Jacob had been told to “view” what YHWH had done to the goats, then was told to “return” to his homeland.  

2 In three other texts YHWH followed up a “view” command to Moses with a second command. First, Moses was told to “view” or “look at” the fact that YHWH made him like a god to Aaron, then he was told to “say” everything YHWH told him to say.  

3 Second, Moses passed on to Israel YHWH’s message to “see” that I have given you this land, therefore Israel was to “go in and take possession” of the land.  

4 Third, in Deut 3:27-28 YHWH followed up His command of Moses to “view” the land with the command to give a “charge” to Joshua (מָנָה).  

5 This last passage describes parallel events to those of Num 27:12-23 giving strong support to linking the command to “view” in vs. 14 with the instructions to give Joshua a “charge” (מָנָה) in vs. 19. The commands to “go up” and “view” often lead to other commands, thus paving the way to look for another command, which is indicated in Num 27:18 with the command, take (נָשָׁה).

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1 Gen 13:14, 17.
4 Deut 1:8, 21.
The second argument which supports using the imperatives as indicators of a single theme results from observing that other Old Testament passages link the concept of “viewing” or “seeing” with that of “taking.” A man “sees” a woman and “takes” her. Eve “saw” the fruit and “took” it. Abraham saw a ram in the thicket and “took” it. Leah “saw” that she had no baby so she “took” her handmaiden and gave her to Jacob, the princess “saw” the basket baby Moses was in and had her maid “take” it out of the water, Achan “saw” the treasures in Jericho and “took” them, and the King of Moab, “seeing” the battle go against him, “took” seven hundred swordsmen to break out of his predicament.1 It would not be unusual for Moses to expect the command, “take,” to follow up the command, “see.”

The double imperatives of Num 27:12 lead to the second imperative of Num 27:18. YHWH’s command of Moses to “go up” and “view” leads to the second command, “take.” This second imperative is then linked to vs. 22 in which Moses responded to the latter command, “and he took” ("אָ電腦"). The imperatives and response to the imperatives help tie the whole pericope into one unified whole focusing on the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua.

The word for mouth or command (טָפָא) provides another indicator of the pericope’s theme. This word is previously used in Num 26:10 and then again in Num 30:3 but used twice in this pericope provides input into deciding the passage’s theme.

1Seeing and taking a woman (Gen 6:2; 12:15; 34:2; 38:2; Deut 21:11; Judg 4:12), Eve and the fruit (Gen 3:6), Abraham and the ram (Gen 22:13), Leah and handmaiden (Gen 30:9), princess and basket (Exod 20:5), Achan and treasure (Josh 7:21), King of Moab (2 Kgs 3:26).
YHWH reminded Moses in Num 27:14 that he could not enter the Promised Land because of his rebellion against YHWH’s command (יהוה). Vs. 21 relates that Moses was to instruct Joshua that he was to lead Israel out and bring them back in only upon the command (יהוה) of YHWH. The second usage of the word provides a means to protect Joshua in the transition of leadership from making the same mistake Moses made as indicated in vs. 14.

Extensive use of the word “congregation” (עם) provides an important sub-theme of the pericope which further indicates the theme of the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The word “congregation” (עם) is used seven times throughout the pericope at a frequency rate of word per verse unparalleled in the rest of the Book of Numbers. Both YHWH and Moses carried heavy concern for the “congregation.” Moses, who rebelled against the command of YHWH before the “congregation,” asked YHWH to appoint a leader over the “congregation” so that the “congregation” would not be like sheep without a shepherd. YHWH instructed Moses to present the new leader to the “congregation” in such a way that the “congregation” would obey Joshua as he, in turn, obeyed the command of YHWH that Moses rebelled against. YHWH’s choice of Joshua was not as much for the sake of Joshua as for the

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1 Num 27:14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22. On usage of key words for interpretation of a passage, see: Shimon Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible, JSOTS 70 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 212-15. Bar-Efrat notes that the greater the frequency of a word in the Bible, the more densely should it occur in a given passage to make it meaningful to that passage. כב科技股份 appears eighty-one times in the book of Numbers but never with the frequency or density of כב科技股份 per verse as for its seven appearances in the nine verses of Num 27:14-22.
sake of the "congregation." Yet the pericope’s focus on "congregation" always returns to the overriding theme of the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua.

A word form infrequently used in the Pentateuch, "before their eyes" (תְּרוּפּוֹת), provides another support of the theme of succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The word is used one time in vs. 14 and one time in vs. 19. Such a rarely used word form appearing so closely together gives support to an interpretation which links the “before their eyes” of Moses’ rebellion to YHWH’s instructions of giving Joshua a charge or commission “before their eyes.” The succession of leadership is to be public.

In summary, the theme of the pericope found in Num 27:12-23 is the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. First, each of the Masoretic Text paragraphs contains unique elements of the patriarch’s and Aaron’s death reports that demand keeping the paragraphs together and which also focus on the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Second, the flow of conversation coupled with the ideas and vocabulary shared throughout the pericope focus on the same theme. The conversation between YHWH and Moses has as its theme the same succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The imperatives at the beginning of the conversation lead right to the imperative in the middle of the conversation. The first imperatives lead the reader to the second imperative establishing Joshua as the next leader of Israel. Moses’ rebellion against the "command" ( HttpRequestFailed ) of YHWH led to the necessity of Joshua.

Liyyinimah appears five times in the Pentateuch (Gen 42:24; Exod 8:22; Num 20:8; 27:14, 19).
succession to leadership, to listen to the same “command” for his going out and coming in. Moses’ sin before the “congregation” (ךֵן־לָעַד) led to the need to choose a new leader for the “congregation.” Moses’ sin “before their eyes” (לִפְנֵי עֵינֵי) led to the need to give Joshua a charge “before their eyes.”

Parallelism

The Num 27:12-23 pericope contains an external, internal, and sequential parallel structure. In the external parallelism, the two sections of the second half of the pericope repeat a pattern established by the two sections of the first half and may be designated as A. B. A’. B’. In the internal parallelism, each of the above sections is divided into four subsections which generally follow the pattern established by the four subsections of section A and may be designated as a, b, c, d in A; a₁, b₁, c₁, d₁ in B; a₂, b₂, c₂, d₂ in A’; a₃, b₃, c₃, a₄ in B’. In the sequential parallelism, each section responds to issues of the previous section; in other words, B responds to issues raised in A, A’ responds to issues raised in B, and B’ responds to issues raised in A’ and may be designated as (A ⇒ B ⇒ A’ ⇒ B’).

The Masoretic Text can be outlined in the following parallel structure:
A  a  And YHWH said to Moses.
b  Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel.
c  After you have seen it, you will be gathered to your people, even you just as was gathered Aaron your brother.
d  because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin, in the rebellion of the congregation, to sanctify me at the waters before their eyes.
These are the Waters of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

B  a₁  And Moses spoke to God, saying:
b₁  Let YHWH appoint the God of the spirits of all flesh, a man over the congregation.
c₁  who will go out before them and who will come in before them, who will lead them out and who will bring them in.
d₁  so that the congregation of YHWH will not be as sheep who have no shepherd.

A'  a₂  And YHWH said to Moses.
b₂  Take (to yourself) Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit.
c₂  and lay your hand on him,
and stand him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him before their eyes.
and you shall confer some of your honor on him so that will listen all the congregation of the sons of Israel.
He shall stand before Eleazar the priest
and he shall ask for him by the judgment of the Urim before
YHWH.
According to His word they shall go out & according to His word
they shall come in,
he and all the sons of Israel with him. even all the congregation.

And Moses did just as YHWH commanded him.
And he took Joshua
and stood him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation.
and he laid his hands on him
and he commissioned him
just as YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses.

Table 3 further illustrates the parallel structure of Num 27:12-23.

External parallel structure

The four sections of the Num 27:12-23 pericope relate to each other in an A, B,
A'. B' parallel pattern in which the A sections represent words of YHWH and the B
sections represents words or actions of Moses:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>YHWH spoke to Moses, vss. 12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Moses spoke to YHWH, vss. 15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A'</td>
<td>YHWH spoke to Moses, vss. 18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B'</td>
<td>Moses did as YHWH commanded, vss. 22-23.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section A' parallels section A in four ways. First, these two sections begin
with the exact same introduction. “And YHWH spoke to Moses” (יהוה
שפתני). Second, each section contains imperatives, two in A and one in A', in
which YHWH commands Moses to do something. Third, each section provides
explanation for the imperative(s) by addressing matters concerning leadership. Section
A establishes that Israel’s current leader, Moses, will soon die while Section A’
establishes how Israel’s next leader, Joshua, will be installed. Fourth, each section
# TABLE 3

## PARALLEL STRUCTURE OF NUMBERS 27:12-23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A'</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>יְהַמָּרְתָּ הַכֹּלֶם עַל-מְשָׁה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>נַעֲלוֹת אָלַיְתֵיכָּם חֶשְׁמוּ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>וּרְאָתָה אֲשֶׁר צָאַפְּסָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי יִנְאָּתָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>כָּפֶרֶנָּה נַפּוֹלָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B'</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>יַכְבֹּר גְּשָׁה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>נִצְצָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>אָשֶׁר צָאַפְּסָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>לִפְתָּה בַּעֲדַת אַשֶׁר צָאַפְּסָה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a'</th>
<th>a'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a'</td>
<td>כָּפֶרֶנָּה נַפּוֹלָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b'</td>
<td>נִצְצָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c'</td>
<td>אָשֶׁר צָאַפְּסָה אוֹתוֹמְכִי</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d'</td>
<td>לִפְתָּה בַּעֲדַת אַשֶׁר צָאַפְּסָה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
provides further explanation for the imperative(s) by addressing matters concerning the congregation. Section A establishes that the congregation will lose her leader. Moses, because of her rebellion at the waters of Kadesh while section A' establishes how the congregation will receive her leadership through Joshua. The parallel relationship underscores that as the congregation follows the information of section A', it will not make the same mistake presented in section A.

Section B' parallels section B in four ways. First, both sections identify Moses as responding to YHWH. In section B, Moses responds by speaking, and, in section B', Moses responds through action. Second, both sections identify Moses' particular response. In section B, Moses responded to YHWH's imperative of Section A by making a request of YHWH to appoint Israel's next leader while in section B' Moses played a personal role in answering his own request and responded to YHWH by doing everything YHWH asked him to do. Third, both sections provide explanation of Moses' response by addressing leadership concerns. In B, Moses expressed concerns about the future leader's ability to go out and come back in before the congregation, and his ability to lead the congregation out and back in. In B', Moses performed certain actions which resulted in establishing a leader who could accomplish all Moses had expressed concern about. Fourth, section B' supplies a conclusion which parallels the introduction of section B. In the introduction of section B, Moses "spoke" (ךָּפַל) to YHWH. The conclusion of section B' uses the same verb, only this time with reference to YHWH. Section B provides an explanation of Moses' response that addresses concerns of the congregation which section B' does not parallel. Perhaps the
reason for this lack of parallel could be that the explanation of the leadership issues addressed in section B' are assumed also to address all congregational issues as well.

*Internal parallel structure*

The pericope’s first three verses, vss. 12-14, make up section A and establish a four-level structural pattern which is repeated in each of the pericope’s following three major sections. The four levels include: (a) an introductory identifier: (b) a statement of request: (c) a statement of explanation for the request which concerns matters of leadership: and (d) a statement of explanation for the request which concerns matters of the congregation. Vs. 12a presents the introductory identifier, subsection a, with the phrase. “And YHWH spoke to Moses.” YHWH is identified as speaking to Moses. Vs. 12b presents the request, subsection b, with YHWH’s command. “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel.” Vs. 13 presents the matters concerning the leader, subsection c, by stating that once Moses had seen the land he would die as his brother had, thus implying that Israel would soon be leaderless. Vs. 14 presents the matters concerning the congregation, subsection d, by pointing out the congregation’s involvement in the sin which will take away its leader.

Vss. 12-14 thus establish a pattern repeated as:

A  YHWH Announced Moses’ death, vss. 12-14
   a  Introductory Identifier, vs. 12a
   b  Request, vs. 12b
   c  Leader Issues, vs. 13
   d  Congregation Issues, vs. 14
Introductory identifier (a // a₁ // a₂ // a₃ // a₄). Each of the four sections presents an introductory clause identifying one who either speaks or acts. In a of section A, YHWH is identified as speaking to Moses; in a₁ of section B, Moses is identified as speaking to YHWH. In a₂ of section A', YHWH is identified as speaking to Moses. In a₃ of section B', Moses is identified as responding to YHWH’s instructions. In a₄ of section B', YHWH is identified as the source of all of the pericope’s actions through the “hand” of Moses.

Request (imperatives), response (b // b₁ // b₂ // b₃). Each of the four sections presents a request (imperative) or response to a previous imperative. In b of section A, YHWH commanded Moses to “climb” a mountain and “view” the Promised Land. In b₁ of section B, Moses requested YHWH to “appoint” Israel’s next leader. In b₂ of section A', YHWH commanded Moses to “take” Joshua the son of Nun, a man in
whom there is spirit. In b of section B', Moses responded to YHWH by implementing His latter command, he "took" Joshua.

Leadership issues (c // c, // c, // c,). Each of the four sections presents matter(s) which concern leadership issues. In c of section A, Moses is told he will be gathered to his people, in other words, he will die just as his brother had previously died, thus creating a leadership vacuum for Israel. In c, of section B, Moses demonstrated that he understood YHWH's point by focusing on leadership concerns rather than on his own loss. His concern was that Israel's next leader be one who can go out and come in before the congregation as well as lead the congregation out and back in. In c, of section A', YHWH instructs Moses as to how to effectively install Joshua as Israel's next leader: he is to "lay" his hand on him, "stand" him before Eleazar the priest and the congregation, "commission" him, and "give" him some of Moses' honor. In c, of section B', Moses followed YHWH's latter instructions and effectively installed Joshua by "standing" Joshua before Eleazar the priest and the congregation, "laying" hands on him, and "commissioning" him.

Congregation issues (d // d, // d,). The Num 27:12-23 pericope's first three sections present matter(s) which concern congregational issues. In d of section A, YHWH clarified the congregation's role in the loss of her leader: she sinned at the waters of Kadesh. In d, of section B, Moses responded with a deep note of concern for the soon-to-be leaderless congregation by stating his desire that the congregation not be like sheep without a shepherd. In d, of section A', in order for the congregation to
receive the best guidance for going out and coming in. Joshua must stand before Eleazar the priest who was to make inquiry of YHWH through the Urim. Section B’ does not address congregational issues perhaps on the assumption that Moses’ actions with Joshua place Joshua in a position of strength to attend to all congregational matters.

**Sequential parallelism**

The four major sections of the Num 27:12-23 pericope relate to each other on a sequential basis: \( A \rightarrow B \rightarrow A' \rightarrow B' \). Section A establishes concerns to which section B responds, section B establishes concerns to which section A’ responds, and section A’ establishes concerns to which section B’ responds. In section A, YHWH established with Moses that he would soon die, thus Israel would soon be without a leader. In section B, Moses responded to YHWH by requesting that YHWH appoint a leader who would provide appropriate leadership for His people. In section A’, YHWH responded to Moses by telling him how to establish Israel’s next leader. In section B’, Moses responded to YHWH by implementing all of His instructions.

**Conclusion**

The Num 27:12-23 pericope contains four sections as indicated by external, internal, and sequential parallelism. Two patterns establish the foundation of the parallelism. The first pattern bases itself on the YHWH and Moses sections in which each of the YHWH and Moses sections parallel each other, or A parallels A’ and B parallels B’. The second pattern bases itself on the four-part pattern established in
section A in which each of the four-part pattern finds a parallel in each of the pericope's four major sections in two different ways: (1) a horizontal parallelism between the subsections of A and A' as well as B and B'; and (2) a sequential parallelism which leads from each subsection of a major section to the subsection of the next major section. The pericope parallels can be illustrated as shown in fig. 2.

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**Figure 2.** Four-part pattern of Num 27:12-23.

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**Narrowing the Focus**

As demonstrated above, Num 27:12-23 presents itself as a clearly delineated, self-contained pericope. It is not the purpose of this study to analyze the whole pericope but to concentrate on a single theme, that of "laying on of hands." An
overview of the pericope gives the following brief outline: section A establishes that Moses will not remain Israel's leader: section B addresses Moses' request that YHWH appoint a new leader: section A' addresses YHWH's response to select Joshua: and section B' addresses Moses' response to YHWH's request. Laying on of hands is mentioned twice in the pericope: first, in section A', YHWH instructs Moses to lay his hand on Joshua: and second, in section B', Moses implements YHWH's instructions and lays hands on Joshua. Four arguments support narrowing the study of laying on of hands to section A', the section in which it is first mentioned. First, sections A and B provide background material leading to section A'. Second, section A' is the chiastic center of the second Masoretic paragraph. Third, in providing the conclusion to the pericope, section B' recapitulates the basic information of section A' stating that Moses did all that YHWH requested him to do in section A', thus through repetition according importance to the information of section A'. Fourth, the key words, or better the Leitwörter,1 of the whole pericope draw particular attention to section A'. This study now analyzes the above four arguments.

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1A term coined by Martin Buber to describe a key word that is meaningfully repeated within a text or sequence of texts which establishes a relationship between separate stages of a narrative, conveying the essential point directly. Literally Leitwört means “leadword,” a word that leads or guides the reader through the thicket of the text. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, Scripture and Translation, trans. Lawrence Rosenwald with Everett Fox (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 114-28, 143-50. See also: Bar-Efrat, 213.
Sections A and B as Background Material

Sections A and B provide background material to section A'. Section A does so in two ways: (1) it confirms that Moses will soon not remain Israel's leader to whom section A' responds by pointing out whom Israel's next leader will be; and (2) it establishes imperatives that lead to the imperative of vs. 18 in section A'.

An understanding of section A requires analysis of its context. Placing the story of Joshua's succession to leadership immediately following settling the inheritance question of the Zelophehad daughters provides important background information for laying hands on Joshua. First, the question immediately comes to mind, who will ensure that the provisions for the five daughters will indeed be put into place? Such provision demanded a strong leader. Second, as section A points out, Moses was reminded that he would not be that leader. Rashi stated that the narrative about the succession of Joshua immediately followed the narrative about Zelophehad's daughters to ensure that Moses would not think that because YHWH had made provision for exceptions to the inheritance laws, He would also make another provision of exception for Moses. Third, the narrative about Zelophehad's daughters establishes an atmosphere of grace immediately preceding the story of Joshua's installation.

YHWH, in His grace, broke tradition for the benefit of five sisters. YHWH, in His grace, provided a new leader for the new generation. The choice of Joshua came, not from Moses, but from YHWH Himself.

It is true, YHWH had demonstrated grace toward the daughters of Zelophehad. But this grace was not to detract Moses from the fact that he could not enter the Promised Land. In section A. YHWH gave Moses two reminders which added certainty to his death and lack of permission to enter Canaan: (1) Aaron had died (vs. 13); and (2) Moses' disastrous assault on YHWH's holiness back at the waters of Kadesh (vs. 14).

Why is the sin of Moses mentioned here? Certainly, the point is not to deprecate Israel's leader. There is no elaboration of the sin, merely a quick reference to it. Mention of his sin placed emphasis on Moses' death in order to bring his attention to the fact that Israel would soon be without a leader. A new generation is to

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1In marked contrast to Zelophehad's daughters who are to receive an inheritance in the Promised Land, Moses is to be excluded. Philip, 4:283-6.

2Num 27:14. because (ךרדה) you rebelled. When 주 occurs in clauses introduced by the relative particle סוף it often has a causal force, implying "because of the fact that." In 1 Sam 28:18 the negative is explicit, whereas here the negative sense is conveyed sufficiently by the verb רעפ without need for further specification. Harrison. 360.

3Rosenbaum and Silbermann, 133b. Pointing out the sin serves to make it known that only one single sin kept Moses out of the Promised Land. His importance is further enhanced by YHWH's description of Moses' impending death with the phrase, "be gathered to your people," a phrase reserved for Israel's forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 25:8. 17; 35:29; 49:33). The phrase is used of Moses not only here but also in Num 31:12 and Deut 32:50. See also, Ashley, 550; Milgrom, Numbers, 234.
enter the Promised Land. A new leader is to take them there. The automatic question then arises. “Who will become Israel’s next leader?” Section B provides no answer to the question. Section A' is the first to address who will fill Israel’s imminent leadership vacuum.

One other element of section A takes one immediately to vs. 18 of section A'. The whole pericope of Num 27:12-23 contains three imperatives. The first two imperatives occur in section A, vs. 12, where YHWH instructed Moses “to go up” (יָצָא) “and to view” (יָצִיעָה). YHWH clarified the reason for these commands in section A’, vs. 18, with a third imperative instructing Moses “to take” (יָתַךְ). As noted above, YHWH elsewhere in the Old Testament used the commands “go up” (יָצָא) “see” (יִתְכַּן) as precursors to a second command. Also, it was noted that the concept of “viewing” or “seeing” was often linked to that of “taking” (יָתַךְ). Apparently YHWH’s purpose of having Moses climb the mountain and view the Promised Land had as its goal that of leading Moses to grapple with the leadership vacuum soon to be created by his own death. Moses’ curiosity was naturally piqued, which in turn led him to ask the question. “Who would be the next leader of Israel?” Moses never presumed to tell YHWH what to do, he wanted an answer from YHWH Himself. Thus the text establishes a scenario in which YHWH could tell him what to do next. YHWH’s first imperative introduced a setting which provided for his second imperative.

Section B adds a third element of focus on section A’. Moses’ response to YHWH’s instructions indicated that he understood YHWH’s intent. In another text
Moses argued that he should be allowed to go into the Promised Land. But Num 27 mentions no such argument. His concern was not for himself but for his people and who would lead them. Moses did not want to be the one to choose the next leader, so he requested YHWH to appoint a replacement. Section A' gives YHWH's response to the request and thus addresses the main issue of this pericope, "Who is to be the next leader and how is he to be installed."

To summarize, sections A and B provide three background elements which draw focus to section A': (1) confirmation that Israel would soon be leaderless, thus creating a setting for Moses to ask who would fill that void, section A' answers the question; (2) the commands, "go up" (יָהָעַל) and "see," which lead to the command, "take" of vs. 18 in section A'; and (3) Moses' request that YHWH appoint the new leader, which YHWH answered in section A'.

Chiastic Center

The second Masoretic paragraph of the Num 27:12-23 pericope, which is composed of sections B, A', and B', follows a simple chiastic parallelism in which actions of Moses provide a framework around the voice and instruction of YHWH. In section B, Moses makes a request of YHWH. In section A', YHWH responds to the request. In section B', Moses does as he is told. The chiasm appears in outline form as:

1 Deut 3:23.
The simple structure of I, II, I, draws attention to II as the central focal point of
the paragraph. Section A', at this central focal point, gains special importance for two
reasons: it is placed chiastically at the structural center of the paragraph, and it reports
words from the Almighty. It is instructive to note that laying on of hands first emerges
in the installation of Joshua pericope at the focal point of the second paragraph, which
in turn is a report of the words of YHWH.

Importance Emphasized in the Conclusion

The imperative of vs. 18, "take," is answered by "and he took" of vs. 22. The
instructions of section A' are implemented in the conclusion section of the pericope, or
section B'. YHWH instructed Moses in section A' to lay his hand on Joshua, stand
him before Eleazar and the congregation, give him a charge, and place on him some of
Moses' honor. Moses responded in section B' by causing Joshua to stand before
Eleazar and the congregation, laying his hands on him, and giving him a charge.
Section B' depends on information generated by section A'.

Section B', as the conclusion to the pericope, emphasizes the narrative's main
point by repeating it. Moses was told to "take" Joshua; the conclusion emphasizes that
he did as he was told, he "took" Joshua. Moses was told what to do with Joshua; the
conclusion emphasizes through repetition that Moses accomplished what he had been

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told to accomplish. Section B' emphasizes the importance of section A' by the means of repetition.

**Key Words/Leitwörter**

As mentioned above, Leitwörter are key words “meaningfully repeated within a text or sequence of tests” which establish a bridge between separate stages of a narrative. Various Leitwörter of the Num 27:12-23 pericope create a "movement" toward section A'.

First, a list of key words repeated throughout the pericope is provided in Table 4. As introductory paragraphs, sections A and B share the fewest key words with the other sections, each with a total of eight key words shared in common with the other three sections. Section A' shares seven key words with section A, seven with section B, and twelve with section B' for a total of sixteen key words shared in common with the other three sections. Section B' shares six key words with section A, six with section B, and twelve with section A' for a total of 14 key words shared in common with the other three sections. With sixteen shared key words, section A' contains the largest frequency of shared key words of all four sections, thus indicating an importance in the pericope that outshines the other three sections.

The most repeated name of the pericope, YHWH (יהוה), provides a second indicator of movement toward section A'. A fairly even spread of the eight usages of the name throughout the four sections establishes an atmosphere in which the

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1 Buber and Rosenzweig, 114, 143.
TABLE 4
LISTING OF KEY WORDS
NUM 27:12-23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>SECTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>יְהִי       (X8)</td>
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</table>
importance of YHWH plays a central role in the pericope. His importance is further emphasized by referring to him as the God of the spirits of all flesh (לֵּנֶּפֶק הַחֲלֹּל). The second Masoretic paragraph of the pericope further enters this atmosphere of emphasis on the centrality of YHWH as indicated by its chiastic outline: (I) Moses speaks; (II) YHWH speaks; (I') Moses Acts. Section A', as the chiastic central section of this paragraph, spells out not only YHWH's wishes but the fact that He knows that Joshua is a man in whom there is spirit (נָפֶל).

A third movement to section A' arises out of the “imperative concern” of the pericope. The three imperatives, go up (לָגוּל), see (נְרָא), and take (נְפִּיךָ), establish an atmosphere enhanced by other key words or Leitworter in the pericope. Moses had sinned against the voice or command of YHWH. Moses asked YHWH to appoint a leader. YHWH instructed Moses to give a command or charge (נְפִּיךָ) which Moses fulfilled. Moses did (נְפִּיךָ) just as YHWH commanded (נְפִּיךָ) him to do. The installation of Joshua was conducted according to the word of YHWH (הָלַךְ). Section A' uniquely enters this “imperative concern” atmosphere by providing not only one of the three imperatives, but also four instructions that have “imperative-like” overtones: lay (נְפִּיךָ), stand (נְפִּיךָ), command (נְפִּיךָ), and give (נְפִּיךָ). Additionally, section A' notes that Joshua and Israel go out and come in at YHWH’s voice or command (נְפִּיךָ).

A fourth movement in the pericope to section A' arises out of its “people concern” for the children of Israel (נְפִּיךָ), otherwise more frequently referred...
to as the congregation (דָּרֶךְ). Moses could not enter the Promised Land because he sinned before their eyes (לְעֵינֵי). His concern was for the going out and coming in before them (לְעֵינֵי) of a new leader, the ability of that leader to lead them out (לָדֵד) and bring them back in (לָדֵד), and that the people not be as sheep (לְעֵינֵי) with no shepherd. YHWH instructed Moses to stand Joshua before (לְעֵינֵי) the congregation, commission him before their eyes (לְעֵינֵי), and have him seek YHWH's will before leading them out (לָדֵד) and bringing them back in (לָדֵד).

Section A provides a unique contribution to the pericope's "congregation" atmosphere by combining three factors into one section. First, section A supplies three of the seven usages of הָדְרֶנֶד and two of the three usages of בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל for a total of five out of ten references to the people. Second, section A enters into the concern of doing things in the presence of the people by using two words, לְפָנָיו and לְפָנָיו. Third, section A provides the means by which Joshua may lead the congregation out and bring them back in, that is, through Eleazar's approach of YHWH through the Urim.

A fifth movement of the pericope to section A arises out of its "high priest concern." Moses was told that he would die as Aaron his brother (high priest) had died. YHWH instructed Moses to stand Joshua before Aaron's son, Eleazar the priest (כֹּהֵן), for the actual installation service as well as to have Joshua stand before Eleazar when he needed to know the direction of YHWH. Section A provides its

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1The children of Israel (בֶּן יִשְׂרָאֵל) referred to in vss. 12, 20, 21. The congregation (דָּרֶךְ) referred to in vss. 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22.
unique contribution to the “priest” atmosphere by providing two of the three references to Eleazar, the priest.

It should be further noted that the pericope develops an atmosphere in which Joshua is installed in a very public setting. Eight times the pericope concerns itself with accomplishing something “before” (נִלַּחַז) another, either before the congregation, before the priest, or before YHWH. Section A’ provides its unique contribution to the “public concern” of the pericope by supplying four of its eight usages of נִלַּחַז.

To summarize, the Leitwörter of the Num 27:12-23 pericope indicate a movement toward section A’ in six areas:

1. section A’ shares the most key words when compared to the other three sections;

2. section A’ as the chiastic center of the second Masoretic paragraph emphasizes YHWH’s central role in the pericope;

3. section A’ contributes to the “imperative concern” of the pericope by providing one of the imperatives, four “imperative-like” instructions, and the need for Joshua to listen to the voice of YHWH;

4. section A’ contributes to the “people concern” of the pericope by providing half of the pericope’s references to the people, usage of both “before their eyes” and “before” the congregation, and a description of the means for Joshua to obtain YHWH’s directions for leading the people;

5. section A’ contributes to the “priest concern” of the pericope by providing two of the pericope’s three references to Eleazar, the priest; and
6. section A' contributes to the "public concern" of the pericope by providing half of the references to actions that were to be conducted "before" another.

Conclusion

Limiting the study of laying on of hands to section A', or vss. 18-21. of the Num 27:12-23 pericope goes beyond choosing this section on the basis that it is the first section in the pericope to mention the gesture. Four arguments, drawn from detailed study of the pericope, indicate section A' as central to the narrative. First, sections A and B provide three background elements which draw focus to section A': (1) confirmation that Israel would soon be leaderless, thus creating a setting for Moses to ask who would fill that void, section A' answers the question; (2) the command "see" of section A, which leads to the command "take" of section A'; and (3) Moses' request of section B that YHWH appoint the new leader, which YHWH answers in section A'. Second, section A' falls into the chiastic center of the second Masoretic paragraph of the pericope. Third, as the conclusion to the pericope, section B' emphasizes the importance of section A' by repeating step by step how Moses accomplished all that YHWH had instructed him to do in section A'. Fourth, the key words or Leitwörter of the Num 27:12-23 pericope indicate a movement toward section A' through the frequency of shared key words in section A' by emphasizing the importance of YHWH, and through unique contribution to the "imperative," "people," "priest," and "public" "concerns" of the pericope.
Now that the field for study of laying on of hands in the Num 27:12-23 pericope has been narrowed to section A', or vss. 18-21, the question must be asked. "What is the contribution of these verses to an understanding of laying on of hands?"

This study first analyzes the accompanying elements of laying on of hands in these verses, and second, draws conclusions specifically applied to laying on of hands.

Elements Accompanying Laying on of Hands in Num 27:18-21

Method of Approach

The presentation of elements accompanying the laying on of hands follows the flow of the internal structure of Num 27:18-21, which parallels the four levels of the other three sections of the pericope. The flow begins with the subsection a, vs. 18a, identification of who is speaking, or YHWH. Once the speaker is identified, His speech addresses three areas: (1) His imperative of subsection b; (2) His explanation of matters concerning leadership of subsection c; and (3) His explanation of matters concerning the congregation of subsection d.

The subsection b imperative "take to yourself" (נָפָשְׁתָּנַתָּ), vs. 18b, initiates a series of four actions as indicated in subsection c. Each of these actions is tied together by four second masculine singular waw perfect verbs in vss. 18, 19, and the first half of vs. 20: "lay" (נָשָׂא), "stand" (נָשָׂא), "command" or "give a charge" (נָשָׂא), and "give" (נָשָׂא). Israel's next leader is to experience each of these four actions.
Waw perfect verbs are thought to continue the idea communicated by the verbal form of the imperative and express its purpose or a consequent situation. Placing a waw on a perfect gives the verb an imperfect sense which expresses actions contingent or dependent upon the preceding. A succession of waws "represents a situation subordinate to that of the preceding clause either as a con(sequence) or explanation of it" resulting in "clausal subordination" expressing a "logical succession." The sense of the imperative of vs. 18, "take," continues with each of the following verbs connected to it by the waw. At the same time a hierarchy is established: first, lay; second, stand; third, command or charge; and fourth, give.

Vs. 20b concludes the subsection c matters concerning leadership by interrupting the flow of the above actions with a result clause introduced with "so that" or "in order that" (ו). The "so that" clause indicates that the actions of the previous five verbs (the imperative followed by four waw perfect verbs) have the purpose of giving status to Joshua. The children of Israel are to listen to Joshua. Thus subsection c can be further subdivided into two divisions. The first, delineated by the

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2 Davidson, 64, 79.

3 Waltke and O'Connor, 477, 525-6.
waw consecutive verbs, define what Moses is to do to Joshua. The second, delineated by the “so that” clause, defines the result of these actions.

The subsection d matters concerning the congregation are introduced in vs. 21 and can also be further subdivided into two divisions. The first subdivision describes an action of Joshua. He must “stand” before Eleazar when he needs to know the will of YHWH for leading the congregation. Evidently, the “standing” before Eleazar of subsection c was a onetime event. However, for the everyday decisions, “standing” before Eleazar was to continue throughout Joshua’s leadership. Whenever he needed to know the judgment of YHWH, he had to “stand” before Eleazar in order for Eleazar to seek that judgment through the Urim which was before YHWH. The second subdivision describes the results of standing before Eleazar as delineated by the “at his voice” clause (שָׁמיעָהוּ). Once YHWH’s word was discovered, Joshua and the congregation were free to go out and to come back in.

The flow of Num 27:18-21 follows from subsection a. the identification that YHWH is the speaker, to subsection b. YHWH’s imperative, which is linked by waw perfect verbs to subsection c, or four further actions of Moses which lead to a result clause concerning the leader, which in turn leads to subsection d, an action of Joshua that leads to another result clause concerning the congregation. Study is first given to each of the above four levels of Num 27:18-21 in order to analyze the accompanying elements to laying on of hands and second to the impact of the accompanying elements on the laying on of hands.

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Introductory Identifier

The Pentateuch uses various phrases to indicate that YHWH spoke to Moses:

“and YHWH spoke to Moses, saying” (יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא לְמֵאָבָה).¹ or “and YHWH spoke to Moses” (יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא),² or as used in the Num 27:12-23 pericope, “and YHWH said to Moses” (יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא).³ What is the difference between the usage of יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא and יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא? יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא “denotes primarily the activity of speaking” while יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא “requires that the content of what is said be stated” and “is necessary before direct discourse that follows.”⁴ In the Num 27:12-23 pericope, יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא introduces specific words YHWH used, while יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא introduces the fact that Moses spoke but does not quote his direct speech.

“And YHWH said to Moses” (יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא) appears just prior to the Num 27:12-23 pericope in vs. 6 where יָרֵא אַל-מָשָׁא introduced the direct speech of YHWH when He provided Moses with an answer to the inheritance question which had been raised by Zelophehad’s daughters. In Num 27:12-27, the phrase occurs two times, in vss. 12 and 18, again introducing YHWH’s direct speech. These two occurrences mark two halves of the pericope, each half beginning with the word of YHWH, and

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¹This phrase is used in at least eleven verses of Exodus, thirty-two of Leviticus, forty-three of Numbers, and one of Deuteronomy.

²This phrase is used in at least nine verses of Exodus, two of Leviticus, three of Numbers, and one in Deuteronomy.

³This phrase is used in at least forty-two verses of Exodus, two of Leviticus, twenty-two of Numbers, and two of Deuteronomy.

each half describing a response of Moses to that word. Deuteronomy uses the same phrase for the first time in Deut 31:14, which is a passage parallel to Num 27:12-23 in describing events of Joshua's installation. Evidently, YHWH's direct speech to Moses does not appear in the earlier chapters of Deuteronomy because Moses reports events of the past. But when Deuteronomy moves from recording events of the past to recording current events, the phrase is again used. It is important to both narrative descriptions of Joshua's installation to note that the event was directly instigated by YHWH Himself.

The word נִשָּׁא (speak) appears about 5,300 times in the Old Testament, never with the purpose of describing the technique of speaking "but to call attention to what is being said."¹ Frequently נִשָּׁא is used by God to introduce revelation in which He expresses Himself and His will. "One would suppose that this usage emphasizes that God's revelation is a spoken, transmissible, propositional, definite matter."² The expression "thus says YHWH" (יִשָּׁא כְּזַ יֵהְוֶה) added authority and importance to any instruction.³ When YHWH spoke, Moses listened and Moses responded.

The instructions of Num 27:18-20 are initiated by YHWH's word. These are no ordinary instructions but have the weight of the divine behind them. The words


²Charles L. Feinberg, "נִשָּׁא (זָחַר) say, speak, say to oneself (think), intend, command, promise." TWOT (1980), 1:55.

³This phrase was used in talking to Pharaoh (Exod 9:13; 10:3), when announcing YHWH's will for Israel to leave Egypt (Exod 11:4), and when Moses dealt with the rebellion of the golden calf (Exod 32:27).
which describe Joshua's installation, to include laying on of hands, are attributed to God Himself; they are not words invented by Moses. The pericope concludes in vs. 23 by emphasizing that all was accomplished according as YHWH spoke (יָדָיו) by the hand of Moses.¹

The Imperative

In the Num 27:12-23 pericope, the speech following each of the two occasions "YHWH spoke to Moses" (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע) included an imperative or command given to Moses. In vs. 12 of section A, YHWH told Moses to "go up into this mountain of Abarim" (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע) and "see the land" (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע). In vs. 18 of section A', YHWH issued another imperative, "Take to yourself (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע) Joshua, son of Nun, a man (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע) in whom there is spirit (יָדָיו יִֽשְׁמַע יִֽשָּׁמַע)." The commands "go up" and "see" have Old Testament precedence as being precursors to a second command. In particular, the Old Testament links the concept of "seeing" with that of taking.² The imperatives of section A established a circumstance leading to the second imperative. Asking Moses to ascend the mountain and look at the land had a purpose more than just that of allowing Moses to see the Promised Land. This first imperative's purpose had the deeper intention of placing Moses in a

¹The switch to יָדָיו results from the fact that this phrase does not report the content of what is said. Each time that the Scriptures report that YHWH spoke by the hand of Moses, the verb יָדָיו is used. See: Exod 9:35; Lev 10:11; Num 17:5; Josh 20:2; 1 Kgs 8:53, 56; 2 Chr 35:6.

²For discussion, see above under the section entitled, "Pericope Theme: The Succession of Leadership from Moses to Joshua."
position where YHWH would give the second imperative, "take." This "taking" is to be colored by the first imperative which asked Moses to "view" the land of which YHWH stated, "I am giving to the children of Israel" (אֲנַהֲנֵנִי לְהַעֲשֹׂרָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל). The purpose of "taking" Joshua is clearly that he be established in his leadership position so that he could lead the children of Israel into that land of promise.

This study now analyzes three elements of the imperative clause of section A': (1) the imperative itself, "take" (וָלֶךָ), (2) who Joshua was, and (3) what it means to be a man in whom there is spirit.

Take

In response to the imperative of section A, Moses asked YHWH in section B, vss. 16 and 17, to appoint (וָלֶךָ) a leader to lead Israel out (וָאָנָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) as well as back (וָאָנָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) so that Israel would not be like sheep without a shepherd. Asking YHWH to make the appointment provided a double protection: (1) for Moses, if YHWH made the appointment then Moses could not be accused of manipulating who his successor would be; and (2) for the future leader, he would not be accused of acting against the leadership of Moses.\(^1\) But in answering Moses, YHWH gave personal responsibility to Moses in the selection process. The Hebrew imperative, וָלֶךֶנְא (literally, "take to yourself"), demanded personal involvement. In other words, this was to be a deliberate...

\(^1\)Allen, 2:945-6. Allen notes that "you yourself take" is an imperative followed by a dative of personal reference.
act on the part of Moses. The imperative may also suggest taking one who is attached to Moses, one who Moses already knew well, and had already proved himself personally to Moses.

The idea of “taking,” communicated by the root of “to take,” נָפָל, “displays considerable flexibility” and a variety of nuances. Three observations on this root have a bearing on an interpretation of “take” in Num 27:18. First, one of the extended meanings of “take” (נָפָל) is that of “select” or “summon.” For example, YHWH “took” (selected) Israel from among the nations. YHWH’s instruction to Moses no doubt did not have the meaning of taking Joshua as a personal possession but rather had the meaning of selection. This meaning of “take” (נָפָל) provides a response to Moses’ request in vs. 16 that YHWH appoint (נָפָל) the congregation’s next leader. Moses was to “select” (נָפָל) Joshua from among the “counted” (נָפָל) of Israel.

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1 נָפָל indicates personal appropriation: Gen 6:21 (Noah is to take food for the ark); 14:21 (Abram is told to keep for himself the war booty, but not the people); Exod 30:23, 34 (Moses is to take spices to make anointing oil); Lev 9:2 (take for yourself a bull calf for an offering); 1 Kgs 11:31 (Jeroboam is to take ten pieces of cloth representing ten tribes); 1 Chr 21:23 (David is to take Ornan’s threshing floor); Isa 8:1 (Isaiah is to take a tablet to write on); Jer 36:2, 28 (Jeremiah is to take a scroll to write on); Ezek 4:1, 3, 4; 5:1; 37:16 (Ezekiel takes a brick, iron plate, grains, sword, and stick); Hos 1:2 (Hosea takes a wife); and Zech 11:5 (Zechariah is to take instruments of a foolish shepherd).

2 Rosenbaum and Silbermann, 134.


4 Deut 4:34. See Kaiser, “נָפָל (lāqah),” 1:482.
The verbal root נָפַד encompasses a rather broad range of meanings to include: muster, count, search for, or seek out, as well as appoint. Moses had numbered נָפַד Israel in both census counts. Males over the age of twenty and thus fit for military service whom Moses had numbered נָפַד were referred to as the “numbered” or “appointed” of the community (הַנַּפְדָּר). By using the verb נָפַד in his request for a new leader in the context of the second census count in Num 26:63, Moses appeared to indicate a desire that YHWH appoint as Israel’s next leader one of the individuals who had recently been counted in the census. He asked for a successor not chosen by blood relationship or by popular demand, but appointed directly by YHWH. In response to Moses’ request that YHWH appoint נָפַד the next leader, YHWH instructed Moses to “single out” or “select” נָסַנְא Joshua, son of Nun.

Second, “often לָגָה designates the initiative for subsequent action.” For example, Laban “took” his brothers in order to pursue Jacob, or Joseph took his

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1 Holladay. 296: Victor P. Hamilton, “נָפַד (pāqad) number, reckon, visit, punish, appoint,” TWOT (1980), 2:731-2. Hamilton (2:731) quotes Speiser, “there is probably no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble.”

2 For example: Num 1:47; 2:33; 26:62.

3 Num 1:19-20; Exod 38:25.

4 Milgrom (Numbers. 235) translates Num 27:18 as. “Single out Joshua son of Nun.”

5 Seebass. 17.
brothers in order to present them to Pharaoh.\(^1\) In each of these examples, the act of “taking” initiated the subsequent action of either pursuing or presentation. YHWH’s instruction to “take” gave Moses an initiative for very specific subsequent actions. The act of taking Joshua was for a specific purpose, as delineated in Num 27:18-20 by a series of waw perfect verbs. In addition to “take” (हे) indicating the making of a selection, “take” (हे) also indicated the initiation of the subsequent actions of hand laying, standing (or presentation), commissioning (or giving a charge), and giving some of Moses’ honor. The imperative “take” (हे) activated a process.

Third, the act of taking can also be an act of faith. For example, Abraham “took” wood, fire, and a knife necessary for a burnt offering. Having taken all these sacrificial items provided an opportunity to underscore Abraham’s basic assertion that “God himself will provide.”\(^2\) Abraham’s taking was rooted in his basic faith in God. In turn, by “taking” Joshua, vs. 22 of section B’, and performing all subsequent actions initiated by that act, Moses declared his faith that YHWH provided the appropriate leader for Israel.

To review, by instructing Moses to “take” Joshua, YHWH communicated (1) that Moses become personally involved in selecting Israel’s next leader, (2) that “taking” began a process of subsequent actions indicated by a series of waw perfect

\(^1\)Gen 31:23; 47:2.  
\(^2\)Gen 22:6-8.
verbs, and (3) that Moses indicated faith in YHWH's promise to make provision for
Israel's leadership.

Joshua, son of Nun

Though not portrayed by name in the exodus event, Joshua enters early into the
story of the wanderings of Israel at the time when it was attacked by the Amalekites.
Apparently Joshua was already well known as a capable leader on the level of a
military general, thus Moses asked him to choose men to fight the Amalekites.¹

During the ensuing years of Israel's wanderings, Joshua "stood before" Moses
and served as Moses' personal minister/attendant (ןוֹבֵּל).² תּוֹטֵל refers to a servant
of high rank who had a special relationship with his master as well as to one who
served in the tabernacle or temple.³ Joshua, as a young man (וָו), fulfilled both of

¹Exod 17:9-14.

²Deut 1:38 describes Joshua as "the one standing before you" (טּוֹטֵל, תּוֹטֵל), or "your assistant." By this term Joshua is called Moses' assistant. The term
"stand" or "stand before" can refer to an assistant serving in some official capacity.
See Deut 17:12 (the priest stands to minister before YHWH); 18:7 (Levites stand to
minister before YHWH); Judg 3:19 (attendants that stand beside the king); 20:28
(Phinehas stood [ministered] "before" the ark); 1 Kgs 12:6, 8 (Rehoboam consulted
with the older attendants who "stood before" Solomon and the young attendants who
"stood before" himself); 2 Chr 9:7 (happy are the servants who continually "stand
before" you); and Neh 12:44 (priests and Levites minister [stand]). "The one standing
before you" (טּוֹטֵל לַעַל) has much the same sense as תּוֹטֵל. These words are
often used of priests and Levites who assist, serve, or stand ministering. Earl S.

³Potipher entrusted his whole estate to Joseph, his נֶבֶל (Gen 39:4-9); King
Ahaziah's nephews were his נֶבֶל (2 Chr 22:8); the נֶבֶל of the king were close
enough to have his ear (Esth 2:2); Elisha was the נֶבֶל of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:2) who
referred to his own personal servant as a נֶבֶל (2 Kgs 4:43; 6:15). Trent Butler
these roles,¹ for he attended (נָצַל) to Moses when Moses “went up into the mountain of God”² and was a “constant attendant” in the tabernacle “serving under the direction of Moses.”³ When seventy elders received the Spirit, Joshua, as Moses’ minister/attendant (מַעַל), became jealous for Moses when two, who were not of the seventy, also started to prophecy.⁴

Joshua came from a distinguished family line. His grandfather, Elishama, commanded the tribe of Ephraim, descendants of the favorite son of Joseph.⁵ His family named him Hoshea: however, Moses renamed him as Joshua, the first Old Testament person other than Moses’ mother, Jochebed, to bear a name compounded (Joshua, WBC [Waco: Word Books, 1983], 7:10) points out that generally the service is freely chosen and “never implies slavery.”

The term רְחֲבַּה refers to Aaron’s ministry in the holy place (Exod 28:35); Aaron’s sons minister (רְחַבָּה) at the altar (Exod 28:43); Levites have a ministry (רְחַבָּה) of song, worship, and praise (1 Chr 6:17; 16:4; 37); Samuel worked in the tabernacle as Eli’s assistant (רְחַבָּה, 1 Sam 2:11, 18:3:1).

¹Exod 33:11.
²Exod 24:13.
⁴Num 11:28.
⁵Num 1:10; 2:18; 7:48, 53; 10:22; Josh 19:49-50; 24:30; 1 Chr 7:27.
with the divine name YHWH. Mention of Joshua’s name change appears at the conclusion of listing the twelve spies. Perhaps Moses desired to emphasize that this young man’s successes were rooted in his faith in YHWH. Hoshea means “he saved,” “deliverance,” or “salvation,” while Joshua (יהושע) means “YHWH saves” or “YHWH is salvation.” The strength gained from Joshua’s close contact with YHWH enabled him, along with Caleb, to argue that the land they had just spied on could be taken, and along with Caleb was rewarded with permission to enter the Promised Land. As Abraham and Israel had received name changes at a significant event of coming out before the world in a new character, Joshua too received his name change at such a moment.

It was no common individual YHWH told Moses to “take.” Joshua had been Moses’ right-hand man throughout the years of wandering. His close association with Moses had a positive effect. But not only did Moses affect him, Joshua also had close contact with YHWH, as evidenced in his name change. Rooted strongly in YHWH, Joshua was named as YHWH’s choice to become Israel’s next shepherd.

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1Num 13:16.

2Ashley (233) states: “At some unknown point, Moses put the Yahwistic element in hōšēa ("he saved") by changing it to y’hōšua ("Yahweh saves").”

3Num 14:6.

4Num 14:30, 38; 26:65; 32:12.
A man in whom there is spirit

Moses responded to YHWH’s first imperative by making a request that was marked by a thorough reverence and sense of dependence on and trust in his God. In section B, vs. 16, he asked YHWH, the God (נא) of the spirits (נפש) of all flesh (נפש), to appoint (נכמה) a man ( nâ) over the congregation (עם). YHWH responded in section A, vs. 18, by instructing Moses to take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man ( nâ) in whom there is spirit (נפש). YHWH directly responded to Moses’ request for an appointment of a man. As God of the spirits of all flesh, YHWH appointed a man of flesh in whom there is spirit.

In addressing YHWH as the “God of the spirits of all flesh,” Moses described YHWH with terminology used only one other time in the Old Testament. Shortly after the spy crisis, the Kohathite Levite, Korah, rebelled against the leadership of Aaron while the Reubentites, Dathan, Abiram, and On, rebelled against the leadership of Moses. YHWH’s response was to announce His desire to kill the entire congregation. Moses and Aaron reacted by interceding on behalf of the people and addressed YHWH as “God of the spirits of all flesh.” Both incidents in which the title was used were moments of leadership crisis. For the first, Moses and Aaron were in danger of losing their positions. For the second, Moses’ death would soon create a leadership vacuum.

1Num 16.

2Num 16:22; Harrison. 358. Ashley (551) points out that though used only twice in the Bible, this title is common in the post-biblical literature.
What about these crises drove Moses to use such a title for YHWH? It should be noted that YHWH is indeed the “God of all flesh” (יהוה-הצבים). The term “flesh” includes either man or animal who has the “breath of life” and who can suffer disaster or death. “Flesh” often refers just to people who can come near to, see, and have an understanding of YHWH.

Spirit, when used of God, denotes “the very antithesis of man,” or a “transcendent divine power” contrasted with flesh, a word which refers to man “in his weakness and transitoriness.” YHWH is this antithesis because His breath is the source and creator of life for mankind: accordingly, Jacob Milgrom translates the title in Num 27:16, as “Source of the breath of all life.”

1Jer 32:27.

2“Flesh” that is either man or animal (Gen 6:12, 13, 7:21; 8:17; 9:11, 15-17); flesh with the “breath of life” (Gen 6:17; 7:15); flesh can suffer disaster or death (Job 34:15; Isa 66:16; Jer 45:5; Ezek 21:4).

3Come near to YHWH (Pss 65:3; 145:21; Isa 66:23; Zech 2:13); see or understand YHWH (Isa 40:5; Ezek 20:48: 21:5).

4M. R. Westall, “The Scope of the Term ‘Spirit of God’ in the Old Testament,” IJT 26 (1977): 40. For example, Isa 31:3 states, “The Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses are flesh and not spirit.” Also, Isa 40:6 states, “all flesh is grass”; Gen 6:3 reminds us that YHWH’s spirit would not abide with pre-flood man forever, “for they are flesh”; and Ps 78:39 points out that man is but flesh, a wind that passes.

5Milgrom, Numbers, 234. Johannes Baptist Bauer (“Geist,” BW [1967], 477-9) states that only YHWH is the Lord of the breath of life or the origin and source of life. Numerous texts affirm that the breath of YHWH is life-giving: Zech 12:1 (YHWH formed the breath of man); Gen 2:7 (YHWH breathed His breath into man); Isa 42:5 (parallels breath and wind); Job 12:10 (in YHWH’s hand is the breath of flesh); Ezek 37:6 (I will put my breath in you and you shall live).
Not only the origin of man's life, but also its span is conditioned by YHWH's breath.¹

Man's whole life depends on YHWH's breath (כְּלָם), and when man dies YHWH retrieves that breath of life.² This breath of life remains the property of YHWH and is only on loan to man, who cannot be arbitrary about keeping it, for it can remain only so long as YHWH leaves it there.³ Accordingly, YHWH is the God of the spirits of all flesh in that He is the One who weighs the breath (כְּלָם) in man.⁴ Thus, in this title for YHWH, Moses recognized an important element of divinity: YHWH is the creator as well as sustainer of all life, and thus ultimately sovereign over all.

Usage of the title, "God of the spirits of all flesh" in the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, emphasized God's role as creator of all life and His sovereignty over it. Moses immediately followed this reminder of YHWH's sovereignty with an appeal to His mercy and grace so that YHWH would appropriately distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. Recognizing that the change of leadership to follow Moses' death could present a crisis of the same proportions as the Korahite rebellion, Moses requested that YHWH, God of the spirits of all flesh, distinguish a leader who


²Job 27:3; 34:14; Pss 104:29; 146:4; Eccl 3:18-21; 12:1. 6, 7.

³God forms the spirit (כְּלָם) of man within him (Zech 12:1), gives breath (כְּלָם) to those who walk on the earth (Isa 42:5), and as long as the spirit (כְּלָם) of God remains in Job's nostrils, he cannot die (Job 27:3).

is worthy from “all flesh.”¹ YHWH should do the appointing since He has made all according to His will. He who knows the deepest recesses of every heart, who fashions and refashions men, and supplies them with the faculties necessary for leadership is asked to distinguish a man who knows how to lead others.² Joshua is thus chosen by the Creator of the Universe, the One who intimately understands everything about him.

Moses had asked in section B, vs. 16, that YHWH appoint a man (מָנוּ) and YHWH responded by telling Moses which man (מָנוּ) He had chosen. The word מָנוּ connotes primarily the concept of a man as an individual and thus differs in that regard from the more general concepts inherent in the words רַע or חַי.³ Had Moses been thinking of just any human being he could have used either רַע or חַי. Instead, he used the word מָנוּ to indicate a specific individual. Moses asked for a man, but not just any man. This particular man was to be found among the numbered, among those ready to enter the Promised Land. YHWH responded by selecting an individual man from among the numbered Israelites.


YHWH, the God of the spirits (נפש), of all flesh, directed Moses to take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man (נני) in whom there is spirit (רו). Developing a simple interpretation of the phrase "a man in whom there is spirit" is complicated by the fact that the word for spirit, נפש, appears in the Hebrew with no article. Moving toward an interpretation begins by linking the word נפש (spirit) of section A', subsection b in vs. 18, to its parallel in section B, subsection b in vs. 16, which identifies YHWH as the "God of the spirits (נפש) of all flesh." As pointed out above, YHWH is thus identified as the sovereign creator. He is the One who gives breath or spirit, therefore He is the One who knows what the spirit of a man really is. Identifying Joshua as a "man in whom there is spirit (רו)" simply indicates that YHWH knows who Joshua is and can guarantee Moses that Joshua possesses the requisite spiritual qualifications and skills for leadership.¹

Possession of spirit (רו) can indicate either a human or a divine spirit. On the one hand, "spirit" resembles the divine spirit which, having descended upon man, causes a radical shift in his status and sets him in a particular direction. On the other hand, "spirit" resembles the internal entity in man, which to a great extent is identical

in meaning to the notion of “heart” and is an object in man upon which God works.¹
As such, the latter meaning indicates natural insight, wisdom, ability, or courage, all of
which are also gifts of God. Both elements of spirit apply to Joshua.

First, the element of “spirit” as YHWH’s Spirit applies. Leon Wood argues
that the lack of an article attached to the word “spirit” in the phrase “Joshua is a man
in whom there is spirit” does not necessarily preclude a reference to the Spirit of God.
He uses for support 1 Chr 12:18 where the word “spirit” (n’ôm) does not have the
article, yet obviously refers to YHWH’s Spirit. Wood further argues that Moses was
endowed with YHWH’s Spirit as evidenced by the story of the seventy elders to whom
he shared some of his spirit and by Isaiah’s reference to the “Holy Spirit within
Moses.” If Moses was endowed with the Spirit, “one should only expect that his
successor would have to be.”²

A more general argument supports Wood’s proposal. Other Old Testament
examples illustrate that n’ôm (spirit) comes directly from God when placed on the

¹Ze’ev Weisman, “The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority,” ZAW 93
(1981): 225-8. The divine spirit can be seen as something external, such as the spirit
which is “upon” Moses (Num 11:16-17, 24-5) which causes a radical shift in their
status (Num 11:25; 2 Kgs 2:15). The spirit sharing the meaning of “heart” (Dan
11:25), i.e., the spirit of Pul (1 Chr 5:26), of Cyrus (Esth 1:1; 2 Chr 36:25), and of
Zerubbabel and Joshua (Hag 1:14).

²Leon J. Wood, The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan, 1976), 49-50. Allen (2:946) states that “spirit” can also refer to the Holy
Spirit, noting that though the word n’ôm (spirit) in Num 27:18 is indefinite by spelling,
it “may be regarded as inherently definite when used as a reference to deity.” See
also: Clarke, 1:707-8; Greenstone, 297.
leaders of God's people. It would therefore be expected that Joshua too operated under the influence of YHWH's Spirit. Additionally, only one other text refers to a "man" in whom there is "spirit." Joseph had earlier been identified as a man in whom there is spirit, however, in his case the spirit is specifically identified as the "Spirit of God" (אֱלֹהֵי אָדָם סְדֻכָּה). The phrase when referring to Joshua uses very similar language, only without the direct reference to God (אֱלֹהֵי אָדָם סְדֻכָּה), and invites an interpretation based upon the reference to Joseph. Joshua too, no doubt, had received a special outpouring of YHWH's Spirit.

The book of Numbers provides an event in which Joshua, as one of Moses' "chosen men," probably received the spirit of prophecy as one of the seventy elders. The Spirit of God no doubt filled the man Joshua. Characteristically, when אֱלֹהֵי appears in connection with יָד, the man on whom the spirit of God falls is so


2 Gen 41:38.

3 Num 11:16-23. Scholars are divided over whether the Hebrew word יהי is derived from יִבָּה, meaning “young men” or from יִבָּה, meaning “chosen.” Budd (123-4) notes that the Syriac Version and the Targums choose the former while he chooses the latter with the Samaritan and LXX. Ashley (216) suggests the modification of “chosen young men.” Milgrom (Numbers, 90) translates: “from his youth.” Lloyd Neve states that Joshua received the spirit of prophecy along with the seventy elders (The Spirit of God in the Old Testament [Tokyo: Seibunsha. 1972], 84-8). Milgrom (Numbers, 235) states that Joshua never became a prophet, that he was "just" a military officer and Moses’ aide-de-camp. Milgrom does not comment on the fact that the reception of the spirit of prophecy for the seventy elders appears to have lasted only for this one experience, thus Joshua could easily have received it too at that time.

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completely changed that he emerges as “another man.”\(^1\) YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, affirms that Joshua is indeed such a changed man.

Second, \(n\)\(^3\) (spirit) can indicate internal elements of an individual. One particular element referred to is that of ability. YHWH endowed Bezalel with a divine \(n\)\(^7\) (spirit) of skill, ability, and knowledge so that he could construct the Tabernacle. In Joshua’s case, \(n\)\(^V\) (spirit) would refer to his endowed leadership skill. YHWH had already chosen, authenticated, and endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, knowledge, and insight to qualify him for the work. This endowment was not something new or sudden, it was a permanent influence proceeding from God already dwelling in him rather than a temporary empowering for a specific action.\(^2\) The spirit \(n\)\(^n\) gave Joshua divine charisma of leadership in the same fashion as later for Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and David through whom YHWH directed the affairs of His nation.\(^3\)

Additionally, the word \(n\)\(^n\) (spirit) can depict a person’s dominant disposition of mind or attitude.\(^4\) In particular, \(n\)\(^n\) (spirit) is used as a synonym for courage.

\(^1\) Sam 10:6 states that when the Spirit of God comes on you, you will be completely changed (\(n\)\(^n\)) into another man (\(n\)\(^N\)). N. P. Bratsiotis, “\(n\)\(^N\) ish; \(n\)\(^n\) ishshah.” \textit{TDOT} (1974), 1:222-35.

\(^2\)Temporary endowment as in Num 11:18. See also: Sturdy, 197; McNeile, 154; G. B. Gray, 401.

\(^3\)Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam 16:13; F. Baumgärtel, "Spirit in the OT." \textit{TDNT} (1968), 6:359-65. One of the functions of YHWH’s spirit (\(n\)\(^n\)) is to equip for national political action by raising up charismatic leaders.

\(^4\)Spirit (\(n\)\(^n\)) describing a dominant disposition can describe the following emotions: crushed in spirit, broken, forsaken, humble, smitten, troubled, faithful, high.
Joshua had displayed his courage early in his victory over the Amalekites. Caleb had a different spirit (רו"ע) than the ten faithless spies, meaning he had not angered YHWH by his obstinacy and rebelliousness like the others but had instead maintained wholehearted commitment to YHWH which resulted in an indomitable and positive attitude toward invading Canaan.1 As noted above, Mary Douglas proposes a chiastic outline which parallels Joshua's commission with his response to the ten weak spies. Though Joshua's spirit is not specifically mentioned in the discussion of Caleb's spirit, the narrative indicates that he shared in that spirit of courageously following YHWH wholeheartedly. Joshua built upon Caleb's spirit by making the case for invasion even more specific and serious.2 Designating Joshua as a “man in whom there is spirit” may in part refer to not only the spy scenario but also to Joshua's long service to Moses as well as to the entire congregation.3 To describe Joshua as “a man in whom


1Synonym for courage (Josh 2:11; 5:1), Joshua's courage over the Amalekites (Exod 17:9-13), Caleb's different spirit (Num 14:24).

2Num 14:6-9. “Spirit” (רו"ע) is a synonym for “courage” as in Josh 2:11; 5:1. This courage manifested itself in Joshua’s victory over the Amalekites (Exod 17:9-13), and is exemplified in his willingness to stand up for God and Moses in the scout episode, for which he is nearly stoned (Num 14:6-10), as alluded to in Num 26:65. Milgrom, Numbers, 235.

there is spirit" is to describe him as a man full of life.¹ As such, YHWH declared that Joshua has the spirit of life and courage necessary to provide the kind of strong leadership necessary to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

To summarize, YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, identified Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit. Joshua is thus indicated as one with an indomitable and courageous spirit. But more, as the giver of spirit, YHWH also identifies Joshua as one to whom He had given a special Spirit, a Spirit that has changed him and endowed him for leadership.

Summary of the imperative

A simple command to “Take to yourself Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit" provides a wealth of information. First, it is parallel to the commands of section A, subsection b, vs. 12b. The commands to “go up" the mountain and “see” the Promised Land placed Moses in a position where YHWH could give another command, to “take” Joshua. Second, it is parallel to Moses’ request in section B, subsection b, vs. 16, of YHWH to appoint a leader. YHWH responded that Moses “take” Joshua, thus communicating to Moses that he too had a role in establishing Israel’s next leader. Third, the imperative, “take,” initiated a process of subsequent actions indicated by a series of waw perfect verbs. Fourth, it gave Moses an opportunity to demonstrate his faith, which he did by “taking Joshua.”

¹Vogels (3-7), argues that though this translation is possible due to Ps 31:6, Joshua has more than life, he has the spirit of YHWH.
as recorded in section B', subsection b, vs. 22. Fifth, Joshua, son of Nun, was the one identified as the one to be taken. YHWH told Moses to choose a man who had previously demonstrated his capabilities and commitments. But more, YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, identified Joshua as an indomitable and courageous man to whom He had given a special Spirit which endowed him for leadership.

**Matters Concerning the Leader**

*Actions of Moses*

Each of the four sections of the Num 27:12-23 pericope first identifies the section’s main characters, then identifies a request, and then discusses matters concerning leadership. In section A, YHWH clarified that Israel’s current leadership would definitely die. In section B, Moses indicated the desire for a leader who had the internal fortitude to go out and come in before the congregation, and who would have the capability of leading the congregation out and back in. In section A', YHWH described actions Moses was to accomplish with Joshua that would establish him as the leader. The imperative level of section A' established a command intended to initiate a series of four actions Moses was to accomplish with Joshua with the intention of establishing him as a leader whom the congregation would obey. The four actions were to lay hands, stand before Eleazar and the congregation, commission, and give honor.

"Lay your hand on him." In the instructions YHWH gave to Moses, the first action initiated by the imperative "take" was that of Moses "laying" his hand on
Joshua. Because this phrase is the focus of this study, the other elements that apply to
an understanding of this phrase are studied first. Laying on of hands is then analyzed
in light of all the other elements. Also, an introduction to the general Old Testament
usage of the phrase "laying on of hands" (חַ֣֔יְּדוּת יָדֵ֧י) is presented in chap. 3.

It should be noted, however, that laying on of hands is the first of the actions
indicated by the imperative "take" even though it was not intended that this hand
gesture be the first action Moses performed in the installation. YHWH’s initial
instructions to Moses indicated that Joshua’s installation take place in a public setting,
thus creating a situation in which public presentation must precede any other actions.
The installation, as recorded in Num 27:22 and 23, confirms this conclusion, for
Moses first “stood” or presented Joshua to the children of Israel, then “laid” hands on
him. By placing hand laying in the first position of the four actions even though it
could not be performed first, YHWH appears to be stating that all the other actions
depend on it. One of the preliminary conclusions that can be drawn with respect to
hand laying is therefore indicated structurally by its placement first in the list of
actions. The public presentation and commissioning of Joshua along with giving him
some of Moses’ honor were to each somehow find their meaning or expression in the
laying on of Moses’ hands. Joshua’s installation is rooted in Moses’ hand-laying
action.

"Stand him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation." In the
instructions YHWH gave Moses, the second action initiated by the imperative "take"
was that of “standing.” Moses was told to “stand” (לְאָמַד) Joshua “before” (לְפֹנֵץ) Eleazar and “before” (לְפֹנֵץ) the congregation. The Old Testament concept of “standing someone or something before” another carries broad and significant implications. Three applications of this concept have direct bearing on an interpretation of “laying on of hands”: (1) public or private presentation; (2) acceptance; and (3) involvement in a cultic setting.

First, the concept of “standing before” can have either a literal or figurative connotation of presentation. The verb לָאָמַד (stand) appears in the Old Testament over five hundred times, the majority of which denote a literal action, that of the physical act of standing.1 The command to “stand” Joshua can be understood in the literal sense of having him physically stand before both the congregation and the high priest. However, YHWH’s instruction to Moses uses לָאָמַד in the hifil (causative). Combined with לָאָמַד in the hifil appears in the Old Testament eleven times additional to Num 27:19 and 22 denoting a figurative action, that of official or formal “presentation” of a person or animal to another.2 Thus “standing” Joshua could also be understood in the sense of Moses making a formal presentation of Joshua to both the

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2 Jacob is presented to Pharoah (Gen 47:7), the cleansed leper is presented to YHWH at the door of the Tabernacle (Lev 14:11), two goats are presented before YHWH (Lev 16:7), the scapegoat is presented live before YHWH (Lev 16:10), present a person to the priest (Lev 27:8), an animal presented to the priest (Lev 27:11), Levites presented to Aaron for service (Num 3:6; 8:13), a suspected adulteress is presented by the priest or her husband before YHWH for judgment (Num 5:16, 18, 30). See Ashley, 552-3, where he lists ten of the eleven occurrences.
congregation and the high priest. In the final analysis, both the figurative and literal meanings apply: Joshua's formal presentation included standing him physically before both Eleazar and the congregation.

Standing someone or something before another as presentation had at least two important purposes: (1) to present something for the usage of another; and (2) to present a case for consideration. To illustrate the first purpose, on the day of Atonement, two goats were “stood before” YHWH of which one would be chosen by lot for YHWH.¹ Three Old Testament legal questions well illustrate the second usage of “standing before” in the sense of presenting a case: (a) when a husband suspected his wife of adultery, he and the priest were to “stand her before” YHWH; (b) the Zelophehad daughters “stood before” Moses, Eleazar, the princes, and the whole congregation to present their inheritance question; and (c) when a man killed another, he was not to die until he had “stood before” the congregation for judgment.² When applied to the Joshua pericope, his public presentation had the purpose of offering him to the congregation as their leader. Also, in presenting Joshua to the congregation,

¹Lev 16:7, 8. Also, no woman was to “stand before” a beast, or give herself to an animal for sexual purposes (Lev 18:23).

²Woman in adultery (Num 5:16, 18, 30), Daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:2), and the murderer (Num 35:12; Josh 20:6, 9). Also note: a cleansed leper “stood before” YHWH to present his case (Lev 14:11); in the context of fixing value for redeeming what is YHWH’s, either a person or an animal was “stood before” the priest to present a case (Lev 27:8, 11); both parties of a dispute must “stand before” YHWH, priests, and judges to present their case; Jehoshaphat and the men of Israel “stood before” YHWH to present their case for deliverance (2 Chr 20:5, 9, 13).
Moses entered the legal arena and established his case that Joshua was legally Israel's next leader.

The second implication of "standing before" is that of acceptance, an acceptance by both the one who is standing and the one before whom the standing takes place. To stand before another communicates strength and ability as well as willingness to take a stand for and listen to that other.1 YHWH communicated acceptance of others by allowing them to "stand before" him.2 Standing Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation communicated two important messages: (1) Joshua had the strength to accept his responsibilities and was willing to listen to both the congregation and YHWH, as represented by Eleazar; and (2) the congregation and YHWH, as represented by Eleazar, communicated their acceptance of Joshua by allowing him to stand before them.

1The idea of “standing before” as an implication of strength is communicated in two passages: Israel could no longer stand before its enemies (Judg 2:14); and who can stand before jealousy (Prov 27:4). The idea of “standing before” as a gesture of willingness to take a stand for and to listen to another is communicated in two passages as well: on the day you stood before YHWH at Horeb to hear His words; and the covenant was renewed with those standing today before YHWH (Deut 29:14, 15 [13, 14]).

2After seventy men died as a result of looking at the ark of the covenant, the men of Beth Shemesh asked, “Who can stand before YHWH” (1 Sam 6:20); YHWH asks, “What shepherd will stand before me?” (Jer 49:19; 50:44) implying that the shepherds are not acceptable to Himself; YHWH also asks those who have performed all manner of evil how they think they can “stand before” me, meaning, think you are accepted (Jer 7:10); and Esther stood before Xerxes after he indicated acceptance of her presence (Esth 5:1-2).
Finally, the phrase “stand before” carries strong cultic overtones as evidenced by its general usage, and by its connection in vs. 19 with two cultic entities, the priest and the congregation. The term “cult” refers to the forms and rituals of a community or individual in maintaining contact with or worship of the divine.\(^1\) For Israel, the cult was to be limited to the Sanctuary and its services. Another term for maintaining contact with the divine is “covenant.” The Old Testament Sanctuary provided the Israelites with a refuge in which to contact YHWH and its services gave institutional form to maintaining the covenant between YHWH and His people.\(^2\) To state that the phrase “stand before” carries cultic overtones is to say that it represents a ritual involved in Israel’s worship of and maintaining contact with YHWH.

The phrase “stand before” carried a cultic connection in at least two areas: (1) “stand before” could indicate ministry before or service to one of higher authority or to

\(^1\)Childs (Canonical, 155) defines cult as “all those fixed conventions of worship, observed by both the individual and the group, by which the benefits of divine favor in every day life could be realized.” Walter Eichrodt (Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J. A. Baker [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961], 1:98) states that “the term ‘cultus’ should be taken to mean the expression of religious experience in concrete external actions performed within the congregation or community, preferably by officially appointed exponents and in set forms.”

\(^2\)The Ark kept in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary/Temple carried the name, “Ark of the Covenant” (Num 10:30; 14:44; Deut 10:8; 1 Kgs 6:19; 8:6; 1 Chr 22:19; 2 Chr 5:7). The New Testament refers to God’s ark of His covenant (Rev 11:19) and to the tablets of covenant contained in the ark of the covenant (Heb 9:4). Ezekiel combines the concept of sanctuary and covenant (37:26; 44:7). Heb 9:1 states that the first covenant had regulations for service and an earthly sanctuary.
a group;\(^1\) or (2) “stand before” could indicate a representational element in which one representing a group “stands before” another and intercedes in behalf of the group.\(^2\)

Both of these usages of “stand before” applied to the Levites as they ministered in the name of YHWH and “stood before” Him in the cultic activities of the tabernacle and temple as well as in their representation of Israel, particularly the firstborn, in this minisstry.\(^3\)

YHWH commanded Moses to “stand” Joshua “before” Eleazar, the priest (הֲוָהוּ). Various Old Testament cultic activities involved presentation before a priest. For example, a cleansed leper “stood before” the priest at the door to the tabernacle, a person or an animal was “stood before” the priest in the context of redemption, and a woman caught in adultery was “stood before” the priest.\(^4\) In each of these three examples, the priest made a determination important to the future of that which was presented to him.

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\(^1\)“Standing before” as service to kings: Joseph to Pharoah (Gen 41:46), David to Saul (1 Sam 16:22); a young maiden for the king (1 Kgs 1:2), counselors of Solomon (2 Chr 10:6); Nubuzaradan for Nebuchadrezzar (Jer 52:12); Daniel and his three friends for Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1:5, 19). “Standing before” as ministry: Levites as ministers to Aaron and YHWH (Num 3:6; 8:13; Deut 10:8; 18:7), Korah was asked if it is too little for you to stand before the congregation to minister? (Num 16:9), Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of YHWH (Zech 3:1-2).

\(^2\)During the time of Jeremiah, YHWH was so upset with His people that even if Moses and Samuel “stood before” Him interceding in their behalf. He would not change his mind (Jer 15:1). Also note that Gedeliah planned to “stand before” the Chaldeans in behalf of the remnant in Israel (Jer 40:10).

\(^3\)Levites “standing before” as ministers (Deut 10:8; 18:7), Levites “standing before” as representatives of the firstborn and all Israelites (Num 8:5-26).

\(^4\)Leper (Lev 14:11), redemption (Lev 27:8, 11), adulteress (Num 5:16).
Priests played several important roles in the ancient Israelite community which included administration of sacred ritual and the office of reconciliation, atonement, and intercession. The priestly ministry was “primarily an altar ministry” but also included responsibility to guard the tabernacle and its law, to teach, to give blessing in the name of YHWH, to make inquiries of YHWH in behalf of others, and to judge. The priestly role of judge included that of assessing and appraising, judging between holy and profane, and playing a role in jurisprudence. When one “stood before” or presented himself to a priest, he stood before an individual who played an important role in maintaining relationship with the Almighty.

YHWH communicated an important lesson in having Joshua “stand before” Eleazar, the priest. Joshua stood before one whose role was to guard the institution (and its law) which ensured covenant with YHWH. Eleazar’s roles of assessing, appraising, and jurisprudence placed him in a position where his blessing communicated volumes. In terms of leadership, if there was no blessing from the high priest there would be no leader. Including Eleazar the priest in the formalities underscored the fact that Joshua’s leadership of the Israelites was to be one of

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1For function of the priest, see W. Dommershausen, “קֹהֶן kōhēn,” TDOT (1995), 7:66-75. For guarding the Tabernacle (Num 1:53; 3:28, 32), for guarding the law (Deut 31:9), for religious teaching (Lev 10:11; Deut 33:10; Ezek 44:23), for giving blessing (Num 6:22-27; Deut 10:8; 21:5; 1 Chr 23:13), for assessing and appraising (Lev 27:8, 12, 18), for making inquiries of YHWH (Judg 18:5; 1 Sam 23:2; 30:7), for a role in jurisprudence (Deut 17:8-13; 21:5; 2 Chr 19:8).
cooperation with the high priest. Joshua’s rule was not to be profane: contact with YHWH was to hold first place in his governance.¹

YHWH also commanded Moses to “stand” Joshua “before” the congregation (רְחֵב). The רְחֵב played an important role throughout the installation-of-Joshua pericope. In the pericope’s twelve verses, YHWH is mentioned eight times, Moses five times, Joshua two times, and the congregation (לֵבַע) seven times.

The noun לֵבַע is derived from the verb לְעַב, “to appoint,” and thus carries the meaning, “assembly by appointment.”² The entire nation, to include women and children, composed the לֵבַע, or assembly, which met (לְעַב) its appointed assembly at the “tent of meeting” (רְחֵב) which in turn housed the Ark of the Testimony (סֵפֶר), all of which words have a similar sound in Hebrew.³ The appointed meetings

¹Calvin, 319.


³The “congregation” (לֵבַע) “meets” (לְעַב) at the “tent of meeting” (סֵפֶר), Exod 29:42-43. The Ark was identified by three expressions: the ark of the testimony (וֹתֶר) (Exod 25:16, 21-22) or tabernacle of the testimony (וֹתֶר) (Num 10:11) or simply the testimony (וֹתֶר) (Exod 16:34, etc.). For scope of the לֵבַע, see: Jacob Milgrom, “Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel,” JQR 69 (1979): 70-1. Milgrom notes that the chief meaning of לֵבַע included the entire nation, to include women and children (occurs over one hundred times, to include: Exod 12:19, 47; 16:1; Num 1:53; 15:25; 17:11; 20:1, 7-8;
bore a sacred connotation of a gathering together in response to a summons of YHWH, occurring mainly in a "sacerdotal context" thus carrying a "definitely cultic association."¹ YHWH revealed His plans for the tabernacle and priesthood to the people.² The term נבירה is associated with Israel as a nation in its first Passover, Sabbath, and sacrifice.³ The נבירה viewed the glory of YHWH and was numbered and arranged around the tent of meeting.⁴ William Wood points out that at first glance the image of this arrangement of Israel is one of an army camp preparing for war, however, "the older notion of Israel as an armed camp prepared for holy war has been replaced by the notion of Israel as a congregation."⁵ Wood also argues that the Hebrew word נבירה is etymologically related to the Hebrew words נ>p נבירה (in the expression נבירה, tent of meeting) and נ>p נר אונא (meeting), thus emphasizing again its cultic connection.⁶ Finally, Wood states that נבירה and נר אונא (testimony) are linked together by alliteration. נר אונא, which he translates as "pact" or "covenant," is the

²²:¹⁷; ³¹:¹⁶; ³²:⁴; Josh ²²:¹⁶-²⁸, ²⁰). נבירה can also indicate all adult males (Num ¹⁴:¹-⁴; ³¹:²⁶, ²⁸, ⁴³; particularly those bearing arms, Josh ²⁰:¹) or the tribal leaders meeting as an executive body (Exod ¹²:³, ²¹; Num ⁸:⁷; Josh ²²:¹³, ²⁶).

¹Weinfeld ("Congregation," ⁸⁹⁴) uses the phrase, "Sacerdotal context"; Shaw (²⁶³) uses the phrase "definitely cultic." W. P. Wood (⁷³) states that נבירה is "P's expression for the cultic religious community of Israel."

²Exod ²⁵-²⁸.
³Passover (Exod ¹²), Sabbath (Exod ¹⁶), and sacrifice (Lev ⁹).
⁴Views the glory (Exod ¹⁶), numbered and arranged (Num ¹-³).
⁵W. P. Wood. ¹⁷⁶.
⁶Ibid., ⁷².
agreement which provides the לֶךֶר יְהֹוָה with the place of worship and means of atonement.¹

YHWH communicated another important lesson in having Joshua “stand before” the לֶךֶר יְהֹוָה which also carried cultic and covenantal ramifications. Joshua’s installation ceremony was public, held before the entire congregation. “because it is the congregation who will be a vital part of the success of Joshua’s leadership.”² It is the לֶךֶר יְהֹוָה with whom YHWH has made a covenant, it is the לֶךֶר יְהֹוָה who requires a leader sensitive to this covenant. Through a public ceremony, Moses made very clear not only his blessing and his wishes but also the blessing and wish of YHWH. The entire congregation viewed the process: all were reminded that the leadership was properly assumed by Joshua with the full approval of God and Moses. By standing Joshua before the congregation, YHWH reminded Joshua that without the people there would be no leader. The congregation must become an important preoccupation of the leader.

Where did the presentation take place? Since the presentation took place before the priest and the congregation, which are both cultic terms, one would expect that the presentation took place where cultic activities took place, namely, the Sanctuary. Presentations before the priest and meetings of the congregation took place at the door to the Tabernacle. Based upon this evidence, Joshua’s presentation to Eleazar and

¹Ibid., 143-5, 176.
²Ashley, 553.
congregation most likely took place at the door to the Sanctuary. Further evidence presented below confirms this conclusion.

Presentation to both the priest and the congregation became important elements of Joshua's leadership. To summarize: first, Joshua's formal presentation had the dual purpose of giving him to the congregation and doing so in a judicial setting; second, the physical gesture of standing communicated Joshua's acceptance of his responsibilities as well as the congregation's and YHWH's acceptance of Joshua; third, the term "stand before" indicated a cultic and covenantal event; fourth, the term gives indication that Joshua's installation ceremony took place at the הֵיכָל חוֹדֶשׁ (tent of meeting), the normal meeting place of the congregation (וּלָּשֹׁן). Joshua's leadership is thus connected to the Sanctuary and to all that it represented in maintaining contact and covenant with YHWH. His leadership must ever espouse these important principles.

"Commission him in their presence." The third action to follow "taking" was that of giving a commission. Moses was to "commission him (Joshua) before their eyes" (לָיְינוּ לֹא לִגָּרְזוּ). The verb "you are to commission" (לָיְינוּ לֹא לִגָּרְזוּ) is a piel perfect, second masculine singular of נָרָא, "to command" or "to give a charge." The verb is used three times in the installation of Joshua pericope. once in section A' when YHWH instructed Moses to "commission" Joshua, vs. 19; and twice in section B'. (1) in its introductory identifier stating that Moses did all that YHWH

1KJV, "give a charge:" RSV and NIV, "commission:" NKJV, "inaugurate."
"commanded" him. vs. 22, and (2) when Moses implemented YHWH's instructions, vs. 23.

The root שֵׂאֵל includes the concepts of making firm or strengthening as well as that of giving a command to or laying a charge upon someone. The piel form is used to describe someone in a position of authority who "orders," "directs," "commands," or "appoints" another. YHWH's command of Moses in vs. 22 illustrates this meaning. When used in an installation ceremony, the piel of רָאָה denotes a solemn charge indicating "admission to a clearly defined office" by the "action of someone in authority who transfers his power to another." Moses' commission of Joshua in vss. 19 and 23 illustrates this meaning. Why is רָאָה used with both of its meanings in so few verses? YHWH's control and input comprise one of the more important messages of this pericope. Moses' commissioning (רָאָה) of Joshua directly results from YHWH's command (רָאָה) of Moses. Moses may be the voice of the commission, but Joshua's commission originates with YHWH.


2 A father gives a charge to his son (Gen 28:1; 6; 49:29); a farmer commands his laborers (Ruth 2:9); a king commands his servants (Gen 12:20; 26:11; Exod 1:22; 5:6; 2 Sam 18:5; 1 Kgs 2:46; 5:17; 2 Kgs 17:27; 22:12; 23:4, 21; 2 Chr 19:9; 34:20; Jer 39:11); YHWH gives commands (Gen 2:6; Ezra 9:11; Neh 1:7; 9:14; Job 36:22; Pss 7:6; 78:23; Jer 32:23), Moses commanded (Exod 36:6; Num 32:28; 36:5; Deut 27:1, 11; 31:10; 31:25); master commands servants (Gen 32:4, 17, 19; 42:25; 44:1; 50:2; 2 Sam 13:28).

YHWH instructed Moses to give a solemn charge to Joshua “before their eyes” (לְיָרָעְשֵׁה), the eyes of Eleazar and the whole congregation. Though the word for eye (יָרָעְשֵׁה) is commonly used in the Old Testament, its particular form in this verse occurs only five times in the Pentateuch: the first two in Genesis and Exodus concern events prior to the exodus from Egypt, the latter three in Numbers relate either directly or indirectly to the installation of Joshua. The basic meaning of the phrase is that of accomplishing something in the obvious and full view of a specific group: Joseph had Simeon bound in the full view of his brothers. Moses was concerned about sacrificing in the full view of the Egyptians. YHWH told Moses to speak to the rock in the full view of the congregation. Moses sinned in the full view of the congregation, and Joshua is to be commissioned in the full view of all.\(^1\)

While the basic meaning of לְיָרָעְשֵׁה remains the same throughout its five usages in the Pentateuch, the latter three share a unique commonality. Moses’ sin at Kadesh provided the setting for the first usage of לְיָרָעְשֵׁה in Numbers. In Num 20:8, Moses was told to speak to the rock “before their eyes” (לְיָרָעְשֵׁה). Joshua’s installation pericope provides the setting for the other two usages in Numbers. YHWH reminded Moses in Num 27:14 that he could not enter the Promised Land because he had not sanctified YHWH at the waters “before their eyes” (לְיָרָעְשֵׁה). A direct link is thus established to Num 20:8 and the sin of Moses. YHWH then instructed Moses

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\(^1\) לְיָרָעְשֵׁה occurs twenty-four times in the Old Testament, five of which are in the Pentateuch: Gen 42:24 (Joseph and Simeon); Exod 8:22 (sacrificing before the Egyptians); Num 20:8 (speaking to the rock); 27:14 (Moses’ sin), 19 (Joshua’s commission).
in vs. 19 to commission Joshua "before their eyes" (לָאָתָה, לָאָתָה). An infrequently used term, such as לָאָתָה, employed twice in such close proximity provides a direct link between Moses' sin and Joshua's commissioning.

Four times, Deuteronomy reiterated the story of Moses not entering the Promised Land, each time intertwining into the narrative Joshua's commission. On two of these occasions, when refusal for Moses to enter the Promised Land is mentioned, Joshua's responsibilities are given special prominence. Succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua as a result of Moses' sin becomes one of the important themes not only in Numbers after the second census, but also throughout the book of Deuteronomy.

Numbers appears to deliberately connect Moses' exclusion from the Promised Land with Joshua's succession for several reasons. First, Moses' disqualification necessitated Joshua's appointment. In the midst of judgment a future leader was provided. Second, Joshua is reminded of the need to listen to the voice (יִהְוהָ) of YHWH. The installation of Joshua pericope notes that Moses cannot enter the Promised Land because of his rebellion against YHWH's voice (יִהְוהָ), then notes that

4J. A. Thompson, Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 89; Cook and Espin, 805.
Joshua must depend on that voice (הָאָזֶן) for his going out and coming in. Joshua is thus reminded of how to protect himself from making the same mistake as Moses.

Third, Joshua is reminded of the importance of the congregation. Moses made a mistake “before their eyes” (לִפְנֵי אֵל) and Joshua is commissioned “before their eyes” (לִפְנֵי אַל). Joshua’s call is to a consistently responsible leadership maintained in the view of all.

What are the contents of Joshua’s commission to be given “before their eyes” (לִפְנֵי אַל)? N. Lohfink made a form-critical study of the commissioning of Joshua in parallel passages to Num 27:12-23, Deut 31:1-8, 14, 23, and Josh 1:1-9, to which D. J. McCarthy added a study of commissions and installations elsewhere in the Old Testament. These scholars confirmed a pattern for commissioning formulas in the Old Testament, a variable pattern in which the phrases used and the order in which they...

1 Num 27:14, 21. Note further discussion below under the heading: “Matters Concerning the Congregation.”

2 Lohfink, 32-44; McCarthy, 31-41. See also: A. D. H. Mayes. Deuteronomy, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1979) 372-4; Patrick D. Miller, Deuteronomy, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: J. Knox Press, 1990), 217-21. Lohfink set the standard by describing the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua as a distinguished genre (Gattung) which he calls an Amtseinsetzung and McCarthy translates as “Installation Genre.” For an opposing opinion, see Lori L. Rowlett, Joshua and the Rhetoric of Violence: A New Historicist Analysis, JSOTS 226 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 121-155. Rowlett proposes on p. 123 that Josh 1:1-9 does not function primarily as an “installation genre” but as a “war oracle.” “The warrior is commanded to be strong and bold (element 1) in carrying out the military task (element 2) because divine presence and help in battle are promised (element 3), thereby assuring a victorious outcome.”
occur “are governed by the demands of the task at hand.” Lohfink and McCarthy refer to this commissioning formula as “installation genre” without apparently paying attention to the fact that, at least in the installation of Joshua, installation included elements in addition to the commission. However, their contribution provides important details to aid in an understanding of the commissioning element of Joshua’s installation. Components of Lohfink and McCarthy’s formula are threefold: (1) encouragement; (2) description of the task; and (3) an assistance formula, sometimes referred to as a formula of support or an assurance of divine aid. Later, J. Roy Porter suggested a fourth element, an exhortation to keep the law.

Three passages provide elements of the installation formula in Moses’ commission of Joshua: (1) Deut 3:21-28; (2) Deut 31:1-8, 14, 23; and (3) Josh 1:1-9. Important links connect these three passages with Num 27:12-23. First, the three passages discuss Joshua’s commission by using the same verb as in the Numbers pericope. In Deut 3:21, Moses reminded Israel of Joshua’s inauguration. “at that time I commissioned Joshua” (ךָֽזִּיוֹן). Two elements of giving the commission are introduced in Deut 31: (1) in vs. 14 YHWH instructed Moses to present Joshua at the tent of meeting that “I may commission him” (ךָֽזִּיוֹן); and (2) in vs. 23 Moses “commissioned Joshua” (ךָֽזִּיוֹן). The same two elements appear in the first chapter of Joshua: (1) Joshua is reminded in vs. 7 to do all

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that Moses “commanded you” (₦א[כד) to do; and (2) in vs. 9. YHWH reminded Joshua, “Have I not commanded you?” (בְּנַעַלְךָ נַעַלְךָ יְהוָה).

Second, the three passages share the theme of leading the congregation out and bringing them back or into the land. In the installation of Joshua pericope in Num 27, Moses prayed for a leader who could lead Israel out and bring them back (בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ and בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ). He clarified the reason for this prayer in Deut 31:2, “I am no longer able to go out and to come in” (בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ יְהוָה). YHWH responded to that prayer by instructing Moses to present Joshua to Eleazar who in turn would go to the Urim to discover YHWH’s will for Joshua in his leading Israel out and bringing them back. These responsibilities particularly included leading Israel into the Promised Land, which are described in Deut 3:28 with the term “go over” (בָּלַע), “he shall go over before this people” (בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ לֶפִּי עֲם בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ); in Deut 31:23 as “and you shall bring (בָּלַע) the sons of Israel into the land”; and Josh 1:2 parallels Deut 3:23 by stating, “go over this Jordan” (בָּלַע נַעַלְךָ).

A third phrase provides a strong link between Num 27:19 and Deut 31:7. In Numbers, Moses gave Joshua a charge “before their eyes” (בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ) and in Deuteronomy Moses called Joshua and spoke to him “before the eyes” (בְּרִיחַ נַעַלְךָ of all Israel.

In light of these parallel passages to Num 27:12-23, what words did Moses use in commissioning Joshua? First, as noted in Lofink and McCarthy’s commissioning formula, the commission contained words of encouragement. Deut 3:21-28 contributes words of encouragement from Moses as well as from YHWH, words calculated to
make Joshua firm and resolute in his leadership. In this charge to Joshua, Moses employed the technique "of eliciting courage for the future on the basis of the experience of the past." Moses reminded Joshua of all that YHWH had accomplished for Israel in conquering King Og of Bashan and King Sihon of Heshbon. Joshua was not to fear, for just as YHWH had accomplished in the past, He most certainly would do again in the future. Moses' charge included an emphasis on the necessity of a strong faith and a positive response to all YHWH has said or done for Israel.

YHWH's words followed a similar vein. He instructed Moses to share words of encouragement intended to strengthen Joshua. Repetition emphasized the element of encouragement: (1) YHWH in Deut 1:38 told Moses to encourage Joshua; (2) in Deut 3:28 YHWH added a second imperative to that of encouragement, that of strengthening Joshua; (3) in Deut 31:6 Moses encouraged all the congregation to be strong and courageous and then twice gave the same encouragement to Joshua; and (4) after the death of Moses, YHWH repeated three times the same encouragement directly to Joshua. Deut 31:8 adds an additional encouragement to not fear (נָלַע נָלַע) nor be filled with terror (נָלַע נָלַע), and Josh 1:9 encouraged Joshua to not be alarmed (נָלַע נָלַע) nor be filled with terror (נָלַע נָלַע).

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1Rosenbaum and Silbermann, *Deuteronomy*, 22.
2Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 125.
4Deut 31:7, 23.
5Josh 1:6, 7, 9.
Second, the commission contained words describing Joshua's task. The words of encouragement had the purpose of strengthening Joshua for two specific tasks: (1) to conquer the land, and (2) to distribute the land to the tribes. Miller notes that commissioning is to a task, not to a position. In other words, authority and standing are dependent upon the nature of the task, not vice versa. The three parallel texts to Num 27 use two Hebrew words to describe the first task of conquering: "go over" (מָלֵא) and "go in" (נָעַב). Deut 3:28 expresses the conquering task by stating that Joshua will enter the land or "go over" (מָלֵא) before his people. Deut 31:7 expresses the same task by borrowing from the "going and coming out" concept: Joshua shall "go in" (נָעַב) to the land. Josh 1:2 uses similar language to Deut 3:28, but adds an imperative, "rise, cross over" (נָעַב הָפַּךְ) this Jordan. All three texts express the second task, distribution of the land, by the hifil of the verb בָּרַע, translated "cause to inherit" or, "to put in possession." Deut 31:7 adds that Joshua is to go into the land with this people to give it to them (נָעַב הָפַּךְ) and to cause them to inherit it (נָעַב הָפַּךְ).
Third, the commission contained words expressing assurance of divine aid. Moses reminded Joshua in Deut 3:21-2 that YHWH will do the same to the kingdoms over there where you are going as He has done to Sihon and Og. In fact, “YHWH, your God, will himself fight for you” (וְיְהוָה יָשָׁב בָּךְ). Moses stated to Joshua in Deut 31:8 that YHWH will go before you (וְיְהוָה יָצָא בָּךְ), will be with you (וְיְהוָה יִתְנַחֲמֶךָ), will not abandon you (בִּירַעְתְּךָ), nor forsake you (בִּרְפָּאֲךָ). YHWH promised Joshua in Josh 1:9 that He would go “with you” (בְּבֶלֶגְתְּךָ) “everywhere you go” (בָּאָרָי). YHWH assured Joshua of sufficiency for the future (“you will bring the Israelites into the land”) and companionship in the present (“I Myself will be with you”) based upon His faithfulness in the past (“I promised them on oath”). Thus the words “YHWH is with you” express the formula of support. Loneliness of leadership presents itself as one of the bleakest forms of loneliness. But YHWH’s support would be sufficient to enable Joshua to meet all future obstacles, the only support upon which Joshua’s confidence and ability to accomplish his task was to be built.

Fourth, the commission contained words exhorting Joshua to keep the law. This element of the commission is not stated in Deut 3:23-28 but is clearly implied in Deut 31. Porter points out that “warnings about keeping the law and directions for reading and preserving the book of the law are found immediately following the descriptions of Joshua’s appointment in Deut 31.” YHWH followed the

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1Brown, 283-8.
2Porter, “Joshua,” 109. See for example: Deut 31:9-13, 23-29. The need to observe the law is mentioned in other passages where the installation formula is found:
encouragement element of the commission in Josh 1:7-8 with an injunction to carefully do (לְשׁהֵם לֹויְשָׁה) according to all the law Moses commanded you (דָּרַךְ). The same verb, לְשׁהֵם, is used in Josh 1:7 to describe the action of Moses in giving the law as for commissioning Joshua in Num 27:19. The book of the law was not to depart (לֹא נִרְבְּעָה) from Joshua’s mouth, and he was to meditate on it (בְּבֵית הַבָּאוֹן) day and night in order that his way would prosper and be successful. All of the above injunctions concerned the book of “this” (יתב) law. The reference to “this” (יתב) indicates a specific document. Quite possibly an actual document of the law was given to Joshua at his installation.¹

Deut 31 provides two additional elements to the commission given to Joshua: (1) YHWH’s personal involvement, and (2) where the commission took place. First, in Num 27:19, Moses was instructed to commission (לָדוּ) Joshua, which instruction he carried out as related in Num 27:22 and Deut 31:23. However, in Deut 31:14 YHWH is the one who actually executed the commission. In fact, this is the first time Joshua stood by the side of Moses during an event in which YHWH revealed Himself to Moses. Lohfink and Porter refer to this as a double installation of Joshua in his office, one by Moses and one by YHWH.² YHWH Himself is the authentic source of

1 Kgs 2:2-4; 1 Chr 22:11-13; 28:7.

¹Porter (“Joshua,” 112-15) compares Joshua’s installation to that of kings, which included the giving of an actual document. Porter suggests that an actual document was probably handed over to Joshua.

²Lohfink, 40. 43-4: Porter, “Joshua,” 129-31. Porter points out that the same applies to the installation of kings, in particular that of Solomon. David appointed
commission. Moses laid hands on Joshua but YHWH ordained him. Moses can only be a tool in the hands of the Almighty.

Second, Num 27 does not state where Moses is to commission Joshua, whereas Deut 31 clearly states that Moses must bring Joshua to the gate of the Tabernacle.\(^1\) At the Tabernacle, YHWH proceeded to ratify Moses' action and solemnify the event by appearing in the pillar of cloud.\(^2\) Moses' confirmation of his call at the burning bush parallels Joshua's confirmation through another equally supernatural manifestation.

To summarize, commissioning Joshua in the presence of the whole congregation contributed an important element to Joshua's leadership. Commissioning included Moses giving Joshua a solemn charge indicating admission to the office of Israel's leader and transfer of Moses' power to Joshua. The commission originated with YHWH for He was the authentic source of the commission. Joshua was commissioned "before the eyes" of the entire congregation to remind him not to make the same

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Solomon king (1 Chr 23:1) but Solomon's previous divine appointment is clearly referred to in 1 Chr 29:1 with the words אֲדֹנָי הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר הַשָׁמַיִם הָיוֹתָם (the one whom God has chosen).

\(^1\)No mention of the Tabernacle is made anywhere else in Deuteronomy.

mistake Moses had at Kadesh and to remind him of the need for consistent leadership to be maintained in the view of all. Parallel passages to Num 27:12-23 indicate that Moses' charge to Joshua included a four-part commission. First, Moses shared words of encouragement calculated to make Joshua firm and resolute. Based on past experience with YHWH, Joshua was encouraged to be strong and courageous, to not fear, or be alarmed, or be filled with terror. Second, Joshua was commissioned to a task, not a position. He was reminded that his task was to be twofold, that of going over the Jordan and into the Promised Land as well as that of appropriately dividing the land between the tribes. Third, Moses extended YHWH's promise of divine assistance, sufficiency, and companionship. Joshua was not to attend to his task alone. YHWH promised to fight for him, go before him, be with him, and never abandon or forsake him. Fourth, Moses exhorted Joshua to read, preserve, and carefully keep the law. He was not to ever depart from it, but to meditate on it day and night. Moses spoke the commission, but YHWH personally effected it. Commissioning took place at the door of the Tabernacle.

"Confer some of your honor on him." The fourth action to follow "taking" was that of conferring (ךֵּן) some of Moses' honor (ךֵּן) on Joshua.1 The Hebrew word

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1Milton C. Fisher, "ךֵּן (נַתַּן) give," *TWOT* (1980), 2:608-9. Because of its extensive use (around two thousand times) in the Old Testament, נַתַּן has a great variety of meanings given in translation. This variety can be reduced to three broad areas: (1) give; (2) put or set; and (3) make or constitute. Translations include: set, commit, put, lay, fasten, hang, make, appoint, suffer, bestow, deliver, send, pay, turn, thrust, strike, cast, permit, place, store, attach, and spend. Its usage in Num 27:20 appears to be mainly connected with the more formal meaning of "appoint," thus the
for honor, גדול, is used twenty-four times in the Old Testament and only once in the Pentateuch, Num 27:20. Half of the usages of גדול describe attributes of YHWH, the other twelve describe attributes of a king (5x), of an individual (4x), of a horse (2x), and of an olive tree (1x). Translations of גדול include: honor, glory, majesty, greatness, authority as well as greatness, dignity, charisma, weight, power, and vitality.

גדול primarily refers to YHWH's lordship in creation as well as in history, and thus expresses the greatness of His sovereign dominion. YHWH's גדול is above earth and heaven, but is also on earth expressing itself in the salvation and preservation of Israel as YHWH's people. Secondarily, גדול is ascribed as a royal attribute of an earthly king describing both the external splendor of his power and pomp displayed by

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translation of "confer."


2Of YHWH (1 Chr 16:27; 29:11; Job 37:22; Pss 8:2; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3; 145:5; 148:13; Isa 30:30; Hab 3:3; Zech 6:13), of the king (1 Chr 29:25; Pss 45:3[4]; 21:6[5]; Jer 22:18; Dan 11:21), of an individual (Moses in Num 27:20; Job in Job 40:10; one can give it to others in Prov 5:9; Daniel's complexion in Dan 10:8), of a horse (Job 39:20; Zech 10:3), and of an olive tree (Hos 14:7[6]).

the court as well as the internal elements of his dignity, authority, and spiritual life.\(^1\)

The king's דָּוִד and his sovereignty and power are "all attributes which in the first
place are applied to God in the Old Testament and thereby make evident that it is God
who enables the king by His free gift to participate in His own majesty, sovereignty,
and power."\(^2\) The king's דָּוִד was entirely founded in YHWH's דָּוִד.

One catches "a glimpse of the esteem in which Moses was held" upon the
realization that the same word used to describe an attribute of YHWH and of kings is
also used to describe an attribute of Moses. "his was the authority of a king."\(^3\) Like
kings, Moses too had both external as well as internal דָּוִד. But like the kings, Moses'
דָּוִד came from YHWH, a gift YHWH instructed him to share with Joshua.

YHWH did not intend for Moses to pass all of his דָּוִד to Joshua. for His
instructions added a partitive לָבֵן to דָּוִד (ךָלְבָּד). Moses was to give Joshua only a

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\(^1\)Warmuth, 3:352-6


\(^3\)Riggans, 203. See also: Porter, Moses, 1-28. Porter argues that the working out of the Moses "tradition primarily took place in Jerusalem under the kings. who adopted Moses to be the link between their new monarchy and the older national traditions which preceded it" (22). He states that Moses "is unmistakably pictured in terms drawn from the language of Hebrew royal ideology" and "that Moses is the antitype of the Davidic monarch" (11). Porter's pamphlet discusses at some length the "role of Moses as king and arbiter of his people's destiny." He, however, carries his point too far when he claims that דָּוִד, "when applied to the human being is used exclusively of king" (18), for it also applied to Job and Daniel.
part of his \( 헤נ \).\(^1\) Moses was to remain unique, like the sun, and Joshua, never the equal of Moses, was to reflect only some of Moses' honor as the moon reflects the sun's light.\(^2\) No matter how important Joshua was to become, he was never to rise to the level of his mentor.\(^3\)

What elements of Moses' \( 헤נ \) were to be passed to Joshua? Was it his civil or spiritual authority? Though a few scholars have found difficulty in determining the exact meaning of \( 헤נ \) in Num 27:20, others maintain that Moses' \( 헤נ \) included his civil and spiritual authority as well as the honor, charisma, and prestige endowed to him by YHWH.\(^4\) Two observations add confirmation to the latter conclusion: first, an observation of the occasion in which Moses shared a portion of his spirit with seventy elders; and second, an observation of Joshua's treatment after the death of Moses.

First, study is given to the occasion in which YHWH shared a portion of Moses' spirit with seventy elders. In Num 11:16-27 Moses stood \( 헤נ \) seventy elders before the people of Israel whereupon YHWH came down in a cloud and took

\(^1\)The Old Testament commonly employs the partitive \( נא \), for example: Gen 4:3-4; Exod 16:27. Ashley, 547; Williams, §324.

\(^2\)Rashi as quoted by Munk, 293, and Rosenbaum and Silbermann, Numbers, 134.

\(^3\)Allen ("Numbers," 2:946) proposes an additional interpretation, that the phrase, "some of your honor," suggests a gradual shift in leadership, "not unlike a coregency of son and father as king."

\(^4\)Scholars who find difficulty ascertainig the exact meaning: Milgrom, Numbers, 235; Noth, 215. Scholars who give a precise meaning: Calvin, 112; Harrison, 360; Maarshingh, 98.
some of the spirit (ןְנַבְּרָה) on Moses and conferred (וןַנַּכְּנָה) it on the seventy.  

Elders, already holding office, received an actual and effective transfer of the spirit which was on Moses, in a public setting before the Tabernacle, for the purpose of shared leadership with Moses, in an act ratified by YHWH manifesting Himself in the cloud. The fact of transfer clearly received divine authentication and ratification when the elders experienced a visible one-time-only event of prophesying. Sharing of a part of Moses, in this case his spirit, gave authority to and enabled the seventy elders to share in his responsibilities of leadership, however at a lesser level.

The pericope describing Moses sharing his spirit with seventy elders shares three critical Hebrew words in common with the pericope describing Joshua’s installation. Both Joshua and the elders were stood/presented (ותְּנַנְּנָה) before the entire congregation, were given (וןַנַּכְּנָה) something that belonged to Moses, but not all that

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1 A partitive הָנָּבָה.

2 Compare this to the transfer of the “spirit” of Elijah to Elisha (2 Kgs 2:15).

3 Neve, 17-19. Prophesying ceased, but the charisma of the spirit continued. The elder’s vocation was not to be that of the prophets, rather prophesying authenticated them as judges in the eyes of the people. See also Weisman, “Personal Spirit.” 229-32. Weisman points out that commentators are divided over the purpose of the seventy elders prophesying between that of authorization of the elders to leadership or to prophesy. He eliminates the option of authorization to prophesy because a onetime prophesying event describes ecstatic behavior and does not accredit the seventy for a prophetic mission. Rather, prophesying was a sign of divine election, or divine endorsement of their prior selection and thus becomes an act of confirmation of their sacred endorsement of candidacy.

4 Henry (610) those who God employs in any service He qualifies for it. That the elders received the spirit Moses had rather than a gift directly from God demonstrates their subordination. Moses alone had direct contact with YHWH (Exod 33:7f.).
Moses possessed as indicated by a partitive מֹשֶׁה. Additionally, both events took place under the leadership of Moses and took place before eyewitnesses. The "seventy elder" pericope adds three elements: (1) that the event took place at the door to the Tabernacle; (2) YHWH's appearance in the cloud; and (3) that the elders prophesied. Joshua’s installation pericope adds the element of laying on of hands and that the spirit was both already possessed by Joshua as well as given to him by the laying on of hands. In either story, enhanced leadership was the result of Moses’ actions.

What can be applied from the seventy elders’ experience to Joshua’s installation? The elements in common encourage an interpretation in which the unique elements could be applied to both pericopes. The fact that a portion of Moses’ honor was passed to Joshua by the laying on of hands indicates a strong possibility that Moses transferred a portion of his spirit to the seventy elders by the same means. The laying on of hands designated who was to receive the gift and became a physical conduit through which the spirit was transferred. Whether or not Joshua prophesied as a result of Moses laying hands on him at his installation into leadership cannot be categorically

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1Num 11:16, 18, 24; 27:19, 22.

2It should be noted that in the installation of Joshua, no mention is made of transferring the spirit of Moses. Perhaps, this is because Joshua already possessed spirit.

3Maimonides states that Moses ordained the elders in the same way as he ordained Joshua, as quoted by Lauterbach, 9:428. Lauterbach also appeals to Deut 34:9 as support to this conclusion. Others who agree include: Binns, 71; Podet, 38-9. On the other hand, Culpepper (472), without references, claims that no laying on of hands occurred.
stated. However, because the parallel experience of the elders included an obvious result, it could no doubt also be concluded that something obvious took place with Joshua in which YHWH authenticated and ratified him, something so obvious that it need not be discussed in the implementation.1

Second, in support of ינפ including Moses’ civil and spiritual authority as well as the honor, charisma, and prestige endowed to him by YHWH, one can also observe Joshua’s treatment following Moses’ death. Though another prophet like Moses never arose in Israel,2 Joshua was accorded many privileges and experiences similar to the great prophet. George Ramsey, E. M. Good, and others point out that Joshua was more “than just a successor to Moses,” in fact, he is portrayed as “almost a second Moses.”3 YHWH spoke face to face with Moses, yet He also often spoke directly with Joshua.4 YHWH assured Joshua that the divine presence would remain with him as it had with Moses with the result that Israel revered and obeyed him as it had Moses.5 Both Joshua and Moses instructed Israel to consecrate themselves prior to displays of

1Noth (215) sees the transference of something effective, perhaps even visible.
2Deut 34:10.
4Josh 1:1; 3:7; 4:1, 15; 8:18; 20:1.
5Josh 1:5, 7; 3:7; 4:14.
YHWH's wonders. Joshua was exalted before Israel as was Moses. The drying of the Jordan was seen as parallel to the drying of the Red Sea. Joshua's experience with the commander of the army of YHWH parallels Moses' experience with the angel of YHWH at the burning bush. When Israel suffered as a result of Achan's sin, Joshua interceded, as Moses had, with YHWH on behalf of the people. Joshua wrote the law on stones as Moses had done. YHWH "listened" to both the voice of Joshua as well as that of Moses. The book of Joshua lists Joshua's military successes alongside those of Moses. Both Joshua and Moses assigned inheritance for the tribes of Israel. In mediating the covenant near the end of his life, Joshua summarized Israel's history as Moses did before his death and functioned in a fashion similar to Moses at Sinai. At his death, Joshua was granted the epithet "servant of Yahweh," a title frequently used of Moses. Moses indeed shared a portion of his דָּבָרָה with Joshua.

1Josh 3:5; Exod 19:14.
2Josh 3:7; 4:14.
3Deut 4:23.
5Josh 7:6-9.
6Josh 8:32.
7Josh 10:14; Deut 9:19; 10:10.
8Josh 12:1-6.
10Josh 24:29; 1:1; 8:31.

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To summarize, sharing some of Moses' honor with Joshua contributed an important element to Joshua's leadership. In a similar fashion as sharing some of his spirit with seventy elders, Moses shared with Joshua, at the door to the Tabernacle, a portion of his civil and spiritual authority as well as his honor, charisma, and prestige endowed to him by YHWH and confirmed by YHWH's appearance in a cloud. Joshua's treatment following Moses' death confirms that Joshua received this gift.

**Result of Moses' actions**

The four waw perfect verbs of vss. 18-20, which follow the imperative "take," culminate in the (so that, in order that) clause of vs. 20. Moses is to lay his hand on Joshua, cause him to stand before Eleazar and the congregation, give him a charge, and give him some of Moses' authority, so that the whole congregation would listen to Joshua. This reaction of the congregation was not a matter concerning the congregation, but a matter of leadership. The appropriate response to all the actions of Moses in establishing Joshua as leader was that of obedience.

While the verb לֶאַהְזָה (to listen, obey) basically means to perceive a sound, it more importantly in this context connotes a listening that pays careful attention to what is said. A call to listen is a call to understand and respond to what is heard. Calling for attention and
understanding has obedience as a consequence, as classically illustrated in 1 Sam 15:22, “to obey (תָּמַם) is better than sacrifice.”

In the case of Israel and Joshua, the congregation is to listen with a hearing that leads to obedience. Evidently, the four actions indicated by the waw perfect verbs signified that the people of Israel should pay homage and respect to Joshua, comporting themselves toward him with respect and reverence. Joshua received a charisma that induced in the congregation a readiness to listen to him with confidence and to follow his leadership. After the death of Moses, at the time Joshua actually assumed command, the whole congregation pledged that as they had obeyed (תָּמַם) Moses, so they would now obey (תָּמַם) Joshua and that all who rebelled against Joshua and not obey (וְלָא תַסְפָּר) his words would be put to death. YHWH’s exaltation of Joshua produced not only obedience but also an awe (שָׂר) in the congregation.

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1See also: Gen 16:2; 34:24; 42:22; Exod 24:7; Deut 1:43; 11:13; 1 Kgs 2:42; Neh 9:16; Isa 1:19; 42:24; Jer 35:18. The verb is used with the same sense of obedience in the context of ancient Near Eastern treaties. Craigie, Deuteronomy, 147.

2Lee, 2:649. Milgrom (Numbers, 235) points out that the LXX, Peshita, and Targums all use “obey him.”

3Greenstone, 297: Maarshingh, 98; Rosenbaum and Silbermann, 134.

4Josh 1:17-18.

5Josh 4:14.
Matters Concerning the Congregation

Each of the four sections of the Num 27:12-23 pericope first identifies the section’s main characters, then identifies a request, discusses matters concerning leadership, and finally discusses matters concerning the congregation. The “congregation” (הַעֲדִיתָה) remains a high priority throughout the pericope as evidenced by its seven appearances and three appearances of “children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).

The subsections b of sections A and B, or the requests of either YHWH or Moses, expressed concern for the congregation. YHWH’s initial request, vs. 12c, asked Moses to look at the land which YHWH was going to give to the children of Israel. Moses’ initial request, vs. 16, asked that YHWH appoint a man over the congregation.

The subsections c of the last three sections, or the matters of concern for leadership, also included concern for the congregation. Moses’ first concern, subsection c of section B in vs. 16, for the future leader was for his example before the congregation as well as for his ability to lead the congregation. YHWH’s response, subsection c of section A’ in vs. 19, was that the leader was to be presented to the congregation for its acceptance and approval. Moses responded, subsection c of section B’ in vs. 22c, by presenting Joshua to the congregation.

The subsections d of the first three sections state a concern for the congregation in straightforward and plain language. YHWH reminded Moses, subsection d of section A in vs. 14, of the sin of the congregation at Kadesh. Moses, touched by that reminder, pleaded in subsection d of section B in vs. 17c for a leader so that the
congregation would not be left as sheep without a shepherd. YHWH responded, subsection d of section A' in vs. 21, instructing Moses to remind Joshua where to go for instructions so that he can lead the congregation. The parallel passage in subsection d of section B in vs. 17c indicates that vs. 21 is describing how Israel will not be left like sheep without a shepherd. The subsection d of section A' addresses what Joshua must do in order to actually lead the congregation on a day-by-day basis. The previous level addressed how he was to be established as leader, and this final level addresses matters concerning the people. The previous level addressed actions of Moses, this final level addresses an action of Joshua.

Action of Joshua

In addition to having Joshua stand before Eleazar in the actual installation service, YHWH further emphasized the importance of the high priest’s role by stating a second time, in Num 27:21, that Joshua must “stand before” Eleazar when he needed YHWH’s directions. Not all the privileges Moses enjoyed passed to Joshua, for he was not to depend on receiving Moses’ honor of face-to-face conversation with YHWH. Joshua was to be totally dependent on the guidance of YHWH through the priest, who had only the privilege of applying for divine direction. The Israelite community acquired the form of “a priestly theocracy” in which the unity of Moses’ office became divided between Joshua and Eleazar.¹ Both of Joshua’s future tasks

¹Budd, 307. Did the Old Testament ever record that Joshua used the high priest to obtain information from YHWH? On the one hand, Scriptures never record a time when Joshua asked for divine guidance through the high priest. Instead, Scripture
involved priests. In the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of Jericho, the priests played an obvious role in carrying the Ark of the Covenant as well as in the blowing of trumpets.¹ Both Joshua and Eleazar were tasked with dividing the land equitably between the tribes.² Because, as noted above, the congregation (תִּלְוָה) carries strong cultic overtones, it would be appropriate for the primary leader of the cult to be a significant part of Israel's leadership.

Eleazar in turn was to seek YHWH’s direction “by the judgment of the Urim before YHWH.”³ What the Urim is has been the topic of much scholarly discussion and speculation, which goes beyond the scope of this study except to state that it was points out that YHWH spoke directly to him (Josh 7:7-15; 10:12-14), encouraged Joshua that as He was with Moses He would be with Joshua (Josh 1:5; 3:7), personally appeared to Joshua in order to give direct instruction about entry into the Promised Land (Josh 1:1-9; 3:7-8; 4:1-3, 15-16; 5:2) as well as its conquest (Josh 6:2-5; 8:1-2; 8:18; 11:6; 13:1-7; cf. 5:14-15) and the establishment of the cities of refuge (Josh 20:1-6). However, on the other hand, Num 27:21 gives clear indication that YHWH expected Joshua to work through Eleazar, an expectation supported by two points made in the book of Joshua. First, Joshua, through Eleazar, should have taken the initiative to contact YHWH before making a covenant with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:14). Second, whenever Joshua is mentioned with Eleazar, Eleazar’s name appears first implying a dependency upon him (Josh 14:1; 19:51; 21:1). See also Milgrom, *Numbers*, 236.

¹Josh 3:2, 6, 14, 15, 17; 4:11, 15; 6:4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16.
²Num 34:17; Josh 14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:1.
³Num 27:21. The fact that בִּשָּׂא (ask) can be followed by the direct accusative of the thing sought or asked for and that the prefix ב can indicate means, strongly supports the translation of בִּשָּׂא as, “by the judgment of.” Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim* (Kampen: Uitgeverij van den Berg, 1986), 87-9; Williams, 44-5.

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an essential tool to enable Eleazar in ascertaining the will of YHWH. Eleazar was to use the Urim before (נֵרֶם) YHWH, meaning inside the Tabernacle before the veil concealing the Mercy Seat.

To summarize; Joshua's onetime experience of installation into office did not remove from him the necessity of maintaining constant contact with YHWH. He was to present himself to Eleazar the priest, who in turn presented himself to YHWH through the Urim, in order to receive guidance for running the affairs of the congregation.

**Result of Joshua's action**

Having "stood before" Eleazar and receiving the judgment of the Urim, Joshua as well as the whole congregation was to go out and come in "according to his word" (ינֵרֶם). By whose word was the going out and the coming in to take place? Though scholars have interpreted the "his" of "his word" as referring to Eleazar, two

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1Urim occurs only twice alone (Num 27:21; 1 Sam 28:6) and five times with Thummim (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Deut 33:8; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65). Not one of the seven texts gives a specific description. E. Robertson ("The 'Urim and Tummim; What Were They?" VT 14 [1964]: 67-74) reviews nine different opinions as to what they were. Much consensus revolves around the suggestion that the Urim gave a "yes" and the Thummim a "no." Owens, 154; Maarsingh, 98; Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 3: 498-9; E. Lipiński, "'Urim and Tummim," VT 20 (1970): 495-6; Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, 202: Hermann Schultz, 1:284. Van Dam (72-80) and Ashley (554) stress that no real definitive definition can be found and all conjectures should be loosely held as to the precise description of the Urim or Thummim.

2Milgrom, Leviticus. 498-9; Jamieson.Fausset, and Brown, 598; Van Dam. 87-9.
indicators support an interpretation of the “his” as referring to YHWH. First, grammatically the nearest antecedent to “his” is YHWH. However, even if the “his” actually refers to Eleazar, he is yet speaking the word YHWH gives him and thus under either circumstance the “he” refers to YHWH.

Second, “his word” (גֵּיאָ) refers back to “my word” or “my command” (ל) of vs. 14, the parallel level in subsection a of section A. Moses could not enter the Promised Land because he had rebelled against YHWH’s word (ג) at the Waters of Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin. The Old Testament speaks often of God’s mouth (ג), particularly frequent in the Pentateuch, with the phrase, “according to the mouth of YHWH” (לַֽעֲשׂה יְהוָה). YHWH had Moses remind Joshua that he must not make the same one-time mistake of Moses in not listening to the ב of YHWH, but that Joshua must always pay attention to this ב through the very important cultic rite in which Eleazar was to use the Urim. Thus the “he” of “his word” refers to YHWH.

Moses’ entreaty for a leader in section B, vs. 17, used parallel language to that used in section A, vs. 21. In vs. 17, Moses asked for a leader “who will go out before them and who will come in before them, who will lead them out and who will bring

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1Noordtzij (257), George Gray (402), and Noth (215) conclude “his” refers to Eleazar though Noth suggests “his” could include YHWH. Ashley (554) concludes “his” refers to YHWH. Van Dam (83-4) and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (598) suggest “his” refers to Eleazar as spokesman for YHWH.


3Exod 17:1; Lev 24:12; Num 3:16, 39, 51; 4:37, 41, 45, 49; 9:18, 20, 23, 10:13; 13:3; 33:2, 38; 36:5; Deut 34:5. See also: Josh 19:50; 22:9; 2 Kgs 24:3.
them in, so that the congregation of YHWH will not be as sheep who have no shepherd.” The same verbs are used for going out (יָצָא) and in (חָגֵל) as for leading out (יָצִיא) and in (חָגֵל). The first set of verbs is in the qal, describing the leader’s personal activities, and the second set is in the hifil or causative, describing the leader as one who enables the general activity of his people.

Hebrew frequently uses antonyms to express totality. The expression for “going out” and “coming in” comprehensively covers all leadership duties and responsibilities which include a managing and conducting of one’s own affairs as well as the affairs of state.1 Though the phrases “they shall go out” and “they shall come in” refer to military activity,2 they also refer to cultic activities such as Deut 28:6; 1 Kgs 3:7; Ps 121:8; Zech 8:10. George W. Coats. Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God, JSOT Supp. Series 57 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 149-50, Snaith. Leviticus and Numbers, 147; Horst Dietrich Preuss. “יָצָא יָגוּר yāṣā,” TDOT (1990), 6:226-7; A. R. S. Kennedy, Leviticus and Numbers, NCB (New York: Henry Frowde, n.d.), 346; George Gray, 400-1. Gray points out that “to go out and come in” is an idiomatic method of expressing activity in general by reference to its commencement and conclusion and is a usus loquendi similar in character to the frequent periphrases for all which consist of two terms for opposed classes: for example, the fettered and the free, the dry and the thirsty, the binder and the bound.

1Deut 28:6; 1 Kgs 3:7; Ps 121:8; Zech 8:10. George W. Coats. Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God, JSOT Supp. Series 57 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 149-50. Snaith. Leviticus and Numbers, 147; Horst Dietrich Preuss. “יָצָא יָגוּר yāṣā,” TDOT (1990), 6:226-7; A. R. S. Kennedy, Leviticus and Numbers, NCB (New York: Henry Frowde, n.d.), 346; George Gray, 400-1. Gray points out that “to go out and come in” is an idiomatic method of expressing activity in general by reference to its commencement and conclusion and is a usus loquendi similar in character to the frequent periphrases for all which consist of two terms for opposed classes: for example, the fettered and the free, the dry and the thirsty, the binder and the bound.

2For military usage, see: Num 21:23; Deut 20:1; 21:10; 23:10f.,[9f.]; 24:5; 31:2; Josh 11:4; 14:11; 1 Sam 8:20; 18:13, 16; 29:6; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Kgs 3:7; 2 Kgs 11:7; 1 Chr 5:18; 20:1; 2 Chr 1:10; Job 39:21; Isa 42:13; cf. Prov 30:27. Preuss, נָצִיא, 236-7. Rashi (quoted by Rosenbaum and Silberman, 135) and Milgrom (Numbers, 236) conclude that Joshua had only to seek the judgment of the Urim for offensive war. Van Dam (84-7) persuasively points out that though the phrase “going out and coming in” may refer to war, it included much more. Note for example, Josh 14:11, where Joshua is characterized as being strong for war and for going out and coming in. Examples of not restricting the usage of these verbs to military usage include Deut 31:2; 1 Kgs 3:7; 2 Chr 1:10.
Preuss argues that the usage of this phrase, “to go out and to come in” as used in Num 27:17, 21, is on the borderline between military and cultic terminology, allowing for the future leader to have cultic involvement.²

Additionally, used separately, נָבַע and נָבַא are powerful covenantal reminders for the new leader. Used frequently of the great exodus event, the hifil of נָבַע reminded one of the great “going out” event, the exodus from Egypt, which symbolized the mighty redemption of God’s people, an event Moses wished his people to often remember.³ On the other hand, נָבָא spoke to the coming and bringing into the land of promise. Giving of the land as well as coming into possession of the land was YHWH’s method of establishing the covenant.⁴

In section B, vs. 17, Moses asked that the new leader be like himself, one deeply involved in all the affairs of his people, one who would complete the exodus that YHWH had begun through Moses, one who would shepherd YHWH’s people. Moses desired his replacement to have concern for his people’s going out and coming in which would include not only their military activities, but also their cultic and

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¹For cultic usage, see: Exod 28:35; 33:7-11; 34:34; Lev 9:23; 16:17f., 23f.; 1 Kgs 8:10; 2 Kgs 11:9; Ezek 42:13f.; 44:3; 46:2. Preuss, 226-7; Noordtzij, 256.

²Preuss, 226-7.


covenantal requirements. YHWH clarified in section A', vs. 21, how Joshua was to be that leader. He was to present himself to Eleazar the priest who in turn sought the wisdom of YHWH. Upon receiving that instruction, Joshua was to lead the congregation in all of its military, cultic, and covenantal activities. Operating only by the voice of YHWH, neither Joshua nor the congregation would make the mistake of not listening to that voice at Kadesh.

Conclusion

The instruction to Moses to “lay his hand” on Joshua has its origin with the Almighty, “and YHWH said to Moses” (בָּאָסַר). With this introduction, Num 27:18 gives importance to everything YHWH said to Moses. YHWH’s words to Moses commenced with an imperative to “take” Joshua, a man in whom there is spirit. The imperative provided an initiative linked to four subsequent actions by the use of waw perfect verbs: “lay,” “stand,” “commission,” and “give.”

In what way does the command to “take” apply to laying on of hands? By instructing Moses to “take” Joshua, YHWH communicated: (1) that Moses become personally involved in selecting Israel’s next leader, (2) that by “taking,” Moses should begin a process of subsequent actions indicated by a series of waw perfect verbs, and (3) that Moses should indicate faith in YHWH’s promise to make provision for Israel’s leadership. Laying on of hands, as one of the subsequent actions initiated by “taking,” provided a means for Moses to become personally involved in the process of choosing Joshua as well as providing a means for Moses to physically manifest faith in YHWH.
A review of Joshua's life history reveals a man who had a careful and close walk with his God. It was no common individual who received laying on of hands. YHWH, the God of the spirits of all flesh, confirmed that this one to receive the laying on of hands was a man in whom there was spirit. Not only was Joshua a man with an indomitable and courageous spirit, but YHWH had given him a special gift of the spirit that changed him and endowed him for leadership. Hand laying is thus associated with a spirited man as well as with a man filled with the Spirit of YHWH.

How does an interpretation of the phrase "standing before" apply to "laying on of hands"? First, the laying on of hands came at a time when Joshua was formally presented to both Eleazar and the congregation. His formal presentation had the dual purpose of giving him to the congregation and doing so in a legal setting, thus also giving judicial precedence to hand laying. As to which came first, hand laying or presentation, Milgrom suggests translating הָעַיוֹר הָעָבְרָא as, "after you have him stand." Milgrom supports this translation by noting that in the implementation of YHWH's orders in vss. 22-23, the hand-laying procedure followed that of standing or presentation. It would only be natural that in the actual implementation ceremony, presentation would precede any action such as the laying on of hands.

As a second implication of "stand before," hand laying was associated with the physical gesture of standing that communicated Joshua's acceptance of his responsibilities as well as the congregation's and YHWH's acceptance of Joshua.

1Milgrom, *Numbers*, 235.
Third, cultic usage of the term “stand before,” reinforced by its association with Eleazar and the congregation, indicated hand laying was part of a cultic and covenantal event. The term “stand before” also gives indication as to where Joshua’s installation ceremony took place. Presentation to priests and meetings of the .isHidden generaly took place at the tent of meeting. Thus, Joshua’s hand-laying ceremony apparently took place at the courtyard gate of the Tabernacle.

How does the phrase “commission him in their presence” apply to an interpretation of laying on of hands? Hand laying is associated with a four-part commission, a commission which encouraged Joshua, described his task, extended YHWH's promise of divine assistance to accomplish the task, and exhorted him to keep the law. Hand laying is thus associated with a commission verbally spoken by a human but effected by YHWH. Finally, the question as to where hand laying took place is answered again by noting that it took place at the same time that Moses gave Joshua his commission, which in turn took place at the door of the Tabernacle.

In the implementation of YHWH’s orders, Moses stood Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation, laid hands on him, and gave him a charge, but made no mention of giving him honor or authority (“T in”). Why is this so? An answer to this question leads directly to laying on of hands. Note first that the four actions associated with “taking” by waw perfect verbs form the following chiasm:

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \text{Nahash to vine,} \\
B & \quad \text{Nahash to vine,} \\
B' & \quad \text{Nahash to vine,} \\
A' & \quad \text{Nahash to vine,}
\end{align*}
\]
or

A  And you shall lay your hand on him.
B  And you shall stand him before Eleazar the priest and before the congregation.
B’  And you shall commission him before their eyes.
A’  And you shall confer some of your honor on him.

Lines A and A’ are linked by the Hebrew word רָאֵּשׁ (on him) while lines B and B’ are linked by the Hebrew word הָאָדָם (him). The Divine command of vs. 20 instructed Moses to place some of his honor “on him” (והָאָדָם), meaning on Joshua. Use of רָאֵּשׁ (on him) corresponds by parallelism directly to the הָאָדָם (on him) of the hand-laying instruction of vs. 18 in which Moses was to lay his hand “on him” (והָאָדָם). “Moses thus establishes a physical conduit for the transfer of his רָאֵּשׁ which is linked by waw consecutive verbs to standing Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation as well as to giving him a charge.1 The physical act of laying hands combined with public presentation and giving a charge became the actions which effectively passed some of Moses’ honor to Joshua.

An analysis of waw perfect verbs provides two further observations about laying on of hands: (1) its priority with respect to the other actions; and (2) its relationship to the other actions in the installation ceremony. As noted above, normally waw perfect verbs are thought to continue the idea communicated by the verbal form of the imperative and express its purpose or a consequent situation. Placing a waw on a perfect gives the verb an imperfect sense which expresses a logical

1Milgrom, Numbers, 235.
succession of actions contingent or dependent on that which precedes it. The sense of the imperative of vs. 18. "take," continues with each of the following verbs connected to it by the waw. At the same time a hierarchy is established: first, lay; second, stand; third, command or charge; and fourth, give. Each command becomes contingent on the previous. Hence, the primary action of this series of commands becomes laying, or the laying of Moses' hand on Joshua.

One other syntactic role of the waw conjunctive/consecutive arises from what Waltke and O'Connor refer to as the "copulative waw" and Williams as the "waw of accompaniment." In other words, the waw introduces a clause describing concomitant circumstances which coordinate with each other. In this case, Moses laying his hand on Joshua would take place concurrently with having Joshua stand, giving him a charge, and giving him some of Moses' honor. Even though all activities may take place concurrently, the activity listed first, or laying on of hands, retains primary significance in the hierarchy of all the activities. However, though primary, to be effective, laying on of hands must also be accompanied by public presentation, giving of a charge, and sharing of honor.

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Ibid., 540; Williams, 83. Waltke and O'Connor (456-7) introduce a history of the controversy wrapped around understanding the conjunction waw. The variety of terms used to describe the conjugation gives evidence of the struggle to understand it. Hebraists are not in agreement and have advanced various theories in a fashion something like the proverbial five blind men examining an elephant. Each of them has described a portion of the beast accurately, but they differed in their conclusions because they tried to describe the whole by generalizing from a part.
One discovers the importance attached to laying on of hands in the experience of Joshua's installation as one compares the order of activities in YHWH's command to Moses in vss. 18b-20a with Moses' implementation of the command in vss. 22b-23a. The importance of hand laying is emphasized by the fact that it was mentioned first in YHWH's command even though Moses could not physically lay his hands on Joshua before making Joshua's public presentation, as clarified in the implementation of the command. By placing hand laying first in the initial instructions to Moses, YHWH declares its primacy over all the other actions and its importance in the installation of Joshua.

Another evidence of the importance of laying on of hands is seen in another chiasm as presented in the pericope's conclusion, section B'. This chiasm is as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
A \quad & \\
B & \\
A' & \\
\end{array}
\]

or

A And he stood him before Eleazar the priest and before the congregation.
B And he laid his hands on him.
A' And he commissioned him.

Lines A and A' are linked by third masculine singular suffixes attached to the verbs \( \text{םישמש} \) and \( \text{שבץ} \). In the instructions of section A', the pronoun “him” had been indicated by the Hebrew word \( \text{שאש} \), but in the implementation of the instructions, the pronoun is indicated by a suffix. However, the description of the implementation for laying on of hands retains the same Hebrew word for “on him” (\( \text{שאש} \)) that had been
used in the instruction of section A'. Laying on of hands falls into the center, again an indication of its importance.

The Num 27:12-23 pericope concludes by drawing attention to Moses' hand in a different fashion. Joshua's installation took place "just as YHWH spoke (ברפ) by the hand (זרע) of Moses." Two important concepts are placed in juxtaposition with each other, the "word" of YHWH with the "hand" of Moses.1 Throughout Israel's experience, the "word" of God played a significant role.2 Walter Roehrs observes that the "word of God denotes the acts of God's revelation as embodying and charged with all the characteristics of God. In and by the word, God acts, conveys, and communicates Himself."3 Because "דָּבָר (word) "posits the reality which it signifies" it has been used in contexts where in English we use "thing."4 When applied to the divine arena, the "word" of YHWH comes as a dynamic "something" with its own distinct reality that is an expansion of YHWH Himself, filled with His personal power. And when YHWH's word comes, it possesses creative power and effects what it signifies, for "when YHWH posits the word-thing, nothing can prevent its

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2Especially during the exodus from Egypt when the word of YHWH moved Israel at each step from Horeb to Canaan (for example: Deut 1:6; 2:2, 18, 31; 3:1; 3:27-28).

3Roehrs. 264.

4Lev 5:2; Num 31:23. McKenzie, 188, 190.

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emergence."1 The Old Testament also treats the “word of YHWH” as an object or bearer of power which always accomplishes its mission and thus creates history and shapes the future.2 Because YHWH’s “word” has been treated as an object with such power, the Old Testament invites YHWH’s people to “see” His word.3

By placing Moses’ “hand” in juxtaposition with YHWH’s “word,” Num 27:23 makes a significant statement about Moses’ hand. His hand became a visible representation of YHWH’s communication and of YHWH’s power. Moses’ hand enabled Israel to see the “word” of YHWH. While it should be noted that thirty-one times the Old Testament states that YHWH acted “by the hand of Moses,” it should also be noted that the expression receives limited usage. It appears to be no accident that the expression was used in the pericope in which Moses was told to lay his hand on Joshua and in which Moses is described as laying his hands on Joshua. Moses’ act of laying his hands on Joshua became a visible enactment of the “word” of YHWH with all of its attendant concepts of power and ability to create and effect what it signifies. Thus it becomes clear why, in the list of actions Moses is to accomplish in the installation of Joshua, the laying on of hands carried primary significance.

1Ibid., 196. By the word of YHWH were the heavens made (Pss 19:2-5; 33:6, 9; 147:15-18; 148:8).
2When YHWH’s “word” goes out, it will not return empty but will accomplish its mission (Isa 45:23; 55:10-11).
3For example: Jer 2:31.
Joshua’s reception of hand laying along with the critical elements of public presentation, commissioning, and a gift of some of Moses’ honor was calculated to have a certain effect. Joshua was to receive something further, that is, obedience of the whole community. However, receiving such recognition did not put Joshua on the same plane as Moses, nor did it remove from Joshua the need of continually seeking YHWH’s will. Though hand laying carried high importance, it did not place Joshua in such a position that he could depend on direct access to YHWH for all of his leadership decisions. Joshua was to seek YHWH’s will by standing before the high priest, Eleazar, who in turn was to seek that will through use of the Urim. But once Joshua ascertained YHWH’s will, the congregation was to follow his directions.

Deut 34:9

Introduction

Organization of the Book of Deuteronomy

In order to interpret Deut 34:9, one must first analyze its placement in an outline of the book of Deuteronomy. Narrative colors to a large degree the structure of Pentateuchal books preceding Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, however, contains a different literary genre, essentially that of speech, or the speeches of Moses.

Unlike the book of Numbers, which is very difficult to outline, Deuteronomy’s speeches give it an inner structure which makes outlining a relatively easy matter. Deuteronomy records various speeches of Moses and contains a final section addressing issues relative to the death of Moses. Though not all scholars agree as to
the details, generally they outline Deuteronomy by dividing it into four major sections delineated by three of the major addresses and a final concluding section:

I. First Address (Chs. 1-4)
II. Second Address (Chs. 5-26)
III. Third Address (Chs. 27-30)
IV. Final Arrangements (Chs. 31-34).

The first speech provides a historical prologue by which Moses reviews Israel’s history with YHWH as He brought them to the boundary of the Promised Land. The second speech reviews in a rather lengthy fashion various elements of the law YHWH provided Israel. The third speech reminds Israel to renew its covenant with YHWH and pronounces blessings for keeping the covenant and curses for forgetting the covenant. The final section addresses the continuity of the covenant from Moses to Joshua.

What role does Deut 34:9 play in the overall scheme of Deuteronomy? The next section address the relationship between this passage and the rest of the book.

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Deut 34:9 in the Overall Scheme of Deuteronomy

A review of what is important to the book of Deuteronomy provides important information necessary to an interpretation of Deut 34:9. Israel has arrived on the Plains of Moab and is about to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy presents Moses' last speeches before he dies and just before Israel is to make that entry. One of the important themes playing throughout the book is that of covenant. Within the speeches, scholars have discerned a covenantal substructure with direct relationship to ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. Main features of classical vassal treaties include elements of the following component parts: (1) preamble, (2) historical prologue, (3) general stipulations, (4) specific stipulations, (5) divine witnesses, and (6) blessings and curses. Peter Craigie suggests that the book of Deuteronomy contains in broad outline the same components: (1) preamble (1:1-5), historical prologue (1:6-4:49), general stipulations (chaps. 5-11), specific stipulations (chaps. 12-26), blessings and curses (chaps. 27-28), and witnesses (30:1-9; 31:19; 32:1-43). It can thus be seen that

1Miller, 12-14. Miller reviews conclusions drawn by Klaus Baltzer, Dennis McCarthy, and Moshe Weinfeld.

2Craigie, Deuteronomy, 22-24. Kalland ("Deuteronomy," 4) after reviewing Kitchen, Kline, and Mendenhall, lists seven main features of Near Eastern Treaties: (1) preamble, (2) historical prologue; (3) stipulations, laws, and regulations; (4) arrangements for depositing treaty copies; (5) arrangements for regular reading of the treaty; (6) witnesses; and (7) curses and blessings.

3Craigie, Deuteronomy, 24.
Deuteronomy has been shaped by covenantal formulary making it not only a “book of the Torah” but also a “book of the covenant.”¹

Thus, just before entering the Promised Land, Israel celebrated a covenantal renewal ceremony on the Plains of Moab, accepting once again YHWH as its suzerain while pledging to remain YHWH’s vassal. Deuteronomy appears to be an official record of that ceremony, which therefore makes it an official covenant-renewal document.² Craigie notes seven actions and events of establishing and/or renewing the covenant mentioned in Deuteronomy: (1) a formal declaration of allegiance by affirming that YHWH was their God (26:16-17); (2) instructions for the next covenant renewal (chap. 27); (3) announcement of blessings and curses (chap. 28); (4) Joshua’s appointment as Moses’ successor (31:7-8, 14-23; 34:9); (5) instructions as to where to keep the text of the covenant (31:9, 6); (6) distant future covenant-renewal procedure (31:10-13); and (7) writing down as well as singing the “Song of Witness” (31:22, 28; 32:1-43).³

Important issues relative to leadership in Israel grew out of this covenantal substructure, issues of allegiance and loyalty, of authority (who rules and in what manner), and of the ordering of life in both its religious and secular spheres. Deuteronomy’s first few and last four chapters concern themselves with Moses’

¹Miller, 12-14.

²Meredith G. Kline. The Structure of Biblical Authority (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1972), 132; Craigie, Deuteronomy, 28.

³Craigie, Deuteronomy, 31-2.
leadership. Moses at first pleaded that YHWH allow him to lead Israel into the Promised Land, but with Moses' obedient acceptance of YHWH's decision and his ascent of Mount Nebo. Deuteronomy addresses termination of that leadership.\(^1\) An important issue for Israel must be settled, the issue of succession. No question arose as to Israel's continued choice for the leadership of YHWH. Deut 31:3-6 clarified that the real source of leadership, power, and direction for the present as well as future did not lie in man, it lay in YHWH. The matter of succession related only to whom YHWH would choose to be His human representative and spokesman before the covenant community and to be the leader who would take the community into the Promised Land. Moses transmitted his authority to his successor according to YHWH's instruction.\(^2\) Not just any Israelite would do. Joshua had been "handpicked" by YHWH Himself through the laying on of Moses' hands. His appointment as Moses' successor was "appointive and charismatic, not genealogical."\(^3\)

**Summary**

Deut 34:9 plays an important role in the overall scheme of the book of Deuteronomy. Israel was about to enter the Promised Land. The covenant Israel had agreed to with YHWH had been reviewed, a covenant that included provision for

\(^1\)Deut 3:23-28 discusses Moses' pleading to enter the Promised Land, while Deut 34:1-8 describes his obedient ascent of Nebo where he went to die.


\(^3\)Kline, 141.
leadership. But YHWH's provided leader was about to change. Deut 34:9 clarifies the role of both YHWH and Moses in selecting the new leader of the covenant community as well as Israel's reaction.

Structure of Deut 34:9

**Passage Delimiters**

Deut 34:9 falls into the fourth major section of Deuteronomy, the final arrangements (chaps. 31-34). Moses' third and final address to the children of Israel concluded with Deut 30. The final chapters of Deuteronomy, chaps. 31-34, shift from narrating Israel's history to narrating the final events of Moses' life. These narratives, alternated with poetry, review Moses' charge to Israel and Joshua as well as the deposition of the law (31:1-29), the "Song of Moses" which examines YHWH's dealings with Israel (31:30-32:47), directives for Moses' death (32:48-52), Moses' final blessings on the tribes of Israel (33:1-29), and Moses' death along with a review of his greatness (34:1-12).

These last four chapters divide nicely as indicated by three demarcations whose beginning points are indicated by the Hebrew word for speak (כָּעַד) and whose conclusions are indicated by the Hebrew words for finish (נִכְלָא) or complete/finish (נִכְלָה) as indicated in the following outline:

I. Moses spoke these words to all Israel (31:1-29)

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The last four chapters contain fifty-two verses of narrative and seventy-one verses of poetry. Deut 31:1-30 are narrative, 32:1-43 are poetry, 32:44-33:1 are narrative, 33:2-29 are poetry, and 34:1-12 are narrative.
II. Moses spoke the words of this song to Israel until their conclusion (31:30-32:47)

III. YHWH spoke to Moses that very day (32:48-34:12).

A detailed outline of these four chapters is presented below.

I. Moses spoke these words to all Israel (31:1-29)

A. I am 120, cannot go out/in for YHWH says I cannot cross over the Jordan
   1. YHWH and Joshua will cross over before you
   2. Do what YHWH commands and be strong/courageous, YHWH not fail you

B. Moses summoned and spoke to Joshua (31:7-9)
   1. Be strong/courageous, you will go in to the land with this people
   2. YHWH will be with you/ not fail you, nor forsake you

C. Moses wrote this Torah, gave to Levites/Elders, charged to read it (31:9-13)

D. YHWH spoke to Moses (31:14-21)
   1. You are going to die - so summon Joshua, come to Tabernacle
   2. You will soon sleep with your fathers, I will be forsaken, so write this song and teach it to Israel

C' Moses wrote this Song and taught it to Israel (31:22)

B' YHWH commanded Joshua and said to him: (31:23)
   1. Be strong/courageous, you will bring Israel in
   2. I will be with you

A' Moses finished writing the words of this Torah into a book
When the words concluded, Moses commanded the Levites, saying: (31:24-29)
   1. Place this book of the Torah at the side of the Ark of the covenant of YHWH
      For I know your rebelliousness while I am alive, surely more so after I die
   2. Gather the elders and I (YHWH) shall speak words into their ears
      For I know that after my death you will surely rebel

II. Moses' Song (31:30-32:47)

A. Moses spoke the words of this song to Israel until their conclusion (31:30)

B. The Song (32:1-43)
   A' Moses spoke all the words of this song to the people, he and Hoshea
   Moses concluded speaking all these words (32:44-47)

III. Moses' Death (32:48-34:12)

A. YHWH spoke to Moses that very day, saying (the command to die) (32:48-52)
   1. Ascend the mountain and see the land of Canaan
2. And die on the mountain
   a. because (דַּנְיָל דָּיָב) of your rebellion against me among the children of Israel
   b. and because (דַּנְיָל דָּיָב) of your not sanctifying me among the children of Israel

B. The blessings of Moses (33:1-29)
   A'  The death of Moses (the response to YHWH's command) (34:1-12)
      1' Moses ascended the mountain and saw the land YHWH promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
      2' Moses died a great man
         a. Servant of YHWH
         b. According to the word (דַּנְיָל דָּיָב) of YHWH who buried him in an unknown place
         c. Moses was 120 years old, eyes not dimmed, vigor not diminished
         d. Israel mourned for Moses 30 days until the mourning period ended
         e. Joshua blessed by Moses' greatness
            i. Received spirit of wisdom as a result of Moses laying hands on him
            ii. Israel listened to Joshua and did according as YHWH commanded Moses
         f. Never a prophet like Moses whom YHWH had known face to face
            i. Evidenced by all the signs and wonders performed in Egypt
            ii. Evidenced by his strong hand and awesome power performed before all Israel

Other than YHWH, Moses and Joshua play the major character roles of the final four chapters. While the dominant theme running throughout these chapters is that of the death of Moses, the installation of Joshua plays an important secondary theme.

Sections I and III emphasize Moses' old age and imminent death. In Section I, Moses reminded the congregation that he was 120 years old and no longer able to lead Israel (no longer able to go out nor come in, נָפַל וְנִנְסָס) and that YHWH had said...
he could not cross over (נָחַל) the Jordan.¹ YHWH specifically told Moses in 31:14 that he was going to die, and in 31:16 that he would soon sleep with his fathers. Moses twice referred to Israel’s actions after “my death” (עהבב).²

In Section III, Subsections A and A’ also focus on the death of Moses. Subsection A refers once specifically to the death (עבב) of Moses and Subsection A’ uses this word twice. Both of these subsections contain other clear linguistic connections to Section I. Subsection A’ repeats Moses’ age of 120 years. Subsection A uses the “come in” (נָתָן) leadership term of Section I and applies it to Moses’ lack of permission to “go into” (יהב) the Promised Land. Subsection A’ refers to Moses not crossing over (נָחַל כֶּלִי), which in Section I Moses stated that YHWH would not allow him to do. The Promised Land referred to in Section I is also referred to twice in both Sections A and A’. Section I points out that YHWH swore (עבב) to give (יִתְנָה), and Subsection A refers to the giving (יִתְנָה) twice without reference to swearing, while Subsection A’ refers once to both swearing (עבב) and giving (יִתְנָה).

Who should become Israel’s next leader is a natural issue deriving from the above heavy emphasis on the death of Moses. Sections I and III describe Joshua’s installation to that position. Section I describes two elements of the installation as described in Num 27:12-23, namely, that of presentation and commissioning.³ Deut

¹Deut 31:2.
²Deut 31:27, 29.
³See pp. 256-63 of this dissertation for a thorough discussion of the parallels between Num 27:12-23 and Deut 31:7-8, 14. 23.
31:7 describes Joshua's presentation by stating that Moses “summoned” or “called” (יָעַבְר) Joshua and “spoke” (יָשָׁא) to him in “the presence of” or “before the eyes of” (בְּעֵינֵי) all Israel. Deut 31:14 adds a second element of the presentation by stating that Moses was to “call” (יָעַבְר) Joshua and present themselves (הָעֲפֹרֵרֵם) at the Tent of Meeting before YHWH. Joshua's commissioning receives the same double emphasis. First, Deut 31:7 and 8 describe Moses' words of commissioning. Second, Deut 31:23 describes YHWH’s words of commissioning. Section III describes the third element of Joshua’s installation as described in Num 27:12-23, namely, that of the laying on of hands. Section II gives importance to Joshua by giving him credit, along with Moses, for having spoken the words of the song normally attributed only to Moses (Deut 32:44).

Section III is divided into three subsections, A, B, A’, in which the first and last subsections parallel each other as illustrated in table 5. The parallels first address matters concerning Moses’ ascent of Mount Nebo and his view from the top. The parallels then address matters concerning Moses’ death. As noted in table 5, both A and A’ contain very similar language when addressing the ascent of Mount Nebo: Subsection A addresses YHWH’s command to go up and view while Subsection A’ addresses Moses’ response to this command.

While A and A’ both address matters of Moses’ death, their themes are dramatically different. Subsection A addresses the more negative elements of Moses’ death, namely, the cause and consequence of his death. The cause of his death is noted by stating that he will be gathered to his people like Aaron because of his rebellion.
### TABLE 5

**SECTION III OF DEUT 31-34: COMPARISON OF SUBSECTIONS A AND A’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection A</th>
<th>Deut 32:48-52</th>
<th>Subsection A’</th>
<th>Deut 34:1-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHWH spoke (םבֶּל) to Moses that very day, saying ( rtrim)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matters Concerning Ascending the Mountain</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Command</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Response</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascend (לאְלַע) this mountain of Abarim, Mount Nebo (לאְלַע הַר אַבְרִימָה הָרְנָבוֹ) which is in the land of Moab (לאְלַע הַר אַבְרִימָה הָרְנָבוֹ) which is before Jericho (לאְלַע הַר אַבְרִימָה הָרְנָבוֹ)</td>
<td>Moses ascended (לאְלַע) from the plains of Moab (לאְלַע הפִּלְלָה) to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah (לאְלַע הפִּלְלָה הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) which is before Jericho (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה)</td>
<td>And YHWH showed (לאְלַע) him all the land (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) the Gilead as far as Dan all of Naphtali the land of Ephraim and Manasseh the entire land of Judah to the West Sea the Negev the plain and valley of Jericho to Zoar</td>
<td>And YHWH said to him this is the land (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob saying I will give (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) it to your seed. I have caused you to see (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) it with your eyes But you will not cross over (לאְלַע הָר פֶּסֶגֶה) to there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8—Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection A</th>
<th>Subsection A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deut 32:48-52</td>
<td>Deut 34:1-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Matters Concerning Moses' Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death and Sin</th>
<th>Death and Greatness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>And die</strong> (<strong>םָלַכְתָּה</strong>), on the mountain you go up (<strong>אָסַף לַגְּבָלוֹת</strong>), and be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people.</td>
<td><strong>Moses</strong> servant of YHWH died (<strong>זָרַע</strong>), in the land of Moab. According to the mouth (<strong>פָּתַח</strong>), of YHWH who buried him in the land of Moab and no one knows where until today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Because</strong> (<strong>בָּאָסָף</strong>), of your rebellion against me, among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.</td>
<td>Moses was 120 years old when he died (<strong>כַּנְבּוּר</strong>), his eye had not dimmed his vigor had not diminished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Because</strong> (<strong>נָסָפוּ</strong>), you did not sanctify me among the children of Israel.</td>
<td>And Israel mourned for Moses in the Plains of Moab for 30 days Then the mourning period ended (<strong>כָּסָפוּ</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For from a distance you shall see</strong> (<strong>זָאָסָפוּ</strong>), the land (<strong>לָשְׁבוּ</strong>), But you shall not enter (<strong>כָּשָׁפֵר</strong>), there into the land (<strong>לָשְׁבוּ</strong>), that I give (<strong>נָשָׁפֵר</strong>), to the children of Israel.</td>
<td>And Joshua, son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom for Moses laid his hands on him and all the sons of Israel listened to him and did according as YHWH commanded Moses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses whom YHWH had known face to face, as evidenced by all the signs and wonders that YHWH sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his courtiers and all his land, and by all the strong hand and awesome power performed before the eyes of all Israel.
against YHWH as well as his lack of sanctifying YHWH among the children of Israel at Meribah-kadesh. Subsection A states that as a consequence of the timing of his death, Moses could see the Promised Land only from a distance and not enter into it.

On the other hand, Subsection A addresses Moses' death from a positive standpoint. First, Moses is referred to as the "servant of YHWH." Second, no human buried Moses, YHWH personally buried him. Third, though he was 120 years old, Subsection A points out that his eyes had not dimmed nor his vigor diminished. Evidently, he was not dying of old age when he died. Fourth, he was so important that Israel mourned for him thirty days. Fifth, he had such an impact on Joshua that by laying his hands on him, Joshua received both the spirit of wisdom and the obedience of Israel. Sixth, this subsection points out that never has there arisen a prophet like Moses whom YHWH knew face to face as evidenced by all the signs and wonders he performed in Egypt and the strong hand with which he performed awesome power before Israel.

While Deut 34 contains parallels to Deut 32:48-52, Deut 34 is a separate and clear unit in itself. Four indicators mark its beginning point and one indicator marks its ending point. The beginning point is first indicated by a topic change from the pronouncement of a blessing on Israel, Deut 33:29, to Moses' ascent of Mount Nebo, Deut 34:1. Second, the literary style changes from poetry in chap. 33 to a narrative style throughout chap. 34. Third, Moses no longer speaks, but is spoken about. In chap. 33 Moses pronounced blessings on Israel, while chap. 34 describes events connected with the death of Moses. Fourth, the Masoretic Text indicates a paragraph
change between Deut 33:29 and 34:1 by usage of a ס (ṣūmā') paragraph indicator.

Chap. 34 has a clear ending point in that it concludes not only the book of Deuteronomy, but it also concludes the entire Pentateuch.

Deut 34 describes the events associated with Moses' death and the fact that he died as a great man. The chapter contains the following outline:

A. Moses and YHWH - vss. 1-4
   1. Moses ascended the mountain - vs. 1a
   2. YHWH showed Moses the Promised Land - vs. 1b-4

B. Moses died a great man - vss. 5-12
   1. And Moses, the servant of YHWH, died as YHWH had said - vs. 5
   2. YHWH personally buried Moses - vs. 6
   3. Moses was 120 years old, yet had great health - vs. 7
   4. Israel mourned for Moses thirty days - vs. 8
   5. Joshua was blessed by Moses’ greatness - vs. 9
      a. Full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid hands - vs. 9a
      b. Israel obeyed Joshua - vs. 9b.
   6. Never a prophet like Moses whom YHWH knew face to face - vss. 10-12
      a. Evidenced by all the signs and wonders in Egypt
      b. Evidenced by his strong hand and power before Israel.

Deut 34:9 falls into the second section of chap. 34 which addresses the greatness of Moses. The unique elements of vs. 9 are twofold: first, it is the only
verse in this section that addresses another person other than Moses; second, it is the only verse of the section that addresses the future beyond Moses' death by describing Joshua's installation as Israel's next leader through the laying on of Moses' hands.

Text and Translation—Deut 34:9

Condition of the text

The comments made above relative to the text of Num 27:12-23 also apply to the condition of the text in Deuteronomy. The Hebrew text of Deuteronomy has been "preserved in remarkably good condition" with "very few places in which it is difficult to grasp the meaning of the Hebrew."¹ This particular text, Deut 34:9, does not present any serious textual difficulties or syntactical problems.² Because the Masoretic Text is generally preferable to any of the variant readings, the translation for this study depends on the MT as it appears in the BHS.

English translation

And Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses laid his hands on him; and all the sons of Israel listened to him and did according as YHWH commanded Moses.

¹Craigie, Deuteronomy, 34-5. The major difficulties arise in the two poetic chapters (32 and 33). The Dead Sea Scrolls "for the most part shows the remarkable accuracy with which the ancient Hebrew text had been transcribed from an early date." Kalland ("Deuteronomy," 9), however, points out that the BHS lists more than 750 variants in the text of Deuteronomy, yet many more exist. While pointing out these variants, Kalland quotes C. F. Keil that "without exception the various readings obtained from the manuscripts exert no influence of importance on the meaning and the contents of Scripture, so far as concerns the subject matter of the faith."

²Lloyd, 1.
Theme

The theme of Deut 34 is Moses: his experience on Mount Nebo which included YHWH showing him the Promised Land and clarifying that Moses was not to enter it; his death, burial, and condition of health at death along with a statement of Israel's period of mourning his death; his impact on Joshua; and his glory. Deut 34:9 is the verse that describes Moses' impact on Joshua. This verse carries a similar theme to that of Num 27:12-23, that of the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Subthemes include the clarification of Moses' connection to Israel's new leader through touch, and Israel's positive response to not only Moses' action with the new leader but also to the instructions of YHWH, which He had given through Moses.

Parallelism

Deut 34:9 consists of two distinct sections, each with two subsections as illustrated in the following outline:

A. Joshua, son of Nun
   a. Full of the spirit (PIP) of wisdom (HETP)
   b. Because (T) Moses laid hands on him

B. And the sons of Israel
   a'. Obeyed (TOP) him
   b'. Did (NEMQ) as YHWH commanded Moses

Subsection a of section A identifies Joshua, who his father was, and what happened to Joshua. Joshua is filled (NEMQ) with the spirit of wisdom (HETP YAD).
This subsection is introduced with a waw conjunctive and describes Joshua with a stative verb. Subsection b of section A then describes how Joshua achieved the state described in subsection a. Joshua achieved the state of being described as "filled with the spirit of wisdom" as a result of Moses laying hands on him (נָאַתָאֶלְלָא מִזְבַּח). This subsection is introduced with the particle לֵא and describes Moses' action upon the subject of subsection a.

Subsection a' of section B describes how Israel responded to the action of the first half of the verse. Israel responded by obeying (שָׁבָע) Joshua. This subsection is introduced with a "waw-resultative," Israel obeyed because Moses had laid hands on Joshua. Subsection b' of section B gives further clarification as to why Israel obeyed Joshua, because it did (לְכִתֶּה) according to the command of YHWH through Moses. This subsection is introduced with a waw conjunctive which links back to the previous waw of result. Unlike the section A in which the subject of the subsection a became the object of the verb in subsection b, in section B, the subject of subsection a' is also the subject of the verb introducing subsection b'.

1Waltke (366) points out that נָאַתָאֶלְלָא as a verb may be used to describe the state of the subject or an action of the subject. Waltke specifically refers to Deut 34:9 as an example of the stative use of this verb.

2Waltke (477) refers to waw-resultative representing "a situation subordinate to that of the preceding clause, either as a (con)sequence or explanation of it."

3Thus it becomes difficult to find a genuine parallelism between the subsections of the two major sections. Of course, the verse is clearly divided into two sections in which the second section responds to the first but whether the subsections contain any sort of parallelism to each other is not clear.
Sections A and B of Deut 34:9 impact an understanding of קָנָה on Joshua by providing parallelism that can be seen as either external or sequential. The external parallelism can be looked at in terms of result. Section A establishes the result of קָנָה for Joshua: he received the spirit of wisdom. Section B establishes the result of קָנָה for the children of Israel: they obeyed YHWH by obeying Joshua. At the same time a sequential parallelism is developed: section A establishes a fact to which section B responds. Israel’s obedience of section B is a response to the קָנָה of section A.

Subsections a, a’ and b, b’ provide an internal parallelism to the verse. Subsections a and a’ are more abstract, presenting spiritual principles. Subsection a establishes that Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom and subsection a’ establishes that Israel “listened” to or “obeyed” Joshua. Subsections b and b’ portray actions that relate to their previously mentioned principles. Subsection b establishes that the spirit of wisdom was the result of an action, that of laying on of hands. Subsection b’ establishes that Israel actually “did” something.

Besides describing principles and actions, these subsections otherwise relate to each other. The “wisdom” (סֵפֶר) of subsection a directly relates to the “obedience” (יָדָּין) of subsection a’. Wisdom is of no value unless it is listened to and carefully followed. And listening implies acceptance of wisdom. The “hands” (יָדָּתְךָ) of subsection b directly relate to the “doing” (יָדָּתְךָ) of subsection b’. The Old

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1For the concept of combining wisdom and listening, see: Deut 4:6; 1 Kgs 3:28; 5:14; 10:6, 8, 24; 2 Chr 9:5, 7, 23; Job 33:33; Eccl 9:16.
Testament commonly connects the act of doing with the concept of “hand.”

Additionally, Israel was expected to “do all YHWH commanded by the hand of Moses.” Also, Israel was expected to respond to YHWH’s outstretched hand through the action of doing.

Focusing on Deut 34:9

Emphasis on לָו לֶחֶם

As noted above, Deut 34:9 falls into the final section of Deuteronomy which emphasize a twofold theme: (1) Moses’ death and its final preparations; and (2) Joshua’s succession to Moses’ leadership. It is not the purpose of this study to analyze all of the final four chapters of Deuteronomy but to concentrate on a single theme, that of laying on of hands (לָו לֶחֶם) in Joshua’s installation. Deut 34:9 is the only verse in this section that uses this phrase.

Impact of Moses’ Death

The most important theme of these four chapters is the death of Moses. At the very outset of these chapters Moses announced his old age and inability to continue

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3Because of observing what YHWH’s outstretched hand accomplished, Israel was expected to obey by keeping (פֶּן לֹא) the Sabbath day (Deut 5:15). Note also, Queen Vashti was punished because she did not do what the king commanded by the hand of the eunuchs (Esth 1:15).
leading Israel because YHWH said he could not cross over the Jordan. YHWH reminded Moses that he was going to die and Moses referred to Israel's actions after his death. YHWH then told Moses where he was to die, what he would see before he died, and why he was to die. Moses then ascended to the place he was to die, saw everything YHWH said he would see, and died a great man. Though Moses could not enter the Promised Land because of his sin at Meribah, he was yet a great man.

The death of Moses placed Israel in a position without a leader. It is into this leadership vacuum that Deut 34:9 steps. A new leader is indicated by Moses, a new leader whose position was greatly enhanced by receiving the laying on of hands from Moses. One of the indications of Moses' greatness rested in the effect his hands had when laid on Joshua.

Parallels to Num 27:12-23

A focus on Deut 34:9 should not take into account only its immediate context, but also to parallels of its context. A distinct effort has been made in two passages of Section III in the outline of Deut 31-34 to parallel Num 27:12-23. First, Deut 32:48-51 repeats YHWH's instructions of Num 27:12-14 relative to the death of Moses and adds a few new details. Deut 32:48 clarifies that YHWH spoke these words to Moses

“on that same day” (כָּלֵי הָעִים לֵאמֹר), or on the day Moses recited the words of his song in Deut 32:1-47 and commissioned Joshua. Deut 32:49 stipulates the mountain of Moses’ death as Mount Nebo, in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and Deut 32:50 stipulates the mountain of Aaron’s death as Mount Hor.

Second, Deut 34:1-8 describes the fulfillment of the instructions given to Moses in Num 27:12-14 and Deut 32:48-5. Deut 34:1-4 states that Moses climbed Mount Nebo and that YHWH showed him the Promised Land. Deut 34:5-8 states that Moses died there, YHWH buried him, and Israel mourned his passing for thirty days. One difference between Deut 34:1-8 and the other two passages is that it no longer elaborates on the reasons for the denial to Moses. The assumption is that Moses has reached the time of obedience to YHWH’s command. Moses died in accord with the word of YHWH.

Third, Deut 34:9 describes the results of the instructions given to Moses in Num 27:18, which Moses is described as fulfilling in Num 27:23. These instructions were to lay hands on Joshua, which Moses did. Deut 34:9 describes what happened as a result of Moses laying hands on Joshua.

**Connection to Leadership Issues**

Deut 34:9-12 forms the last paragraph of the book of Deuteronomy. Richard Lloyd convincingly argues that the final chapters of Deuteronomy are not a collection of miscellaneous unrelated passages. In particular, Deut 34:9-12 affirms the authority of Moses to speak YHWH’s words to the Israel of his time as well as to future
generations. Lloyd proposes three principal functions of Deut 34:9-12: (1) this passage
establishes Moses' authority to speak and act for YHWH; (2) this passage gives the
book of Deuteronomy a prophetic flavor by identifying the greatest prophet, affirming
his personal relationship with YHWH, and pointing out that the book is prophetic
because the word of YHWH is delivered by His spokesman Moses; and (3) this
passage demonstrates the continuing watch care of YHWH over His people in selecting
a new leader who will follow in the steps of Moses.¹ Not only do these verses
establish the authority of Moses, but Deut 34:9 also establishes the authority of Joshua.
Moses is established as the ultimate prototypical leader, and Joshua as the first to
follow Moses becomes the prototype of all leaders to come.

Thus by focusing on Moses' death and its final preparations and deliberately
paralleling Num 27:12-23, Deuteronomy sets the stage for an on Joshua. The
need for Joshua's succession is well established.

Succession of Joshua

Though of lesser importance than the theme of Moses' death, the succession of
Joshua also receives important prominence in the final four chapters of Deuteronomy.
Moses may be the one receiving the main focus in these chapters, however. Joshua
remains the only other individual to receive attention. Meredith Kline proposes that
Deut 31-34 is concerned with the "continuity and perpetuation" of the covenant
relationship between YHWH and His people and addresses in one way or another the

¹Lloyd, 19-23, 79-82.
Moses-Joshua succession. Kline further states that “Joshua’s succession was the most prominent symbol of Yahweh’s continuing theocratic lordship and, therefore, it was of fundamental and supreme significance in the covenant ceremony and document.”

YHWH’s continuing lordship is reaffirmed in Deut 31 through a ceremony in which Moses appointed Joshua as his successor and YHWH divinely commissioned him. Deut 34:9 reports that Israel’s renewed oath of obedience to YHWH also included a commitment to follow Joshua.

Joshua’s prominence was affirmed in Section I through two events. First, in Deut 31:7-8, Moses spoke words of encouragement to Joshua, promising the continued presence and help of YHWH. Two elements of this speech directly tied this encouragement to the covenant. One was the promise that Joshua would “go in” (NîZPi) to the Promised Land and the other was the description of the land as that which YHWH “swore” (L’ZTj) to their fathers. In the second event of Section I, YHWH personally commissioned Joshua by reiterating Moses’ earlier words that Joshua would “go in” to the Promised Land which YHWH “swore” He would give.

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1Ibid., 141-4. Kline’s position is that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document which in its total structure exhibits the classic legal form of suzerainty treaties of the Mosaic age. The Esarhaddon vassal treaties provide one evidence of support. The ceremonies ensuring Ahurbanipal’s succession rights involved two stages: (1) a ceremony held four years before Esarhaddon’s death; and (2) another ceremony after Ashurbanipal’s accession for confirmation of the vassal’s fealty to him. Joshua’s succession involved similar ceremonies: (1) a ceremony held before Moses’ death (Num 27:12-23; Deut 31:1-8, 14, 23; 34:9), and (2) a ceremony held at Shechem not long after Moses’ death and Joshua’s succession (Josh 1:16-18).

2Deut 31:14-23.
Joshua received importance in this second event through YHWH's instruction that he and Moses present themselves at the Tent of Meeting. Furthermore, YHWH spoke to Joshua and, when talking to Moses, implied that Joshua was to be involved with Moses in writing the song Moses was to teach Israel.\(^1\) Section II further affirms Joshua's prominence in Deut 32:44 at the conclusion of Moses' Song by stating that Moses "spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Joshua son of Nun."\(^2\) Section III affirms Joshua's succession in Deut 34:9 by pointing out that he was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid hands on him, and Israel obeyed him.

**Conclusion**

Several elements contribute to the importance of Deut 34:9. First, it is the only place in the book of Deuteronomy that refers to the laying on of hands (הַמִּנֵּא) in the installation of Joshua. Second, it addresses the leadership vacuum created by the death of Moses. Third, it parallels Num 27:12-23. Fourth, it addresses important leadership issues in a context in which Moses is established as the ultimate prototypical leader, and Joshua as the first to follow Moses becomes the prototype of all leaders to come. Fifth, Joshua's succession is an important symbol of YHWH's continuing theocratic leadership and thus of covenantal significance.

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\(^2\)Joshua is here referred to with the name Hoshea.
Now that the background to Deut 34:9 has been reviewed, the question must be asked, "What is the contribution of this verse to an understanding of laying on of hands?" This study now analyzes the accompanying elements of laying on of hands in this verse and draws conclusions specifically applied to laying on of hands.

Elements Accompanying Laying on of Hands in Deut 34:9

Three elements influence an understanding of in the experience of Joshua as related by Deut 34:9. First, the story of Moses surrounding Deut 34:9 clarifies the importance of establishing a connection between Joshua and Moses. Second, Deut 34:9 describes the results of on Joshua personally: he was filled with the spirit of wisdom. Third, Deut 34:9 also describes the results of the on Joshua as it related to the Israelites in general: they obeyed him by doing as had commanded.

Connection with Moses

The context surrounding Deut 34:9 emphasizes and enhances the importance of Joshua’s succession. Moses’ impending death signals a critical moment in Israel’s history. Never has there existed such a great leader. Who will take his place? Moses settled his affairs with Israel and as a final testament commissioned Joshua as his replacement.

Deut 34:1-8 describes Moses’ death, his burial by , as well as the thirty days of mourning after his death. ’s experience of is sandwiched
between two descriptions of Moses’ greatness. Deut 34:7 points out that though Moses was 120 years old at his death, his vision and strength were yet strong. Immediately following the presentation of רַבֵּן on Joshua, Deut 34:10-12 adds that there was never a prophet like Moses who knew YHWH face to face and performed awesome signs and wonders before both Pharaoh and Israel. Such a great prophet as has never otherwise existed actually touched Joshua, indicating by that touch approval and support of Joshua’s position. Joshua’s direct connection to Moses by touch, by רַבֵּן, placed him in a unique position of obvious strength.

Because it was Moses who touched and Joshua who was changed by that touch, Deut 34 clearly establishes the uniqueness of Moses and the fact that Joshua is less than Moses. But the Moses’ uniqueness must continue. Deut 34 addresses this need by creating a break in the flow of the description of Moses and introducing the one who will continue the reflection of Moses. By the result of רַבֵּן a memory of Moses is guaranteed to through his successor Joshua.

Results on Joshua

Filled (שָׁחַב)

According to Deut 34:9, Joshua was filled (שָׁחַב) with the spirit (רוֹעָה) of wisdom (רוֹעָה). The basic meaning of שָׁחַב is “to fill,” “be full,” or “to make full.”¹ The form שָׁחַב (fill), as it exists in Deut 34:9, can be translated in one of three ways:

¹Fairman (23-32) reviews the major lexicons and provides an excellent study of the meaning of שָׁחַב. See pp. 121-3 of this dissertation for a review of the Old Testament expression “filling the hands.”
ways: (1) as a verb, qal perfect 3rd masculine singular (was filled) or a qal participle; (2) as an attributive adjective (full or complete, modifying spirit of wisdom); or (3) as a masculine noun (fullness, that which fills). As a verb, can be translated as either “to fill” or “to be full (of)” and can be used in the sense of “fill up, complete.” Something can be filled by either that which is concrete or immaterial. Immaterial items that can be used in the filling include praise, blessing, glory, indignation, righteousness, laughter, or anguish.

In the clause, “Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom,” the word form for “filled” indicates that it could be either a verb, as translated above, or an attributive adjective modifying “spirit of wisdom,” translated as “Joshua, son of Nun, received the spirit of wisdom in its fullness.” Two indicators support translating as a verb. First, the structure


Holladay, 195.

Snijders, 298. “Complete the week of this one [bride]” (Gen 29:27), while in Babylon, Israel’s time of service was fulfilled when its measure of suffering was completed (Isa 40:2). when the days of the Nazarite separation are filled (completed, Num 6:5, 13).

Ibid. Praise (Hab 3:3), blessing (Deut 33:23). glory (Num 14:21). indignation (Jer 15:17), righteousness (Isa 33:5), laughter (Job 8:21; Ps 126:2), and anguish (Isa 21:3).

Schröeder (238) incorrectly interprets this clause. Fairman (126) agrees with Schröder and argues that the “adjective is to be preferred because the verb is transitive, and this occurrence lacks a direct object.” However, on p. 26, Fairman points out that
of the verse indicates clearly the choice of verb. The verse is divided into two sections in which each section contains two verbs: the first contains two perfect verbs and the second contains two imperfect verbs. Should נִלָּחֲמָה not be a verb, the verse would be imbalanced. Second, the particle יִהְיֵשׁ forces נִלָּחֲמָה into being a verb. It would therefore be incorrect to interpret נִלָּחֲמָה as an adjective.

The book of Numbers, on one occasion, used the verb “fill” (נִלָּחֲמָה) when referring to Joshua. Israel’s older generation could not enter the Promised Land because they followed the advice of the ten faithless spies who did not “fully” or “completely follow” (נִלָּחֲמָה) YHWH. However, Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter because they “completely followed” (נִלָּחֲמָה) YHWH. Rendered literally, the Hebrew idiom reads that they “completely filled themselves after YHWH,” giving the idea of total obedience and dedication.

The act of filling as indicated in Deut 34:9 is an act of placing something into Joshua, an act of completion. YHWH completely filled His faithful servant who had faithfully and fully already given his all.

Nִלָּחֲמָה can be either transitive or intransitive. Thomas Lambdin cautions that adjectives are often associated with stative verbs which are frequently identical in stem form to the 3ms of the perfect and thus easily confused. Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 94. However, Waltke and O’Connor (366) treat נִלָּחֲמָה in Deut 34:9 not as an adjective, but as a stative, qal perfect verb, and translate, “Joshua . . . was filled with the spirit of wisdom.”

1Num 32:12. Milgrom (Numbers, 269) translates as, “they remained loyal to the Lord.” Budd (335) translates as, “they followed Yahweh wholeheartedly.”

Craigie, Deuteronomy, 104. The phrase נִלָּחֲמָה is used four times in the Pentateuch, twice for Caleb (Num 14:24; Deut 1:36), once for Caleb and Joshua (Num 32:11), and once for Israel who did not follow YHWH (Num 32:10).
Joshua was filled with the "spirit of wisdom." Two areas of study contribute to ascertaining the meaning of "spirit of wisdom:" (1) its usage in the rest of the Old Testament; and (2) an overview of the concept of wisdom as used in the book of Deuteronomy. In this section, study is given to the aforementioned two areas of study which is followed by making an application to Deut 34:9 and Joshua's experience.

The first area of study is that of usage in the rest of the Old Testament. The phrase "spirit of wisdom" occurs here and in only four other Old Testament texts. In a seminal study on "filling" texts, Richard Fairman noted three additional texts which provide an important contribution to an understanding of that which filled Joshua. A review of these seven texts additional to Deut 34:9 provides valuable insight into the meaning of "filling" as it is applied to the "spirit of wisdom." Additionally, the experience of Joseph and Solomon contribute to an understanding of the content of wisdom. An overview of the above areas can be summarized with three points.

1. Three texts address the workers who built the Tabernacle (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31) and one addresses the shoot to arise from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:2).

2. Fairman (103-45) refers to seven texts. Of the seven, four have already been mentioned because they refer specifically to "spirit of wisdom." Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut 34:9. The three additional texts include, Exod 35:35 (Bezalel and Oholiab filled with the heart of wisdom), 1 Kgs 7:14 (Hiram filled with wisdom), and Mic 3:8 (Micah filled with power of the spirit of YHWH). Fairman assimilated the data gained from his study of the "filling" texts into a "topically-arranged" explanation of the doctrine of filling. His topics included: nature, circumstances, scope, duration, manner, results, and purpose of filling.
First, YHWH is the one who fills. In the seven texts, except 1 Kgs 7:14, YHWH is the one who receives the credit for providing the filling. In Exod 28:3 YHWH filled (נָבָא) men “wise of heart” (בְּרוֹאֹתָם) with the “spirit of wisdom.” in Exod 31:3 and 35:31 YHWH filled (אָנָבוֹת) Bezalel with the “Spirit of God (רוֹאָם) in wisdom” (רוֹאָם בּוֹשַׁלְתָּם), in Isa 11:2 the Spirit of YHWH (רוֹאָם בְּרוֹאָם) will rest on the shoot that comes from the stump of Jesse, a spirit defined in three pairs as the spirit of wisdom (רוֹאָם בּוֹשַׁלְתָּם) and understanding (רוֹאָם בּוֹשַׁלְתָּם), counsel and power, as well as knowledge and fear of YHWH, and in Mic 3:8 the basis for Micah’s fullness is the enablement of the Spirit of YHWH, his commitment to justice, and his refusal to compromise. The references in the experience of those who built the Tabernacle to YHWH as subject and the reference in Micah to YHWH’s Spirit as instrument “seem to suggest the former as the agent and the latter as the instrument with which He does the filling.”

YHWH alone truly knows and understands wisdom and it is He who dispenses it to His people. YHWH’s spirit is seen to be the means by which His people are filled with wisdom, hence the expression, “spirit of wisdom” (רוֹאָם בּוֹשַׁלְתָּם).

Second, Exod 28:3 notes that YHWH filled the “wise of heart” (נָבָא) with the “spirit of wisdom” (רוֹאָם בּוֹשַׁלְתָּם). Who are the “wise of heart?” The Old Testament frequently refers to the heart (לֵשֶׁת) as a term which indicates all aspects of a

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1Ibid., 142-3.

2See also: 1 Kgs 5:9, 26; Job 11:6; 28:23; Pss 51:8; 90:12; Prov 2:6.

3Other texts referring to the “wise of heart” (נָבָא): Exod 31:6; 35:10, 25, 26, 35; 36:1, 2, 8.
person. As such, “heart” ( Heb) can refer to a person’s center of the vital processes of life, to his seat of human emotions, to his voluntative center or his driving force which drives the conception of plans, to his religious center or the locus of God’s influence which impacts his conscience, and to his noetic center or his cognition, memory, and wisdom. It is this latter element of the “heart” ( Heb) which gives insight towards an understanding of “spirit of wisdom.”

Fabry notes that the cognition element of the “heart” ( Heb) precedes, initiates, preserves, and internalizes operation of the senses and represents the total intellectual ability of an individual. “Inattention, heedlessness, and confusion to the point of ethically negative duplicity” result from an improperly functioning “heart” ( Heb) which places a person in the “grip of folly.” A properly functioning heart becomes the seat of wisdom. Wisdom, placed in the heart ( Heb) by YHWH, draws one’s attention to the law, one’s ears to be open to knowledge, and one’s words to be well chosen. One “wise of heart” ( Heb) possesses a broad intelligence that comprehends the surrounding world and provides a dimension of experience informed by acknowledgment of YHWH’s righteousness and divinity. It was these kinds of person.

2Ibid. 419. 423.
3Placed by YHWH (Exod 35:35; Prov 2:6; 1 Kgs 10:24; 2 Chr 9:23), focused on law (Prov 2:2; 10:8); ears open to knowledge (Prov 18:15); and words well chosen (Prov 15:28; 16:21, 23; Job 33:3; Isa 32:4).
both male and female, who were filled with the spirit of wisdom to fashion the priestly
vestments and construct the tabernacle.¹

Third, what “wisdom” filled these individuals? The circumstances surrounding
each of the “filling” texts were always associated with a particular need, for example,
building the Tabernacle or temple, conquering and dividing the Promised Land, or
confrontation of false prophets. In each of the texts describing the sacral expertise of
those called to work on the tabernacle, “wisdom” (חכמה) refers not so much to
accumulation of knowledge as to insight, discretionary skill, and administrative ability
necessary to accomplish one’s task.² Each individual receiving the “spirit of wisdom,”
an otherwise worthy person previously endowed with excellent gifts, received
additional gifts when commissioned for service. Each received an extra equipping by
YHWH to make it possible for him or her to accomplish the task YHWH had
delegated. Hebrew wisdom is not theoretical or speculative but practical. As such,
practical wisdom’s essential idea is that of prudence, skill, moral sensitivity, and (of
utmost importance) experience in the ways of YHWH.

¹Of the “wise of heart” texts mentioned above, Exod 35:25, 26 refers to
women who wove the tapestry for the Tabernacle.

²For a review of wisdom (חכמה): Louis Goldberg, “חכמה (חָקָם) be wise, act
wise(ly),” TWOT (1980), 1:282-4; H. -P. Müller, “חכמה chākham; חכמה chākhām;
חכמה chokhmāh; חכמה chokhmōth,” TDOT (1980), 4:364-85. See also: Milgrom,
Numbers, 235; Lloyd, 9-10; Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” 234-5; G. E. Wright, “The
Book of Deuteronomy,” IB (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1953), 2:536; Marshall,
171-2.
Wisdom not only refers to the skill to make things, such as the accouterments of
the tabernacle, but also to the skill to lead. Joseph was described as a discerning (יִנְצָה) and wise (שָׁפָר) man. Gerhard von Rad reviewed Joseph’s life and proposed several elements of Joseph’s character that deemed him wise. Joseph was one who possessed the twin virtues of outspokenness and good counsel. Joseph was a man whose upbringing, modesty, learning, courtesy, and self-discipline acquired true nobility of character. He practiced wisdom in resisting the temptation of Potiphar’s wife and in control of his tongue when dealing with his brothers. He had the insight to distinguish right from wrong with the resultant ability to render true justice which he illustrated in self-control, magnanimity, and forbearance from any kind of revenge. Joseph recognized his strength rested in an appropriate fear of YHWH. When he made himself known to his brothers, he ascribed all past events to the guidance of YHWH who brought all the vicissitudes of the family’s life to a happy conclusion.

The experience of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3:5-12 illustrates other facets of wisdom. Solomon’s response to YHWH’s offer to give him anything he wanted was to ask for a “receptive heart” (הַזָּמִין), or more literally a “hearing” or “listening heart.” Solomon recognized that one must be attentive, receptive, and discriminating if he is to render appropriate and true justice. In vs. 9, Solomon desired a “listening heart” in

\[1\text{Gen 41:33, 39.}\]

order that he might discriminate (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יְשוּעַ הִנֵּה בָא) between good and evil. YHWH responded by repeating Solomon’s request but making it more complex: “you asked for ability to discriminate in perceiving justice” (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא תַעְנָאֲס הֶעָלָה בָא). Then YHWH stated He would give Solomon a “wise and understanding heart” (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא תַעְנָאֲס). The adjective “understanding” (כְּרָשָׁת) responds to the infinitive of purpose in vs. 9 but the adjective “wise” (בְּרָשָׁת) introduces a new concept, that of the judicious administration of justice for which Solomon has prayed. The use of “wise” (בְּרָשָׁת) in this verse “constitutes the historical point of origin for the tradition about Solomon’s great wisdom.”1

In summary, three elements can be seen in the general Old Testament background that apply to an understanding of the spirit of wisdom with which Joshua was filled. First, YHWH is the one who fills. Second, it is the wise hearted who are filled with the spirit of wisdom or those who possess a broad intellectual ability that comprehends the surrounding world and whose experience is informed by acknowledging YHWH’s righteousness and divinity. Third, wisdom that filled others was twofold: (a) a practical ability to accomplish tasks; and (b) the skill to lead which resulted from a receptive heart to which YHWH gave the ability to distinguish right from wrong and render true justice.

The second area of study that contributes to an understanding of the meaning of the spirit of wisdom that Joshua received is the study of wisdom as used in the book of

1Simon J. DeVries, 1 Kings, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 12:53.
Deuteronomy. An overview of the usage of wisdom in Deuteronomy can be summarized in four points. First, wisdom played a role in the establishment of leadership. Deuteronomy introduces its concern for leadership in chap. 1:9-18 where YHWH instructed Moses to choose wise (צִמְצָמִים), understanding or discerning (יָדְיון), and well-known or reputable (עָקָדִים) men to aid in the governance of Israel. Again, as for Joseph, wisdom and discernment are associated. The Old Testament uses the word “understanding” (יִשְׁפְּרָה) to denote the concept of “distinguishment that leads to understanding” or the “power of judgment and perceptive insight” which is “demonstrated in the use of knowledge.” Wisdom has to do with intelligence and knowledge acquired by experience which plays an important background role to one’s powers of discernment.

Second, wisdom in Deuteronomy manifested itself in certain leadership responsibilities. Deut 1:16-17 details four leadership responsibilities of Moses’ new appointees. First, each was to listen to all sides, whether Israelite or alien, and to judge “righteously” (פֶּרֶשׁ). The primary aim of judgment was to seek the right, a

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1. S. Dean McBride, Jr., “Polity of the Covenant People: The Book of Deuteronomy,” Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology 41 (1987): 229-44. McBride suggests that the book of Deuteronomy concerns itself with the leadership of Israel in two of the above four ways: (1) provision for setting up leadership; and (2) instructions about responsibilities of leadership. McBride suggests that torah in Deuteronomy is best understood as polity. The book is intended to provide the polity by which Israel’s life should be ordered and ruled.


3. For a good review of Deut 1:9-18, see Miller, 27-30.
command to be followed when appointing judges once established in the Promised Land. The covenant between YHWH and Israel is founded on YHWH's righteousness, which all human judges are to emulate. Second, no partiality was to be shown. Both important and unimportant individuals are to be given equal opportunity. Moses also repeated this command, literally not to "show regard for faces" (בְּמִיבְּרַי), for appointment of judges in the Promised Land adding that they were not to accept bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise (בְּמִיבְּרַי). Third, justice was not to be compromised by fear. Judgment without fear was not merely an assurance but a command based on the premise that judgment belongs to God. Judges should not let fear of power, wealth, or reprisal compromise an insistence for equitable justice. Fourth, for any case too hard to handle, a judge could go to Moses who would listen to the case.

Third. Deuteronomy not only associates wisdom with the ability to make appropriate leadership decisions, it also associates wisdom with obedience, particularly of YHWH's statutes (בְּמִיבְּרַי) and judgments (בְּמִיבְּרַי). In keeping of YHWH's law Israel will show its wisdom (בְּמִיבְּרַי) and understanding (בְּמִיבְּרַי) to other nations, qualities attributed to Joseph, judges, and later to Solomon and the messiah. Moses

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1 Deut 16:18.
2 Deut 16:19.
3 Deut 4:5-8.
4 Deut 4:6. To Joseph (Gen 41:39), to judges (Deut 1:13), to Solomon (1 Kgs 3:12), to the messianic Branch (Isa 11:2).
encouraged his listeners to realize that "regal-like discernment is available to and demonstrated by the people themselves in their keeping of the instruction for life given by the Lord."¹ Israel is to recognize that through the law YHWH draws near to His people. Israel will thus demonstrate its wisdom above all the surrounding nations in the careful attention given to keeping the statutes and judgments of YHWH. Israel's wisdom lies in an intelligence and discernment that is the fruit of obedience to the law and Israel's distinctiveness lies in the intimate relationship the covenant created between YHWH and His people.²

Fourth, Deuteronomy also associates wisdom with the ability to recognize where a particular course of action will lead. Moses noted in Deut 32:6 that foolish (ֶּּרֶשׁ) and unwise (נַּּדְרִ) people pay no attention to YHWH and go so far as to disengage from Him. Moses then reviewed YHWH’s and Israel’s mutual history, how in YHWH’s generosity Israel grew fat and yet abandoned YHWH. Moses calls his people, Deut 32:29, to be wise (קֶּדֶת) and understanding (יְדַע) so that they can interpret the events YHWH brings into their experience. A proper understanding (יְדַע) results in a power of judgment and perceptive insight that is demonstrated in appropriate use of the knowledge which YHWH has shared through Moses. The wise would “discern their latter end and see the disaster toward which their life style was leading them inevitably. The beginning of God’s judgment is not a hidden thing: the

¹Miller, 55.

²Craigie, Deuteronomy, 131.
signs are there to be read, but the pathos of the people of God lay in their lack of
discernment. “

In summary, four elements can be seen in an overview of wisdom as used in
Deuteronomy. First, Moses was to choose wise and understanding men who possessed
a knowledge acquired by experience that demonstrated itself through perceptive insight
and the ability to judge. Second, wisdom manifested itself through listening to all
sides, showing no partiality, not being compromised by fear, and going to a higher
authority in the case of need. Third, wisdom exhibited itself through obedience of
YHWH’s laws. Fourth, wisdom recognized where particular courses of action would
lead.

What did Joshua receive when he received the “spirit of wisdom?” First, it is
YHWH who fills with the spirit of wisdom. The origin of the spirit Joshua possessed
came from outside himself.

Second, though the origin of the spirit was elsewhere, YHWH filled those who
were already wise hearted. The artisans who received the “spirit of wisdom,” which
enabled them with additional skills to better perform their responsibilities, were already
“wise hearted.” Solomon possessed a receptive heart to which YHWH responded by
giving wisdom. The implication for Joshua is that he, too, prior to receiving the

1Ibid., 386.

2Solomon requested of YHWH an understanding heart (חֲכָר נַעַר) in order to
judge (אָכַז בְּעַיִן) and discern (חָכָר לְאָמָר) between good and evil (1 Kgs 3:9). When one is
“wise hearted,” YHWH has already provided the necessary skills to accomplish His
assigned task.
“spirit of wisdom.” possessed a broad intellect, an ability to comprehend his surrounding word, and a life experience informed by his acknowledgment of, and commitment to, YHWH.

Third, when the wise hearted received the spirit of wisdom, they were given wisdom for practical skills. Though Joshua’s primary responsibilities focused on the governance of his people, practical skill played an important part of his life. An important role was already discussed in Num 27:21 in which Joshua was to lead the people out and bring them back in.

Fourth, Joshua’s wisdom included the various skills necessary to lead. Joshua, like Joseph or Solomon, was called to a position of leadership; and leadership demands wisdom along with understanding. The judges Moses appointed and the judges who were to be appointed in the Promised Land were to be men of wisdom and understanding. The responsibilities these wise men were to assume portray responsibilities that Joshua, as leader over all other leaders, should also assume. Wisdom for Joshua must therefore manifest itself through righteous judgment for all Israelites and aliens, through impartiality, and through judgment with no fear. And like the first judges were to take their difficult cases to Moses who in turn sought his

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1The phrase, “spirit of judgment” (חכמה ומשפט), Isa 28:6, refers to the power being given to one who sits in judgment by which he is enabled to exercise his judicial functions. Similarly, the spirit of wisdom is a gift which enables the governing of people. See: Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, 149. Joshua received a practical wisdom and common-sense administration skills. Samuel Rolles Driver, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, ICC (New York: Scribner, 1902), 424; Joseph Reider, Deuteronomy with Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937), 345.
answers from YHWH. Num 27:21 clarifies that Joshua was also to take his difficult questions to an intermediary, or Eleazar the high priest, who in turn sought his answers from YHWH through the Urim.

Because Deuteronomy associates wisdom with obedience to YHWH's law, it can be assumed that the spirit of wisdom associated with Joshua also included a relationship to the law. No doubt, Joshua was already a law keeper as indicated by the fact that YHWH gave the spirit of wisdom to the wise hearted. But also, in the position of leader, Joshua also needed the ability to understand, interpret, and apply the law in the life of YHWH's people.

Also, Deuteronomy associates leadership wisdom with the ability to discern the results of various courses of action. Joshua received special wisdom which enabled him to choose wisely where to lead YHWH's people. Wisdom is that quality given by YHWH which enabled Joshua to make good judgments, to understand the essence and purpose of things, and to find the right means for achieving the YHWH-given goals.

To summarize: (1) Joshua's spirit of wisdom came from YHWH; (2) Joshua was already a man of intellectual ability; (3) Joshua was given the practical skills to accomplish his mission; and (4) Joshua was given leadership skills with their attendant responsibilities, ability to interpret YHWH's law, and ability to determine the results of various courses of action.
Because Moses laid his hands
(םוחט את אַחָזְרַע)

Deut 34:9 explains that Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because (םוחט) Moses had laid his hands (םוחט אַחָזְרַע) on him. Reception of the spirit of wisdom depended upon hand laying. Spirit reception as dependent upon laying on hands appears to contradict Num 27:18 in which hand laying was dependent on a previous reception of spirit. An attempt at reconciliation of this contradiction must take into consideration the particle (םוחט).

The particle (םוחט) not only is one of the most frequently utilized words in the Old Testament, but it is also a word "with the widest and most varied range of nuance and meanings." It originally carried a demonstrative character and as such gave emphasis or force to a statement. But it was more than a demonstrative for it also carried a deictic character or a pointing (showing) the way forward. Out of its demonstrative and deictic character, (םוחט) has been used in the Old Testament in at least ten different ways: causal (because), temporal (when, now), conditional (if), adversative (after a

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negative), concessive (though), asseverative (to assert strongly, a use originating in oaths), resultative (that), interrogative (who, introduces a question), nominalizing (introducing noun clauses), and recitative (introducing direct speech).

Translations generally understand ' as causative in Deut 34:9. However, W. Vogels argues that this text presents the only clear case in which there appeared to be a causal link between a human ritual and the gift of the spirit of God. By focusing on the particle ' he concluded that ' is a multipurpose particle which could be used as an introductive particle for a strong emphatic statement. Consequently, he suggests two changes in the translation of Deut 34:9: (1) a change in the traditional punctuation of the verse, and (2) a change in the interpretation of ' from causal to temporal. Vogels thus translates: "And Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom. When (or since) Moses had laid his hands upon him, the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses." To Vogels, this removes the discrepancy between Deut 34:9 and Num 27:18 and thus clarifies that it was only God who gave the Spirit, not Moses' hands.

Difficulty with supporting Vogels' argument begins with analysis of the Masoretic accents. His translation ignores two significant Masoretic disjunctive accents. The Masoretes divide Deut 34:9 into two major sections with an athnah, or Grade I (Emperor) disjunctive accent. The athnah places the break after "because

1NAB has “since;” JB, NASB, RSV, NEB, KJV, NKJV have “for;” NRSV, NIV have “because.”

2Vogels, 3-7.
Moses laid his hands on him. The Masoretes further divide the first half of the verse into another two sections with a small zaqef, or Grade II (King) disjunctive accent. The small zaqef places this secondary break after "and Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom." James Price points out that "the distinguishing characteristic of each hierarchic rank is that it embraces the segments of the next lower rank in its domain."1 A Grade I (Emperor) rank includes all clauses with lower level accents in its thought. The Masoretes interpreted Deut 34:9 in such a way that the clause was to be included as an explanation of the first quarter of the verse. Thus, Joshua's reception of the spirit of wisdom is explained as possible because of Moses laying his hands on him.

The structure of Deut 34:9 gives support to the placement of the Masoretic accents in two ways. First, the verse is composed of four well-balanced sections: (1) Joshua, the son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom: (2) because Moses had laid hands on him; (3) so the Israelites listened (obeyed) to him: and (4) did as YHWH commanded Moses. Second, the verb in the first two sections is in the perfect and the verb in the last two sections is in the imperfect. The Masoretic accents apparently follow the verse's natural structural indicators.

Schoors and Lloyd propose arguments that can be used to support the Masoretic punctuation. Schoors notes that the best-known use of is that of a subordinating

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conjunction introducing a causal clause. Most of the 'because' following a main clause should be rendered as "because." Unless strong evidence otherwise exists, the most common usage should prevail. Though Lloyd is unclear as to whether or not he supports Vogel's translation, Lloyd proposes three considerations that contribute to clarifying whether or not something happened to Joshua at the event described by Deut 34:9: (1) it is clear that this event symbolized a new task for Joshua as leader. (2) has technical cultic overtones, thus its usage clarifies that Joshua had not only been given the practical wisdom to lead the Israelites but also from the cultic setting he has been blessed by God to provide that leadership. and (3) because Deut 34:9 closely parallels Num 27:22-23 which twice emphasizes that Moses functioned according to the command of YHWH thus clarifying that YHWH, the One who fully controls the succession of Israel's leaders, is the One who instigated the hand-laying action on Joshua and could accomplish the blessing granted to Joshua. Internal evidence within Deut 34:9 supports this last consideration of Lloyd when it states that Israel did according to YHWH's command to Moses. So, to Lloyd, laying on of hands

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1Schoors, 264-73. Muilenburg (145) points out that the causal 'because' is particularly noteworthy for the role it plays in the many kinds of motivations of various literary forms. See: Gen 3:5, 14; 1 Kgs 13:21; 21:29; 2 Sam 12:10; Isa 7:5; 15:1.

2Lloyd (11) points to sacrificial usage in Lev 1:4 and Num 8:12, usage with the consecration of the Levites in Num 8:10, and usage with the blasphemer in Lev 24:14. He also discusses the fact that all these sources are considered part of P which emphasizes the cult.

3Ibid., 10-11.
represents an enablement by YHWH in a cultic setting, at a time when Joshua received
a new task.

In summary, though the particle "2 is one of the most frequently used words in
the Old Testament with a wide and varied range of meanings, clear evidence supports
interpreting it as causal in Deut 34:9. The evidence that supports this conclusion is
fivefold: (1) translations generally understand "2 as causal; (2) Masoretic accents
indicate that the "2 clause was to be included as an explanation of the previous clause;
(3) the structure of the verse supports placement of the Masoretic accents; (4) most
"2's following a main clause should be rendered as "because;" and (5) the "2 refers
ultimately to an action of YHWH.

Deut 34:9 indicates that something happened to Joshua as a result of Moses'
gesture. The usage of "2 indicates that Joshua's reception of the spirit of wisdom came
as a result of Moses laying hands on him. It should be no surprise that Moses' hands
were perceived as having the capability of such accomplishment. The three verses
following Deut 34:9 conclude the book of Deuteronomy by reminding the reader of the
greatness of Moses with language which draws attention to the entire exodus
experience. Moses' greatness included talking face to face with YHWH, performance
of signs and wonders which YHWH sent him to do in Egypt, possession of a mighty
hand (τὴν ὁ πιστήν τῶν Ἰσραήλ), and performance of awesome deeds in the sight of Israel.

1 In the New Testament, laying on of hands had a similar result: Acts 8:17,
Holy Spirit received after hand placement; 2 Tim 1:6, gift of God in you received by
the laying of Paul's hands.
Moses' hand was well known for possessing great power. Moses took up a snake by its tail in his hand, stretched out his hand resulting in plagues that fell on Egypt, stretched out his hand over the sea that parted at the right time and returned at the right time, raised his hands resulting in victory over the Amalekites, numbered Israel by his hand, and by his hand (along with Aaron's) brought Israel out of Egypt. Additionally, on numerous occasions YHWH commanded and spoke "by the hand of Moses (תֵּאָדוֹת)." It should be noted, however, that the Pentateuch's intent is not to present Moses' hands as having magical power. YHWH is always presented as the real power. At the burning bush YHWH clarified that Moses was to perform before Pharaoh the wonders YHWH Himself would put into Moses' hand, and it was always YHWH who spoke by the hand of Moses. "It is astonishing what immense power God has entrusted to our hands for fashioning and embellishing the spiritual nature of men."

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1Picked up snake (Exod 4:4), plagues (Exod 7:19; 8:5[1]; 9:22; 10:12, 21, 22), split the sea and returned it (Exod 14:21-23), raised hands brought victory over the Amalekites (Exod 17:5-12), numbered Israel (Num 4:49), out of Egypt by the hand of Moses (Num 33:1).


3YHWH told Moses that Pharoah would not let him go unless a "mighty hand" compels him. So, YHWH stated that He would stretch out His "hand" and strike the Egyptians with His wonders (Exod 3:19, 20).

4Exod 4:21.

The question must be asked, "What was the special power in the hands of Moses?" Moses' own consecration came directly as a result of a personal calling of YHWH. He therefore did not pass on a consecration he had himself received from another human being: "he acted only as 'the servant of the Lord.'" Moses laid his hands upon Joshua when he set him apart for leadership, but it was YHWH who gave the gift through the hands of Moses. YHWH enables those whom He calls. Though, in the final analysis it is the blessing of YHWH that made the difference in establishing Joshua as Israel's next leader, YHWH yet chose to pass that blessing through the hands of Moses.

What did the gesture accomplish for Joshua? Though not specifically mentioned in Deut 34:9, the context to which the passage belongs, or the last four chapters of Deuteronomy, indicates an event in which Joshua was installed as Israel's new leader. The laying on of hands therefore indicated a rite of installation.

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1Torrance, 236.

2In Deut 31:7, 8, Moses informed Joshua that YHWH would be the one who took Joshua into the Promised Land which in Deut 31:23 YHWH affirmed directly to Joshua. In the Num 27:12-23 pericope, Moses asked YHWH to appoint a man and did all that YHWH commanded him.

3Deut 31:7 and 8 describe Moses' commissioning speech and Deut 31:23 describes YHWH's commission speech at the Tabernacle, each of which were made in the presence of the whole community.
investiture of a new function, or a method of induction into a position of authority.\textsuperscript{4}

Kalland and Henry refer to the installation of Joshua as an "ordination."\textsuperscript{1}

Scholars have proposed at least two suggestions as to what was transferred by Moses' hand gesture during Joshua's installation ceremony. On the one hand, the "spirit of wisdom" is a reference to that part of Moses' honor which YHWH told him in Num 27:20 to pass on to Joshua. By the laying on of hands Joshua became a participant of the authority and spirit of wisdom of Moses.\textsuperscript{3}

On the other hand, the "spirit of wisdom" refers to a special gift given by YHWH's Spirit. On at least one other Old Testament occasion, reception of the Spirit of YHWH was connected to a physical act. David received a mighty outpouring of the Spirit on the day Samuel anointed him with a horn of oil.\textsuperscript{4} This outpouring did not preclude the fact that David already had a measure of the Spirit. Rather, from that day forward David received extra evidence of YHWH's Spirit. In the case of Joshua, a man who Num 27:18 states already had spirit, received an extra measure of the spirit

\textsuperscript{1}Coppens. 163; Smith. 59-60.

\textsuperscript{2}Kalland, "Deuteronomy," 324-5; Henry. 888.

\textsuperscript{3}Galtier, 7:1304; Stacey, 265; Smith. 59-60. Stacey states, "It seems certain that the transmission of personal virtue and vitality (of Moses) is implied." Smith emphasizes that the Spirit is not bound to any one physical act on the part of man. Hand laying did not mediate the Spirit. Rather, it transferred a portion of Moses' honor or majesty.

\textsuperscript{4}1 Sam 16:13.
of wisdom mediated by the physical contact of Moses’ hands as stated in Deut 34:9.\footnote{Podet, 42-6; Coppens, 163; Kennedy, *Deuteronomy and Joshua*, 246-7; Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Deuteronomy and Joshua*, NCB (New York: H. Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1907), 246-7; Zlotowitz, 67-8; John D. W. Watts, “Deuteronomy,” *BBC* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1970), 296.} As noted above, this special gift of wisdom gave Joshua extra skills to better lead the children of Israel.

**Result on Israel**

As a result of the hand-laying experience in which the spirit of wisdom was mediated to Joshua, “all the sons of Israel obeyed (לְאָשֵׁר)” him.\footnote{See previous study on obey (לְאָשֵׁר), Num 27:20.} All that YHWH had asked Moses to do to Joshua in Num 27:12-23 had as its intended result the obedience (בְּמִצְטָה) of Israel directed toward Joshua. Deut 34:9 reports that indeed Israel followed through with YHWH’s instructions and submitted to Joshua. The children of Israel also did (כָּפַר) as YHWH had commanded Moses.

During the Exodus, Israel had often been challenged both to listen (לְאָשְׁר) to YHWH and to do (כִּי הָיָה) what He asked. And Israel had responded with a commitment both to listen to YHWH and to do as He asked.\footnote{Listen and do: Exod 15:26; 23:22; 24:7. Do what is right: Deut 6:18; 12:25; 13:18; 21:9. Listen: Exod 19:5; 24:3. Do what YHWH asks: Lev 19:37.} Both of these terms have strong covenantal overtones which were clarified even before Israel met YHWH at Sinai. Moses told Israel early in their sojourn that if they listened to YHWH’s voice and did what was right in His eyes, He would not bring upon Israel any of the
Egyptian diseases. 1 The substance of YHWH’s option to Israel is set forth in terms of obedience, which is a standard accompaniment of covenant making in the ancient Near Eastern world and, in particular, the Old Testament world. 2

To the Old Testament mind, listening (ןָאָה) denoted not only a paying of attention, but also a positive response in some tangible action. There was a strong note of intentionality conveyed by the verb תָּבֻּל which carried the sense of “obey,” appropriately resulting in some sort of “doing” (משה). The Israelites were under ethical and covenantal obligation to respond to YHWH beyond mere mental abstraction but through obedience evidenced in demonstrable action. 3 Hearing in this purposeful and compulsive sense is crucial to the whole enterprise which Deuteronomy represents. 4 In Deuteronomy, Israel’s hearing began when it received the Decalogue, the basic stipulations of the covenant, directly from YHWH at Sinai. 5 The remainder of YHWH’s covenantal decrees was “heard” by Moses on behalf of Israel and mediated to it as he in turn communicated what he had heard in the “hearing” of

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1 Exod 15:26.

2 Durham, 3:213-4; Walter Kaiser, “Exodus,” EBC (1990), 2:415-16. Kaiser points out that Exod 19:5 (If you obey my voice) falls into a section (Exod 19:3-8) which is cast in the Near Eastern suzerainty treaty form in which vs. 3b is the preamble (summons by God), vs. 4 the historical prologue, vs. 5a the stipulations, vss. 5b-6a the blessings, and vss. 7-8 the acceptance in solemn assembly.


5 Deut 5:4-22.
Israel.\textsuperscript{1} When hearing YHWH's instructions through Moses, Israel internalized the demands of God in order to "do" them and live in the land of inheritance.\textsuperscript{2} By repetition, Deuteronomy drives home the requirement of obedience: only by obedience would the Israelites prosper in the Promised Land. YHWH's protection was to come only to an "obedient nation" who took care to maintain the integrity of the covenantal relationship with YHWH.

In listening to Joshua, Israel was listening to Moses, who had listened to YHWH. Thus, in "listening" to and "obeying" Joshua as well as "doing" all that YHWH had commanded through Moses, Israel was taking some of its first steps in covenant fulfillment. Reception of Moses' hand-laying gesture confirmed Joshua's role as leader of the covenant community. Only as Israel obeyed him could it maintain the integrity of its covenantal relationship with YHWH.

Conclusion

The laying on of hands of Deut 34:9 receives special prominence and importance as a result of a study of the text as well as its placement in the structure of the final four chapters of Deuteronomy.

Three indicators give structural importance to the laying on of hands in Deut 31-34. First, the dominant theme throughout these chapters is Moses' death and Joshua's installation. Deut 31 describes the presentation and commission elements of

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
  \item Deut 5:23-6:3.
  \item Deut 4:1; 31:9-13.
\end{itemize}}

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Joshua's installation while Deut 34 describes the laying on of hands element. Deut 34 presents the grand conclusion of the book of Deuteronomy which describes the death of Moses, the greatest of all prophets, and his most important act of installing Joshua as his successor. Laying on of hands thus becomes the gesture which summarizes and gives meaning to the entire installation event. The presentation and commissioning of Joshua find their meaning in the gesture of laying on of hands.

The structure of Deut 34 indicates the second indicator of the importance of laying on of hands. Deut 34 places Joshua's installation between Moses' death and a short discussion of Moses' greatness. Placed in this context, Joshua received laying on of hands by the greatest of all Israel's prophets. Joshua's reception of such a physical touch from so great a man indicated that he was to be Israel's next leader. But Moses' touch possessed a grander element than merely that of pointing out who Israel's next leader was to be. Deut 34:9 points out that Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid hands on him. Laying on of hands had an impact on Joshua in that he received something as a direct result of the physical gesture.

The conclusion of Deut 34 indicates the third structural indicator of the importance of laying on of hands. Deut 34:12 concludes the book by reminding the reader of the fact that Moses possessed a mighty hand. The one who laid hands on Joshua was well known for hand(s) which possessed great power.

A study of Deut 34:9 accords importance to the laying on of hands by noting two results of Moses laying hands on Joshua. Something happened to both Joshua and
Israel as a result of receiving the hand-laying gesture: Joshua received wisdom and Israel obeyed Joshua.

Joshua's reception of the spirit depended on the laying on of hands. This reception of the spirit was specifically limited to the spirit's gift of wisdom. A study of the "spirit of wisdom" in the Pentateuch provides two observations about the gift Joshua received: first, the spirit of wisdom was given to people who already possessed "spirit"; second, the "spirit of wisdom" refers to a gift of skill to accomplish an assigned task.

As noted above, the book of Exodus connects reception of the "spirit of wisdom" with already "wise hearted" people. Evidently, reception of the "spirit of wisdom" had as its prerequisite a previous possession of some form of wisdom. Application of this principle to the experience of Joshua would indicate that he, too, previous to the reception of the "spirit of wisdom" indicated in Deut 34:9, was a "wise hearted" person. Moses would not have laid his hands on Joshua without that previous evidence of wisdom. The act of filling was a complete act made possible by Joshua's previous reception of YHWH's wisdom.

The book of Exodus also indicates that YHWH gave the above-mentioned "wise hearted" people an extra measure of the "spirit of wisdom." In their case, "spirit of wisdom" refers specifically to a gift of skill, given to an otherwise previously endowed recipient, which enabled that person to accomplish a new task to which YHWH had called him/her. Application of this principle to Joshua would indicate that he received an extra measure of YHWH's Holy Spirit. However, in Joshua's case, the means of
receiving that wisdom is specified. Through the laying on of hands, Joshua received a gift of wisdom needed by the demands of the new office he was to assume.

The kind of wisdom Joshua received can be likened to that required of the judges Moses appointed as well as of those to be appointed in the Promised Land. Like these judges, Joshua received wisdom which included insight, discretionary skill, and administrative ability. He needed the wisdom to make impartial, righteous judgment without fear of reprisal. He received a wisdom which enabled proper understanding, interpretation, and ability to apply the law. He received a wisdom which also enabled the discernment of the results of various courses of action.

This new and extra gift of the spirit was received from YHWH through the mediation of Moses' physical touch. Joshua's position as a general who led Israel's fighting men and as Moses' right-hand man indicates that he already possessed administrative skills. But in the laying on of Moses' hands, Joshua received something more. That something more was what Moses had possessed during his leadership of Israel and which Israel was soon to lose due to Moses' imminent death, a gift to lead the whole nation into YHWH's desired action. Joshua had no need for this gift prior to Moses' death and his installation as the leader of the nation.

Finally, Deut 34:9 accords importance to the laying on of hands by noting its effect on Israel. Reception of Moses' hand-laying gesture confirmed Joshua's position of leader of the covenant community. Joshua received the obedience of the Israeliite community as a direct result of Moses' gesture.
Laying on of Hands in Both Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9

Areas of Uniqueness, Disagreement, and Agreement

Num 27:12-23 describes the historical event to which Deut 34:9 appears to refer. When comparing the “laying of hands on Joshua” in these two passages, one discovers areas in which each pericope presents unique information, areas in which the pericopes appear to disagree, and areas of agreement. A review of each of these areas leads to an understanding of the hand-laying gesture as applied to the experience of Joshua.

Four areas of uniqueness appear in the Numbers pericope. First, Numbers points out that the event is the result of Moses' request of YHWH to appoint an individual found numbered among those of the second census for these are the ones found ready to enter the Promised Land. Second, Numbers points out areas of leadership of much concern to Moses. Such areas include leadership issues of shepherding as well as the ability to lead the congregation out and in. YHWH’s response to such concerns is to instruct Moses to take Joshua and lay hands on him. Third, Numbers outlines a limit to be placed on Joshua which Moses had not.

1Vogels (3-4) points out that exegetes who make cross-references from one text to the other (Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9) either do not seem to notice important differences (G. Bernini) or discuss the differences (J. De Vaulx) but rarely try to explain the disparity between the two texts. Vogels (4) further points out that since the two texts belong to the Pentateuch, one might explain the differences by the theory of the “four traditions (J-E-D-P).” However, “exegetes generally agree that the two texts belong to P,” thus the “four traditions” explanation does “not seem satisfactory in this case.”
experienced. In his leadership of Israel, Joshua was not to directly approach YHWH as Moses had. In order to discover YHWH's will, Joshua had to approach the high priest Eleazar who in turn was to use the Urim. The fourth area of uniqueness applies only to a comparison of Num 27:12-23 with only Deut 34:9 and not the whole section of which Deut 34:9 is a part, namely, Deut 31-34. When compared to only Deut 34:9, Numbers points out three critical elements that were to accompany laying on of hands: public presentation (도록) of Joshua to the congregation and Eleazar, commissioning of or giving a charge (גרה) to Joshua, and giving Joshua some of Moses' honor or authority (_BOTH). When compared with Deut 31-34, two of the accompanying elements are mentioned in Deut 31, presentation and commissioning.

Deuteronomy contains one area of uniqueness, that of closure. While Numbers describes what Moses did and that the Israelites were to obey Joshua, Deuteronomy clarifies that Israel actually did (וה) as YHWH had commanded Moses. In Numbers, Israel is told what to do while in Deuteronomy Israel did what it had been told to do. Joshua's installation had its appropriate effect.

The two pericopes appear to disagree in two areas. The first area is more a complication in Numbers than a disagreement between them. Scholars have become sidetracked by an apparent discrepancy in the Numbers pericope in its presentation of YHWH's instructions to Moses as a request to lay a hand on Joshua but that when Moses implemented the request, he used two hands. First, it should be noted that the command is more concerned with method than with numbers. It appears that the instruction is to use a particular part of the anatomy in the ordination service, namely,
the hand. Second, Deuteronomy states that Moses laid hands on Joshua. Third, a review of hand usage in the Old Testament confirms that Hebrew thought placed no significant difference upon the usage of one or two hands.¹ Thus, there is no discrepancy in the Numbers pericope. YHWH wanted Moses to use hands in the ceremony. In all likelihood, due to the fact that two hands are mentioned in both Deuteronomy as well as in Numbers, the actual ceremony involved Moses using both hands.

The second area of apparent difference is more complicated. On the one hand, Numbers states that because Joshua was a man in whom is spirit, Moses was to lay hands on him. On the other hand, Deuteronomy states that Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid hands on him. Numbers appears to state that hand laying is dependent on previous spirit reception while Deuteronomy appears to state the opposite. However, any apparent contradiction disappears when one addresses the difference of purpose in the two pericopes. Chavasse points out that “when Moses commissioned Joshua (Numb 27:18-23) he was sending him to work, and in Deut 34:9 it is clear that he was thereby strengthened for work.”²

In Numbers, Moses desired that YHWH, the “God of the spirits of all flesh,” indicate a man in whom existed a spirit in tune with YHWH. Numbers, in declaring

¹Vogels (4-5) states that “the ritual of the laying on by one or two hands appears elsewhere and the difference of number does not seem to indicate a difference of meaning.” He then refers to D. Daube, E. Ferguson, J. K. Parratt, and C. Chavasse for support.

²Chavasse, 150.
that Joshua was a man in whom is spirit, emphasized that Joshua had that spirit. Thus
Joshua, spirit filled, was the man on whom Moses was to lay hands. In the situation
described in Numbers, Moses had not yet been instructed as to whom the next leader
was to be.

Deuteronomy describes a different occasion, an occasion after the fact. There
is no need to establish Joshua’s experience prior to hand laying. Rather, emphasis is
on the results of hand laying on an already spirit-filled man. Previous reception of the
spirit did not dispense with the need of a new outward sign. The Spirit itself was not
enough, there must be a particular appointment and reception of special grace for a
special task. Evidently, YHWH passed to Joshua, as a result of Moses laying hands on
him, a special new gift necessitated by the fact that Joshua now actually was to be the
new leader. Thus, Joshua received an additional endowment to that already
established, that of practical wisdom and administrative ability to govern Israel.

Areas of agreement between the texts are fourfold. First, and foremost, both
passages emphasize YHWH’s control: He is in command of the event. Each passage
contains a statement that all was done according to YHWH’s orders. In Num 27:16,
Moses requested that YHWH, “the God of the spirits of all flesh,” direct in choosing
Israel’s next leader. Eight specific references to YHWH throughout the passage further
indicate His control. The pericope concludes by pointing out, with two distinct

\begin{enumerate}
\item Vogels, 3.
\item Num 27:12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23.
\end{enumerate}
statements in the short space of two verses, that Moses did as YHWH had commanded. Deut 34:9 follows in the same vein, also emphasizing that Israel did as YHWH had commanded Moses.

Second, both passages emphasize the presence of spirit (נָרָה) in Joshua. It has been noted above that the timing of receiving the spirit differs between the passages. However, both passages place heavy importance on the element of spirit in the choice of Joshua. "Spirit" (רוח) is something that Joshua possessed prior to his installation as Israel's leader and is also something that Joshua received as a result of that installation. "Spirit" plays a significant role in each of the passages.

Third, both passages point out that listening or obedience (שָׁמַע) is an expected response to hand laying. The waw perfect verbs of Num 27:18-21 describe a series of actions Moses was to accomplish with Joshua commencing with the laying on of hands, then standing Joshua before Eleazar and the congregation, then commissioning Joshua, then conferring Moses' honor on Joshua, all culminating in a לְעָלֶמֶנּ (so that) purpose clause demonstrating that the purpose of Moses' actions was to gain the obedience (שָׁמַע) of Israel. While Deut 34:9 contains the laying on of hands without the other three actions, it does contain the same result, that of obedience (שָׁמַע). It would appear that since Deut 34:9 includes the first of the above four actions and the culmination, it would by implication also assume the other three actions. Also, the לְעָלֶמֶנּ (so that) purpose clause of Num 27:20 corresponds to the waw plus imperfect concluding clauses of Deut 34:9, which describe Israel's response as that of listening.
(םלוע) to Joshua and doing all YHWH commanded Moses. Deuteronomy states simply that the sons of Israel obeyed (שם) him.

Fourth, both pericopes place major importance on “laying on of hands” by Moses. Numbers emphasizes the gesture’s importance structurally by deliberately placing it first in the list of activities YHWH instructed Moses to actualize in the installation of Joshua even though it was not implemented first. The deliberateness of placing laying on of hands first in this list emphasizes its importance as both a title to the list and a conclusion. Laying on of hands summarizes the list and includes within the gesture all the meanings of the rest of the list. Deuteronomy emphasizes the gesture’s importance by deliberately placing it last as a summary statement which gives meaning to the entire installation procedure.

Both pericopes also treat hand laying as a conduit or a means to effect something. Numbers treats hand laying as a means for Moses to become personally involved in the process of choosing Joshua as well as a means to physically manifest his faith in YHWH. Additionally, Numbers structurally indicates that hand laying was the conduit for passing some of Moses’ honor to Joshua. Deuteronomy treats hand laying as the means by which Joshua received the spirit of wisdom necessary for Joshua to meet the demands of his new office.

Both pericopes treat hand laying as an important element in Israel’s obedience of Joshua. Israel’s obedience as mentioned in Numbers was a reaction to the whole ceremony, which included laying on of hands, presentation, and commissioning, but
Israel's obedience as mentioned in Deuteronomy was a reaction to Joshua's spirit of wisdom which he received as a result of hand laying.

Both pericopes treat hand laying as an important visible expression of the word of YHWH. The Numbers pericope concluded by placing in juxtaposition the "word" of YHWH and the "hand" of Moses. Laying on of hands provided a visual enactment of YHWH's word with all its attendant concepts of power and ability to effect what the gesture signified. The book of Deuteronomy concludes by reminding the reader of Moses' greatness, which included a "mighty hand." The Pentateuch clarifies that YHWH was the real power behind all the mighty acts of Moses; however, it also clarifies that YHWH chose to pass his action through the hand of Moses. YHWH blessed Joshua through Moses' hands.

Joshua and the Laying on of Hands

What is the significance of Moses laying his hands on Joshua at his installation to the office of leader of Israel? In search of an answer to this question, chapter 1 reviewed the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of laying on of hands in the ancient Near East transfers of leadership, discovering little evidence for significant interest in the hand gesture. Chapter 2 reviewed the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of laying on of hands in Old Testament transfers of leadership, discovering major significance placed upon hand laying as a gesture. This chapter studied the only significant Old Testament leadership
transfer which used laying on of hands, Moses to Joshua. As such, detailed study was
given to the two texts describing this scenario, Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9.

What can be learned from the above study of Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9?
What happened when Joshua received the laying on of hands (יָדָיוֹן)? How was the
procedure executed? What were the symbolic implications of the gesture? What were
the tangible effects of the gesture? The following sections answer these questions.

Procedural Techniques of Laying on of Hands

It is the purpose of this study to investigate the procedural techniques of
יָדָיוֹן in Num 27:12:23 and Deut 34:9. This section reviews how יָדָיוֹן is
executed in these texts by addressing the questions of the administrative context, the
relationship of the procedure to that of the Levites, the number of hands used, the
physical setting, the important players, public presentation, and the accompanying
words Moses used in the procedure.

In the administrative context, Israel was about to enter one of the more
vulnerable and unstable periods of any government, the time of change in leadership.
Moses realized that a decision had to be made that needed to be communicated to the
congregation of Israel in such a way that the whole nation would be motivated to accept
a new leader and follow him. YHWH clarified the procedure which would accomplish
each of these goals.
The procedure Moses followed in the installation of Joshua carried similarities to the procedure used for setting aside the Levites as recorded in Num 8:5-26.\(^1\) YHWH commanded Moses to take (ון) both Joshua and the Levites. Both ceremonies took place before the entire community (הנה) and involved hand placement (ךל) on (לחם) the participants. The experience of the Levites can be instructive for understanding the role of Moses in Joshua’s hand-laying experience in the area of determining the role of Moses. Most scholars propose that, for the Levites, the large size of the congregation precluded the whole group from personal involvement in the ceremony.\(^2\) Thus the congregation laid hands on the Levites by the agency of representatives. Moses’ role, in the case of Joshua, should also be seen as representational. The effectiveness and success of Joshua’s hand-laying experience depended on the fact that Moses represented YHWH, Who expressed His choice for Israel’s leader through Moses. Moses’ hands became the visible representation of the hands of YHWH. Num 27:12-23 states very clearly that Moses acted at the behest of

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\(^1\)Wenham, 195; Sturdy, 197.

\(^2\)Rashi (see Fisch. 839) maintains that since the Levites became an expiatory offering for the whole nation because of the sin of the golden calf it was therefore imperative for the whole congregation to be present at the appointment of the Levites and to put their hands on them, just like for the sacrifice. An equally attractive proposal is that since the Levites took the place of the firstborn, the firstborn laid hands: “Numbers,” *The Wycliff Bible Commentary*, 123; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 1:533-4; Binns, 50. Most scholars propose some representative of the people, such as the princes, elders, or heads of the tribes, laid hands in behalf of the whole group: “Numbers,” *The Wycliff Bible Commentary*, 123; Allen, “Numbers,” 2:966-7; Harrison, 152; Riggans, 65; “Numbers,” *SDABC*, 1:852; Henry, 1:595-6; Binns, 50; Budd, 93; Cook and Espin, 679; Greenstone, 80-3.
YHWH, and Deut 34:9 reminds the reader that YHWH gave the commands to Moses, which in turn Israel followed. On a secondary level, Moses also represented the congregation in expressing its support of YHWH's choice.

As to the number of hands used in the procedure. Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 appear to present an ambiguity. However, the number of hands used in the installation appears to have no particular significance. Three references are made to hand(s) in the two texts, of which two clearly use the plural. This fact would lead one to conclude that most likely Moses used both hands. However, the fact that hands were used carries much more significance than how many hands were used.

Neither Num 27:12-23 nor Deut 34:9 specifically states where the hand-laying event took place. Israel, as a congregation, always conducted its official business with YHWH at the door to the Tabernacle. The location of the Levitical ceremony is identified as "before the tent of meeting" (תֵּבָן). The Levitical-hand laying location affirms interpreting Joshua's location based upon Deut 31:14, where YHWH summoned Joshua to the door of the Tabernacle to receive His personal commissioning. Moses called the whole congregation to that sacred place where he conducted the hand-laying ceremony for Joshua.

Five important players filled significant roles in the installation: YHWH, Moses, Joshua, Eleazar the high priest, and the entire congregation. YHWH initiated the whole process and effected it. Moses became YHWH's visible representative. Joshua had previously given powerful evidence as to his skills and connection with the divine. Eleazar the high priest represented the cultic or formal worship, connection.
It was for the congregation that the whole service needed to take place, for YHWH loved His people and desired to place in their midst a leader who would lead them into the Promised Land.

Presentation played an important role in the procedure. YHWH instructed Moses to present Joshua to the entire congregation of Israel. It was important that all see whom had been chosen as well as to observe the sacred ceremonies of installation. Also, by this act, Joshua was reminded for whom he was to be responsible. YHWH also instructed Moses to present Joshua to the high priest. By this act, Joshua was reminded that in his leadership of the people he was also to work in close harmony with the one who possessed the tools to communicate with YHWH. Joshua was not to forget his connection with his God.

The ceremony included words of Moses to the congregation, public presentation of Joshua to both the congregation and to Eleazar the high priest, Moses laying hands on Joshua’s head, Moses giving a commission to Joshua, and YHWH’s personal commission of Joshua in the Tabernacle. Moses’ words to the congregation included explanation of the fact that Moses would not lead them into the Promised Land but that Joshua would and concluding with words of encouragement based upon YHWH’s promise of protection. Then Moses presented Joshua to the congregation so that all could see who their next leader was to be. Moses laid his hands on Joshua’s head and gave him a commission, again in the sight of all. Moses’ commission included four parts: (1) words of encouragement calculated to make Joshua firm and resolute, (2) words that described Joshua’s task as conquering the Promised Land and appropriately
dividing it between the tribes, (3) words promising divine assistance, sufficiency, and companionship throughout all of Joshua’s leadership, and (4) words exhorting Joshua to read, preserve, and carefully keep the law. The ceremony concluded with YHWH appearing in a pillar of cloud, at the Tent of Meeting, to Moses and Joshua wherein He commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous, that Joshua would bring Israel into the Promised Land, and that “I myself will be with you.”

The procedure for laying hands on Joshua came at a time of leadership change. The important players in the scenario included YHWH, Moses, Joshua, Eleazar the high priest, and the entire congregation. Moses represented YHWH, who expressed through the procedure who His choice was for leader, and the congregation, who expressed its support of YHWH’s choice. Moses presented Joshua to both the congregation and the high priest, gave him a charge, and laid both hands on his head. Though the laying on of hands represents the most important element of the installation, all of the other elements contributed to the installation. It appears important to the concept of the installation that laying on of hands included also presentation and commissioning.

Symbolic Meanings of Laying on of Hands

It is also the purpose of this study to investigate the symbolic meanings of in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. This section reviews what the laying on of hands accomplished symbolically for Joshua in these texts by addressing the
following questions: Did the laying on of hands pass authority or power to Joshua? Did the gesture symbolize confirmation, succession, affirmation, or designation?

Blessing

Scholars often suggest that laying hands on Joshua symbolizes giving a solemn blessing.¹ Most base this conclusion on Gen 48:14 where Israel blessed his grandchildren by placing his hands on their heads. Hand laying in this passage clearly denotes a gesture which passes a blessing from one to another. However, the placement of hands in Gen 48:14 is indicated by מָצַע rather than מִפְקַד. While Moses may well have intended to convey a blessing to Joshua, מִפְקַד has no Old Testament precedent indicating the passing on of blessing.

Identification, substitution, and confirmation

Scholars also propose that Moses' hand laying indicated some form of identification. As the Levites were identified by laying on of hands as representatives of the congregation, and in particular the firstborn, Moses also identified Joshua through the laying on of hands as a representative of either himself or YHWH.² Thus Joshua was identified as dedicated to YHWH and no longer his own master.³ Hand laying identified Joshua as YHWH's specific individual to become the next leader of

¹Ashley, 552; Wenham, 195; Calvin, 318; Huey, 93-4; Noordtzij, 256-7; Greenstone, 297; “Numbers,” SDABC, 1:923; Ferguson, Dissertation, 96.

²Sturdy, 97.

³Calvin, 318.
Israel. Furthermore, hand laying indicated Moses' identification with Joshua as well as identifying Joshua with Moses, making Joshua his substitute and resulting in the Israelite's willing obedience.\footnote{The intended result of laying on of hands in both Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 was the obedience of Israel. See: Sturdy, 197; Huey, 93-4; Wenham, 195.} Indicating continuity in the succession of leadership necessitated Moses' personal touch so all would know his endorsement prior to his death.\footnote{Rosenbaum and Silbermann, 134; Philip, 285; Wenham, 195.}

Identification resulted in four steps of confirmation. First, laying on of hands, as a gesture of touch on a specific individual, confirmed that Joshua was YHWH’s choice. Second, because Moses represented YHWH, the gesture became an extension of YHWH’s hand in laying claim to Joshua. Hand laying confirmed that Joshua belonged to YHWH. Third, the hand gesture confirmed in an official manner that Joshua had legally received the leadership position. By placing hands on Joshua, Moses not only identified with Joshua but also affirmed him and indicated confidence in him.\footnote{Deut 3:21-28; 31:1-8, 14, 23. See: Fisch, 943; Owens, 154.} The hand-laying gesture was a public act confirming and ratifying the spiritual gifts YHWH had already given Joshua.\footnote{Num 27:18. See: Cook and Espin, 759; Riggans, 202.} The gesture was an act of validation recognizing Joshua’s YHWH-given capacity for leadership.\footnote{Coats, \textit{Moses}, 150; Ashley, 552.} Thus hand laying confirmed an inner endowment by an external recognition. Fourth, the gesture
confirmed the notion that Moses, Joshua, and Israel recognized the solemnity of the moment. YHWH had spoken through Moses' hands, had acted through his hands in various powerful ways, and now Israel was invited to recognize the grave implications of Moses' gesture on Joshua.

Formal appointment, induction, dedication, setting aside into office

An area of common consent in the scholarly world as to the meaning of laying on of hands on Joshua is that of initiation to office.\(^1\) Hand laying set Joshua apart from the rest of the congregation and distinguished him from all other potential leaders that he might be dedicated to the service of leadership without complication of competition. Scholars note that laying on of hands not only marked Joshua as one of YHWH's special men but also indicated that he was being set aside for leadership service.\(^2\) Laying on of hands signified an official investiture to a task which invested Joshua with responsibility and power in an official ceremony held before the entire congregation.\(^3\) In other words, laying on of hands indicated that Joshua was to be dedicated to the special purpose of the office of leadership and conferred formal and public appointment to that office.\(^4\) Thus laying on of hands became an act of installation and inauguration.

\(^1\)"Numbers," *SDABC*, 1:923; Noordtzij, 256-7; Ashley, 552.

\(^2\)Riggans, 202.

\(^3\)Sansom, 325 (investiture to a task); Hanson, 14:415-6 (invest with responsibility); Allen. "Numbers." 2:946 (investiture of power).

\(^4\)Noordtzij, 256-7; Ashley, 552; Cook and Espin, 759.
as well as a symbol of consecration and initiation into office.¹ Both W. Gunther Plaut and George Coats refer to Joshua's hand-laying experience as an ordination.² Ordination should be understood in the sense of introduction into office or investiture with official function by a religious ceremony.

Transfer

A significant scholarly representation purports that the primary intention of laying hands was to transfer authority and power to Joshua to act in behalf of the whole nation, or to at least visually represent that transfer.³ The act of hand laying reminded "the audience that the hands of Moses parallel the rod of Moses in that they are instruments to effect the power of God for the people."⁴ More than transferring formal authority, laying on of hands transferred a portion of Moses' honor onto Joshua, thus enabling his acceptance by the Israelite congregation.⁵ Specifically, hand laying symbolically transferred the lifelong office and powers of leadership.⁶

¹Noth, Numbers, 215 (act of installation); Calvin, 318 (inauguration); "Numbers," SDABC, 1:923 (consecration); Greenstone, 297 (initiation).
²Plaut, 1205; Coats, Moses, 150.
⁴Coats, Moses, 191.
⁵Stacey, 265: Owens, 154; Ferguson, Dissertation, 94-6.
⁶Budd, 307; Plaut, 1205; Huey, 81, 93-4; Fisch, 47, 943; "Numbers," SDABC, 1:923; Hanson (refers to Billerbeck and Gray), 14:415-6; Greenstone, 297;
Scholars do not agree on the subject of hand laying and transference of the Spirit. On the one hand, Ferguson argues that laying on of hands does not in any way communicate the Spirit to Joshua. Mitchell adds that human hands do not have magical ability to transfer anything of this sort. On the other hand, midrashic tradition submitted that laying on of hands can transfer the Spirit. However, normally hand laying is not seen as that which actually transfers, but rather that which symbolically transfers. Coats points out that laying on of hands marks “a transfer of spirit that characterizes Moses. A recognition of divine presence, the defining quality of Moses as man of God, now passed to the successor.”

However, in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9, the concept of spirit plays a significant role. Numbers does not address the transfer of Spirit, but carefully notes that Joshua already possessed spirit which made possible the laying on of hands. Deuteronomy clearly states that Joshua received the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid hands on him. A spirit indeed was transferred to Joshua. What spirit was transferred? True, it was special skill to lead. But how did one receive this gift? This


1Ferguson, Dissertation. 94-6.


3According to the Midrash, referred to by Ferguson, Dissertation, 94-6.

4Coats, Moses, 191. Though Mitchell (91, 176-7) cannot accept that hands laying transfers power, he accepts that hand laying symbolically transfers Spirit, authority, and responsibility.
study demonstrated that the gift had to come from YHWH, an observation supported in Deut 34:9 when it states that Israel did all that YHWH commanded Moses. The Spirit of YHWH was transferred to Joshua through the laying on of hands which enabled Joshua to better function as a leader.

Succession

Did laying on of hands establish a succession of leadership? Yes and no. Yes, Joshua indeed succeeded Moses as a result of the laying-on-of-hands ceremony. However, Moses in no way established a dynasty or circumstances that could in any way be interpreted as “apostolic succession.” Moses’ authority was rooted in his relationship with YHWH and not in his relationship or connection with any human being. Joshua’s authority was rooted in YHWH’s commands to Moses as well as to himself. Joshua’s authority was founded in his connection to YHWH rather than in his connection to Moses. One does not read that Joshua in turn laid hands on anyone, but

1Pirke Avoth states: “Moses received the Torah at Sinai and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly.” Such a statement implies some sort of succession. However, the intent of the statement appears not to be concerned with leadership succession as with outlining a historic chain of men who transmitted Jewish tradition. See: Irving M. Bunim, Ethics from Sinai: An Eclectic, Wide-ranging Commentary on Pirke Avoth (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1964), 1:28; R. Travers Herford, The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 20; Jacob Neusner, Torah from Our Sages: Pirke Avot (Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1984), 25; Isaac Unterman, Pirke Aboth: Sayings of the Fathers (New York: Twayne Publishers. 1964), 24-30.
instead, after his death, YHWH raised up judges to lead Israel.\(^1\) What made the difference was YHWH’s choice, whether it be of Joshua or later of the judges. However, it should be noted that YHWH chose to establish Joshua through the physical contact of Moses’ hands with Joshua’s head.

**Tangible Effects of Laying on of Hands**

It was also the purpose of this study to investigate the tangible effects of laying on of hands (דוחש) in Num 27:12:23 and Deut 34:9. This section reviews what the laying on of hands accomplished tangibly for Joshua by addressing the following questions: What is the importance of touch? Did the gesture contribute to any changes in leadership skills or personality? Were there any physical manifestations?

The tangible effects of laying on of hands finds its primary importance in the fact that YHWH Himself instructed Moses to lay his hand on Joshua. The physical gesture of hand laying finds its root in a command from the Almighty. Another importance of touch is that the whole congregation observed Moses physically touch his successor. Moses did not just speak words, he also gave physical manifestation to graphically illustrate his point. Moses, by touching Joshua, marked him as the one to receive the above-mentioned symbolic meanings of hand laying. The gesture of touch became the conduit by which YHWH chose to pass Moses’ honor to Joshua.

\(^1\)Judg 2:16.
Where there any physical manifestations of ecstasy which resulted from the laying on of hands? The texts give no indication of any such manifestation. The texts also give no indication of any change in Joshua’s already well-established personality and character. But Deuteronomy does indicate that Joshua received the “spirit of wisdom” as the result of the gesture. Surely this gift of YHWH had such a noticeable tangible effect on Joshua that the writer of Deut 34:9 felt compelled to make note of it. Apparently the wisdom Joshua received gave him a special understanding of the law which made him one who judged righteously without partiality and without fear. He also had the wisdom to foresee results of various courses of action and thus lead his people correctly.

The most obvious tangible effect of the hand-laying gesture in the experience of Joshua appeared in the reaction of the congregation of Israel to his leadership. Numbers established that the congregation was to listen to and obey Joshua, and Deuteronomy points out that Israel indeed obeyed him and did all that YHWH had commanded through Moses.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided an exegetical study of the laying on of hands (יְדֵיָ֣ה) in the installation of Joshua to the leadership position of Israel, as presented in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. Each text and its parallel passages were studied in detail to discover their contribution to an understanding of the hand gesture. In arriving at a conclusion, the areas of uniqueness, disagreement, and agreement between the two
texts were noted and then applied directly to Joshua’s experience in the areas of procedure, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the hand-laying gesture.

The procedure of hand laying was initiated by the need to establish a new leader for Israel. Moses represented YHWH, who expressed through the gesture His choice for leader, and represented the congregation, who through the gesture expressed support of YHWH’s choice. Moses presented Joshua to both the congregation and the high priest, gave him a charge, and laid both hands on his head. Though the laying on of hands represented the most important element of the installation, all of the other elements were necessary in order to accomplish the installation.

Laying on of hands accomplished several symbolic goals. Hand laying identified Joshua as Israel’s next leader, affirmed him, indicated confidence in him, confirmed, and ratified the spiritual gifts YHWH had already given him. Hand laying marked Joshua as YHWH’s chosen leader and indicated that he was set aside for and dedicated to leadership service, thus becoming an act of installation, inauguration, and ordination as well as a symbol of consecration and initiation into office. Hand laying transferred some of Moses’ honor to Joshua and the spirit of wisdom that enabled him with unique ability to lead his people. Laying on of hands did establish a succession of leadership but did not establish a dynasty. YHWH retained the option to choose whom He would have for leader.

Laying on of hands also had tangible effects. By touching Joshua, Moses marked him as the one to receive Israel’s obedience, and the texts comment that Israel indeed did obey Joshua. YHWH’s gift of the spirit of wisdom had such a noticeable tangible effect on Joshua that Deut 34:9 makes special note of it.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this dissertation was to determine the procedural techniques, symbolic meanings, and tangible effects of the laying on of hands (יְדִי וּבַשָּׁמֹן) in the installation of Joshua to the position of Israel's leader as presented in Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. In attempting to reach this goal, chapter 1 reviewed ancient Near Eastern hand symbolism in the perception, communication, and transference of status, chapter 2 reviewed the same symbolism in the Old Testament world, and chapter 3 provided an exegetical study of Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. The purpose of this final chapter is to summarize the findings and to draw tentative conclusions and implications.

Summary

Chapter 1 presented the results of a study of the ancient Near Eastern cognates and related terms of יד and בושם in a representative sample of literature from the ancient Near Eastern world. This study indicated that hand symbolism in the ancient Near Eastern world was very rich and had broad application but that laying on of hands in leadership transfer scenarios appears to be limited to the transfer of leadership in Egypt from Dhutmôse I to his daughter Hatshepsut. The Old Testament world as indicated in chapter 2 shared in the rich hand symbolism of the world around it, but
added unique understanding regarding the symbolism of laying on of hands in transfers of leadership.

Because this dissertation focuses on laying on of hands in Joshua's installation as the leader of Israel to follow Moses, study of ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament hand symbolism was limited to its usage in the perception, projection, and change of status. It was discovered that hand symbolism played a significant role in each of these three areas for both the biblical and ancient Near Eastern worlds, thus indicating rich symbolism which can enhance an interpretation of the usage of Moses' hand in Joshua's installation to leadership. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the conclusions for hand symbolism in these three areas.

First, hands played a significant role in the perception of status by symbolizing ownership, possession, power, and control. Such symbolism further indicated various responsibilities that naturally attended themselves to ownership such as provision of care, protection, guidance, direction, and guarantee of well-being. An important attending responsibility included that of judgment whether positive or negative. Naturally, the hand symbolized one's strength and ability to act and thus took on personal qualities of accomplishment. When applied to the areas of the divine, the hand became something magical and seminal symbolizing the power of creation or procreation.

Second, hand symbolism played a significant role in leadership ability to project status through someone else, to communicate and express status as well as the nature of that status to a community and the community's response to that communication. Hand
symbolism as a leader's communication to his community gave definite communication as to who was in command. The phrase, "by the hand of," indicated delegated authority. But more than a symbol of delegation, working "by the hand of" indicated working within the power of the delegated authority. YHWH passed details to His people, spoke, worked, saved, destroyed, and gave commandments by the hand of intermediaries. Moses was one of the favored ones "by the hand of" whom God acted.

Hand gestures on the part of leaders indicated kindness, approval, and recognition. Hand symbolism as community response indicated an expression of loyalty or request in prayer as well as the taking of oaths, making of pledges, or rendering of respect, submission, or obeisance.

Third, hands played a significant symbolic role in effecting status change. Because power symbolically resided in one's hand, one could symbolically transfer that power through the hand. For example, laying on of hands indicated ritual ownership, substitution, conferral of blessing, protection, and power. It appears that the laying on of hands in ancient Near Eastern transfer of leadership scenarios was used only in Egypt, and only in Hatshepsut's rise to power. In the Old Testament, laying on of hands communicated a broad spectrum of meanings which include: transference, substitution, as well as confirmation of legal decisions, confirmation of the recipient of the action, confirmation of ownership, and confirmation of recognition and setting aside. The Hebrew phrase for "laying on of hands," מָכַשׁ, indicated leaning as well as support, transfer of something, declaration of a substitute, confirmation of a legal act, confirmation of who is to receive the results of the hand laying, confirmation
Chapter 3 gave study to the two texts that mention laying on of hands on Joshua at his installation to the position of leader of Israel: Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9. This chapter gave attention to the historical and contextual background of the event. Then, the Masoretic Text was analyzed and translated. Study was also made of the literary structure of the two passages to include ascertaining structural indicators of key words that impact an understanding of the usage and meaning of כְּפֶרֶת in the two texts. The key words and phrases of the above two passages were examined for their contribution to understanding laying on of hands. Parallel Pentateuchal passages were examined for details of additional information that enhanced the development of a complete picture of Joshua’s installation.

When comparing Joshua’s laying on of hands in Numbers and Deuteronomy, one discovers areas in which each passage presents unique information, areas in which they appear to disagree, and areas in which they agree.

Numbers presents most of the unique information due to its twelve verses as compared with the single-verse passage in Deuteronomy. Numbers indicates that Joshua was appointed from among the numbered who were to enter the Promised Land. Numbers addresses Moses’ specific concerns for the leadership of Israel, concerns of shepherding and leading the people out and back in. Numbers describes elements other than laying on of hands that were part of the installation ceremony. Such elements included public presentation to the congregation and high priest, the
giving of a charge, and the giving of some of Moses’ honor. It should be noted that
Deut 31, as the introduction to the immediate context of Deut 34:9, also describes two
of the elements accompanying laying on of hands, namely, presentation and
commission. Numbers also specifies that in order for Joshua to discover YHWH’s will
for his leadership, he must ask Eleazar, the high priest, to discover that will through
the Urim. Deuteronomy adds the unique touch of closure by stating that Israel really
did obey Joshua.

Upon investigation, the two areas of apparent disagreement between the two
passages can be harmonized. First, Numbers appears to contradict itself, for YHWH is
reported to have instructed Moses to lay his hand (singular) on Joshua, and Moses is
reported to have laid his hands (plural) on Joshua. A review of Moses’ usage of hand
or hands indicated that there was no significant difference in the symbolism of one or
both hands. Most likely, in that hands (plural) are mentioned in both Deuteronomy as
well as in Numbers, the actual ceremony involved Moses using both hands. Second,
the relationship between hand laying and Joshua’s reception of the spirit appears to
differ in that Numbers states that Joshua is to receive hand laying because he is a man
in whom there is spirit and Deuteronomy states that he received the spirit of wisdom
because of the hand gesture. However, the two passages address two different issues:
Numbers clarifies why Joshua is eligible for the position of leadership, and
Deuteronomy clarifies what happened as a result of the hand-laying experience.
Joshua’s previous reception of the Spirit did not preclude the need of a new outward
sign. YHWH passed to Joshua, as a result of Moses laying hands on him, a special
him, a special new gift necessitated by the fact that Joshua received new responsibility. Joshua received an additional endowment to that already established which enabled him to govern Israel.

Areas of agreement between Num 27:12-23 and Deut 34:9 are fourfold. First, and most important, both passages emphasize YHWH’s control. He is in command of the event. In Num 27:16, Moses requested that YHWH, “the God of the spirits of all flesh,” direct in choosing Israel’s next leader. Eight specific references to YHWH throughout the passage further indicate His control. The pericope concludes by pointing out, with two distinct statements in the short space of two verses, that Moses did as YHWH had commanded. Deut 34:9 follows in the same vein, also emphasizing that Israel did as YHWH had commanded Moses.

Second, both passages emphasize the significant role of spirit (šā'ār). “Spirit” (šā'ār) is something Joshua possessed prior to his installation as Israel’s leader and is also something he received as a result of laying on of hands in the installation ritual. Third, both passages emphasize that as a result of the gesture all Israel obeyed Joshua. Fourth, both passages treat the hand-laying gesture as of primary importance to the installation of Joshua. Both passages structurally indicate the importance of the laying on of hands. Numbers by placing the gesture first to emphasize its importance as both a title to the list and a conclusion, Deuteronomy by placing it last in the Deut 31-34 pericope as a summary statement to give meaning to the entire installation procedure. Hand laying provided a means for Moses to become physically involved in choosing Joshua, to physically manifest his faith in YHWH, to pass some of his honor to Joshua.
and for YHWH to give the spirit of wisdom. Both passages treat the gesture as an important visible expression of the word of YHWH with all of its attendant concepts of power and ability to effect what the gesture signified. YHWH blessed Joshua through the hands of Moses.

Conclusions

Based on the evidence submitted in this dissertation, it is concluded that Joshua’s reception of the laying on of hands played a critical, necessary, and significant role in his installation to the office of Israel’s leader. At least three types of transfer took place as a result of the laying on of hands: Joshua received a portion of Moses’ honor, an extra measure of God’s Spirit in the form of the spirit of wisdom, and the obedience as well as loyalty of the Israelite congregation. It is further concluded that the laying on of hands was the primary element which summarized and gave meaning to all the other actions that took place at the installation service. In other words, laying on of hands gave meaning to the public presentation and became a physical conduit for passing to Joshua two elements: YHWH’s commission and Moses’ honor. The laying on of hands was a legal action which gave visible representation to YHWH’s word. While Moses laid his own hands on Joshua, YHWH did the transferring.

It should not be surprising that hand laying played such a significant role because of the importance hand symbolism played in the ancient Near Eastern and biblical worlds. Inasmuch as hands symbolized power and possession throughout these worlds, YHWH was easily perceived as passing His power to Joshua through Moses’
hands and at the same time He was perceived as claiming Joshua as His possession through the instrument of Moses’ hands. On other occasions, YHWH spoke “by the hand” of Moses. On the occasion of Joshua’s installation, YHWH transferred His Spirit to Joshua “through the hand” of Moses.

Usage of the hand-laying gesture in Joshua’s installation service indicated an ordination to a special work of ministry for his people. Joshua was to lead his people out and bring them back in by becoming their shepherd. Hand laying indicated that he was indeed YHWH’s personal choice to be Israel’s shepherd. As hand laying indicated an act of consecration in which the Levites were set apart from the rest of the congregation in order to be completely dedicated to cultic service, so the same hand-laying gesture indicated a consecration in which Joshua was set apart from all others in order to be dedicated completely to the ministry of leadership. While ordination to priesthood was indicated by “filling the hands,” Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom at his ordination by the “laying on of hands.”

The ceremony in which Joshua received the laying on of hands followed a simple procedure. Moses called all of Israel to meet at the door to the Tabernacle. In full view of all, Moses formally presented Joshua. He then laid his hands upon the head of Joshua followed by giving Joshua a commission which included words of encouragement, words describing Joshua’s task, words promising divine assistance, and words exhorting Joshua to preserve and keep the law. Joshua was then presented to the high priest as a reminder that he was to always work in conjunction with the high priest, especially to discover YHWH’s will for Joshua’s leadership. The ceremony
concluded with YHWH appearing in the pillar of cloud wherein He confirmed the process by giving his own personal commission to Joshua which included words of encouragement, task description, and a promise to stay close to Joshua.

Laying hands on Joshua carried several symbolic meanings: identification, substitution, affirmation, confirmation, setting aside, conferral of office, and transfer. Hand laying identified Joshua as YHWH's choice to become Israel's leader. The gesture also identified Moses with Joshua and Joshua with Moses, thus making Joshua the clear substitute of Moses by receiving Moses' endorsement through personal touch. Thus, by placing hands on Joshua, Moses affirmed him and indicated confidence in him as well as confirmed and ratified the spiritual gifts of leadership YHWH had already given Joshua. Laying on of hands signified an official investiture wherein Joshua was dedicated to the office of leadership and indicated conferral of formal and public appointment to that office. Laying on of hands was the visible symbol of transferring the lifelong office and powers of leadership to Joshua. Because of the laying on of hands, the Spirit of YHWH was transferred to Joshua, which enabled him to better function in his capacity as leader.

Because laying on of hands was rooted in a command from the Almighty, the gesture had at least two tangible results: Joshua's reception of the spirit of wisdom in leadership skills, and the congregation's receptivity and obedience to Joshua's leadership.

Thus, this study has presented compelling evidence that the essence and purpose of ritual investiture as described in Num 27:12-23 and Deut...
34:9. This essence and purpose permeate the procedural details, the symbolic meaning, and the tangible results of כְּ. While the other elements of the installation ritual were important, the laying on of hands was indeed the strong identifying mark that bound them all.

This study can have significant implication on the theology and rites of Christian ordination to ministry. A possible implication that may arise from further study is that the laying on of hands is the essential element of the Christian rites of ordination. Theological issues that should be further studied include the role and importance of hand laying in ordination services and its connection to identification, substitution, affirmation, confirmation, setting aside, conferral of office, and transfer. Ceremonial issues to be studied include the applicability of each element of the rites of Joshua’s ordination to Christian ordination.

It is further anticipated that this dissertation will stimulate further research on the laying on of hands in the experience of the Levites (Num 8:5-26) and in the reception of Moses’ spirit by the seventy elders (Num 11:16-27). It is also hoped it will stimulate further research on the question of the viability of Joshua’s ordination as the prototypical experience for New Testament or Christian ordination.
# APPENDIX

## OLD TESTAMENT HAND SYMBOLISM AND TEXT SOURCES

### HANDS AND THE PERCEPTION OF STATUS

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| **Wealth**
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—Continued | | |
| **Her Hand = She, Her** | Lev 12:8 | |
| **Your Hand = You** | Deut 12:17, 18; 2 Sam 4:11; Isa 1:12; Ezek 3:18, 20; 33:8; Mal 1:10, 13; 2:13 | |
| **Hand as a Fraction of Ownership** | Gen 47:24; 2 Sam 19:43[44]; 2 Kgs 11:7; Neh 11:1; Isa 56:5 | |
| **Number of Times (Hands) One Thing Is Multiplied** | Gen 43:34; Dan 1:10 | |
| **Handfuls = Abundance** | Gen 41:47 | |
| **Get a Hand = Become Rich** | Lev 25:47 | |
| **Hand Fail = Become Poor** | Lev 25:35 | |
| **According to the Hand = Net Worth** | Lev 27:8 | |
| **According to the Hand = Share Wealth** | 1 Kgs 10:13; Esth 1:7; 2:18 | |
| **Open the Hand = Share Wealth** | Deut 15:8, 11; Pss 104:28; 145:16 | |
| **Stretch Hand Toward = Share Wealth** | Prov 31:20 | |
| **Close Hand = Keep Wealth** | Deut 15:7 | |
| **From the Hand = Dispossession** | Gen 48:22; Lev 25:14; Deut 3:8; Ruth 4:5, 9 | |
| **Work of the Hand = Produce** | Deut 12:7, 18; Job 1:10; Hag 2:17 | |
| **Hand = Memorial** | 1 Sam 15:12; 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5 | |
| **Strength and Direct Action**
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| **High Hand = Independence, Triumph, Defiance** | Exod 14:8; Num 15:30; 33:3; Deut 32:27; 1 Kgs 11:26f; Isa 26:11; Mic 5:8 | |
| **Drooping Hands, Hanging Hands = Lack of Will, Weak, Poor, Stopping Action, Refusal, Fear, Anguish, Lazy** | Lev 25:35; Josh 10:6; 2 Sam 4:1; 14:26; 17:2; 1 Chr 21:15; Job 4:3; Eccl 10:18; Ezra 4:4; Isa 13:7; Jer 6:24; 30:6; 50:43; 38:4; 47:3; Ezek 7:17; 21:12; Dan 10:10; Zeph 3:16 | |
| **Fold Hands or Bury Hands in a Dish = Indolence** | Prov 6:10; 19:24; 24:33 | |
| **Short Hands = Powerless** | Num 11:23; Isa 50:2; 59:1 | |
| **Hands Go Away = Powerless** | Deut 32:36 | |
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<td>Hand = Violence</td>
<td>Isa 28:2</td>
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## HANDS AND THE PROJECTION OF STATUS

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<td>Hand Delineates Chain of Command</td>
<td>Exod 6:8; Num 14:30; Deut 32:40; Neh 9:15; Ps 106:26; Ezek 20:5, 6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14; 38:21; 1 Chr 25:2; 3, 6; 2 Chr 23:18; 26:11; Ezra 3:10; Jer 5:31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In One’s Hand = Control</td>
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<td>Hand on Neck = Control</td>
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<td>Under the Hand = Control</td>
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<td>In/on/Under Hand = Control or Protection</td>
<td>Gen 42:37; 1 Chr 4:10; 25:2; Ezra 8:22; Pss 37:24; 91:12; Isa 49:2; 51:16; Jer 5:31; 26:24</td>
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<td>Look to Hands of Master = Respect</td>
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<td>Pour Water on Hands = Respect, Serve</td>
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Oswalt, John N. “יְהֵן (ki)” as though, as, because that, but, certainly, except, for, surely, since, that, then, when, etc.” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. L. Harris et al. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. 1:437-8.


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